

Birth, parentage, marriage and death of Elizabeth Merigan

This brief evidences the details of the birth, parentage, marriage and death of Elizabeth Merigan.

Those details are –

The birthday of Elizabeth Merigan was celebrated on 28th August, her birth year is about 1841, and her birth place was probably in County Tipperary, Ireland.

Her parents were William Merigan and Ann Keating.

She married Patrick Bolan on 4th January 1863 at St Ann's Roman Catholic Church, Whitechapel, London.

She emigrated to Australia, departing Liverpool on the ship *Peerless* on 27th February 1866, and arriving in Sydney on 6th June 1866.

She married for a second time to Patrick Shields on 13th April 1885 at St Luke's Church of England on Sussex Street, Sydney.

She died on 29th December 1925 in the Sydney suburb of Rozelle, and was buried in Sandgate Cemetery, Newcastle the next day.

Elizabeth was affectionately known by her Shields family as "Grandma Shields".

(The research for this brief was conducted in early 2024. Additions were made to this brief in mid-2025).



A note about Elizabeth's name

Elizabeth's family name given in the 1851 England Census is "Merrigan" (see the record below). However, the family name in the death certificates of both her mother and father is spelt "Merigan", which is also the spelling in almost all other records located relating to Elizabeth, including the record of the 1865 birth of her daughter Eliza, for which she herself was the informant.¹ Accordingly, that spelling is used in this brief.

It appears that Elizabeth was called "Eliza" by her family by at least about age 9, as she is so listed in her family's record in the 1851 England Census (see the record below). Also, Elizabeth called herself Eliza when informing the 1865 birth of her own daughter, who was likewise named "Eliza" by her and her husband Patrick Bolan. Elizabeth thus appears to have preferred to call herself Eliza.

Ray Burke² stated in his paper *Our Merrigan Heritage* that "Kath Palyga was always adamant that the "Elizabeth" we knew was really christened "Eliza". I think she was right." However, in the absence of any birth or baptism record, their conclusions are speculative.

In the formal records that are available, being a death certificate, and two marriage certificates, the forename Elizabeth is used. It thus appears to be her more correct, formal first name. Accordingly, that name is used in this brief.

Elizabeth's death

As appears from her death certificate set out below, Elizabeth died on 29th December 1925 at 42 Hornsey Street, Rozelle (then apparently named Balmain South), and was buried the next day at the Roman Catholic Cemetery, Sandgate, a suburb of Newcastle.

There is no doubt that this certificate refers to Alf Shields grandmother, as the informant is named as Alf Shields' sister Nellie Shields, who is herself named as Elizabeth's granddaughter. Also, Hugh Shields is listed as Elizabeth's child, and he is known to be her child through direct personal contact in that Alf Shields introduced Stephen Palyga to Alf's father Hugh "Hughie" Shields and his second wife Betty Stutzel at their retirement village home in Old Toongabbie in Sydney in 1972.

DEATH REGISTERED IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA.							CERTIFIED COPY FURNISHED UNDER PART V OF THE REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES ACT, 1973.					
No.	Date and place of death	Name and occupation	Sex and age	Cause of death Duration of last illness, medical attendant, when he last saw deceased	Name and occupation of father Name and maiden surname of mother	Informant	Particulars of registration	When and where buried: name of undertaker	Name and religion of Minister and names of witnesses of burial	Where born and how long in the Australian Colonies or States	Place of marriage, age, and to whom	Children of marriage
17488	29 December 1925 42 Hornsey Street Rozelle Balmain Municipality, New South Wales	Elizabeth Shields	Female 85 years	Arteriosclerosis of the coronaries (1) - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5) - (6) - (7) - (8) - (9) - (10) - (11) - (12) - (13) - (14) - (15) - (16) - (17) - (18) - (19) - (20) - (21) - (22) - (23) - (24) - (25) - (26) - (27) - (28) - (29) - (30) - (31) - (32) - (33) - (34) - (35) - (36) - (37) - (38) - (39) - (40) - (41) - (42) - (43) - (44) - (45) - (46) - (47) - (48) - (49) - (50) - (51) - (52) - (53) - (54) - (55) - (56) - (57) - (58) - (59) - (60) - (61) - (62) - (63) - (64) - (65) - (66) - (67) - (68) - (69) - (70) - (71) - (72) - (73) - (74) - (75) - (76) - (77) - (78) - (79) - (80) - (81) - (82) - (83) - (84) - (85) - (86) - (87) - (88) - (89) - (90) - (91) - (92) - (93) - (94) - (95) - (96) - (97) - (98) - (99) - (100) - (101) - (102) - (103) - (104) - (105) - (106) - (107) - (108) - (109) - (110) - (111) - (112) - (113) - (114) - (115) - (116) - (117) - (118) - (119) - 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Elizabeth's age at death is given as 85, which information would have been provided by Nell Shields as informant but no doubt ultimately came from Elizabeth herself. If she was truly aged 85 years on 29th December 1925, she would have been born between 30th December 1839 and 29th December 1840.

The following picture of the headstone on Elizabeth's grave in Sandgate Cemetery is available at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/187314117/elizabeth-shields>.³



The headstone reads:

Sacred to the Memory of
PATRICK SHIELDS
DIED 4TH MAY 1900 AGED 63 YEARS
ALSO ELIZABETH
DIED 29TH DEC. 1925 AGED 85 YEARS.

Elizabeth's first marriage

Elizabeth is recorded as having married a Patrick Bolan in her above death certificate, although he is called "John". He is also known to have been her husband in that Alf Shields introduced Stephen Palyga to Alf's half first cousin⁴ Dick Colgan in Perth in 1974 as the son of Elizabeth and Patrick Bolan's daughter Mary, who married a John Colgan. Dick (Richard Colgan) was one of their 9 children.

Dick Colgan died in 1978, according to page 51 of *Colgans in Australia*,⁵ a family history edited by John Tully Colgan (Dick's son) and written with contributions from his cousins, John George Colgan and Patricia Burke (see page 6). That 1995 text also acknowledges Elizabeth's marriage to Patrick Bolan at page 56. At page 66, Patricia is noted as the eldest child of James Bolan Colgan, another son of Elizabeth and Patrick Bolan's daughter Mary. The fact that Kath Palyga and her half second cousin Patricia shared Elizabeth as a great-grandmother, and knew her as such from their respective family histories, is obvious from correspondence in Kath Palyga's papers between her and Patricia (and Patricia's husband Ramon Burke, known as Ray).

Included in genealogical records researched and collected by Kath Palyga is a copy of a marriage certificate (see below) confirming that Elizabeth Merigan married Patrick Bolan on 4th January 1863 at St Ann's⁶ Roman Catholic Church, Whitechapel (in central London).⁷ Elizabeth's address at the time is given as 8 Wilmer Gardens, Hoxton

³ That webpage gives the Sandgate Cemetery plot location as "Catholic_1; Section G.SPEC; Plot 58".

⁴ See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cousin> regarding cousins, half cousins, second cousins and half second cousins.

⁵ *Colgans in Australia*, John T. Colgan (Ed), Access Press, 1995. National Library of Australia catalogue ISBN 0 949795 97 6.

⁶ The marriage certificate lists the church as St Ann's, but a Google Maps search gives its present name as St Anne's.

⁷ See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitechapel>.

Old Town. Wilmer Gardens is a road in Hoxton which was apparently a notorious slum and “the leading criminal quarter of London, and, indeed, of all England”⁸ (or it later became such). The east end of the road has now disappeared with the construction of an estate.⁹ The area is in the former Shoreditch borough, and about 1 mile north-north-west of St Ann’s Church in Whitechapel.



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number PAS 15.6999/3/91

1863 Marriage solemnized at <u>St Ann's Church, Whitechapel</u> in the District of <u>Whitechapel</u> in the County of <u>Middlesex</u>								
No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
70	January 1863	Patrick Bolan	26	Single	Draper	by Mary Street, Whitechapel Road	James Bolan deceased	Silk Dyer
		Elizabeth Merigan	21	Single		St Helena Gardens, Hoxton, Whitechapel	William of Merigan	Wagoner

Married in the St Ann's Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Roman Catholic by us,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Patrick Bolan and Elizabeth Merigan in the Presence of us, Josephine Burke and Hugh P. Henry S. 111 Registrar

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of Whitechapel Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 4th day of October 19 91.

MX 480645

This certificate is issued in pursuance of section 65 of the Marriage Act 1949. Sub-section 3 of that section provides that any certified copy of an entry purporting to be sealed or stamped with the seal of the General Register Office shall be received as evidence in the said Office shall be of any force or effect unless it is sealed or stamped as aforesaid.

CAUTION.—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person, or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.



Form A513MX 13/8/27/5031 2106/506 1/51 5091 M-5 53/121

Correspondence in Kath Palyga’s papers include a letter from Patricia and Ray Burke dated 18th September 1992 in which the Burkes advised that they had visited St Ann’s Church in Whitechapel, and were given a photocopy of the entry in the parish register of the marriage of Patrick Bolan and Elizabeth Merigan. The Burkes enclosed a copy of the extract, as follows:

1863

Anno 1863 die 4 mensis Januarii Ego Hugh P. Henry S. 111

in Matrimonio conjunxi Patricium Bolan

512 filium Joachim Bolan, et Elizabetham Merigan

filiam Guthrie Merigan

Præsentibus } Joachim Knichly

testibus } Ann Merigan

Hugh P. Henry S. 111

⁸ See <https://strandselections.wordpress.com/2017/08/28/trips-about-town-6-in-the-heart-of-hoxton-george-r-sims-september-1905/>.

⁹ An 1860’s London map shows the road, see <https://www.theundergroundmap.com/article.html?id=61721&zoom=16&annum=1860>.

A FreeBMD search also confirms that a Patrick Bolan married a Merigan in the Whitechapel district of London in the March quarter of 1843. That fact is indicated in the search return as having been extracted from the General Register Office alphabetical index of marriage records for that quarter. This is a snapshot of the scanned GRO index page linked to the FreeBMD search:¹⁰

SURNAME of Person Married	NAME of the Spouse	SUP. REGISTRAR'S DISTRICT	Vol.	Page
Boston	John	Bellingham	10	361
Bolan	Caroline Amelia Elizabeth	Manchester	8	281
Bolan	Caroline Amelia Elizabeth	Manchester	8	281
Bolan	Ellen	Casington	10	358
Bolan	Jane Ann	Newcastle	5	103 32
Bolan	William George	Newcastle	5	103 6
Bolan	Mary	Seigh	8	204
Bolan	Patrick	Whitechapel	1	735
Bolan	Thomas	Manchester	8	281

The “reverse” FreeBMD search for a Merigan marrying a Bolan in the March quarter of 1843 returned one entry, namely for an Elizabeth Merigan.¹¹ That fact is also indicated in the search return as having been extracted from the General Register Office alphabetical index of marriage records for that quarter. This is a snapshot of the scanned GRO index page linked to the FreeBMD search, and it records that the original marriage record is on the same register book page as Patrick’s, namely Volume 1c, page 735:¹²

SURNAME of Person Married	NAME of the Spouse	SUP. REGISTRAR'S DISTRICT	Vol.	Page
Meredith	John	Stockton	10	a 103
Meredith	John	Liverpool	2	607
Meredith	Louisa	Wolton	8	c 242
Meredith	Margaret	Church Stetten	6	a 223
Meredith	Noah	Brecknock	11	6 151
Meredith	Priscilla	Ludley	6	c 31
Meredith	Rebecca	Hignworth	5	a 24
Meredith	Samuel	Liverhead	8	a 490
Meredith	Thomas	Stourbridge	6	c 151
Meredith	Thomas	Widbury	6	a 327
Meredith	Thomas	Widbury	11	a 385
Meredith	William	Worrumich	6	6 680
Meredith	William	Woolly	6	a 721
Meredith	William	Wilmington	6	a 1090
Meredith	Sarah Jane	Murylebone	1	a 688
Meredith	Ann	Portsea	2	6 071
Meredith	Ann / Jenny	St Austell	5	c 150
Meredith	Elizabeth	Whitechapel	1	c 735
Meredith	Thomas	Manchester	8	281

¹⁰ The image is linked at https://www.freebmd.org.uk/cgi/information.pl?scan=1&r=35082805:8949&d=bmd_1756343688.

