

Finding the Home of your Donegal Ancestor

When contemplating a trip to Donegal, foremost in most family historian's minds, is the hope to find and stand on the land where our ancestors were born.

Not so long ago, this would have been a daunting task however, in the last two years, it has become quite simple – there is still work to be done, but all the resources you need to identify that place are now online.

Case study

Fanny Gallagher, 16 years, daughter of Hugh of Stramore, Gartan Parish, married John O'Donnell in the RC Chapel in Letterkenny, 1866.

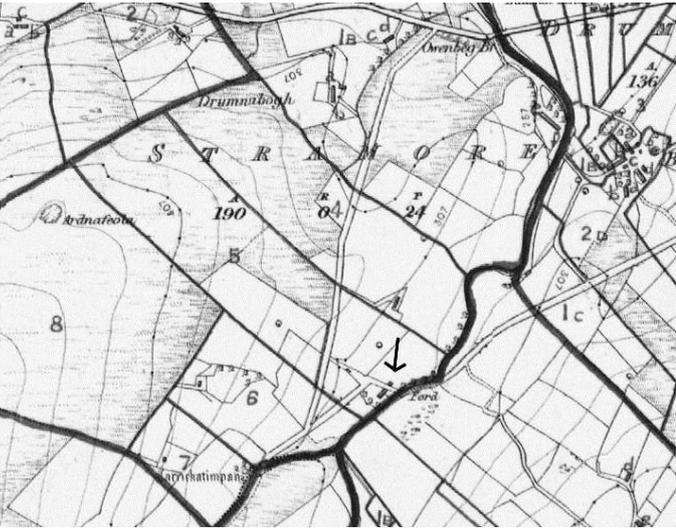
I want to find where Fanny's family lived in Stramore and hopefully even the house she was born in.

Step 1 : Consult the 1857 Griffith's Valuation, which names the heads of the households, their landlords, their holdings and the numbers and letters of reference to the corresponding Ordnance Survey Map

Ask About Ireland Online Griffith's Valuation - <http://askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/>

I searched on Hugh Gallagher, Gartan Parish – I was presented with options to view the original Valuation and I could also view the corresponding Map :

No. and Letters of Reference to Map.	Names.		Description of Tenement.	Area.
	Tenants and Occupiers.	Immediate Lessors.		
VALUATION OF TENEMENTS. PARISH OF GARTAN.				
	STRAMORE—			A. R. P.
	<i>contiguous.</i>			
5	Hugh Gallagher,	Benjamin G. Humfrey,	House, offices, and land.	19 2 30
6	John Gallagher,	Same, . . .	Offices and land.	8 0 0
7	Eleanor Gallagher,	Same, . . .	Land, . . .	4 1 20
8	John Gallagher, Eleanor Gallagher,	Same, . . .	Land, . . .	31 1 5
			Total, . . .	189 3 38

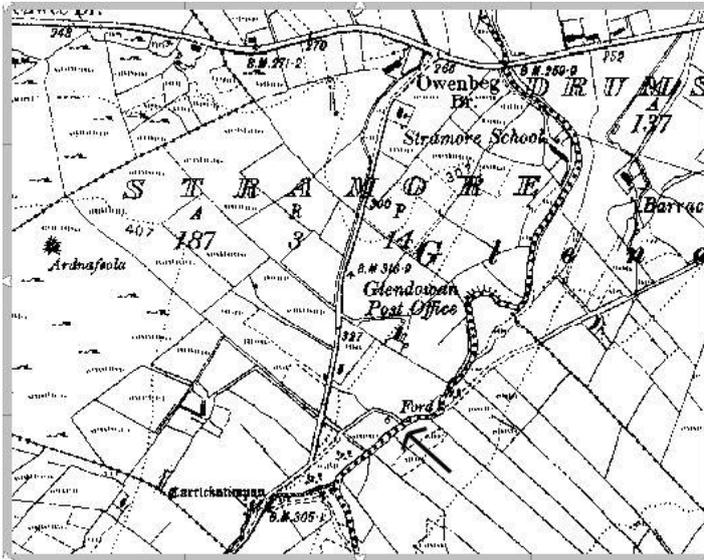


Hugh Gallagher's house was located at map ref 5 – the corresponding map shows exactly where ref 5 was, as well as a small rectangle which indicated the location of the house within that plot (marked with an arrow, above)

