

UHF3/22/028

**[Please quote reference on all correspondence]**

Dear

Thank you for your preliminary assessment enquiry and payment of £50 Sterling. You have requested information on the feasibility of researching the family history of Samuel Martin.

You were able to tell us that he was born around 1807 possibly in Ahoghill. He married Rachel Leith in 1831 at Portglenone and they had George Martin (born 1832, Hilliston/Hillistun) and Joseph Martin (born 1834, Portglenone). The family emigrated to Australia in 1838.

Samuel Martin was a farm labourer and belonged to the Church of Scotland (known as the Presbyterian Church in Ireland). His mother was Agnes Till and he had a brother Thomas who also emigrated to Australia sometime after Samuel and his family and a sister Jane who married a Mr Dutton.

Rachel Leith had two or three brothers, one of whom was named Thomas. One of these brothers had a son named Thomas Leith who Samuel's son George corresponded with; he lived in Gortgole townland. You have located the headstone of a Thomas Leith in Portglenone Church of Ireland graveyard who was born around 1824 and died in 1915 – this would certainly make him a contemporary of George Martin and therefore quite possibly his cousin. Thomas was married to Mary Jane (c1830-1902) and their daughter married a Stewart Kyle (c1859-1926).

Your objectives are to find out more about your ancestors in Ireland – both before Samuel and his family emigrated and afterwards, relating to those relatives who remained there.

Searching for Irish ancestors is not without its difficulties. Civil registration of all births, deaths and marriages did not commence in Ireland until 1864. Non-Catholic marriages are registered from 1 April 1845. Before these dates one is dependent on local parish registers for information relating to family history. However, relatively few of these survive from the eighteenth century.

There are no complete census records for Ireland prior to 1901. Earlier census records were almost completely destroyed, either accidentally or deliberately. There are also no official records of emigration prior to the late nineteenth century. It must also be realised that many records have not yet been digitised and must be manually checked in the archives.

The Ulster Historical Foundation has indexed virtually all civil marriage records for counties Antrim and Down, 1845-1921. It has also indexed nearly all pre-1900 Catholic records for the same area as well as a large number, but by no means a complete record, of Protestant records and civil births. These records are available on a pay-per-view basis on [www.ancestryireland.com](http://www.ancestryireland.com).

We examined this database but did not find any records relating to your ancestors. It should be noted however that there are not yet records from every church on this website as it is an ongoing project. Many church registers are still only available for consultation in the archives.

We searched for the death record of a Jane Dutton. Dutton is not a very common name and we were pleased to find the record of someone of that name who died in 1887 aged 75 years. This would make her a contemporary of Samuel Martin. She was the widow of a farmer and

died in the townland of Killygullib (see attached record). Killygullib Glebe is located in the parish of Tamlaght O’Crilly in County Londonderry however it is not far from the River Bann so is only around 5 or 6 miles from Gortgole as the crow flies therefore we believe this is a strong candidate for Samuel’s sister.

We also examined Griffith’s Valuation which we use as a census substitute due to the destruction of the vast majority of our nineteenth-century census records and found a John Dutton renting a house, office (out-building) and land (3 acres, 2 roods and 10 perches) at plot number 10 in Killygullib Glebe (see attached valuation). Looking at the valuation revision books which follow on from Griffith’s Valuation, we note that the occupier’s name changed from John to Jane by 1885 and then to representatives of John by 1888, reflecting Jane’s death (see attached valuation revision). There is scope here to look for both the death of Jane’s husband John and the baptisms and marriages of any children as well as the marriage record of Jane herself to confirm this was Samuel’s sister.

We next turned to what can be described as an early nineteenth-century census of farmers. In 1823 the Composition Act was passed which stipulated that henceforth all tithes due to the Established Church, the Church of Ireland, were to be paid in money rather than in kind as they previously could have been. This necessitated a complete valuation of all tithable land in Ireland, the results of which are contained in manuscript form in the tithes applotment books arranged by parish. Exemptions included landless labourers, urban dwellers and those living on Church land.

We searched this index and found individuals named Martin in the following townlands in Portglenone parish:

Name	County	Parish	Townland	Year
Charles Martin	Antrim	Portglenone	Drumraw	1825
Chas Martin	Antrim	Portglenone	Drumraw	1825
Danl Martin	Antrim	Portglenone	Ballyloghan	1825
John Martin	Antrim	Portglenone	Ahoghill	1825
Robt Martin	Antrim	Portglenone	Ahoghill	1825
Thos Martin	Antrim	Portglenone	Craigs	1825

This source only lists individuals renting land so those with occupations such as farm labourer or weaver would not appear in this source unless they were also renting land.

As you know, the townland of Gortgole is situated just north of Portglenone. We spent some time searching for the placename Hillston/Hillstun. We noted the placename Milltown which is in the townland of Bracknamuckley and also adjoins the townland of Gortgole (see attached map) – we think it is possible that this was the location mentioned as George’s birthplace.