¹¹ See https://www.freebmd.org.uk/cgi/information.pl?scan=1&r=35122638:7104&d=bmd_1756343688.

¹² The image is linked at the webpage referred to in the preceding footnote.

Family Search records confirm the GRO registration of the marriage in Whitechapel, London in the March quarter of 1863, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2DVZ-22Y>.¹³

The screenshot shows a FamilySearch record for Elizabeth Merigan. The record is titled "Elizabeth Merigan" and "Marriage • England and Wales Marriage Registration Index, 1837-2005". It includes a "Document Information" section with a link to the "England and Wales Marriage Registration Index, 1837-2005". The "Cite This Record" section provides a citation: "England and Wales Marriage Registration Index, 1837-2005," database, FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2DVZ-22Y : 13 December 2014), Elizabeth Merigan, 1863; from "England & Wales Marriages, 1837-2005," database, findmypast (http://www.findmypast.com : 2012); citing 1863, quarter 1, vol. 1C, p. 735, Whitechapel, London, England, General Register Office, Southport, England.

The "Details" section lists the following information:

- Name: Elizabeth Merigan
- Event Type: Marriage
- Event Date: 1863
- Event Place: Whitechapel, London, England
- Registration District: Whitechapel
- Page: 735
- Volume: 1C
- Affiliate Line Number: 18
- Registration Quarter: Jan-Feb-Mar
- Registration Year: 1863
- Possible Spouse: Patrick Bolan
- Possible Spouse: Sarah Grigg Good
- Possible Spouse: John Pippin

The "Family Tree" section includes a button "ATTACH TO FAMILY TREE". The "Similar Records" section states "No similar records were found."

As to what became of Patrick Bolan later on, in his paper *Our Merrigan Heritage*, Ray Burke stated:

Patrick Bolan was essentially known as John. He was on the electoral rolls as such and Nellie Shields as the informant on the death of Elizabeth (Merrigan) named her first husband as John Bolan. Patently he did not identify himself as Patrick Bolan but rather as John Bolan. The family account is that following the birth of Mary Catherine John Bolan went off to America. There are multiple interpretations of that simple fact. One version is that he simply sailed off to America leaving Elizabeth and the children to fend for themselves; another that he went to America to scout out whether there were better opportunities for the family there than here. Whatever may have been the result of that reconnaissance Elizabeth and the children remained here. It was probably about 1872 that he left. ... So by 1872 here was Elizabeth with three young children, aged 7, 5 and 1 and no social security to provide sustenance and no apparent family support in the country. ...

We have no knowledge of whether Elizabeth had any contact with John Bolan after he left her. She remained married until he or she died or there was a divorce. In practical terms she was married to John Bolan until he died. Perhaps she was given some news of his demise or perhaps she just decided "what-the-hell" but she had deferred marriage to Patrick Shields for long enough. There is also the legal doctrine that anyone, particularly those that go to sea, and over a period of seven years thereafter, are not heard from by those who would really be expected to hear from them were they alive then there could be a presumption of death. Elizabeth had certainly waited the necessary seven years though it seems unlikely that she would have made an application to the Court for a formal declaration of death.

Tom Moore's 2024 book *Family Ties: The Patriarch and the Matriarch: John Charles Noblet, Elizabeth Jane Merrigan, and their families*, at pages 87-89, also tells the like story of the "disappearance" of Patrick Bolan, including that it occurred in late-1871 to early 1872. The abovementioned Colgan family history, *Colgans in Australia*, page 56, also relates the story of Patrick's likely desertion.

¹³ URLs of Family Search records linked herein include "61903", presumably a specific member number, and likely need adapting to function.

Emigration to Australia

As appears from the following ship's log, Elizabeth arrived in Sydney with her husband Patrick Bolan and her daughter Eliza Jane on the *Peerless* on 6th June 1866. See https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/primo-explore/fulldisplay?context=L&vid=61SRA&lang=en_US&docid=INDEX3100703, image 1 of 15:

29 Nov 1866

10-0-0

LIST of IMMIGRANTS per Ship.

"Parless"

Arrived on the

Sixth

day of

June

1866

NO.	NAME	MARRIED.	AGE											
			15 years and upwards.				7 and under 15 years.				SINGLE.			
			M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
	Bolan Patrick	29												
	Elizabeth	25												
	Eliza Jane													
	Cameron Donald	50												
	Christina	50												
	Quinn	26												
x	Jane	x												
x	James	x												
x	Patricia	x												
	John	19												
	Laura	14												
	Donald	4												
	Carpenter James	22												
	Blanchina	23												
	Coyleston George	28												
	Sarah	28												
	Laura													
	Joseph													
x	Fitzgerald Patrick	x 23												
	Ellen	21												
x	Flanagan Patrick	x 26												
	Bridget	19												
	Fletcher Peter	62												
	Marion	44												
	Fraser George	23												
	Christina	23												
	Isabella													
	Thence John	26												
	Elizabeth	25												
	James Forward	9	9	3	3	1					1	1	1	2

CALLING.	NATIVE PLACE AND COUNTY.	RELIGION.	READ OR WRITE.	REMARKS.
Labourer	London, Middlesex	C. C.	Both	
Wife	do do	"	"	
Labourer	Chen, Wexfordshire	C. C.	Both	
Wife	do do	"	"	
Ploughman	do do	"	"	
Milliner	do do	"	"	
do	do do	"	"	
Ploughman	do do	"	"	
Infant	do do	"	"	
Shepherd	do do	"	"	
do	do do	"	"	
Hotel Keeper	Stroudbridge, Wilts	C. C.	Both	
Wife	do do	"	"	
Brickmaker	Barleston, Staffordshire	C. C.	"	
Wife	Angewinford do	"	"	
do	do do	"	"	
do	do do	"	"	
Labourer	Limerick	C. C.	Both	
Wife	do do	"	"	
do	do do	"	"	
Labourer	Ennis, Co. Clare	"	Both	
Wife	do do	"	"	
Shoemaker	Edinburgh	C. C.	"	
Wife	Slay, Wexford	"	"	
Baker	London, Middlesex	C. C.	"	
Wife	do do	"	"	
Shoemaker	Albany, America	C. C.	"	
do	do do	"	"	
Shoemaker	Quinnstown, Limerick	C. C.	Both	
Wife	do do	"	"	

According to the shipping news on page 4 of the *Sydney Morning Herald* the next day, Thursday 7th June 1866, the ship had left Liverpool on 27th February 1866:¹⁴

SHIPPING.	
ARRIVALS.—JUNE 6.	
Triumph, schooner, 95 tons, Captain Nias, from Baffie Creek 24th ultimo.	Laidley, Ireland, and Co., agents.
Prince Regent, barque, 257 tons, Captain M'Burney, from Auckland 12th ultimo.	Captain, agent.
Sarah and Mary, schooner, 175 tons, Captain Baker, from Circular Head.	W. Hezlet, agent.
Lass of Gawler, brig, 223 tons, Captain Dixon, from Tome 12th March.	Passenger—Mr. Wilkinson. N. Caston, agent.
Peerless, ship, 900 tons, Captain Flavin, from Liverpool 27th February.	Passengers—378 Government immigrants. Willis, Merry, and Lloyd, agents.
City of Melbourne (s.), 615 tons, Captain Walker, from Mel.	

¹⁴ See <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/13132344>.

Elizabeth's second marriage

As is recorded in her above death certificate, and as is known from received family history, Elizabeth also married a Patrick Shields. This occurred on 13th April 1885 at St Luke's Church of England on Sussex Street, Sydney, as a certified copy of the marriage registration in Kath Palyga's papers confirms:

PR 183 Application P 422652/90 MN 

Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act, 1973

CERTIFIED COPY

MARRIAGE REGISTERED IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

Date of marriage	13th April, 1885	
Place of marriage	St. Luke's Church, Sydney	
	Bridegroom	Bride
Surname	SHILDS	BOLAN
Other names	Patrick	Elizabeth
Usual occupation	Miner	-
Usual place of residence	Balmain	Sydney
Conjugal status	Bachelor	Widow
Birthplace	Scotland	London
Date of birth/Age	45 years	44 years
Father's name in full	-	-
Mother's maiden name in full	-	-
Name of person giving consent where party a minor	-	-
Name of celebrant	Thomas W. Unwin Officiating Minister	
Rites according to which marriage was celebrated	Church of England	
Name of witnesses to marriage	Fanny Unwin Susan Pitt	
Particulars of registration	Edward G. Ward, Registrar General Sydney.	Date - 1885 Number 512

