

PARTICULARS OF ORDER OR DISMISSAL.

If Dismiss, whether with or without prejudice, and whether with or without Costs, &c. In Ejectment, when to be evicted, and from what and whose Premises, &c. If to be Whipped, whether in or out of Prison, &c., &c. (Where Money ordered to be paid by or to any Person, the amount to be written in Words at full length in this Column, as well as to be entered in Figures in the Money Columns.)

Defendant convicted and ordered to pay for Fine the sum of 20/- and committed to Prison for 8/- and in default of payment to be imprisoned in His Majesty's Prison at Pallanure for 14 days with hard labour to work till he pay the before named sum.

Defendant convicted and ordered to pay for Fine the sum of 8/- and to pay the sum of 8/-

# Getting started

Brian Donovan of genealogy company Eneclann gives three tips for using court and prison records to research your family history...

"There's no such thing as surname standardisation in historic records. Names were spelt in a much greater variety of ways than they are today, so you need to be aware of that.

"If you're searching for a court or prison, don't limit it to courts and prisons where you think your ancestors lived, because people moved around a lot more than (we) realise. It's quite probable that you'll find people from Antrim in courts and prisons in Cork.

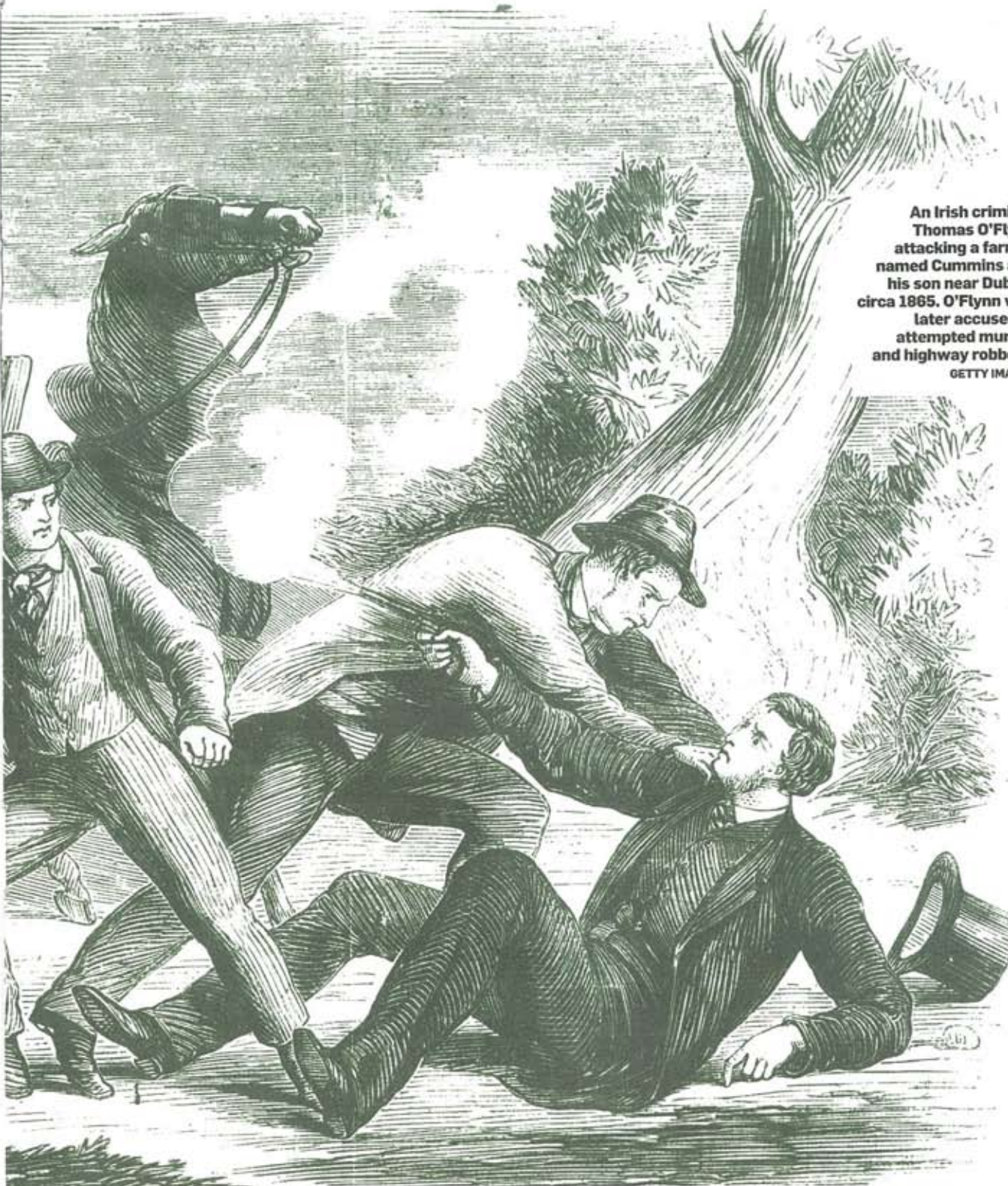
"People were an awful lot more elastic about their ages in the past, I think sometimes because they weren't terribly sure... You've got to be open-minded as to what you're looking for... but the balance of evidence needs to guarantee this is the right person."

County of DONEGAL

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No.	Date of Order.	Name or Names of Justice or Justices by whom Order made; and if made out of Petty Sessions, or if entry in this Book made from a Certificate, same to be here stated.	PARTIES—COMPLAINANT & other addition, and Residence, Townland, to be given, and the grieved by prefixing their appella Defendant.)
153	1910 Sept 15th	L. H. Broshi RM W. Mc Vitty J. A. Myles x Jas Mc Ralty Caguis	The King at the Prosecution of J. Hildensgard Esq. P. J. R. J. J. LYSHANNON
154	-		

Above: Excerpts from the Petty Sessions records for 1910 (right) and 1911.

An Irish criminal Thomas O'Flynn attacking a farmer named Cummins and his son near Dublin, circa 1865. O'Flynn was later accused of attempted murder and highway robbery. GETTY IMAGES



Clonmel District Lunatic Asylum.

This was a fairly common occurrence, says Mr Donovan. "(Committing relatives to an asylum) was a great way of getting rid of unwanted family members... there's all sorts of other stuff, hidden agendas going on behind these records."

And that's what makes them so intriguing. "Where you're finding your ancestors in these records, you're getting that nugget of information that will actually make your story interesting. Because a lot of people, they almost approach genealogy like stamp collecting, especially with names and dates. But there's no context or information about each person.

"But this actually tells you something happened... (the records) provide the flesh for the bones of the genealogy."

Findmypast.ie is a commercial site - you can purchase credits, starting from €9.95 for 100, to access records from five credits a go. However, if you want to look at the Petty Sessions records for free, the National Archives' reading room, on Dublin's Bishop Street, has hard copies.

But what about people who think that the records won't have any relevance for their family, as they come from a long line of law-abiding folk?

"You don't actually know the history of your family yet," says Mr Donovan.

"You haven't found it yet... The general population interacted with these courts far more widely than you might think."

So, if you're interested in finding out more about your family's past, court and prison records are a valuable resource. You may not find a veteran of the Easter Rising in your family tree, but you might discover some tangible evidence of how your ancestor actually lived, something far more evocative of their day-to-day lives than simply a dry list of names and dates.

Even if it's just the knowledge that your great-grandfather was drunk on his ass.

For more information, visit [findmypast.ie](http://findmypast.ie), [eneclann.ie](http://eneclann.ie) and [nationalarchives.ie](http://nationalarchives.ie)