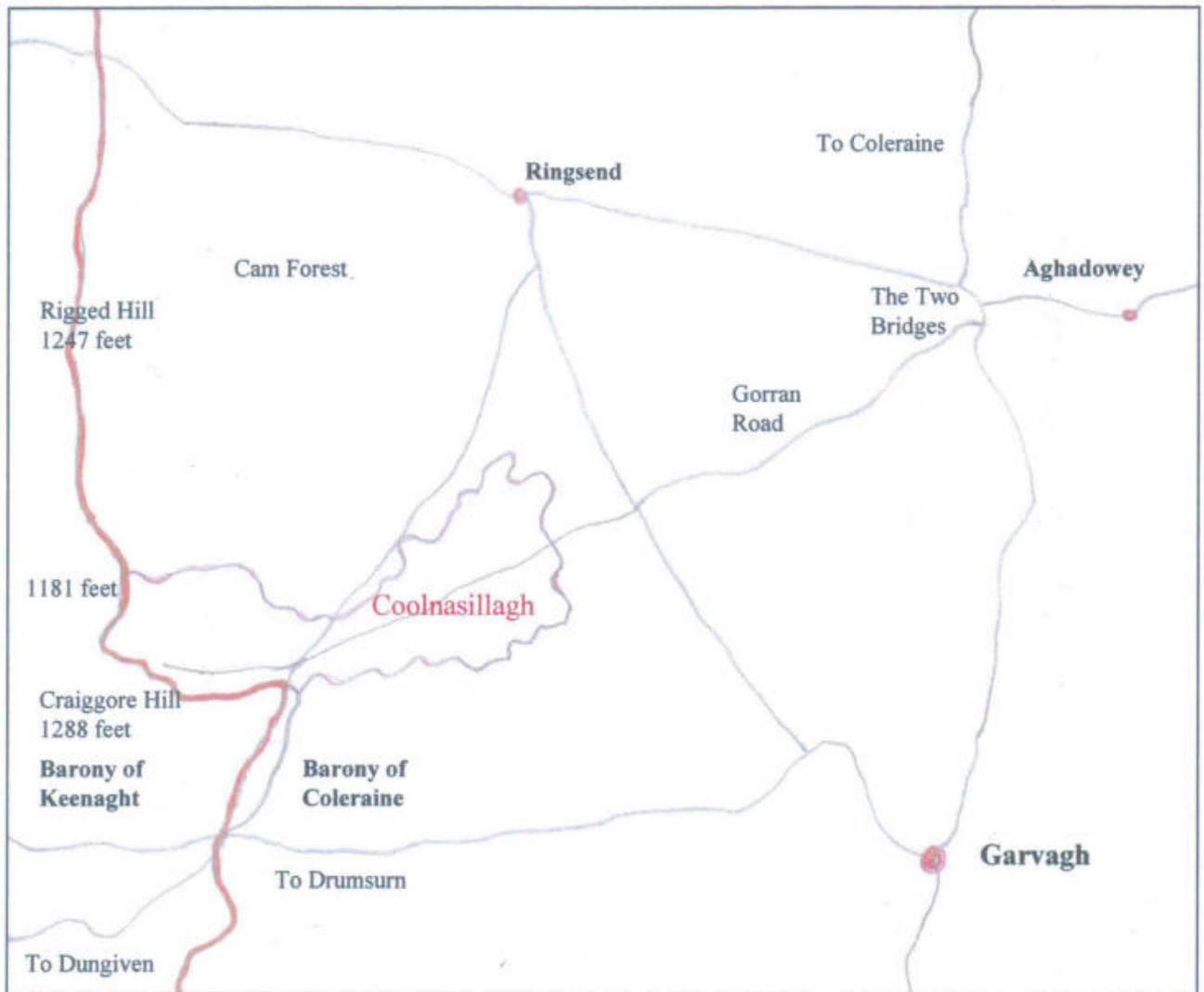


The O'Kane Families living in the Townland of Coolnasillagh in 1901

The townland of Coolnasillagh lies to the west of the road from Garvagh to Ringsend in a district which is generally known locally as Ballerin. The road which runs up the townland climbs steadily to a height of around 1000 feet. The upper part of the townland is covered in moorland and bogland.

The map below shows the location of the townland with the wider district.



Most of the population, both now and in the nineteenth century, lived in the lower part of the townland.

At the time of the Griffith's [Tenement] Valuation in 1859 there were thirteen separate O' Kane households in the townland of Coolnasillagh, between Garvagh and Ballerin [Boleran].

On the next page there is a copy of the page from the Griffith's Valuation and on the page after that there is a copy of the accompanying valuation map.