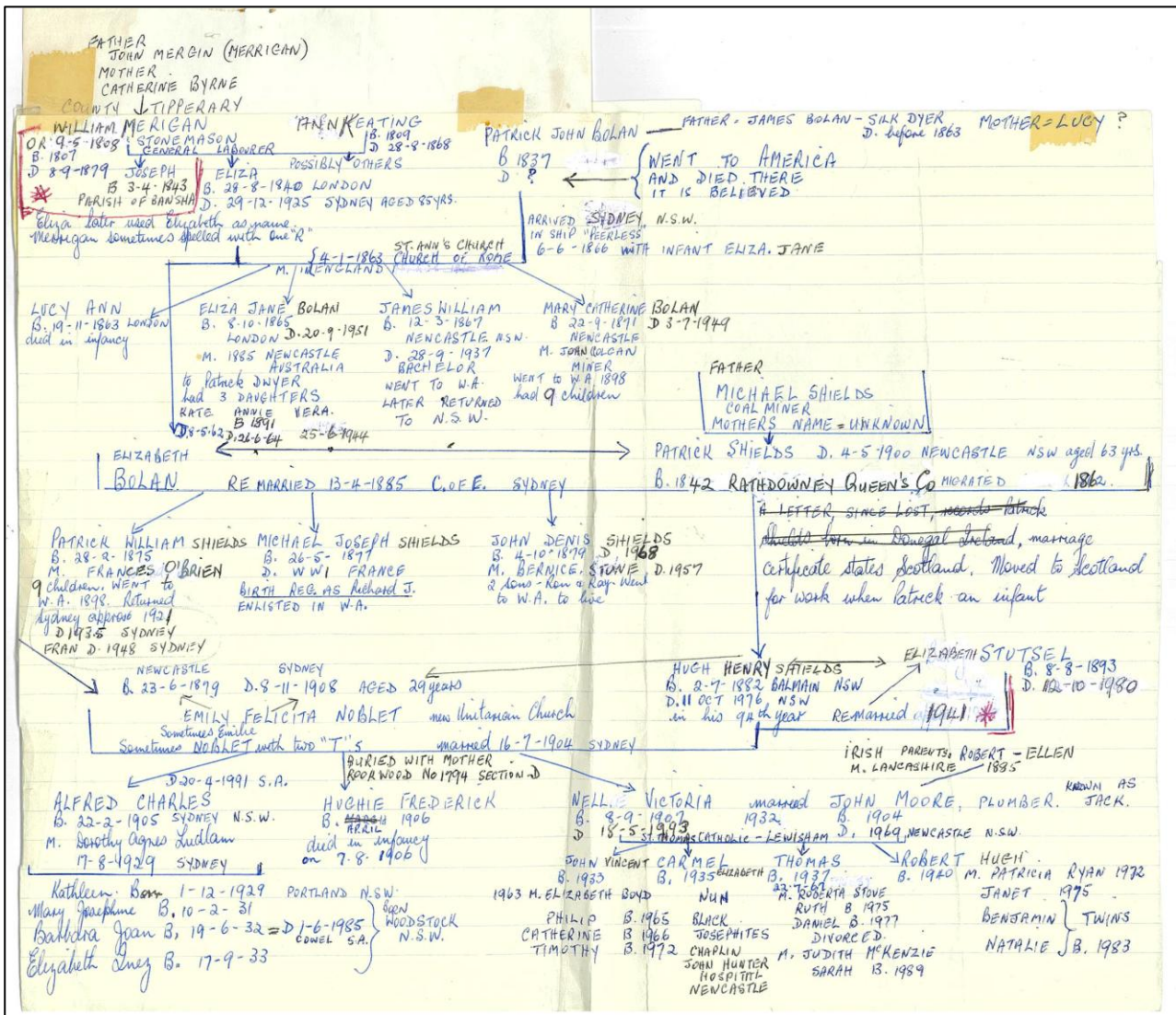
I, Vernon Mark Bennett,
hereby certify that the above is a true copy of particulars recorded in a register kept by me.

 Issued at Sydney,
on 26th June, 1990.

 
Principal Registrar

 L.O. 1803

Elizabeth's parentage



William Merrigan was named as Elizabeth's father in her 1863 marriage certificate above, and most likely attended the marriage. It is received family history that Elizabeth's father was a Merigan, and that her mother was a Keating, as is apparent from the details given when her death was registered in 1925 (see the certificate above). It is also received family history that Elizabeth spent time as a girl in County Tipperary, Ireland (see below), and that she grew up "within the sound of Bow Bells" in London (see below).

In Kath Palyga's papers, there was a copy of an 1851 England Census record of the family of a William and Anne Merrigan of 43 Phillips Street, St Leonards, Shoreditch,¹⁵ including a daughter Eliza Merrigan with a stated age of 9, and a stated place of birth of London. William and Anne are recorded as born in County Tipperary in Ireland. This is the census record in question:

¹⁵ St Leonard's, Shoreditch, is an Anglican parish in Shoreditch, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoreditch_\(parish\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoreditch_(parish)).

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Ward of St. Leonard's Shoreditch		Enumeration District of Faggerston West		City or Borough of Tower Hamlets		Form of		Village of	
Name of Street, Place, or Road, and Name or No. of House		Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 1861		Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age at last Census	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether Married
		George Newman	Gen			10	Belcher	St. Leonards	
		John D.	Serv			2		Holborn	
162		Harriet Pacey	Head			50	Blackman	Blagdenburg	
		Albert D.	Serv			15		Greenwich	
163	43 Phillips Street	Frances Buckner	Head	Widow		77	Charitable Helpless	St. Leonards	
		William Turner	Grandson			16	Ship Boy	St. Leonards	
164		William Morrison	Head	Widow		40	Labourer	St. Leonards	
		Ann D.	Wife			28		St. Leonards	
		John D.	Serv			9		St. Leonards	
		Isabella D.	Serv			2		St. Leonards	
		Ann D.	Serv			2		St. Leonards	
		William D.	Serv			10		St. Leonards	
165	44 Phillips Street	James Phillips	Head	Widow		30	Cabinet Maker	St. Leonards	
		Harriet D.	Wife			25	Wid. Weaver	St. Leonards	
		James D.	Serv			2		St. Leonards	
		Thomas D.	Serv			5		St. Leonards	
166		William Taylor	Head	Widow		26	Printer & Glazier	St. Leonards	
		Ann D.	Wife			24	Wid. Weaver	St. Leonards	
		Ann Eliza D.	Serv			20		St. Leonards	
Total of Persons						109			

12 U B

Given the above received family history, and Elizabeth's known diminutive of Eliza, and given that Shoreditch is within the sound of Bow Bells,¹⁶ it is certain that the Eliza Merrigan listed is Elizabeth, and that this census record relates to her family. There are also convincing age correlations, being Elizabeth's age (given as 85 at death in 1925, thus about 10 in 1851), William's age (he was 72 at death in 1879 – see the brief relating to him – thus about 43 in 1851), and Ann senior's age (she was 59 at death in 1868 – see the brief relating to her – thus about 42 in 1851).¹⁷

In 1850, 43 Phillips Street (now Phillipp Street) was roughly parallel to, and 40 metres to the north of, Wilmer Gardens.¹⁸ William and Ann were living at 7 Wilmer Gardens when Ann died on 28th August 1868, see her death certificate in the brief relating to her. The family's 1861 census entry records them as residing in Ann Terrace, Shoreditch (see the record below, as well as verification that it is the family's). There is no Ann Terrace in or near Shoreditch,¹⁹ but there is an Ann's Place 200 metres west of 43 Phillips Street, and 100 metres north-west of the junction of Wilmer Gardens and Hoxton Street. These three locations correlate with each other.

An even stronger location correlation corroborating William and Ann's parentage of Elizabeth is that Elizabeth's address upon her marriage to Patrick Bolan on 4th January 1863 is given as 8 Wilmer Gardens, Hoxton Old Town (see the certificate above). Elizabeth's mother Ann's death certificate (see the brief relating to her) gives Ann's place of death in 1868, and her husband William's residence at the time, as 7 Wilmer Gardens, Hoxton. Whether Elizabeth lived adjacently, or the number was mixed up, is unknown.

There is also no real possibility of another Merigan family with parents with the same forenames of William and Ann in the known Shoreditch location at the time, because there was a paucity of Merigans/Merrigans in England at the time, and only a handful (at best) named William or Ann/Anne. This is demonstrated by FreeBMD

¹⁶ See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cockney>.

¹⁷ The 1861 England Census gives ages for William and Ann senior which even more closely correlate to their ages at death, see below.

¹⁸ See the 1850 map at <https://www.theundergroundmap.com/article.html?id=61721&zoom=16&annum=1850>. Number 43 does not now exist. On the south side of Phillip Street, there is now a block of flats at No. 25 ("Archer House"), next to an unnamed block of flats at No. 53. They are separated by a pedestrian laneway. The current Phillip Street streetscape can be viewed using Google Streetview in Google Maps.

¹⁹ A Google Maps search confirms that there is no Ann or Ann's Terrace in London today. And there was only one, an Ann's Terrace, in old London, see https://www.maps.thehunthouse.com/Streets/New_to_Old_Abolished_London_Street_Names.htm, but this was in Bermondsey, south of the Thames (it is now called Loftie Street). It seems extremely unlikely that the family moved there before the 1861 census, and then moved back to the Phillips Street/Wilmer Gardens area by the time of Ann's death in 1868.

searches for England, which returned only 43 Merrigan, and 55 Merigan, births, deaths and marriages in the whole of the 33½ year period from 1st July 1837 to 31st December 1870. Excluding births, as they could not be of Elizabeth's parents, and the death of a William Desmond Merrigan in Liverpool two years after his birth, there were no records for a William or Ann/Anne Merigan/Merrigan except for an Ann Merigan married in Liverpool in 1850 (which, again, could not be Ann), and the death in 1868 of Ann herself (that is, Elizabeth's mother Ann, see the brief relating to Ann Keating for further details of her death).²⁰

Accordingly, Elizabeth's parents were William and Ann Merigan.

It is noted above that it is certain that the above 1851 census record relates to Elizabeth's family. This is the Family Search record of the census entry, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:SG64-T7J>:

Eliza Merrigan
Census • England and Wales, Census, 1851

Records Full Text Images Family Tree Genealogies Catalog Books Wiki

View on The National Archives, London, England

VIEW ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Document Information
Collection Information
[England and Wales, Census, 1851](#)

Cite This Record
"England and Wales, Census, 1851",
FamilySearch
(<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:S:G64-T7J> : Tue Jul 23 19:51:30 UTC 2024), Entry for William Merrigan and Anne Merrigan, 1851.

Copy Citation

Name Eliza Merrigan
Sex Female
Age 9
Birth Year (Estimated) 1842
Birthplace , London
Relationship to Head of Household Daughter
Event Type Census
Event Date 1851
Event Place Saint Leonard Shoreditch, Middlesex, England
Event Place (Original) Saint Leonard Shoreditch, Middlesex, England
Line Number 10
Page Number 38
Piece/Folio 1537 / 456
Registration Number HO107

Attached in Tree to
Elizabeth Jane Merrigan
1841-1925 • KNN2-LMW

Similar Records
No similar records were found.

Eliza Merrigan's Parents and Siblings

Name	Relationship	Sex	Age	Place
Anne Merrigan	Mother	F	38	Ireland
William Merrigan	Father	M	40	Ireland
William Merrigan	Brother	M	0	, London
Joshua Merrigan	Brother	M	7	, London
Anne Merrigan	Sister	F	3	, London

OPEN ALL

The 1851 census was conducted on 30th March 1851.²¹ Three days later, on 2nd April 1851, a child William was born to William and Anne Merigan, see the birth certificate in Appendix 1.²² The place of birth is noted as 43 Phillips Street, Shoreditch, which is also given as the mother Anne's place of residence. Accordingly, there is no doubt that the birth is into the same family as is recorded in the 1851 census entry above.

William junior's mother Anne Merigan is named as the informant in his birth certificate. Under "Name, surname and maiden surname of mother", the following is recorded: "Anne Merigan formerly Keating".

Further, the fact that Elizabeth's mother was a Keating is, as noted above, received (and long known) family history. And, as is also noted above, in Elizabeth's death certificate, her mother was named as such. That information would have been provided by Nell Shields as informant but no doubt ultimately came from Elizabeth herself. As may be expected, Elizabeth would have known her mother's maiden name, and obviously passed it

²⁰ This does not mean there were no other William Merigans or Ann/Anne Merigans in England at the time, rather just that there were no others recorded as marrying or dying. But it does demonstrate the scarcity of the names William Merigan and Ann Merigan in England at the time.

²¹ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1851_United_Kingdom_census.

