

## Tata Pume, Episode 9

Ciarán Oglesby: Welcome to Tata Pume, episode 9 Traces. Today I am speaking to Fiona Fitzsimons, who is the director of Research and Consultancy with Eneclann. Welcome, Fiona.

FF: Thank you Ciarán, How are you?

CO: Fine, thank you. How are you?

FF: Keeping well.

CO: Good, very good. Fiona, could you give us a description of the work Eneclann has undertaken?

FF: Sure. It really boils down to three main areas: research, publications and on line services. For research we are probably best known for the genealogy and the house history. For genealogy we've complete all the Irish research for Who do You Think You Are?, The UK series 2 to 5, the Australian series, Canadian and the Irish series that was recently broadcast. We also did the research for Ancestors During the Famine, with Animo and we have prepared a lot of research work for documentaries to be broadcast by TG4. That is the media work, but we often offer the same kind of service to private clients, and traditionally our market has been from overseas. Ireland's a country of emigrants, so our markets come from the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, a couple of pockets in South America and even we have someone from an Arctic Research Station at one stage.

CO: Very interesting.

FF: But with the advent of the various TV series we are beginning to see a growing audience for family history in the UK and also in Ireland for the first time ever. We have house history research as well. We can provide research on any house and building, no matter what the size, and even if it is not longer standing. One house history we did we found that the house had been formerly being used as a guano storehouse in Sligo. Another, we found a house in Dublin where a rather gruesome murder has taken place: the body lied without being found for at least a week. Another house history we found was a country house built in the early 1700s; the architectural style was Queen Anne, so it is one of the few houses in that style which still stand in Ireland. But we found that it was built much earlier around a grave hole, so that is the research out of our business. We also deal with publications, and online services. And the two are very closely connected. We have a contract with Trinity College to digitalise the old Library, so you have access to potential four million records, four million books I should say. Now, we have tended to focus on books of interest to our audience, who are particularly interested in family history and local history. And these are published under Archive CD Books Ireland title. But recently we have also taken over the archives of CD Books UK in print. We are now catering for a wider audience, not only in Ireland, but also in England, Scotland and Wales. Now, that ties up very well with our online services and just to explain what I mean about that, going back to what I referred earlier, the growing interest in family history worldwide with the TV series and the like, a lot of people want to do their own research, what the excitement of getting down into the archives, they want to do the

detective work, they are very engaged with their own family and what we do is we digitise large collections of records, so we make them available online by subscription. But probably the best example of this I can give you is back in 2002, we digitise the only complete copy of Griffith's valuation and that is now available on line on [www. Irishorigens.com](http://www.Irishorigens.com). Now, we completed this in partnership with the National Library of Ireland and they received a royalty payment for every user. So, this is a new model for making Irish historical documents from the archives available to a much wider audience, an audience that is situated, literally, around the world.

Early in 2008, as well, Griffith's valuation was then licensed to the Library Council so the same publication is now available to all the country libraries, but because we provide it online, it is also available to Joe Bloggs in Chicago, and it is available to Joe Smith in the outback, in Australia. As long as we have a computer, they can go online.

CO: That's wonderful. Can you explain to our listeners, who may not be aware or have information about Griffith's Archives and how important they are?

FF: Griffith is absolutely essential. It is a very misunderstood source, because people think it is a single stand-alone source, that it is a property valuation taken in the mid nineteenth century, but the actual value of Griffith's is that it feeds into earlier and later sources. The earlier records were compiled in the 1830s and 40s, and these records were continuously revised right up to the late 1970s, when the local office of taxation, the local rates were actually abolished. So, the real value of Griffith's is that it is a way of keying in, of finding where a family lived, where they might have moved to at any time from the mid nineteenth century right up to the 1970s. I suppose it is often underused because its value has not been fully appreciated.