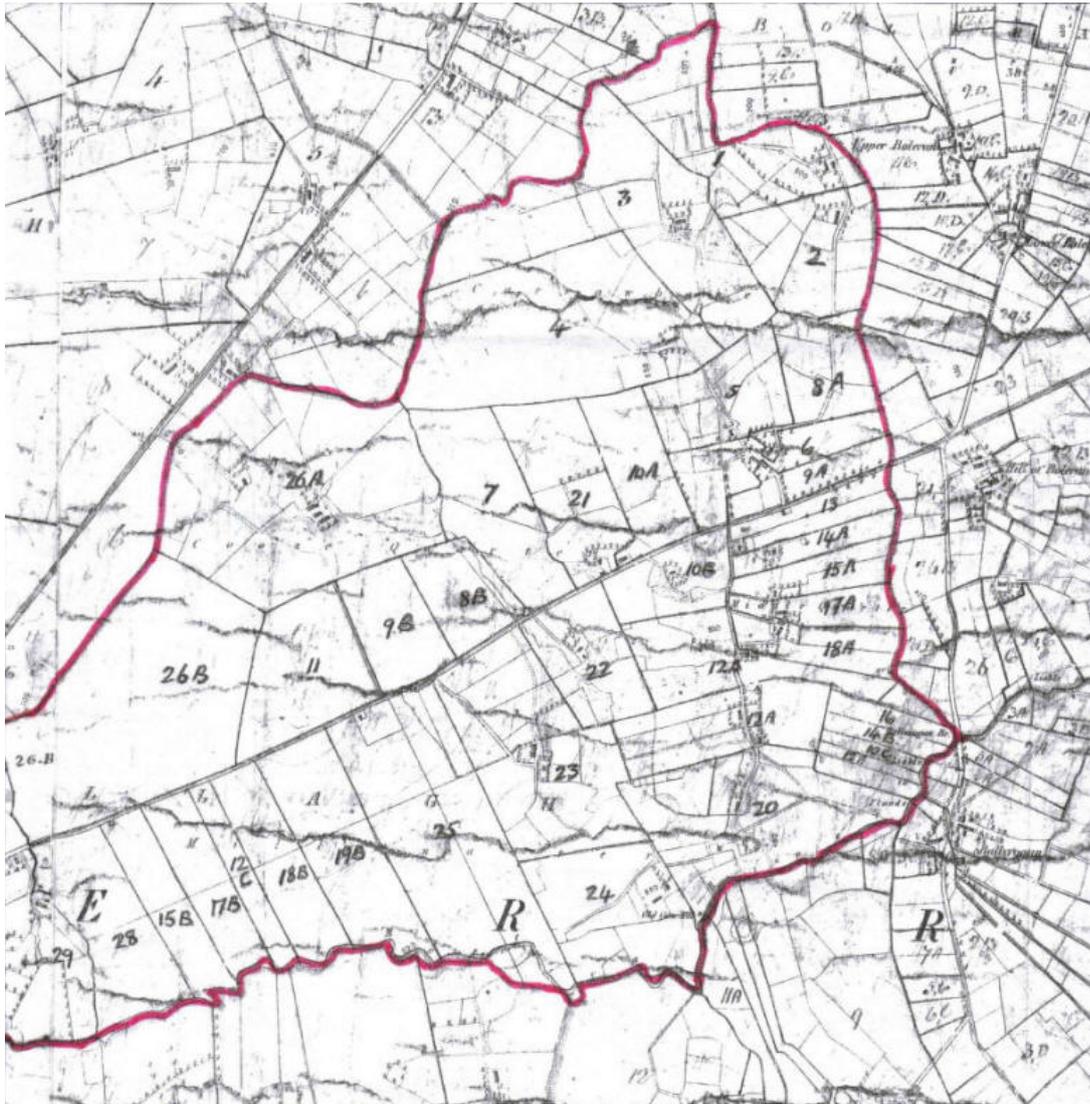
Note that the map is in two sections. The first map covers the lower part of the townland and the second map covers the upper part of the townland.

The numbers on the map can, at times, be difficult to read.

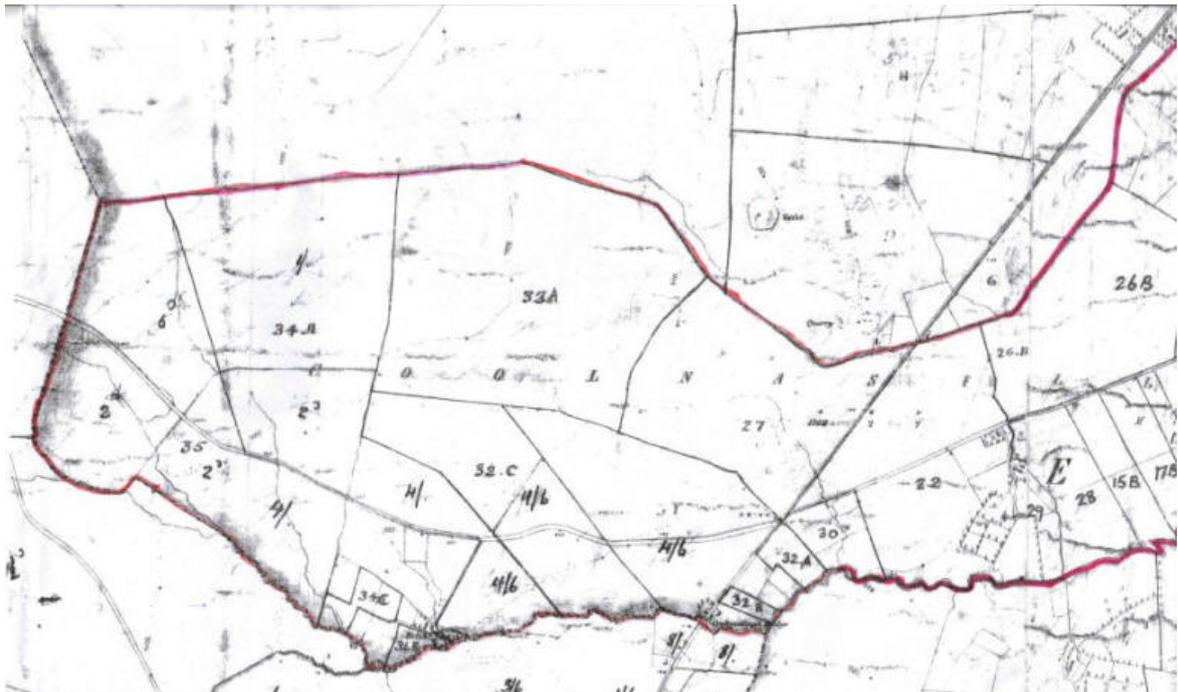
VALUATION OF TENEMENTS.