²² Despite this birth date of 2nd April 1851, William is said to be aged 1 month ("1 mo") on the census date 3 days earlier. He may have been due or about due, and for that reason added to the record albeit unborn. Or, possibly, census-taking proceeded over several days. Or he may have been born by 30th March, but his birth date was incorrectly registered, perhaps due to the delay in registration to 7th May some 5 weeks later (see the certificate), although it seems unlikely that Ann, as informant, would get the date wrong.

on to Nell Moore and, presumably, also, her daughter Mary Bolan given that Mary's granddaughter Patricia Burke also knew Elizabeth's mother's maiden name was Keating.²³

Accordingly, Elizabeth's parents were William Merigan and Ann Keating.

The Merigan family's 1861 England Census record

As noted above, the 1861 England Census entry for the family of William and Ann Merigan records them as residing in Ann Terrace, Shoreditch. This is the Family Search database record in question, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2ML-HJLF>:

William Merrigan
Census • England and Wales Census, 1861

Records Images Family Tree Genealogies Catalog Books Wiki

View on The National Archives, London, England

VIEW ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Document Information

Collection Information
England and Wales Census, 1861

Cite This Record
"England and Wales Census, 1861," database with images, FamilySearch (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2ML-HJLF : 3 March 2021), William Merrigan, Shoreditch St Leonard, Middlesex, England, United Kingdom; from "1861 England, Scotland and Wales census," database and images, findmypast (http://www.findmypast.com : n.d.); citing PRO RG 9, The National Archives, Kew, Surrey.

Copy Citation

Personal Information

Name: William Merrigan
Sex: Male
Age: 52
Birth Year (Estimated): 1809
Birthplace: Ireland
Residence Note: Anns Terrace
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Labourer
Relationship to Head of Household: Head
Relationship Code: Head
Event Type: Census
Event Date: 1861
Event Place: Shoreditch St Leonard, Middlesex, England, United Kingdom
Event Place (Original): St Leonard Shoreditch, London, Middlesex, England
Registration District: Shoreditch
Household Identifier: 346238
Line Number: 19
Page Number: 24
Piece/Folio: 244 / 110
Registration Number: RG09

Family Tree
ATTACH TO FAMILY TREE

Similar Records
No similar records were found.

Other People on This Record

Name	Sex	Age	Birthplace
Ann Merrigan	F	50	Ireland
Joseph Merrigan	M	18	Ireland
Ann Merrigan	F	12	London,
William Merrigan	M	9	London,

OPEN ALL

This is the original census record (which spells the street name as "Ann Terrace", not "Anns Terrace"):

²³ It is clear from a letter from the Tipperary Heritage Unit to the Burkes dated 24th August 1992 that the Burkes knew then that Elizabeth's mother was a Keating ("we did not locate Elizabeth Merrigan's baptism or the baptism of her mother Anne Keating"). This was well before the Burkes obtained William's birth certificate in 1998 (see the date on the copy of the birth certificate in Appendix 1), which certificate, as noted above, also confirms the Keating maiden name.

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the											
Parish (or Township) of		City or Municipal Borough of		Municipal Ward of		Parliamentary Borough of		Town of		Hamlet or Tything, &c., of	
St. Andrew, Shoreditch		Municipal Borough of		Municipal Ward of		Parliamentary Borough of		Town of		Hamlet or Tything, &c., of	
No. of House	Road, Street, &c., and No. or Name of House	No. of Inhabitants	Name and Surname of each Person	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of		Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether Blind, or Deaf, and Dumb	Whether Married
						Male	Female				
123	5 Ann Terrace	1	Thomas Courtwell	Head	Widow	63		Pocket Book Maker	Bowford		
			Alfred D.	Son		14		"	Shoreditch		
			Clara D.	Son	Un	23		"	"		
			Clara D.	Son	Un	20		"	"		
124	6 " "	1	Henry Fuller	Head	Mar	49		Painter	London Port		
			Emily A. D.	Wife	Un	47		"	London		
			A. D.	Son	Un	14		"	City		
			Edmund J. D.	Son	Un	16		Traveller	Shoreditch		
			Edmund D.	Son	Un	11		"	"		
125	" "	"	John Paddy	Head	Un	46		Labourer	Shoreditch		
126	7 " "	1	William T. Jones	Head	Mar	42		Traveller	Shoreditch		
			Mary A. D.	Wife	Mar	26		"	Shoreditch		
			Emily D.	Son	Un	3		"	"		
			William D.	Son	Un	3		"	"		
127	" "	"	A. Padden	Head	Mar	47		Traveller	Shoreditch		
			Emily D.	Wife	Mar	26		"	Shoreditch		
			Thomas W. D.	Son	Un	11		"	"		
			John D.	"	"	11		"	"		
128	8 " "	1	William Merigan	Head	Mar	42		Labourer	Shoreditch		
			Ann D.	Wife	Un	50		"	"		
			Joseph D.	Son	Un	18		Carver	"		
			Ann D.	Son	Un	12		Servant	London		
			William D.	Son	Un	9		Schooler	"		
129	1	"	Paul W.	Head	Mar	42		Labourer	Shoreditch		
			Ann W.	Wife	Mar	26		"	Shoreditch		
			Caro D.	Son	Un	5		"	Shoreditch		
Total of Houses...		4	Total of Males and Females...		15		11				

Eng.—Sheet D.

The paucity of Merigans in England, as noted above, means that any 1861 record which replicates an 1851 record of a family where the mother and father are named as William and Ann Merigan, and where they are living in the same Shoreditch area, almost certainly relates to the same family. The matter is put beyond doubt given the alignment of the ages of William and Ann as listed in the two records, as well as the alignment of the children's names and ages as listed in the two records (except that "Joshua" is now named "Joseph" and his birthplace is now given as "Ireland", but noting that it is demonstrated in Appendix 1 that he was in fact born in Ireland in 1843 with the name Joseph).

Notably, by the time of the 1861 census, Elizabeth has left the household, the 18 year old Joseph is employed as a carver, and the 12 year old Ann as a servant.

Elizabeth's date of birth

Elizabeth's grave in Sandgate Cemetery, Newcastle (see the picture above) does not give a birth date. It states that she was aged 85 at death (as does her death certificate). As noted above, ultimately, information about Elizabeth's age most likely came from Elizabeth herself. Also, as noted above, if Elizabeth was truly aged 85 years on 29th December 1925, she would have been born between 30th December 1839 and 29th December 1840.

Elizabeth's granddaughter Nell reported in her memoirs *A Life Story by Nell Victoria Moore* that Elizabeth "was born in 1840 near Bow Bells in London", see page 1. It seems likely that Nell's information as to Elizabeth's birth year came from Elizabeth herself.

Kath Palyga recorded the birth date in her family data sheet for Elizabeth Merigan as 28th August 1840:



FAMILY DATA SHEET

HUSBAND NAME PATRICK JOHN BOLAN
BIRTH DATE 1837 PLACE _____
MARRIAGE DATE 4-1-1863 PLACE _____
MARRIED _____ TIMES. OTHER WIVES _____
DEATH DATE _____ PLACE _____
BURIAL DATE _____ PLACE _____
FATHER'S NAME JAMES BOLAN
MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME LUCY ?
RESIDENCE _____
OCCUPATION Marine labourer

INCLUDE MIDDLE NAMES IF KNOWN

[illegible]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

HUSBAND'S No.

WIFE'S No.

Correspondence in Kath Palyga's papers between her and the Burkes make clear that the Burkes were also keen researchers of Elizabeth's family history. By a letter to Kath Palyga dated 23rd September 1998, the Burkes sent her a paper called *Some 1998 Research*, in which they state that they were inclined to accept that Elizabeth's date of birth was 28th August 1840:

Kath Palyga has suggested that Elizabeth's birthday was 28 August. If that be so and if the young Elizabeth was really aged 9 years at the date of the Census²⁵ (a bit risky to assume it to be so) then she was probably born on 28 August 1841. She is clearly the eldest born²⁶ though Nellie Moore was inclined to suggest that Joseph was the elder born.²⁷ I gather Kath Palyga gives Elizabeth's birthday as 28 August 1840. There seems to be quite a bit going for that. Would guess she was probably aged 10 at the time of the Census.

²⁷ Also not so, see Appendix 1.

Again, no verifying information is provided, and the Burkes' conclusion is admitted to be guesswork.

Elizabeth's age at her marriage to Patrick Bolan on 4th January 1863 was given as 21 (see the marriage certificate above). If she was really 21 as at that marriage, Elizabeth would have been born between 5th January 1841 and 4th January 1842, suggesting that her birth date was 28th August 1841.

Elizabeth's age at her second marriage to Patrick Shields on 13th April 1885 was given as 44 (see the certificate above). If she was really 44 as at that marriage, Elizabeth would have been born between 14th April 1840 and 13th April 1841, suggesting that 28th August 1840 is more correctly her birth date.

As to whether Elizabeth was born in England, it is noted that compulsory birth registration with a central government agency (the General Register Office) commenced in England on 1st July 1837.²⁸ Elizabeth was undoubtedly born after then given her age as noted in all of the records set out above, being her death certificate, her gravestone, her two marriage certificates, the list of immigrants on the ship *Peerless*, and her 1851 England Census record. (As noted in the list below, the earliest date of birth suggested by any of those records is 30th December 1839, some 2½ years after compulsory birth registration began).

Accordingly, if Elizabeth (or Eliza) Merigan (or Merrigan) had been born anywhere in England, it is almost a certainty that the birth was registered with the General Register Office, but searches of both FreeBMD and the official index of the General Register Office returned no female so named born in England between 1st July 1837 and 31st December 1845.²⁹ The same searches of the Family Search "England and Wales Birth Registration Index, 1837-2008" database, which picks up GRO birth records, were also fruitless.

Also, if Elizabeth had been born in England prior to 6th June 1841, there is a very strong likelihood that there would be a record of her in the 1841 England Census.³⁰ However, a Family Search search of that database returned no Elizabeth (or Eliza) Merigan (or Merrigan).³¹ Even if she was born in England after that date, we may expect a record of her parents William Merigan or Ann Merigan (or one of them) to be returned on a search of that database, but none was.³²

The records in Family Search relating to Elizabeth's children with Patrick Bolan, namely Lucy Ann Bolan (born 1863,³³ died 1864³⁴) and Eliza Jane Bolan (born 1865³⁵), also had no relevant information about their mother Elizabeth's date or place of birth, or which suggested a line of research to pinpoint the same.

Civil registration commenced in Ireland in 1864, except for non-Catholic marriages, which commenced in 1845.³⁶ It is understandable therefore that searches of the Civil Records at www.irishgenealogy.ie for a birth record anywhere in Ireland between 1837 and 1844 for an Elizabeth or Eliza or Eliza with the surnames Merigan, Merrigan or Mergin all returned "no results found".³⁷

Like searches of Irish Church Records, also made available at www.irishgenealogy.ie, also returned no relevant records.³⁸ However, this project only includes church records for Dublin City, Carlow, Cork and Kerry,³⁹ not the Cahir, Tipperary or Bansha parishes,⁴⁰ or the County of Tipperary more widely.

²⁸ See https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Civil_Registration.

²⁹ Indeed, only one female Merigan was returned in all the searches, being a Mary Merigan, whose birth was registered in the Lambeth district in the March quarter of 1844. The Lambeth district is south of the Thames, and 3 miles south-west of Shoreditch.