CO: Yes Fiona, I find that for me –and I try to explain to my friends from abroad- it is a complicated process for us here in Ireland. We have a well documented history and genealogy, yet, at the same time, in genealogical terms, there are a lot of records, etc, and it can be a very complicated system, but you can meet the person walking on the street, ask them their surname and you know nearly in what part of the country they originated from way back. So, yes, it is very unusual situation that. Could you explain that to our listeners please ?

FF: Of course, Ciarán. In the first instance you are absolutely right. In 1922 we saw the destruction of the public records office and it was the first act of the Civil War. Now, that destroyed almost the entire medieval archives of Ireland, so there is a huge gap on the records there and it is not the only archival destruction that has happened in our history either. But, never the less there are still records there and there are ways of working around those gaps. In a sense, because so many other records have been destroyed, that actually emphasises the importance of what has survived down to the present day and Griffith's Valuation you know, lacking the nineteenth century census records, we still have Griffith's valuation so we can actually trace where a family lived and the conditions in which they lived to source like Griffith's Valuation. But you are quite right also when you say that is also possible to identify where a family may have come originally, based on the family name. There is a very high degree of regionalisation of certain surnames. Although Ireland is a country of emigrants up to the point which

families emigrated, left the country entirely, the tend to stick within the same areas, parishes and baronies within counties, and we see that right up the late nineteenth century, in fact. So, you can often say that an O'Sullivan is from Kerry, you can also often say that an O'Donovan is from Cork, and similar, you know. It applies to very very many Irish names, but also the names of the different settlements that have come into Ireland. We have many many influxes of people coming in in the last two thousand years, right down to the present.

CO: Typical case on point that be the name Sreng. Very very unusual name in Ireland, but Sreng was originally one of the successional invaders we had in Irish history, yet in Cong, the village in County Mayo, there is people still till the seventeenth century with the name Sreng. It is not amazing?

FF: It is extraordinary; I had never heard that one before.

CO: yes, I found that extraordinary when I heard that, but it just put the emphasis on what you just spoke about there.

FF: Well, Ciarán, I have another one for you, and that is the Manapii way which is little place, a street, I think or a lane name in Wexford town, and that name comes from the Manapii, who would have been a Celtic tribe, who had to areas of settlements on Ireland and on England, Wexford and Cumbria, which is now Cumberland, and somehow, that name from the sixth or seventh century has survived down to the present, and it is actually used as a place name in Wexford town.

CO: It's amazing, isn't it? Yes, Fiona, could you explain to our listeners of the unique aspect of genealogy in Ireland?

FF: Well, I hope I can. Surnames had set down in Ireland at an earlier age than they are in any other European country: earlier than Britain, France, Spain...; earlier than anywhere else. There is also a very early recording of what it was our oral traditions, these traditions being written down by the monks who came in the sixth seventh and eighth centuries and we actually have some of the earliest pedigrees in genealogy that survived in Europe. This survived both Gaelic Irish, but its actual system was adopted very very quickly by the Anglo Normans families that came in in the twelfth and thirteenth century, and many of these pedigrees survived down to the present day and they are actually lodged in the genealogical office in Kildare Street, and there is a small number of people that can actually trace back their families , and I think a lot more of us have actually descended from these, but because of the destruction of the some much of the historic records, there is only a small number of people that can prove definitely that they link with these pedigrees. But when you can, you can then trace your family back, granted this is only following the oldest son of the oldest son, but if you come in within these genealogies, you can often trace your family back to the tenth or ninth century, which is quite extraordinary in an European context.

CO: Yes, can you explain our listeners we have a very well documented account of the lineage of the High Kings in this country from the Leabhir Gabhála, etc, to the manuscripts of the monks would have written?

FF: Right, well, many of those books are actually stories which explain the origin of the Irish people, but the Irish people...you know, you have a whole series of settlements coming in, I think from nine thousand before the present different communities came in and settled right down to the present day. In the period in which I deal with, and that would be the period with historic documents so, from the eighth century onwards really, there are three families that might have made a claim to being High Kings of Ireland, to having a significant amount of power that they could have controlled a good deal of the countryside, and they would be the O'Neill in Ulster, there would be the O'Brien of Munster –that would be slightly later period-, and there would also be the O'Connor, and of course we had the last High King of Ireland, that would have been Ruari O'Connor, who died in 1198. It is probably important to realise that none of these could actually exercise control over the whole of Ireland, but they can certainly have had influence with other regional kings, to which they could have asserted a bit of influence.