PARISH OF ERRIGAL.

No. and Letters of Reference to Map.	Names.		Description of Tenement.	Area.	Rateable Annual Valuation.		Total Annual Valuation of Rateable Property.
	Townlands and Occupiers.	Immediate Lessors.			Land.	Buildings.	
GORTFAD—continued.							
16	Robert Dripps, . .	Paul C. Clinton, . .	Corn-mill, offs., & land,	A. R. P. £ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	
17	James M'Cluskey, . .	Same, . .	Ho.,offs.,flax-mill,&ld.,	1 0 0 0 10 0	18 0 0	18 10 0	
				17 0 10 15 0 0	10 0 0	25 0 0	
			Total, . .	446 0 9	218 15 0	57 15 0	276 10 0
COOLNASILLAGH.							
<i>(Ord. S. 17 & 18.)</i>							
1	Hugh Doherty, . .	Marquis of Waterford,	House, office, and land,	20 1 35	7 10 0	1 5 0	8 15 0
2	Neal M'Gonigle, . .	Same, . .	House, office, and land,	15 3 35	7 5 0	1 0 0	8 5 0
3	Roger Atkinson, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	35 1 0	5 0 0	0 10 0	5 10 0
4	William Atkinson, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }		5 0 0	0 10 0	5 10 0
5	Neal M'Shane, . .	Same, . .	House, office, and land,	40 3 30	9 5 0	0 15 0	10 0 0
6	Peter Mullen, . .	Same, . .	House, office, and land,	12 1 30	5 0 0	0 10 0	5 10 0
7	John Mullen, . .	Same, . .	House, offices, and land,	10 1 0	5 15 0	1 0 0	6 15 0
8	Peter Mullen, . .	Same, . .	Land,	17 1 35	1 0 0	—	1 0 0
9	John Mullen, . .	Same, . .	Land,		1 0 0	—	1 0 0
8 A	Denis M'Guire, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	10 3 0	5 10 0	1 0 0	7 5 0
9 A	Neal Doherty, . .	Same, . .	House, offices, & land, }	9 0 30	0 15 0	—	5 0 0
10 A	Bernard O'Kane (Boy),	Same, . .	Office and land,	5 3 30	3 15 0	0 15 0	7 15 0
11	Bernard O'Kane (Boy),	Same, . .	House, office, and land,	10 0 20	0 10 0	—	0 10 0
12	Patrick O'Kane (Boy),	Same, . .	Land,	11 2 0	2 15 0	0 5 0	0 16 0
13	Patrick O'Kane (Boy),	Same, . .	Land,	9 0 20	3 10 0	0 10 0	0 8 0
14	Patrick O'Kane (Boy),	Same, . .	Land,	1 1 25	0 15 0	—	0 8 0
15	Patrick O'Kane (Boy),	Same, . .	Land,	16 3 35	0 16 0	—	0 5 0
16	Patrick O'Kane (Boy),	Same, . .	House, offices, & land, }	0 2 20	0 5 0	—	—
17	James O'Kane (Mick),	Same, . .	House, offices, & land, }	12 2 17	5 5 0	0 15 0	7 10 0
18	Edwd. O'Kane (Donald)	Same, . .	House and land,	5 0 20	1 5 0	—	5 0 0
19	Edwd. O'Kane (Donald)	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	6 3 15	4 10 0	0 10 0	4 15 0
20	Miehl. O'Kane (Shaun),	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	4 2 25	3 2 0	0 7 0	4 15 0
21	Ml. O'Kane (Shaun),	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	2 2 0	1 6 0	—	—
22	Patk. O'Kane (Brien),	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	6 0 20	4 5 0	0 10 0	7 5 0
23	Patk. O'Kane (Brien),	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	9 2 10	2 10 0	—	—
24	Patk. O'Kane (Brien),	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	2 3 5	1 0 0	—	1 0 0
25	Patk. Mullen (Harnish),	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	5 3 0	4 0 0	0 15 0	7 10 0
26	Patk. Mullen (Denny),	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	10 0 0	2 15 0	—	—
27	Thomas Doherty, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	8 2 0	5 15 0	1 0 0	9 15 0
28	Michael Heveral, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	12 0 0	3 0 0	—	—
29	John O'Kane (Ecklin),	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	16 2 35	9 10 0	0 10 0	5 5 0
30	Patk. Mullen (Micky),	Same, . .	House, offices, & land, }	18 3 5	5 5 0	0 15 0	5 15 0
31	Daniel M'Cormick, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	0 10 0	0 10 0	0 10 0	5 10 0
32	James Bradley, . .	Same, . .	House, offices, and land,	27 2 35	14 0 0	1 5 0	15 5 0
33	Charles Connell, . .	Same, . .	House, office, and land,	15 2 35	3 15 0	0 10 0	4 5 0
34	William Starr, . .	Same, . .	House, office, and land,	11 3 25	4 10 0	0 10 0	5 0 0
35	David Atkinson, . .	Same, . .	House, offices, and land,	29 3 15	9 5 0	1 0 0	10 5 0
36	Robert Brown, . .	Same, . .	House, offices, and land,	19 2 15	5 0 0	0 5 0	5 10 0
37	Robert Brown, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	0 2 20	0 5 0	—	—
38	David Gowd, . .	Same, . .	House and land,	38 1 20	10 0 0	0 5 0	10 5 0
39	Bridget O'Kane (Jack),	Same, . .	House and land,	50 2 35	14 5 0	—	—
40	James Hagan, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	—	—	0 15 0	11 15 0
41	Catherine O'Kane, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	—	—	0 10 0	6 0 0
42	Robert Brown, . .	Same, . .	Land,	48 0 25	2 5 0	—	5 15 0
43	David Gowd, . .	Same, . .	Land,	57 0 5	5 15 0	—	4 15 0
44	Bridget O'Kane (Jack),	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	17 1 35	4 15 0	—	7 10 0
45	James Hagan, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	66 2 0	7 0 0	0 10 0	7 10 0
46	Catherine O'Kane, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }		7 0 0	0 10 0	—
47	Ecklin O'Kane, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	8 2 5	3 10 0	—	16 10 0
48	Ecklin O'Kane, . .	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	50 1 10	11 15 0	1 5 0	—
49	Ecklin O'Kane, . .	Same, . .	House and land,	0 0 15	0 1 0	0 4 0	—
50	Ecklin O'Kane, . .	Same, . .	House and land,	3 3 10	1 10 0	—	12 5 0
51	Ecklin O'Kane, . .	Same, . .	House and land,	1 2 30	1 0 0	—	—
52	Edward O'Kane, . .	Same, . .	Land,	42 1 30	9 10 0	—	6 5 0
53	Edward O'Kane, . .	Same, . .	Land,	102 1 35	6 5 0	—	—
54	Michl. O'Kane (Micky)	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	105 3 20	11 10 0	0 15 0	14 15 0
55	Edward O'Kane (Boy),	Same, . .	House, office, & land, }	2 0 15	1 0 0	—	—
56	Edward O'Kane (Boy),	Same, . .	House, offices, and land,	4 1 0	1 10 0	—	—
57	Edward O'Kane (Boy),	Same, . .	House, offices, and land,	112 3 35	15 0 0	1 0 0	16 0 0
			Total, . .	1168 2 7	270 8 0	22 16 0	293 4 0