³⁰ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1841_United_Kingdom_census.

³¹ See, for example,

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/record/results?count=20&q.givenName=Elizabeth&q.surname=Merigan&f.collectionId=1493745>.

³² See, for example,

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/record/results?f.collectionId=1493745&q.givenName=William&q.surname=Merigan>.

³³ See <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:261T-7FF>.

³⁴ See <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2NGJ-V96>.

³⁵ See <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2X94-2RM>.

³⁶ See <https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/irish-records-what-is-available/civil-records> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Register_Office and <https://timeline.ie/general-register-office/>.

³⁷ See, for example, <https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/civil-perform-search.jsp?namefm=Elizabeth&name=Merigan&location=&yyfrom=1837&yyto=1844&type=B&submit=Search>.

³⁸ See

<https://churchrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/search.jsp?namefm=Elizabeth&name=Merigan&location=&yyfrom=1837&yyto=1844&submit=Search>.

³⁹ See <https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/church-records/about/update-of-progress-on-the-computerisation-of-the-records>.

⁴⁰ Being the most relevant parishes given the location of known family events which are referred to in Appendix 1.

The like searches in Family Search's "Ireland Catholic Parish Registers 1740-1900" (giving the date as 1840, although results returned ranged far afield on either side of that date) also returned no relevant results for Elizabeth.⁴¹

(Despite these searches in the "Ireland Catholic Parish Registers 1740-1900" database being unproductive in relation to Elizabeth, they did return two baptisms to Gulielmi Merrigan and Annae Keating in Cahir parish, being Mary baptised on 5th February 1834 and Patrick baptised on 12th May 1838. For further information as to Mary and Patrick, see Appendix 1).

Although the parish registers of Tipperary and Bansha have been microfilmed, and scans of the microfiche held by the National Library of Ireland can be viewed online, those National Library of Ireland scans cannot be electronically searched for names.

A physical search was therefore conducted for any Merrigan (or Merigan or Mergin) baptism on 28th August 1840 or 28th August 1841 of both the microfilmed Tipperary parish records (see pages 115 and 130 of <https://registers.nli.ie/registers/vtls000632775#page/1/mode/1up>), and also the microfilmed Bansha parish records (which parish is also called "Bansha and Kilmoyler") (see pages 135 and 144 of <https://registers.nli.ie/registers/vtls000632650#page/1/mode/1up>), but no such record was located.⁴²

The physical image search was then expanded to the whole period from the start of 1838 to the end of 1842. Elizabeth's birth surely falls within this period given her mother baptised Patrick in May 1838, and Joseph in April 1843, see Appendix 1. This search spanned pages 76 to 148 of the Tipperary records (which recorded nine Elizabeths and 33 Elizas as baptised in the period, but none relevant), and pages 113 to 153 of the Bansha records (which recorded only one Merigan baptised in the period, but not an Elizabeth).⁴³

In her death certificate, Elizabeth's mother's surname was given as Keating. Given the 1834 and 1838 Cahir baptisms noted above of Mary and Patrick to William Merigan and Ann Keating indicate that this was Elizabeth's family, and given they were in Cahir in the late 1830s, a physical search of the microfilmed Cahir parish baptism records was conducted for Elizabeth's baptism from July 1838 (which, although less than 9 months after Patrick's baptism in May 1838, allows for some delay after Patrick's birth to his baptism) to the end of 1842 (by which time Elizabeth's mother was either carrying, or had had, Joseph).

This examination spanned pages 86 to 146 of "Cahir Microfilm 02459/06".⁴⁴ Most entries were fully legible, and even for entries which were partly obscure, they were still sufficiently legible to make out the name of the child or the mother or father. However, no Elizabeth or Eliza baptised to William and Ann Merigan in that period was recorded.⁴⁵ (Notably, the records showed quite a few Keating baptisms in that 4½ year search period, which tends to suggest that Ann came from Cahir, a conclusion also suggested by the presence there of her and William's family in 1834 and 1838 for the baptisms of Mary and Patrick).

As noted above, Kath Palyga's half second cousin Patricia Burke (and her husband Ray) were also keen genealogical researchers, and they also assiduously attempted to track down Elizabeth's birth/baptism record,

⁴¹ See

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/record/results?count=20&q.anyDate.from=1840&q.anyPlace=County%20Tipperary%2C%20Ireland&q.surname=Merigan&f.collectionId=2820100>.

⁴² Test Family Search searches of children's names in the microfilmed Bansha parish baptism records of the time held by the National Library of Ireland mostly returned records for them in the abovementioned "Ireland Catholic Parish Registers 1740-1900" database, so it appears that Family Search has digitised the available Bansha records. That suggests that, if Elizabeth was indeed baptised in Ireland, or at least in Bansha, the parish record of it ought to have been located on Family Search searches. However, there are huge gaps in Irish public records of the early 19th Century for the reasons detailed in Appendix 2 to the brief relating to William Merigan. Also, experience in Family Search record searching demonstrates that records for known events occurring in known places are sometimes not located, or they are not initially located, but are later. The search terms used are obviously key. Also, records may exist but be illegible, misspelt, obscured (wholly or partly) by damage or the copying or microfilming process, in Latin, incorrectly understood and/or transcribed by the scanning software etc. Or difficult to find on physical inspection because they have been placed or copied out-of-order. Or records may have existed but are now missing, destroyed or damaged.

⁴³ Note, however, that Tipperary and Bansha are said to be just two of 63 separate Catholic parishes in the County of Tipperary. See https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/County_Tipperary_Catholic_Parishes. (Although elsewhere it is stated that there are microfilmed records for 67 parishes, see <https://registers.nli.ie/parishes?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=tipperary>).

⁴⁴ See <https://registers.nli.ie/registers/vtls000632135#page/88/mode/1up>.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth was not a common given name in Cahir at the time, with only three Elizabeths and one Eliza baptised in Cahir between July 1838 and December 1842 out of an estimated 1,400 baptisms (57 pages of records averaging about 25 per page). Mary/Maria, Ann, Elena, Joanne, Catherine, Brigid and Margaret dominated female given names.

but without luck. As to their searches relating to England and Wales,⁴⁶ in a letter to Kath Palyga dated 18th September 1992, they stated their conclusion that “[h]er birth is still not registered”. Ray Burke repeated that finding in his paper *Our Merrigan Heritage*:

For whatever reason much time has been spent unsuccessfully scanning the registers, initially at St. Catherine’s House and more recently at the Family Records Centre, particularly seeking a record of the birth of Elizabeth – which doesn’t exist.

As to their searches relating to Ireland, the Tipperary Heritage Unit advised the Burkes by letter dated 6th August 1992 that “after a thorough and detailed search of all 46 parishes in the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly, we were unable to locate any information on the Keating of [sic] Merrigan families”. Given the significant number of records in the Archdiocese for Merrigans, Merigans and Keatings, it is safe to assume that the Unit had the narrower task of looking for records for Elizabeth, William, Ann and their antecedents.

In a follow up letter dated 24th August 1992 to the Burkes, the Tipperary Heritage Unit refers to the fact that they had received further information about the “Keating/Merrigan families” from the Burkes by letter dated 12th August 1992, but advised that the Unit nonetheless “did not locate Elizabeth Merrigan’s baptism”.

Further research was conducted to locate Elizabeth’s birth or baptism by way of checking the various Family Search person records of her known family members, and following through on all data of possible interest provided in those person records, but that research did not yield any clues as to Elizabeth’s birth or baptism, or any information which provided leads for further research.

Accordingly, despite extensive searching, Elizabeth’s birth or baptism record has not been found, and her year of birth cannot be more accurately described than “about 1841”,⁴⁷ a conclusion based on her age as given upon various events, and the birthdate ranges they indicate, as follows:

Event	Date of event	Age given	Indicated birthdate range
1851 census	30 th March 1851	9	31 st March 1841 to 30 th March 1842
Bolan marriage	4 th January 1863	21	5 th January 1841 to 4 th January 1842
Peerless register	6 th June 1866	25	7 th June 1840 to 6 th June 1841
Shields marriage	13 th April 1885	44	14 th April 1840 to 13 th April 1841
Death	29 th December 1925	85	30 th December 1839 to 29 th December 1840

What is sure is that, given Elizabeth’s family likely had no birth certificate or other record, or any copy thereof, or any access thereto, information as to when Elizabeth was born could only have come orally from her parents. That being so, the 1851 England Census record, being the earliest record of Elizabeth’s age that we have, is probably the most reliable, as her parents would likely still be able to remember her year of birth.

On that occasion, Elizabeth was said to be 9, and Joshua/Joseph was said to be 7. We know Joseph was baptised on 8th April 1843, see Appendix 1, so he actually was 7 on the census date of 30th March 1851. It seems likely that in 1851 the parents would also still have a reasonably accurate recollection of the time difference between the births of Elizabeth and Joseph. All of which suggests Elizabeth was probably 9 in March 1851, and hence born about 1841.

As to the day and month of the birth, it has not been pinpointed, but, if any birth date is the most likely, it is the one customarily commemorated as such by Elizabeth, that is, 28th August.

⁴⁶ Family Records Centre records only relate to England and Wales. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_Records_Centre.

⁴⁷ Hopefully, some future researcher may locate a record of Elizabeth’s birth or baptism as the project to digitise Irish Church records (and make them available at www.irishgenealogy.ie) progresses.

Elizabeth's place of birth

In the above 1851 England Census record, Elizabeth is stated as born in London. As noted above, Nell Moore in her memoirs *A Life Story by Nell Victoria Moore* records that her grandmother Elizabeth “was born in 1840 near Bow Bells in London” (see page 1). Ray Burke noted in his paper *Our Merrigan Heritage* that “Elizabeth is reported as often stating that she was born within the sound of Bow Bells ...” Steve Palyga remembers his grandfather Alf Shields similarly recounting (on more than one occasion) that Grandma Shields was born within the sound of Bow Bells. Kath Palyga's above family tree states that:

ELIZA MERIGAN (Grandma Shields) was born within sound of the Bow Bells in London but went to Ireland as a child and remembered the 1846 potato blight and its consequences.

As Ray Burke notes, that Elizabeth was born within the sounds of Bow Bells was her own account of the matter. However, obviously, one cannot personally attest to such a fact – one can only truly know one's correct birthplace from a birth notice or certificate or other credible record, or from accurate information received from one's own family. Possibly, the romance of being a “Cockney”, the well-known definition of which is “born within the sound of Bow bells”,⁴⁸ was hard for Elizabeth to resist.

In the 1851 England Census record, Elizabeth's brother Joseph is also stated as born in London but, in the 1861 England Census record, he is stated as born in Ireland.

Joseph's birthplace of Ireland given in the latter England Census of 1861 seems likely to be the correct place of birth, since he was clearly baptised in Ireland. The chances that the family were living in England at the time of his birth (1843), and went to the trouble and expense to take him back to Ireland for his baptism seem extremely low. Further, searches of the official index of the General Register Office also returned no record of a Joseph or Joshua (or any variation of those names, or any derivative name) Merigan or Merrigan born anywhere in England between 1841 and 1845. There almost certainly would have been such a record if Joseph was born in England given the compulsory birth registration system was by then in place. The obvious conclusion from these facts is that Joseph was born, as well as baptised, in Ireland.