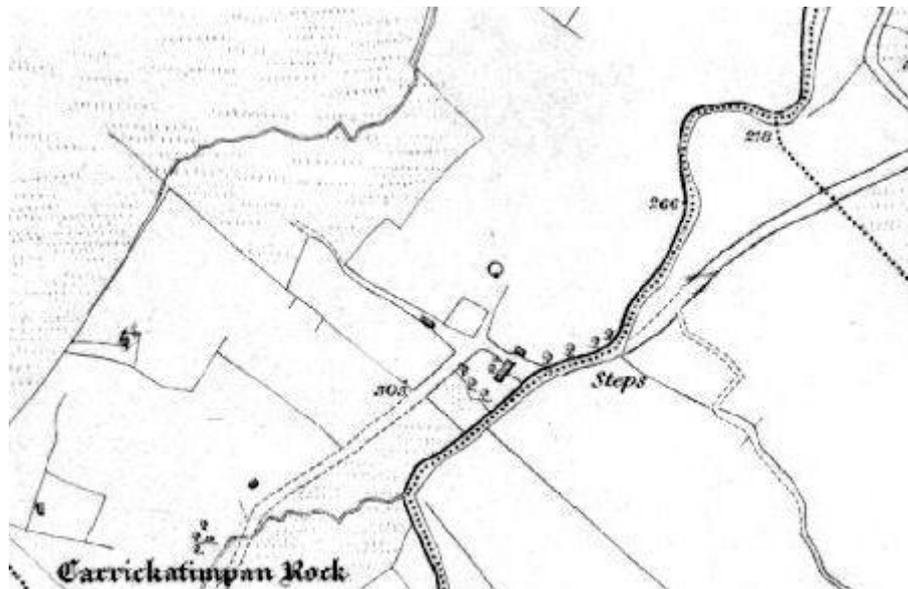
Step 2 : Is the house still there??

Donegal Planning Map search - http://gis.donegal.ie/gplan_donegalcc/

This is a very handy website as once you have set the location you are interested in (Stramore, in this case), you can centre and zoom to it on an Ordnance Survey Map and with the click of your mouse button, you can see the exact same location as an aerial photograph :



The Ordnance Survey Map is a little later than 1857 and shows a house and buildings, still in the same plot, but closer to the roadside. I double-check the maps with the Online maps of County Donegal (1835 editions) - <http://gis.donegal.ie/librarymaps/gisSearch.htm>

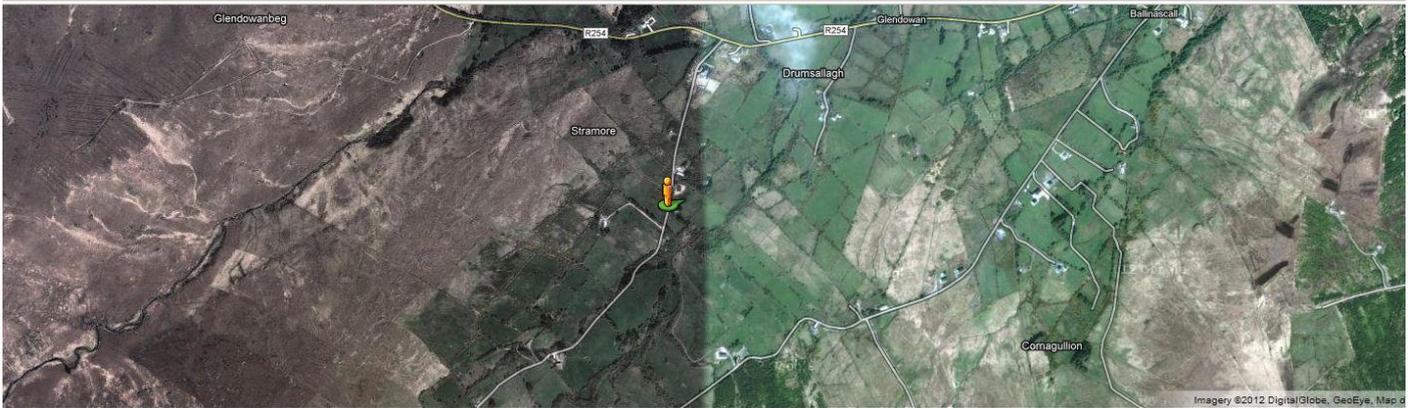


My ancestor's house is clearly marked but interestingly, the road which runs through Stramore did not exist in 1835 – instead it runs through from Carrickatimpan, past my ancestor's house, over the river and away towards Church Hill and Letterkenny.

Step 3 : Being there – Virtually

Google maps - <https://maps.google.com/>

Now that the exact location has been identified, I want to see how to get there and what the area surrounding it looks like. I go to Google maps and enter Stramore, Donegal, Ireland :



Using a combination of 'street view' and a satellite view of the area, I can now see the house to look out for, which will lead me to a wander behind it, to the location of my ancestor's home, near the river.

Conclusion :

I did get to stand at my ancestor's house, but found it had been mostly dismantled to build a sheep-dip! I did however, find interesting information about the disappearing road and what the house had been used for – originally, the road from Dungloe had passed by the house, which doubled as a home, a shop and a hedgeschool in the early 1800s. This house, closer to the 'new' road, was built by the husband of Fanny's sister, Bridget, some time perhaps in the late 1860s/early 1870s.

So, if you have a townland, a family name, and/or the name of the head of your family's household in the mid-1850s, these are the steps you can take to locate your ancestral home – all that's now left is for you to visit Donegal so you can stand there in person.

Go n-éirí an bóthar leat (may your journey be successful)

Lindel Buckley, Jan 2013