PRONI: VAL/12/D/5/18A [1858-1876]



PRONI: VAL/2/A/5/17B [1856]

By the time of the 1901 Census the total number of O'Kane households [descended from the 1859 households] had fallen to either five or six and there was a new family of O'Kane that had moved in from the neighbouring townland of Freugh. In the table below are brief details of the families in 1859 and the families in 1901. Because there were so many families of O'Kane in the townland in 1859 the valuers, and indeed the locals, gave most of the families a nickname. Even today some of these nicknames are well known amongst local people, despite the fact that there are no O'Kane families living in the townland today.

O' Kane Families in 1859	O'Kane Families in 1901
Bernard O' Kane (<i>Boy</i>)	Unmarried sons, Bernard [50] and Daniel [48] were living in house No. 27 in the census [Griffith's No. 10B].
Patrick O' Kane (<i>Boy</i>)	Unmarried sons, Patrick [40] and Thomas [39], were living with their mother, Annie [88], in house No. 21 in the census [Griffith's No. 12B].
James O'Kane (<i>Mick</i>)	His widow, Rose [67], and her family were living in house No. 19 in the census [Griffith's No. 13].
John O'Kane (<i>Ecklin</i>)	His son, John [Ecklin], a widower [55], and his family were living in house No. 8 in the census [Griffith's No. 20]. This family is the subject of a more detailed case study below.
Catherine O'Kane	I think her son Francis [50] and his family were living in house No. 1 in the census [Griffith's No. 31a]. Francis married Mary McNicholl of Boviel in the parish of Dungiven in 1865. Francis's father was given as John Kane, deceased. I'm assuming, but can't prove, that Catherine was the widow of John Kane. In Griffith's, Francis occupies Catherine's farm and this is the basis of my assumption.
Bernard O'Kane	Bernard [35] and his two sisters [33 & 38], all unmarried, were living in house No. 24 in the census. I am not sure of the exact location of their house in the townland, nor can I find out much about them. I suspect that they were related to one of the O'Kane groups in the townland, but they could have come from somewhere else.
James O'Kane	James [38] and his family were living in house No. 9 in the census [Griffith's No. 23]. James, an agricultural labourer, had moved into Coolnasillagh from the adjacent townland of Freugh, c.1886. He married an Anne Connor from the townland of Killhoyle in the parish of Balteagh in 1886. James's father was Patrick O'Kane and Anne's father was Bernard Connor.
Ecklin O'Kane	All of these families had gone by 1901. Most of their names were stroked out in the Griffith's Revision Books during the 1870s.
Edward O'Kane	
Edward O'Kane (<i>Boy</i>)	
Edward O'Kane (<i>Donald</i>)	
James O'Kane (<i>Jack</i>)	
Michael O'Kane (<i>Mickey</i>)	
Michael O'Kane (<i>Shaun</i>)	
Patrick O'Kane (<i>Brien</i>)	

The above information suggests that the demise of the families who had disappeared by 1901 was emigration. The number of unmarried male heads of family points to the other major factor that led to the decline of population in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century - celibacy.

The Patrick (*Boy*) line of O'Kanes had disappeared from the townland by the 1920s and the Bernard (*Boy*) line by 1940 simply because the sons, who did not emigrate, simply never married. The James (*Mick*) line had gone by 1935, again due to emigration and celibacy. Francis Kane [*Catherine*] had already gone by 1916.

The James O'Kane [agricultural labourer] had gone by 1920 and the Bernard O'Kane and his sisters had gone by the the end of the 1920s.

The only line that did survive until the 1950s was the John (*Ecklin*) line and this particular family will be the subject of the remainder of this case study.

John O'Kane (*Ecklin*) was listed in the Griffith's [Tenement] Valuation of 1858 occupying the holding marked number 20 on the valuation map. When I first began to enquire about the Ecklin line of O'Kanes, the name Ecklin was well known in the townland. I was informed that the family had lived in the general area of the townland which corresponded with the No. 20 on the valuation map. Apparently the family of a Thomas O'Kane, who was the son of an John O'Kane, had moved from there to somewhere near Newbuildings in the 1950s but there was also an Ecklin O'Kane still living somewhere in the general area of Boleran.