That suggests that the 1851 England Census record statement that Elizabeth was born in London may likewise be incorrect and, indeed, that the family did not emigrate to England until sometime after Joseph's 1843 baptism, perhaps even sometime after Elizabeth's birth. If the latter was so, it would explain why no record of Elizabeth's birth in England was returned upon the searches referred to above in FreeBMD, the General Register Office's index, and Family Search's “England and Wales Birth Registration Index, 1837-2008” database. Had she been born in England, there almost certainly would have been such a record under the compulsory registration system then in operation.

Further, the on-set of the Potato Famine in Ireland in 1845 suggests a strong reason for Elizabeth's family to emigrate. Wikipedia notes that about one-eighth of Ireland's population did so:⁴⁹

At least a million people are thought to have emigrated as a result of the famine ... mainly to North America. ... Short-distance emigrants, mainly to Britain, may have numbered 200,000 or more.

Elizabeth had a sister Ann, said to be aged 3 at the time of the 1851 England Census, see above. The 1851 census was conducted on 30th March 1851.⁵⁰ If Ann was truly aged 3 on that date, she would have been born between 31st March 1847 and 30th March 1848. It seems unlikely, notwithstanding the commonality of age discrepancies in census and other records of the time, that the parents would get the age in years of an infant significantly wrong. A FreeBMD search verified that no Ann or Anne Merigan or Merrigan was born anywhere in England between 1st July 1837 (the starting date of central registration)⁵¹ and 31st December 1851. Searches of the official index of the English General Register Office also returned no record of any such birth,⁵² suggesting

⁴⁸ See <https://www.eastlondonhistory.co.uk/history-east-end-cockney/>.

⁴⁹ See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_(Ireland)).

⁵⁰ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1851_United_Kingdom_census.

⁵¹ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Register_Office_for_England_and_Wales.

⁵² The searches were for the birth of an Ann or Anne Merigan or Merrigan anywhere in England between 1837 and 1851.

that Elizabeth's sibling Anne was also not born in England, rather she was born in Ireland, and hence that the family was still there when she was born.⁵³

In the 1851 England Census record, Elizabeth is said to be 9, and thus aged about six when Ann was born. In a letter to Kath Palyga dated 18th September 1992, the Burkes stated that "Nellie Shields has told us that Elizabeth was brought up in County Tipperary ..." That information doubtless ultimately came from Elizabeth herself. The oral family history of other descendants of Elizabeth holds to the same effect as, in their paper *Irish Genealogy*, the Burkes state: "We knew (from Fred Cutcliffe) that Elizabeth was educated in Tipperary County". These bits of information suggest that the Merigan family moved to England much closer to the time of the 1851 England Census, and that it was only after emigration that Elizabeth grew up near Bow Bells.

This thesis is further supported in that received family history is that Elizabeth could remember the Potato Famine. See Kath Palyga's note, inserted in her above family tree, that Elizabeth "went to Ireland as a child and remembered the 1846 potato blight and its consequences".

In 1986, Alf Shields recounted his memories of his early family history, including:

My basic one that I had personal contact with was Grandma Shields, Elizabeth Merigan. She was born in Islington, London, I believe, and reared in Ireland by her people. She must have gone back there as a young girl because she was born in 1840 and she went through the 1846 potato blight. That was the famine that hit Ireland and the potatoes all went bad. Food of course was very scarce. I remember her telling me that she had seen people eating grass, as she put it. I suppose they gathered up whatever they could in the vegetable and weed line to make up some sort of pottage as she used to say.

Ray Burke likewise states as follows about her in his paper *Our Merrigan Heritage*:

She had spent time [in Ireland] in her youth since she remembered the Famine (which was probably from 1846 onwards in Tipperary) and it seems she may have stayed with relatives from about 1843 until something prior to the 1851 Census. To recall the events of the Famine suggests she was probably aged 7± before returning to London.

And:

While born in London the family oral history holds [Elizabeth] to have been reared in Tipperary and Elizabeth herself has been quoted as purporting to remember the potato blight – The Famine – which ravaged Ireland over the period from 1846 to 1850. It is likely that she went to Ireland about 1843 and was there when her brother, Joseph, was born and baptised. The date of her return to the family is speculative but certainly before March 1851. Tipperary was substantially affected by the Famine so a best guess would suggest that Elizabeth probably returned home about 1847 or 1848. There was an uprising in Tipperary in 1848 and that could be a factor in determining the return home.⁵⁴

With the material available to them, the Burkes were attempting to reconcile two pieces of oral family history, that Elizabeth was born a Cockney but brought up in Ireland, as well as to reconcile the 1851 England Census

⁵³ One record found perhaps indicated differently. In an unrelated Family Search search, an 1871 England Census record for an Anne Merigan was located. See <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VRNG-D5B>. She is said to be aged 22 in 1871, and born in Shoreditch. That age certainly fits with Elizabeth's sister Anne, who might well have believed that she had been born in Shoreditch. The record names her as a sister-in-law to a James Sweet, and living with his family at "Saint John at Hackney, St Bartholomew by The Royal Exchange". Saint John at Hackney is about 1½ miles north-east of the Phillips Street/Wilmer Gardens area. Anne is named as a "general servant" in the 1871 record, so she may have just been a domestic for the Sweets, and the census taker might have been told she was a sister-in-law to James for the sake of convenience. In fact, it cannot be the case that Elizabeth's sister Anne is James' sister-in-law, because James wife Caroline is said to be born in St Pancras, and aged 37 (and thus born about 1834). Thus Caroline could not have been born to William and Anne Merigan, as they were clearly still in Ireland at that time. The 1871 England Census record also suggests that Caroline's maiden name was Barker, not Merigan, as the household also had a 71 year old widow, Sarah Barker, who is a likely candidate for James' mother-in-law. Although Sarah's relationship to James is not stated, she as well as Caroline is said to be born in St Pancras. See <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VRNG-D5G>. Family Search searches for a Caroline Merigan or Merrigan proved fruitless, and the 1871 census record did not provide any lead to any further Anne Merigan or Caroline Merigan records. In the end, it was concluded that the Anne Merigan in the Sweet household was not Elizabeth's sister.

⁵⁴ The uprising was an Irish nationalist rebellion, albeit fomented by anguish over the Famine. It was a short-lived stand-off between rebels and police occurring on 29th July 1848 over "a number of hours" at Farranrory, about 24 miles north-east of Cahir and Bansha. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Ireland_rebellion.

record suggesting that Elizabeth was born in London about 1841 with the fact of Joseph's baptism in Ireland in 1843. Kath Palyga likewise had Elizabeth travelling to Ireland as a child.

Rather than such toings and froings of a young girl whilst about 3-7 years of age, travel not consonant with the times, nor (one would think) able to be afforded by her parents, the simpler explanation is that the family emigrated to England no earlier than about 1848. That is more likely to be the case if one accepts that the 1851 census record statement as to Elizabeth's birthplace is wrong, resolving the abovementioned conflicts.

The Burkes were avid and very competent family historians. Their findings are often quoted in these Merigan briefs. However, genealogical research 30 years ago mainly consisted of manual searching of physical records, and was thus laborious, frustrating and slow. Access to online records was not available widely, if at all.⁵⁵ Analysis of the records now readily available online strongly suggests the conclusion that the family emigrated only after Ann's birth, specifically, the absence of English birth records for Elizabeth, Joseph and Ann (not just one of them, but all three) notwithstanding England's compulsory birth registration system.

It is thus concluded that the family likely emigrated from Ireland to England no earlier than about 1848.

Ancestry.com provides access to lists of immigrants arriving in England at the time, which might pinpoint the exact time when the Merigans migrated to England, except that the database is said to contain "lists of aliens (non-British citizens) arriving in England between 1810 and 1869".⁵⁶ The database is called "All England, Alien Arrivals, 1810-1811, 1826-1869", and the records come from the National Archives collections.

Searches of the database for a record relating to a William/Ann/Anne/Eliza/Elizabeth Merigan or Merrigan all "returned zero good matches". The reference to "alien arrivals" may mean that the database does not include Irish immigrants, as Ireland was part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland at that time.⁵⁷

It follows from the above conclusions that Elizabeth was born in Ireland and, given the family connection with Bansha and Cahir (and possibly also Tipperary town given there were landholding Merrigans living nearby, see Appendix 1 to the brief relating to William Merigan), her birth place was most probably in County Tipperary.

⁵⁵ Family Search's digitisation of its 2.4 million rolls of microfilmed genealogical records only began in 1998. See <https://www.familysearch.org/en/newsroom/familysearch-completes-digitization-of-massive-microfilm-collection>.

⁵⁶ See <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/1587/>. The database can be searched for free, but obscures the record in the event of a hit.

⁵⁷ See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Ireland_\(1801%E2%80%931923\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Ireland_(1801%E2%80%931923)).

Appendix 1

Elizabeth's siblings

The following children of William Merigan and Ann Keating have been located:

Name	Birth/baptism date	Location	Evidence of birth/baptism
Mary	5 th February 1834	Cahir	Parish baptism record
Michael	19 th November 1835	Cahir	Parish baptism record
James	About 1837	Co. Tipperary	No record, but beyond doubt
Patrick	12 th May 1838	Cahir	Parish baptism record
Elizabeth	About 1841	Co. Tipperary	No record. Location likely only
Joseph	8 th April 1843	Bansha	Parish baptism record
Anne/Ann	About 1847-1848	Co. Tipperary	Census records. Location likely only
William	2 nd April 1851	Shoreditch	Birth certificate

For the above baptisms in Ireland between 1834 and 1843, there is a common basis for concluding that these were baptisms of Elizabeth's siblings, which is that any child born to a William Merigan and Ann Keating in the Tipperary town/Bansha/Cahir area of South Tipperary in the 1830s or 1840s was without doubt born into Elizabeth's family because –

- as is demonstrated above –
 - Elizabeth's parents were the William and Ann Merigan in the above 1851 England Census record and
 - Ann Merigan's maiden name was Keating
- and, also, as is demonstrated in the brief relating to William Merigan –
 - the William Merigan and Ann Keating in the above 1851 England Census record were the same couple as William Merigan and Ann Keating baptising children in the Tipperary town/Bansha/Cahir area of South Tipperary in the 1830s and 1840s and
 - there is no realistic chance of another William Merigan and Ann Keating family in that locale, and having children, at that time.

The last conclusion is also corroborated by the fact that all of the births/baptisms of the children located, as listed above, are time-spaced as one would expect of a series of children born to the same parents, and also time-spaced to each other by sufficient periods for them all to be so.

Elizabeth's siblings Mary and Patrick

As noted above, in the course of research for this brief, searches in Family Search's "Ireland Catholic Parish Registers 1740-1900" database returned two baptisms to Guglielmi Merrigan and Annae Keating in Cahir parish, being Mary baptised on 5th February 1834 and Patrick baptised on 12th May 1838.