Turning to the *Guide to Church Records*, produced by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), we find that the following registers are available for Presbyterian churches in the parishes of Ahoghill and Portglenone:

*1<sup>st</sup> Portglenone Presbyterian Church*

Baptisms, 1826-46 and 1852-1923; marriages, 1845-1933 [MIC1P/24]

*2<sup>nd</sup> Portglenone Presbyterian Church*

Baptisms, 1821-67 and 1881-1910; marriages, 1822-1910 [MIC1P/357]

*3<sup>rd</sup> Portglenone Presbyterian Church*

Baptisms, 1869-1944; marriages, 1845-1911

*1st Ahoghill Presbyterian Church*

Baptisms, 1841-1922; marriages, 1841-1920

*Trinity or 2nd Ahoghill Presbyterian Church*

Baptisms, 1835-1901; marriages, 1836-1920 [MIC1P/136]

*Brookside or 3rd Ahoghill Presbyterian Church*

Baptisms, 1859-1962; marriages, 1845-1911

*Cullybackey (Cunningham Memorial) Presbyterian Church*

Baptisms, 1812-43 and 1848-1925; marriages, 1818-38 and 1845-1919

[MIC1P/88; CR3/7]

Baptisms, 1726-1815; marriages, 1727-1792 [In Presbyterian Historical Society]

As you can see some of these church registers survive from too late a date to be of use in our search but it would be worth examining those church registers which cover the period when George and Joseph were baptised.

The Ulster Historical Foundation offers a comprehensive ancestral research service and would welcome the opportunity to carry out a more in-depth investigation on your behalf. Research would primarily take place at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland where church registers, valuation records, wills, etc. are available for consultation.

Success can never be guaranteed, of course, and it might well be the case that even after a great deal of checking your ancestors will remain elusive. I do not mean to sound overly pessimistic, but then neither would I wish to raise your hopes beyond what can be reasonably achieved. This is particularly true in this case because of the lack of sufficiently early registers for Samuel Martin and Rachel Leith and their families. There is however a chance that we could find the baptismal records of George and Joseph.

We are also confident that we will be able to find more records on the Thomas Leith you have identified and his family who remained in Ireland as well as on Jane and John Dutton.

Finally Till is another uncommon surname but we have noted that there were Till families living in the parish of Aghadowey in County Londonderry.

In-depth Research begins at six hours of research at the GRO, PRONI or another archive. If you would like us to carry out research on your behalf I would suggest that you visit our website [www.ancestryireland.com](http://www.ancestryireland.com) and go to Research Services. Here you will be able to register for a search and find out more about the services we offer. Our reports are interpretative as well as factual as we seek to build up a profile of your ancestors by assessing the information uncovered as well as presenting our findings in an uncomplicated way. Please note that the turnaround period for in-depth research is 4-6 months.

**SPECIAL OFFER:** Please note that if you commission full research with us within six months of the date of this email, you will receive a *free* electronic book of your choice. We currently have over 40 e-books available with more being added all the time. For a full list please visit our online bookstore <http://www.booksireland.org.uk/store/ebooks>. The books come in both Mobi (Amazon Kindle) and EPUB formats.

Some of our publications might also be of interest to you for example our Research Director, Dr William Roulston's volume, *Researching Scots-Irish Ancestors: the essential genealogical guide to early modern Ulster, 1600-1800*, provides information on surviving records of genealogical value from the seventeenth and eighteenth century for every parish in Ulster,

including records from around 200 churches and 350 landed estate collections. It should be useful to anyone searching for ancestors in Ulster in this period regardless of denomination or background. All our publications can be ordered via our online bookstore [www.booksireland.org.uk](http://www.booksireland.org.uk).

If you want to publicise your research interests you might consider joining the Ulster Genealogical and Historical Guild (information available from our website [www.ancestryireland.com](http://www.ancestryireland.com)). This is managed as a research cooperative. The membership register has passed the 10,000 mark. It aims to prevent duplication of research effort and to bring together people with similar interests. Subscribers receive two annual publications: *Familia - Ulster Genealogical Review* which contains articles about Irish history and genealogy and the *Directory of Irish Family History Research* which is the most complete and up-to-date record of Irish genealogical research in progress. Subscribers are also offered the option of having their research interests (as contained in the Directory) placed on UHF's Internet homepage. With millions of people browsing the Internet each day, your interests will be publicised to a worldwide audience through membership of the Guild. Our website is presently enjoying approximately 30,000 'hits' monthly.

Guild members now enjoy unlimited access to an ever-expanding range of online genealogical databases. Over 500,000 genealogical records are currently available with new records being added on a regular basis. Members now have free access to our gravestone inscriptions database (Members' Area only) and receive a privileged rate of access to our new database of over 1,500,000 birth, death and marriage records for Cos. Antrim, Down and the city of Belfast.

You might feel that it would be worth your while contacting the Ulster Heritage DNA Project for advice and assistance at using DNA to further your research. The website of this group is [www.familytreedna.com/groups/ulster/about](http://www.familytreedna.com/groups/ulster/about). You may also wish to contact the DNA project of the North of Ireland Family History Society: <https://www.nifhs.org/dna/>.

Yours sincerely,

Research Officer (GH)