Before I had visited the townland and received the above local information, I had already consulted the 1901 census. At the time I began this research the 1911 Census was not available online. Nevertheless, it was relatively easy to find the family of a John Ecklin O'Kane living in a house in Coolnasillagh in 1901 that had a thatched roof, 3 front windows and 3 rooms. Obviously, from his age, this John Ecklin O'Kane could not be the 1858 John (*Ecklin*). I thought that he could be a son but, at this stage, I had no hard evidence that he was. The details of John Ecklin O'Kane's family are shown in the table below.

1901 Census [Glenkeen DED] [PRONI: MIC354/5/6]

House No. in Census	Forename	Surname	Relationship	Religion	Education	Age	Sex	Profession	Marriage	Where Born
8	John Ecklin	O'Kane	Head of Family	Roman Catholic	Read & write	55	M	Farmer	Widower	Co. Derry
8	Bridget	O'Kane	Daughter	Roman Catholic	Read & write	12	F	Scholar	Not married	Co. Derry
8	Thomas	O'Kane	Son	Roman Catholic	Read & write	10	M	Scholar	Not married	Co. Derry
8	John	O'Kane	Son	Roman Catholic	Read & write	8	M	Scholar	Not married	Co. Derry
8	Ellen	Madden	Servant	Roman Catholic	Read & write	50	F	General Domestic Servant	Widow	Co. Derry

How long had John Ecklin O'Kane been a widower? When, exactly was he married? Given his age, were there older children who had, perhaps, emigrated? Was he, in fact, the son of John O'Kane (*Ecklin*)?

The answers to these questions were to come from three key sources - marriage and birth records in the Derry ~ Londonderry Genealogy online databases - a gravestone in the nearby churchyard at St. Columba's, Ballerin - and the discovery of a descendant of this family, Mrs Bridie Tully, who lives in Ringsend. Bridie is the great-great-granddaughter of John O'Kane [Ecklin] of 1858. My thanks to Bridie for her help in trying to piece together the story of this family.

As with the Samuel Long of Cullyramer case study, a gravestone provided important information on a family which is not available elsewhere. There is a photograph of the headstone on the next page but as you can see the names and dates on the headstone are becoming difficult to read. I have included a transcript of the information on the headstone, on the page following the photograph.



ERECTED
 BY PATRICK, AND JOHN O KANE,
 COONASILLACH,
 IN MEMORY OF THEIR MOTHER
 MARY O KANE,
 WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE 16TH APRIL 1865.
 AGED 62 YEARS.
 ALSO THEIR FATHER JOHN,
 WHO DIED 10TH JUNE 1876,
 AGED 72 YEARS.
 ALSO BR. ROSE, BELOVED WIFE OF JOHN,
 WHO DIED 22ND OCT. 1893,
 AGED 55 YEARS.
 ALSO HER HUSBAND JOHN O KANE,
 WHO DIED 27TH MARCH 1870, AGED 77 YEARS.
 ALSO THEIR SON JOHN O KANE,
 WHO DIED 15TH MARCH 1937, AGED 46 YEARS.
 BRIDGET O KANE WIFE OF THOMAS O KANE,
 WHO DIED 22ND MAY 1965.
 ALSO HER HUSBAND THOMAS,
 DIED 19TH OCT 1978, AGED 89 YEARS.
Rest in peace

Erected
By Patrick and John O'Kane
of Coolnasillagh
In Memory of their Mother
Mary O'Kane
who departed this life 16th April 1865
aged 62 years
Also their father John
who died 10th June 1876
aged 72 years
Also Bridget beloved wife of John
who died 22nd October 1893
aged 35 years
Also her husband John O'Kane
who died 27th March 1920 aged 77 years
Also their son John O'Kane
who died 15th March 1937 aged 47 years
Bridget O'Kane wife of Thomas O'Kane
who died 22nd May 1965.
Also her husband Thomas
died 19th Oct. 1978 aged 89 years.

This headstone provides part of the family tree of John (*Ecklin*) O'Kane of 1858 and provides substantial information on the family of one of his sons John O'Kane who is the John Ecklin O'Kane listed in the 1901 Census above. It also indicates that John had a brother Patrick.

Family of John and Mary O'Kane (*Ecklin*)

These are the two people at the top of the headstone and John O'Kane (*Ecklin*) was listed in the 1858 Griffith's [Tenement] Valuation as living in No. 20 on the valuation map.

From the information on the headstone we can say that John was born in 1804 and died in 1876 and his wife Mary was born in 1803 and died in 1865. Since both deaths took place after compulsory registration of deaths was introduced in 1864 it should be possible to check the deaths, but there was no pressing reason for me to do so.

Marriage and birth information is more relevant. However, it is not available in church registers because the marriage and baptismal registers for Errigal Parish do not begin until 1873 and 1846 respectively. The fact that there is no information on the couple's marriage means that we do not know Mary O'Kane's maiden name. The headstone suggests that their son John was born c.1843 and I as you will see below Patrick was born c.1841. It is likely that the couple had other children, but there is no record of them. Given that the couple were born in 1803 and 1804, I would expect that they would have been married either in the late 1820s or early 1830s. There were three John Kane families listed in the 1831 Census Returns, two of which were married and there are three John Kanes listed in the 1835 Tithe Applotment Book for the townland. Unlike the 1858 Griffith's Valuation, no attempt has been made by the valuers or enumerators to distinguish between them.

Although far from complete, the above information made it easier to interpret the information in the Griffith's revision Books covering the period 1860 to 1911. The table below attempts to summarise the relevant information from these books. You can see the changes for the entire townland in the Coolnasillagh locality study at the Barony of Coleraine link in the right-hand menu.