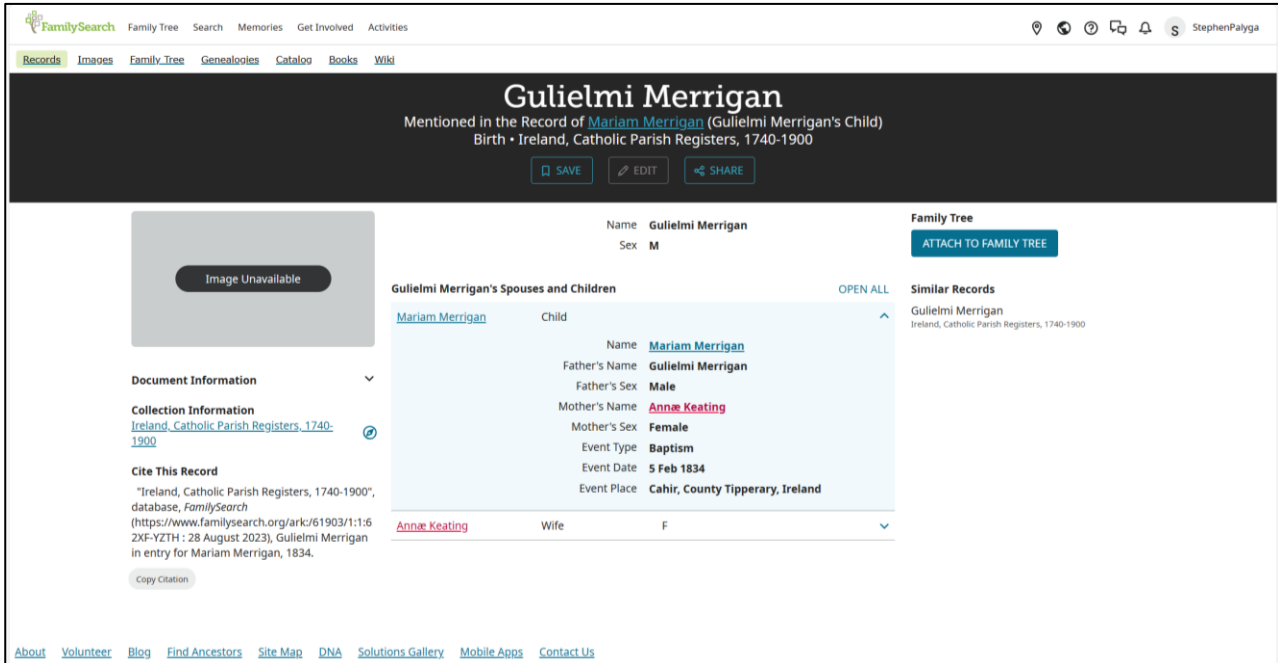
Guglielmi is anglicised to William,⁵⁸ and Annae to Ann.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ See <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Guglielmi>, <https://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=guglielmo>, and <https://www.houseofnames.com/guglielmi-family-crest>.

⁵⁹ See <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/annae>.

Consequently, given that any child born to a William Merigan and Ann Keating in or near Cahir in the 1830s or 1840s was born into Elizabeth's family for the reasons explained above, Mary and Patrick were the children of Elizabeth's parents William and Ann Merigan, and siblings to Elizabeth.

The Family Search database record for the 5th February 1834 baptism of Mary Merigan ("Mary" being the anglicisation of Mariam)⁶⁰ is at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:62XF-YZTH>:



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Gulielmi Merrigan

Mentioned in the Record of [Mariam Merrigan](#) (Gulielmi Merrigan's Child)
Birth • Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1740-1900

SAVE EDIT SHARE

Name **Gulielmi Merrigan**
Sex **M**

Family Tree
ATTACH TO FAMILY TREE

Similar Records
Gulielmi Merrigan
Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1740-1900

Image Unavailable

Document Information

Collection Information
[Ireland - Catholic Parish Registers, 1740-1900](#)

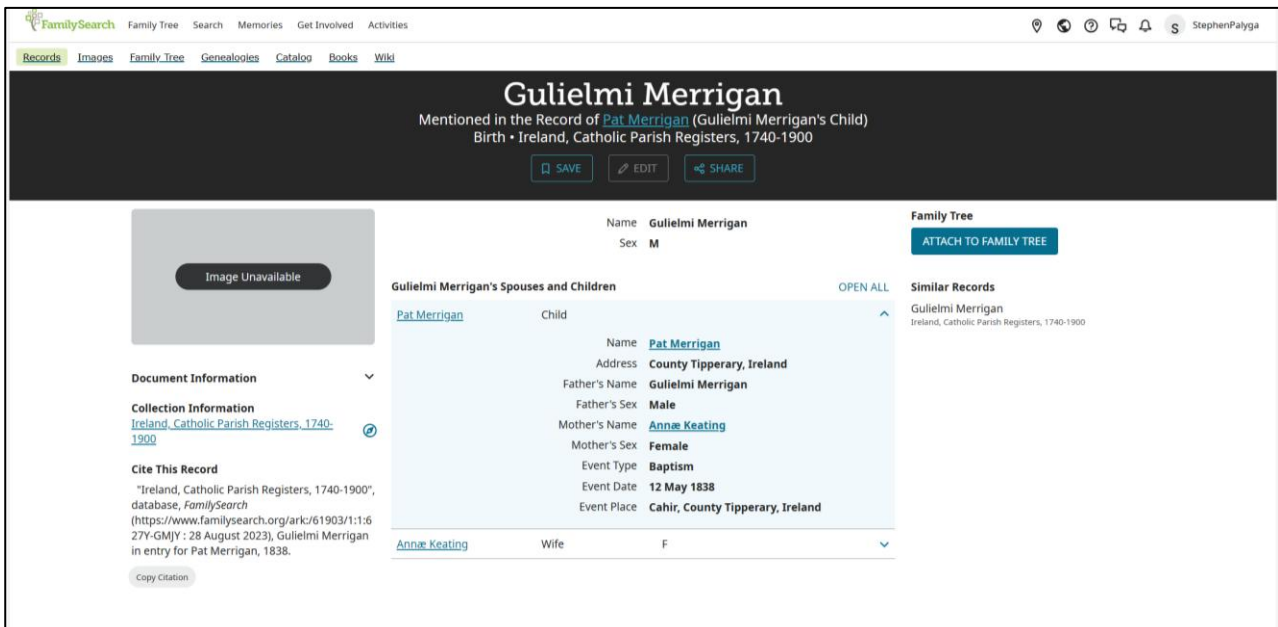
Cite This Record
"Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1740-1900", database, *FamilySearch*
(<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:62XF-YZTH> : 28 August 2023), Gulielmi Merrigan in entry for Mariam Merrigan, 1834.
Copy Citation

Gulielmi Merrigan's Spouses and Children OPEN ALL

Name	Relationship	Sex
Mariam Merrigan	Child	
Gulielmi Merrigan	Father's Name	Male
Annæ Keating	Mother's Name	Female
Baptism	Event Type	
5 Feb 1834	Event Date	
Cahir, County Tipperary, Ireland	Event Place	
Annæ Keating	Wife	F

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The Family Search database record for the 12th May 1838 baptism of Patrick Merigan is at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:627Y-GMJY>:



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Gulielmi Merrigan

Mentioned in the Record of [Pat Merrigan](#) (Gulielmi Merrigan's Child)
Birth • Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1740-1900

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Name **Gulielmi Merrigan**
Sex **M**

Family Tree
ATTACH TO FAMILY TREE

Similar Records
Gulielmi Merrigan
Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1740-1900

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Collection Information
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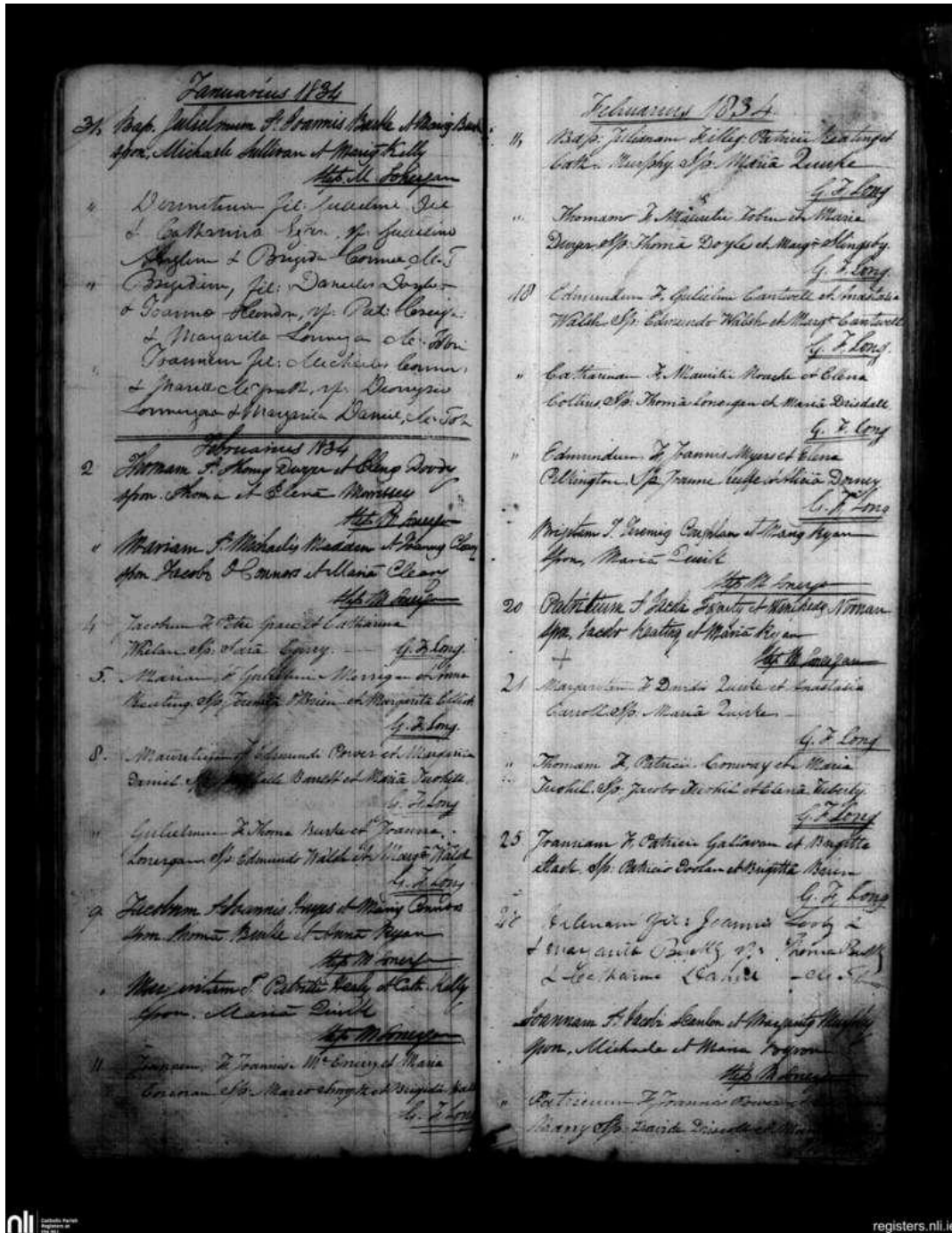
Cite This Record
"Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1740-1900", database, *FamilySearch*
(<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:627Y-GMJY> : 28 August 2023), Gulielmi Merrigan in entry for Pat Merrigan, 1838.
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Gulielmi Merrigan's Spouses and Children OPEN ALL

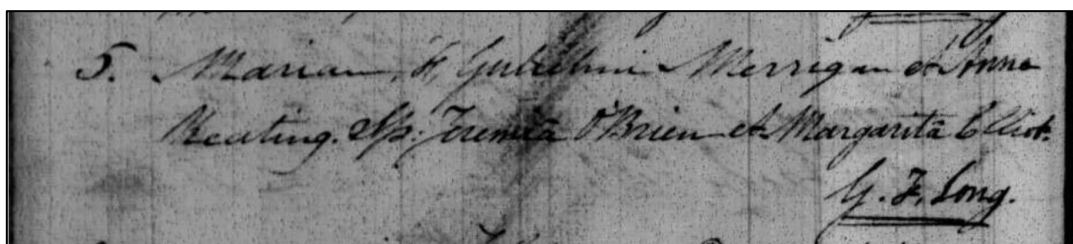
Name	Relationship	Sex
Pat Merrigan	Child	
Gulielmi Merrigan	Father's Name	Male
Annæ Keating	Mother's Name	Female
Baptism	Event Type	
12 May 1838	Event Date	
Cahir, County Tipperary, Ireland	Event Place	
Annæ Keating	Wife	F

⁶⁰ See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maryam_\(name\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maryam_(name)).