CO: OK. And, finally, Fiona, could you give us an example of the traces left by intercultural dialogue in everyday life, that we do not even perceive because we live among them here?

FF: Probably the area I can speak with greatest knowledge about would be the area of surnames, I think I am going back to what I said earlier, that Ireland was a country where we always thought that our population emigrated, we often miss the fact that there were continuous influxes of people during our history, and there is really evidence in the family names, And I will give you a few examples of different settlements of peoples in Ireland. A couple of names spring to mind immediately, the name Doyle, the Irish version of that is O Doubhall, which actually means, in literal translation from the Irish is *dark or black foreigner*. And this actually refers to the Danes. The surname Doyle is especially strong in the South East –in Arklow, Wexford and Waterford – basically all the areas where we would have a Viking settlement. Now, another name which is often I suppose passed over is... do you know the name Fingall, from North County Dublin? The name Fingall in literal translation will be *fair foreigner*, and it refers to the Norwegians, so also Viking settlers. They gave the name to Fingal, which is now North County Dublin. And we can also consider other settlements. Anglo-Norman names like Bourke, originally De Burgo; Roche, originally De la Rope, De Roche; Plunkett... You know names like Joe Plunkett, we always think of it as being Irish when as a natural fact they only arrived here in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, but it really is a case of becoming more Irish than the Irish themselves to the point we do not even realise anymore that they are not originally Irish. People often also think that any surname that begins with 'Fitz' must be an Anglo-Norman name, but many of the Fitz surnames in Ireland are of gaelic origin, where the native Irish tried to Anglicise the names, particularly around the time of the Tudor conquest, in the Sixteenth Century. So for example you have Mageoghegan Padraig, who was an Irish ancient lordship in the midlands that actually became the Fitzpatricks. There is other names of other settlers as well that people that first came to Ireland in the Fiftieth and Sixtieth Centuries and names as Collier and Wearan, which are very well known, particularly in Wexford, names like Sayers and that is in the news this week because of Peig Sayers it is a name that it is very well known in Kerry. There are two origins of this name, one is English settlers, who arrived in Kerry, soldiers from the Cromwellian Wars and the second can be German palatines, who arrived in Ireland in the first decade of the Eighteenth Century. They settled in Limerick originally and then, in the mid Eighteenth Century moved from Limerick to Kerry. And other names are names like Adams and Burns, this are English and Scottish

planters that settled in the north, mainly in Ulster, at the time of the Seventeenth Century Plantations. One last one that I want to throw at you, because this is yet another trace of French Huguenots and we had quite a large settlement of French Huguenots in Ireland from the seventeenth Century but it then became much quicker in the earlier Eighteenth Century and the name D'Olier, which any Dubliner can tell you D'Olier Street, that's a mark of those French Huguenots who came in.

CO: That was very informative, Fiona Fitzsimons. Thank you very much for your time.

FF: Thanks Ciarán.

MUSIC

CO: Today I am speaking with Donald Mac Giolla Easpuig who is involved with the Place Names Branch. Welcome Donald.

DMCG: Good Afternoon

CO: Donald, could you explain our listeners about the work you undertake in that office?