No. in Griffiths 1859	Occupier Forename 1859	Description of Property 1859	Valuation of Buildings 1859	Occupier 1859 to c.1900
15B	Michael O'Kane [Shaun]	Land 9.2.10. valued at £2.50.		1874 John O'Kane [Ecklin]. 1893 Bernard O'Kane [Ecklin].
20 [a]	John O'Kane [Ecklin]	House, offices & land 27.2.35. valued at £14.00	£1.25	John O'Kane [Ecklin].
20b	Not listed in 1859	House in 1872 valued at £1.50. In 1901 listed as an office.		1872 Patrick O'Kane [new house]. 1887 vacant. 1901 John O'Kane [Ecklin] as an office..
28	David Gowd	Land 17.1.35. valued at £4.75.		David Gowd. 1873 Patrick O'Kane [Ecklin]. 1888 John O'Kane [Ecklin]. 1893 Bernard O'Kane [Ecklin].

This information shows the John O'Kane (*Ecklin*) with his holding at No. 20 [a]. and it appears to show him in place all the way through to 1902. However, we know that he died in 1876.

In 1872 a new house appears on the holding - No. 20 [b] occupied by Patrick O'Kane. We know that Patrick is a son of John O'Kane (*Ecklin*). Patrick also takes over a plot of land from David Gowd [No. 28] in 1873. If you look at the valuation map you will see that this land is further up the valley from the home farm. The other point to note here is that the new house occupied, presumably, by Patrick becomes vacant in 1887 and is listed as a office [outbuilding] in 1901 and 1911 belonging to John Ecklin O'Kane.

In 1874 John O'Kane (*Ecklin*) takes over a plot of land from Michael O'Kane (*Shaun*) [No. 15B]. Was this John Sen. or John Jun.? I suspect it may have been John Jun.

The third relevant O'Kane appearing in this table is Bernard O'Kane [Ecklin] in 1888 and 1893. I do not know who this Bernard O'Kane [Ecklin] is. For a time I thought he was connected with Patrick O'Kane but a search of birth records failed to come up with any hard evidence. He may very well be the unmarried Bernard O'Kane [with two sisters] who is listed in the 1901 Census. As yet, he remains a mystery.

The information which follows on the families of the brothers John Ecklin and Patrick O'Kane will put some flesh on the barebones of the story that is revealed in the Griffith's Revision Books.

Marriage of John Ecklin O'Kane and Bridget O'Connell

The marriage of John Ecklin O'Kane to Bridget O'Connell took place on 16th October 1884 in St. Columba's Roman Catholic Church in Ballerin. Below is a screenshot showing the details of their marriage in the *Derry ~ Londonderry Genealogy: Marriage Records for Co. Derry* online database. Note that the address given for Bridget O'Connell should read Meavemanougher. This may have been caused either by an error in transcription when the database was being created, or it may in fact be spelt this way in the original entry in the marriage register. In my view it is not a mistake worth spending money on to look at the original certificate.

Civil Marriage Record			
Date of Marriage:	16/10/1884		
Parish / District:	GARVAGH		County: Co. Derry
Husband		Wife	
Name:	John	O'Kane	Bridget O'Connell
Address:	Coolnasillagh		Mabemenougher
Denomination:	Registrar District		Registrar District
Occupation:	FARMER		
Age:			
Status:	Bachelor (Previously unmarried)		Spinster (Previously unmarried)
Husband's Father		Wife's Father	
Name:	John	O'Kane	John O'Connell
Address:			
Denomination:			
Occupation:	FARMER		FARMER
Husband's Mother		Wife's Mother	
Name:			
Address:			
Denomination:			
Occupation:			
Witness 1		Witness 2	
Name:	John	O'Connell	Mary O'Connell
Notes:	THE GROOM'S FATHER'S DECEASED BALLERIN		

Births of the children of John Ecklin and Bridget O'Kane

John and Bridget had five children. All, except Joseph, were born in Coolnasillagh between 1886 and 1889. Despite what it says in the 1901 and 1911 Census, Joseph was born in Dublin in 1891. This information about Joseph came from Bridie Tully.

Mary, the first child, was born 13th January 1886.

Bridget Jane was born 11th March 1887.

John was born 11th March 1888.

Thomas was born 20th April 1889.

In the birth certificates up to 1888 their father, John, gave his occupation as farmer. On the 1889 certificate of Thomas, he gave his occupation as farmer and cattle dealer.

Sadly, their mother, Bridget died in 1893. Below is, what I think, is the entry in the *Ireland, Civil Registration Indexes* of the registration of her death in 1893. It would have been registered in the Local Registrars' Office at Garvagh, probably by her husband. You could get a copy of her death certificate from either the GRONI in Belfast or the GROI in Lower Abbey Street, Dublin or Roscommon.

Name: Bridget Kane
 Registration district: Coleraine
 Record type: DEATHS
 Registration date - quarter and year: Oct - Dec 1893
 Estimated birth year: 1858
 Age: 35
 Volume: 1
 Page: 389.

All of John and Bridget's children were alive in 1901. The 1901 Census, above, shows that only Bridget, Thomas and John were living with their father in Coolnasillagh. Where were Mary and Joseph living? Some local people in Coolnasillagh thought that Joseph, in particular, had always lived with his mother's people and Bridie Tully, who lived at Ringsend, would know.

Joseph was Bridie's grandfather and she confirmed that this was the case. Joseph's mother had come from Meavemanougher which is at Ringsend, so I looked at the 1901 Census for that townland and found that Joseph and his sister Mary were living there with their aunt and uncle in Meavemanougher and, to some extent, a similar arrangement was still in place in 1911 as the tables below will show.

