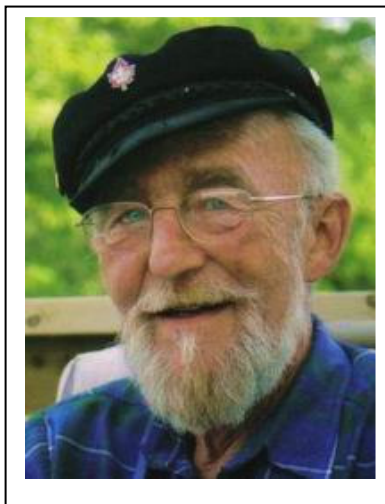


### Dream Trips



How often have we wished we could visit the family homeland to see for ourselves, the sights and sites of our ancestors? And how sure we are that if only we could get there, we would find all kinds of information not available to us here. The reality, of course, is that such a trip would take a lot of planning with no guarantee that we would find anything that we were looking for.

A lot of disappointed travelers testify to the risks inherent in such a venture. The need, however, is growing and it has spawned a new specialized sector of the travel industry.

There are now companies who focus exclusively on heritage and genealogical tours and they will design a custom tour to meet your specific needs. They will take you to the places of importance in your family's history, the repositories where you can do local research, provide guidance and translation, if required, and provide you with a digitized photo record of your trip.

Some of them provide genealogist/guides and will even do a considerable amount of advance research to ensure that you will get the full benefit of your visit. As many of you have experienced, it helps to be with a local when in a foreign country.

There are companies providing these services in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Russia, the Czech and Slovak republics, and the Scandinavian countries. I am a little leery about the ones who claim to expertise in a vast range of countries but maybe I am being unfair to them.

Scandgen Specialty Tours ([www.scandgen.com](http://www.scandgen.com)) is one that specializes in the Scandinavian countries. They promise to do a minimum of 8 hours of preliminary research to find the repositories, etc. that you need, will drive you around in a Mercedes minibus with its own chauffeur (who is not your guide), provide genealogical advice, translations, and generally facilitate your visit. Their website is well worth a visit.

Of course, this is the Cadillac route to research but, when you consider how much you could spend on a trip anyway with no guarantee of any success, it may be worth a little investigation. The costs make it imperative that you seriously consider the *emptor caveat* (buyer beware) principle. Most of the companies can be researched on the internet and I would make a point of looking for testimonials from previous clients and the qualifications of the genealogical guides.

The larger your party, the smaller is the per/person cost so you may want to try to build up some enthusiasm for the idea among your relatives.

If any readers have already used such services, I would love to hear from you.

### Irish Place Names

Samuel Lewis published a 2-volume work in 1837 entitled *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*. It describes many of the counties, cities, boroughs, towns, parishes, and villages with notes on their history, economy, government, etc., and often with engravings of their arms or seals.

That book is now available online at <http://www.libraryireland.com/topog/index.php>. I checked out the little village where my family came from, Saintfield, and found an extensive description of the place, its population, its economic activities, the schools and other institutions along with some historical information.

Wanting to know a little more about the site, I went to their home page. It turns out that their business is in downloadable books, which you can purchase online from them. Their free service is providing books like Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary*.

There is a tab called 'subject index' and clicking on this opens a list of all the books that you can peruse for free and there are dozens and dozens of them about different places and events in Ireland's history.

If you have Irish ancestors, you don't want to miss this resource.