DMCG: First of all, the Place Names Office is a government office, we are part of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltach Affairs and our purpose is to research the place names of Ireland and provide Irish language forms of names for official and general uses. We were set up about 50 years ago. First there was about a hundred and fifty thousand place names in the country and there were on great scale maps, and about half of those are what we call administrative names, being names of parishes, baronies and administrative units, the smallest of which is the town land in Ireland, there are about sixteen thousand of those. And all those names in the large scale maps are in anglicised form, that is they are written according to the conventions of English spelling, but most of the names throughout the country would be of Irish Language origin, probably about 93 per cent of the whole country. Now, the process of Anglicisation of names began with the arrival of the Anglo-Normans that were mainly English speaking in the late Twelfth, early Thirteenth Century and these Anglicised forms have been used in official administration of the country since that time, although the Irish forms remained side by side but they weren't given recognition, official recognition. So, they are recorded in literary sources and other sources, historical sources in Irish language, but that is only the minority of those. So, our job is to find what the original Irish form of the name was and just to get a number of examples around the Dublin area, area covered by your radio station, one would be Clontarf, which in its present forms, its anglicise form actually means nothing but the early form of that, the original Irish form of that name is Cluain Tarbh, which means 'The Meadows of the Bull' and it is well documented in Irish language sources because of the Battle of Clontarf, for Cath Chluana Tarbh, in 1014 between the Irish and the Norse of Dublin City that were defeated for the last time.

CO: Brian Boru

DMCG: Brian Boru, yes. Every student hopefully may have heard about the Battle of Clontarf and Brian Boru. So, another one would be Glasnevin which again it does not mean anything in its English form, but in Irish form it is Glas Naíon which means 'The stream of the infants' and it is probably where they were

baptised or something like that, we do not know the specific meaning is lost in time to us, the only we know is that it is well documented and that is the meaning, glas, the stream, naion, the infants.

CO: Yes, and I remember reading one time about down on the South West coast of Ireland that apparently was about the God Donn and it would be where the sun would be setting in Ireland, and there is a rock there and they believe there is also a pass from Ireland that on that day will go and siphon through this gully on the rocks there, this gap on the rocks, and they would be taken away to the land, to hell, to Brazil or whatever you want to call it.

DMCG: Even in medieval times, let's say the Tenth Century or even earlier, this body of early literature that was centred around place names and poets at the time, they created this body of literature around poetry, and try to explain the names of our most noteworthy place names at the time. An example of that would be one that has been on the news, one of the best known names in the country would be Tara, and that comes from Irish Tower and it was not know what the original meaning was but the poets used their imagination and said that that was made of two words, *Tea mhair*. Tea was the name of a woman and Mhair was the name of a rampart or a wall, the same than on the Latin, **uros**, or the French, mur. So what it actually meant was the rampart of Tea, this woman, and then they created a story to explain how had she come to Tara and died and was buried in this rampart, and that is how Tara got its name, that is how TEamhair got its name, which is very poetical and all, but it is actually nothing to do with the meaning itself.

CO: I heard that myself, and they positive that. She was princess Tea Telphi.

DMCG: That's right, yeah, yeah.

CO: Interesting story, very noble history there, creation of history, but that is myth isn't it?

DMCG: It is a myth, yeah, and with that, we get an awful lot from our pre-Christian mythology that has survived through the stories by the place names. It has grown up and it must have survived as a type of folklore and then the poets were able to take this folklore and mould it themselves into literature, you know. So a good deal of our mythology is found associated to the place names so that is the earliest strata of our names.

CO: I see, and for our listeners, Irish is our native tongue, our native language, and unfortunately, for me personally, what I find when we have visitors from abroad that come here for the first time, they get very confused with the place naming, because the anglicise, the English version, is just a direct literal translation of the Irish word and it totally loses its emphasis and as soon as you explain somebody the Irish word and its meaning, it brings so much the focus and context to them. And they always say the same thing. It is such a shame, because it loses its own history -we know is there, because the Irish name will always be there- but it loses its essence in the day to day running of things, isn't it?

DMCG: Yes, it does. Something that is very very clear in the Irish form. Actually, the Irish name for Dublin is Baile Átha Cliath, but the name Dublin itself comes from Irish as well, it comes from *dubh linn*,

that it will very clear to an Irish speaker, it comes from black pool, but it has been completely changed and its meaning gets hidden behind the Anglicised form and its English form.