1901 Census [Meavemanougher: Ringsend DED] [PRONI: MIC354/5/33]

House No. in Census	Forename	Surname	Relationship	Religion	Education	Age	Sex	Profession	Marriage	Where Born
9	John	O'Connell	Head of Family	Roman Catholic	Read & write	40	M	Farmer	Not married	Co. Derry
9	Mary	O'Connell	Sister	Roman Catholic	Read & write	30	F		Not married	Co. Derry
9	Mary	O'Kane	Niece	Roman Catholic	Read & write	14	F	Scholar	Not married	Co. Derry
9	Joseph	O'Kane	Nephew	Roman Catholic	Read & write	9	M	Scholar	Not married	Co. Derry

1911 Census [Meavemanougher: Ringsend DED] [NAI: 1911 Online Census]

House No. in Census	Forename	Surname	Relationship	Religion	Education	Age	Sex	Profession	Marriage	Where Born
10	John	O'Connell	Head of Family	Roman Catholic	Read & write	66	M	Farmer	Single	Co. Derry
10	Mary	O'Connell	Sister	Roman Catholic	Read & write	56	F		Single	Co. Derry
10	Joseph	O'Kane	Nephew	Roman Catholic	Read & write	20	M	Farmer's son	Single	Co. Derry

1911 Census [Coolnasillsagh: Glenkeen DED] [NAI: 1911 Online Census]

House No. in Census	Forename	Surname	Relationship	Religion	Education	Age	Sex	Profession	Marriage	Where Born
16	John (E)	O'Kane	Head of Family	Roman Catholic	Read & write	67	M	Farmer	Widower	Co. Derry
16	John	O'Kane	Son	Roman Catholic	Read & write	22	M	Farmer's son	Single	Co. Derry
16	Thomas	O'Kane	Son	Roman Catholic	Read & write	21	M	Farmer's son	Single	Co. Derry
16	Joseph	O'Kane	Son	Roman Catholic	Read & write	19		Farmer's son	Single	Co. Derry

However, the first point to notice in 1911 is that neither of the two girls were present in either household. By 1911 both girls would have been in their twenties and according to Bridie Tully would probably have emigrated by that time.

Two of the three boys, Thomas and John, were still living with their father but Joseph appears to have been enumerated twice - once in the O'Kane household and once in the O'Connell household. The tradition within the family is that Joseph always lived with the O'Connells. Note also that Joseph is age 19 in the O'Kane house and 20 in the O'Connell house!

In order to avoid double-enumeration the rule was that a person should only be enumerated in a house if they were physically present in that house on the night of the census i.e. sleeping in the house that night. However, you can see how such an error could occur in the case of Joseph. I suspect the error was not picked up because the two households were enumerated by two different enumerators.

Incidentally, I have just noticed that John Ecklin O'Kane has rectified the mistake that he made in the 1901 Census when he listed Thomas as 10 and John as 8.

I did not investigate the story of the family very much after this time. One of the sons, Thomas, eventually inherited the farm after his father's death in 1920. Thomas married Bridget Quinn on 14th April 1921. The Griffith's Revision Books show that Thomas [c.1924] bought the neighbouring farm belonging to Charles Connell [Nos. 24 & 12A] and both of these farms were bought by Anthony McKenna [c.1957] when Thomas and his family moved to the townland of Rosnagalliagh near Newbuildings.

Sadly, as the headstone shows, Thomas and his wife, at the time of their deaths in 1956 and 1978, returned to the locality where they had been born, and had left in the 1950s.

Thomas's brother Joseph had married Susan Higgins in 1919 and descendants of his family, including Bridie Tully, still live in the Ringsend area today.

Family of Patrick O'Kane and Catherine Bradley

I was fairly certain that Patrick, John Ecklin's elder brother, was married because there is an entry in the Griffith's Revision Books which records a Patrick O'Kane, in 1872, occupying a new house on holding No. 20 in the Griffith's Revisions. This suggested that he might have married before that date. I was fairly sure that he would have married within the Parish of Errigal, most probably at Ballerin Church. Unfortunately there are no church marriage records for the Roman Catholic Parish of Errigal [Garvagh] during the period when he was likely to have been married.

The greatest problem that I had was the fact that I had no idea of his wife's name. I did search the *Irish Genealogy: Central Signposting Index* [no longer available] for any marriages of a Patrick O'Kane in Co. Derry. I entered the year 1870 in the year box because I knew that would cover the years 1865 to 1875. I found three names that were possible - Catherine Bradley and Mary Mullan in 1865 and Ann Mullan in 1870. Bradley and Mullan were names that occurred in Coolnasillagh and the adjoining townlands. It could have been any one of these matches.

These same three dates came up in a search of the *Derry ~ Londonderry Genealogy: Marriage Records for Co. Derry* online database for the marriage of a Patrick O'Kane which included the Parish/District filter of Garvagh (RD). Again, I had no way of distinguishing between them.

Even a members' search of the *Emerald Ancestors* index did not help. It also identified these same three marriages in Coleraine Registration District. This is the Superintendent Registrar's District. It did say that the marriages took place in the parish of Errigal but indicated Garvagh Roman Catholic Church. There are actually two churches in Errigal Roman Catholic Parish - St. Columba's at Ballerin and St. Joseph's at Glenullin.

Although these searches had narrowed the field down to three possible wives all married within the Garvagh Local Registrar's District and Errigal [Garvagh] Roman Catholic Parish, I still did not know the maiden name of Patrick's wife. One possible source, of at least her first name, was the baptismal register of Errigal Roman Catholic Parish which covered the years 1846 to 1881. Here I found the baptisms of three children of a Patrick O'Kane and a Catherine Bradley.

Eclan Kane, born/baptised 2nd April 1867, sponsors Edward Kane and Christina Kane.

Interestingly this exact same entry appeared again in the register, except the date was 15th May 1869. Does this mean that the first Eclan had died and the next child was named after him and the same two people were sponsors? I thought at first that whoever was entering the baptisms in the register thought that he had forgotten to record the baptism of Eclan in 1867 and entered it in 1869. Certainly I have seen instances of this in other registers. However, the date entered against the baptism, although out of sequence, in the register, is normally the year that the baptism actually took place.

Susan Kane, born/baptised 6th May 1873, sponsors Alexander Kane and Susan Kane.

Catherine Kane, born 23rd September 1784, sponsors Jeremiah Mullan and Catherine Connell.

Unfortunately the register gives no information on the townland in which Patrick and Catherine O'Kane were living at the time of each birth.

Since all of these births took place after compulsory registration of births began in 1864, I decided to search the *Derry ~ Londonderry Genealogy: Birth Records for Co. Derry* online database to see if there were Civil Births for these three children. I found one for Susan and one for Catherine but only the two church baptisms for Eclan. It looks as if the Eclan birth or births were never registered - not altogether surprising given the fact that compulsory registration had only begun in 1864.

A look up of the Susan civil birth confirmed that her mother and father were Patrick O'Kane and Catherine Bradley of Coolnasillagh.

Once I knew that Patrick O'Kane of Coolnasillagh had married a Catherine Bradley in 1865 within Garvagh Local Registrar's District and possibly in Ballerin Church, I had sufficient information which I could use to obtain a verification of this marriage from the local Coleraine District Registration Office.

Alternatively, I could visit the Mormon Family Centre at Racecourse Road in Derry and look up this marriage on their microfilm of civil marriages which cover the period 1845 to 1870. A search of the "Ireland, Civil Registration Indexes" online database will provide the information necessary to identify the relevant microfilm reel at the centre.

Name: Patrick O'Kane
Registration district: Coleraine
Record type: MARRIAGES
Registration date - quarter and year: 1865
Volume: 1
Page: 573

Name: Catherine Bradly
Registration district: Coleraine
Record type: MARRIAGES
Registration date - quarter and year: 1865
Volume: 1
Page: 573

I now know that Patrick O'Kane of Coolnasillagh married Catherine Bradley of Coolnasillagh on 26th May 1865 in St. Columba's Roman Catholic Church in Ballerin. According to the marriage certificate, Patrick was aged 24 [which suggests that he was born 1841] and Catherine was aged 27 [which suggests that she was born 1838]. The marriage certificate confirmed that Patrick's father was John O'Kane, farmer and Catherine was the daughter of Charles Bradley, farmer. The witnesses were Bernard O'Kane and Biddy O'Connell.

As mentioned above, the births/baptisms of the couple's children can be found in the baptismal register of Errigal Parish which covered the years 1846 to 1881. I have already listed the three children whose births were recorded in the baptismal register. As I said I was unable to find any more children. I would think that any further children would be baptised so it looks as if not all baptisms were recorded in the baptismal register.

The further children that I found came from the civil birth registers and were:

Patrick, born 16th February 1872. [His birth certificate indicates that his father was a farmer and cattle dealer.]

John, born 27th January 1877.

Alexander, born 1st June 1878.

These children were born over a period of twelve years. Were there more children? Did Catherine O'Kane die? Did the family emigrate? I ask these questions because of the information in the Griffith's Revision Books shown in the table above.

In 1872 a new house appears on the John O'Kane (*Ecklin*) holding occupied [I presume] by his son, Patrick O'Kane. Patrick had been married since 1865 and I suspect had he been living in his father's house. His mother had died in 1864. By 1872 his family was growing and we know that his brother John, and perhaps other siblings, would have been living in the same house. By 1887 the new house was listed as vacant and eventually becomes an office related to the main house on the holding. Note that on farms at that time it was not unusual for a house to become an office, and vica-versa, to accommodate changes within a family group.

The question is what happened? To be honest I have not really investigated this question. Even if there had been a death of one or other of the parents I would have expected to find the family in the 1901 Census. Unfortunately at the time I was researching this family the 1901 Census was not online. I searched the online 1911 Census but was unable to find either a Patrick O'Kane or a Catherine O'Kane fitting their age profiles. The fact that the entire family disappears suggests that the family emigrated.

Conclusion

I was drawn to this case study by the fact that Coolnasillagh was a townland that had been dominated by the O'Kanes in the middle of the nineteenth century yet today does not contain one family bearing that surname. There are of course still many O'Kanes living within the Ringsend/Garvagh district.

The other reason for choosing the name O'Kane is that is one of the top surnames within the county. This, of course, presents its own problems when researching any family bearing that surname. Add to that the fact that their first names were usually Bernard, Patrick, John, James and Michael and the task becomes even more difficult. The fact that nicknames were used by enumerators, valuers and local people to distinguish between families is clear evidence of this problem, even for contemporaries.

The first name and nickname Ecklin made it somewhat easier for me to find the family that I eventually concentrated on. Even then, without the help of a descendant of this particular family, the task would have been much more difficult.

Another problem I faced when trying to research some of the other O'Kane families in Coolnasillagh was the fact that more than a few male heads of family in the townland were unmarried. This made it more difficult to identify their fathers because there was no marriage certificate.

One bonus, however, was the headstone which provided information on the second half of the nineteenth century that could be checked against both church and civil records. Better still was the fact that it contained dates which [by inference] provided information on the first half of the nineteenth century when Catholic church records, in particular, are often not available.

Clearly, this study still leaves a number of unanswered questions but they are for another day.

Copyright 2012 W. Macafee.