But we have had influences apart from Irish, although Irish languages being predominant, but around naturally Dublin and its hinterland, we had outside influences there from the Ninth Century on. The first would have been of course the Scandinavian Vikings who came and actually established the first town Dublin. So we have a number of names around the area from old Norse ,Howth will be one of them, it just means the hinterland, and then,

CO: Benn Étair

DMCG:, yes, that would be the Irish form that it is still on use by Irish speakers. And Ireland's Eye, the Eye part is from the old Norse, Eye meaning an island. And one next to it would be Lambay, which is Lamb-ay, meaning 'island of the lamb'... So, we have those and then, with the coming of the Anglo Normans we had quite a number of names being introduced from the Thirteenth Century on. So, around the Dublin area, I'd say that 93-95 percent of the whole country, but around Dublin it will be more like 50-50 that is English mainly from the Thirteenth Century on.

CO: So we have a very very speckled history.

DMCG: We have, indeed, and it actually reflects the hidden names, certainly in the East Coast that you know... All throughout Ireland, this country, that you find them

CO: Very much and the plane in Tallaght there it is associated with the Myth about the Nemedians and the plague they had and they are all buried there , or it was the Partholonians, one or the other.

DMCG: Well, Again, the name Tallaght itself was explained as Tamlachta, the Taml part was explained as a plague, and the acht was a mound, so yes, that is, It was explained as plague mound and all those people who died of the plague, on the various plagues, were buried there and again you get s the name to explain exactly how it happened, you know? And usually, if you did not die of the plague, you'd die of something you know: slaughter, the name Magh **na Slad**, the plane of the slaughter, yet you always get some story to explain how and what caused the slaughter, you know. But it is usually as you said, in the old Irish period we have a myth explain, there is one book, the Book of the Invasions, the Leabhir Gabhál, it explains how different people came to Ireland. The Tuatha De Dannan, who were completely and utterly mythical and then Fir Bolg, and the Milesians, they were supposed to have come from Spain,

CO: King Melesius

DMCG: that is right, and it is known as Míl Espáine, Mil of Spain,

CO: That is correct, and it has seven sons, isn't it. The magical number.

DMCG: Yeah, and that was the last of the invasions, and they conquered everyone else in the island.

CO: And untimely so, Donald, sorry for interrupting you there, the fascinating thing about that is that they embrace it as very much their own, as if there was the island of destiny, and we all know that

legend also and the mounds and Tuan the stag and all that, the art of it, the embrace it all, well, the places of ritual, that were sacred to the people who were there before. So there was an acknowledgement and respect for the previous culture, isn't it?, which was a lot less than an invasion, really, wasn't it?

DMCG: It was, yeah. Well I suppose invasions were movements of people, you know, and probably all speaking the same language, you know, but there would have been, we do not really know, latter explanations of how people came to Ireland, you know. But all we know was that the predominant language here was Irish language at the beginning of the historical period, and even the place names recorded by Tolomeo in the First Century AD would have been recorded by Rommes from Britain, from those names that were just Irish, and Irish of course is part of the Celtic languages which came at one time across Europe, the Goidelic branch. We have a number of correspondences between, particularly, Gaul, which is now modern France, quite a number of the names, quite a large proportion of the names there would be of Celtic origin, we get correspondence, for example, Lugdunum was the earliest form of Lyon, in France, it means 'the fort of the gods' – Lugh - and Dunloe in County Donegal, means again 'the fort of the god' Lugh, the mythical god, again, pre-Christian god Lugh.

CO: the sun god. He was a phenomenon, wasn't it? Well that idea was a phenomenon all across Europe wasn't it at that period?

DMCG: Yes it was, it must have been common... Well, there was... the Celts have their own myth and they can see it in the names, particularly on names of people and peoples and on the place names as well, you know? There were changes in the language which we find correspondence there.

CO: Donald, that has been very informative, and as you documented there, we have very varied and rich history of interculturalism in Ireland and indeed it is what it made us what we are today.

DMCG: Yes, indeed.

CO: Donald Mac Giolla Easpuig, from the Places Names Branch. Thank you very much.

DMCG: and thank you all.