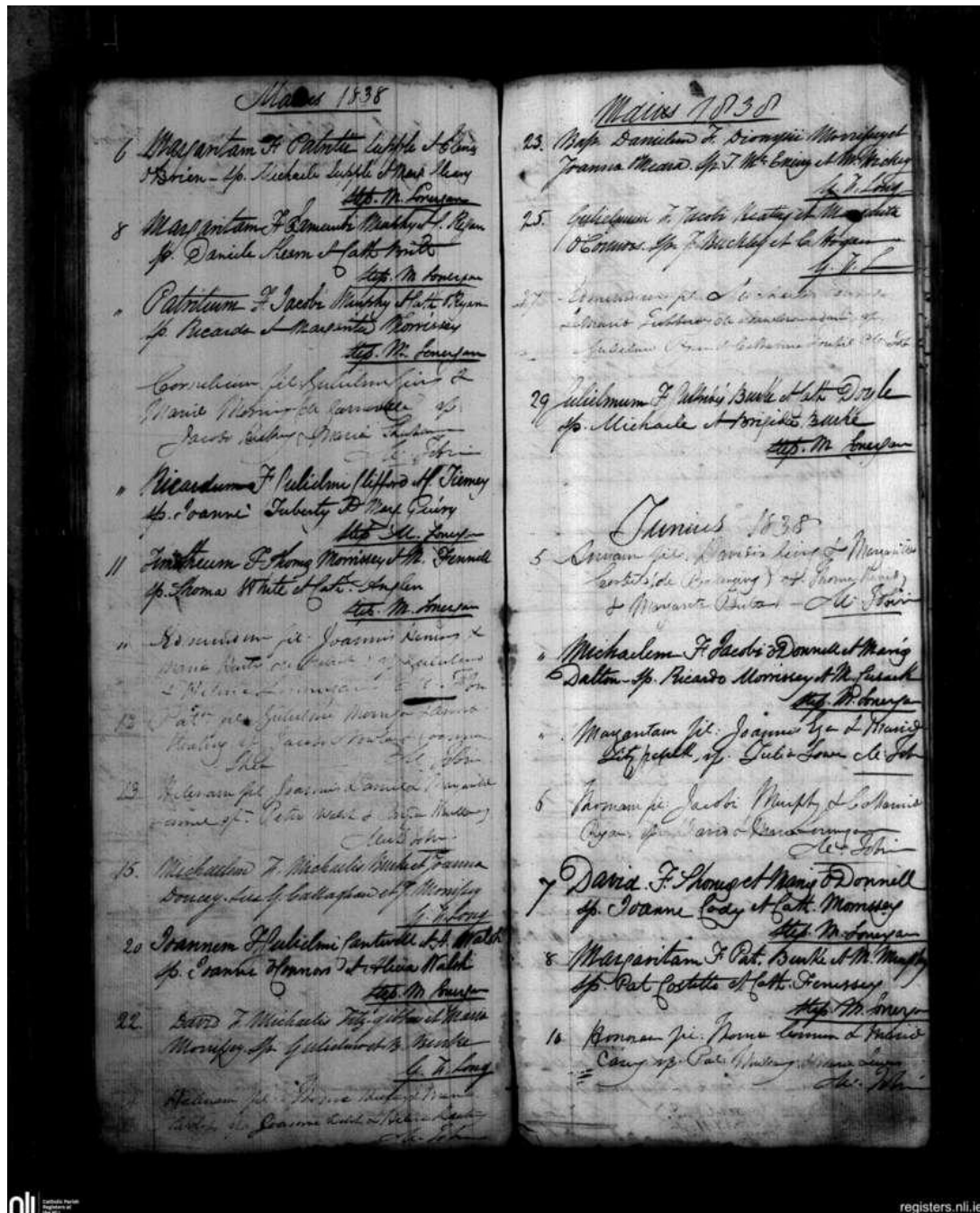
As with Tipperary and Bansha, some Cahir parish registers have been microfilmed, with the microfilm held by the National Library of Ireland. The 1834 baptism of Mary is at page 31 of Cahir "Microfilm 02459/06", see https://registers.nli.ie/pages/vtls000632135_031:



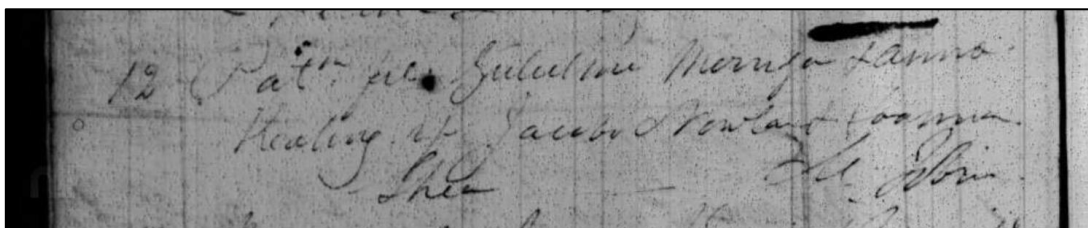
This is a close up of the relevant entry:



The 1838 baptism of Patrick is at page 84 of Cahir "Microfilm 02459/06", see https://registers.nli.ie/pages/vtls000632135_084:



This is a close up of the relevant entry:



Notably, the 1851 England Census record for the family, see above, records no Mary, who would have been about 17 by then if she was still alive (the 1851 census was conducted on 30th March 1851).⁶¹ Nor does it record a Patrick, who would have been about 13 by then if he was still alive.⁶²

It is possible that Mary was old enough to decide to stay in Ireland when the family emigrated. It is also likely that she had, by 1851, commenced employment, and left home to do so, such as by going into service.⁶³ Patrick may also have left home by then to commence work.⁶⁴

Also, it is quite possible that either or both of Mary and Patrick had died by 1851. The Potato Famine started in Ireland in 1845.⁶⁵ Wikipedia notes that about one million people died due to the famine.⁶⁶ According to an article posted at <https://williamsmithfamilyhistory.com/2012/03/30/the-great-famine-in-ireland/>: “Most of County Tipperary was badly affected ... losing 20-30% of its population”. By 1848, “there were scenes of terrible destitution and suffering in South Tipperary”.⁶⁷

Since the baseline mortality rate of children under 5 exceeded 1 in 4 at the time,⁶⁸ the chances of one or more of the infant Merigan children dying in infancy irrespective of the Famine was also high.

There is no record of Mary or Patrick in Kath Palyga’s papers, and the Burkes also do not mention them in correspondence. Nor does Nell Moore. It seems unusual that Nell did not know of them from her grandmother. If Elizabeth never mentioned them, that may suggest they died young, while Elizabeth was a toddler. Or that they died of starvation and it was too painful for the family to mention them.⁶⁹

If either or both of Mary and Patrick Merigan died in infancy or in the Famine, no record of that was located. Specifically, no records from the 1830s and 1840s were located for the death of either of them in County Tipperary, whether on general Family Search searches narrowed to deaths in County Tipperary,⁷⁰ or on specific searches for them in the Family Search “Ireland Catholic Parish Registers” database.⁷¹ Nor could any Cahir, Bansha or Tipperary parish death records be physically inspected on-line, as no death records are microfilmed and held by the National Library of Ireland.⁷² (That would be a reason why, if Mary or Patrick had died as children, a Family Search search for the death would prove fruitless).

There appears to be no available on-line lists of persons who died in the Famine, although upon a visit to the Great Irish Famine Exhibition in Skibbereen Heritage Centre,⁷³ West Cork in 2019, hospital records with such lists were on display.

No doubt many starvation deaths were simply not recorded, as the daily death rates would have sometimes overwhelmed the record keepers. In their paper *Irish Genealogy*, the Burkes reported that, on 24th June 1996, in Tipperary:

We sought cemeteries and were directed to St John’s on the south side. Impressive place. A plaque indicated that also within its boundaries was buried and [sic] unknown number of unnamed victims of

⁶¹ See <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/census-records/>.

⁶² Nor does it record any James Merigan, for that matter. He would have been about 14 in 1851, and was still alive, see below.

⁶³ See <https://northumberlandarchives.com/2021/03/11/women-in-domestic-service/>.

⁶⁴ In the 1861 English census record for the family, Mary’s sister Anne’s occupation is recorded as a “servant”, although her stated age was just 12, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2ML-HVWW?lang=en>. So employment could commence very young.

⁶⁵ See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_(Ireland)).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Page 132, “The Famine in South Tipperary Part Two”, by Denis G. Marnane, available at <https://tipperarystudies.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/The-Famine-in-South-Tipperary-Part-Two.pdf>. See also pages 134-135. Part One is also available at <https://tipperarystudies.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/The-Famine-in-South-Tipperary-Part-One.pdf>.

⁶⁸ See <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1041714/united-kingdom-all-time-child-mortality-rate/>.

⁶⁹ But there is also no indication that Elizabeth ever mentioned her brother James, although he was definitely alive and living nearby to Elizabeth in the 1860s, see below.

⁷⁰ For example, see

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&q.anyDate.from=1845&q.givenName=Mar%2A&q.surname=Merrigan&c.deathLikePlace1=on&f.deathLikePlace0=9&c.deathLikePlace2=on&f.deathLikePlace1=9%2CIreland&f.deathLikePlace2=9%2CIreland%2CCo%20Tipperary>.

⁷¹ For example, see

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&q.anyDate.from=1845&q.givenName=mar%2A&q.surname=Merrigan&f.colId=2820100>.

⁷² See <https://registers.nli.ie/parishes/1097> and <https://registers.nli.ie/parishes/0245> and <https://registers.nli.ie/parishes/0281>.

⁷³ See <https://skibbheritage.com/>.

the Famine. The caretaker told us that in the 1840s and 1850s the cemetery was beside the Workhouse and Fever Hospital who gave some succour to Famine victims but had erected a chute from an upper window which delivered the recently deceased victims into pre-excavated mass graves keeping no records.

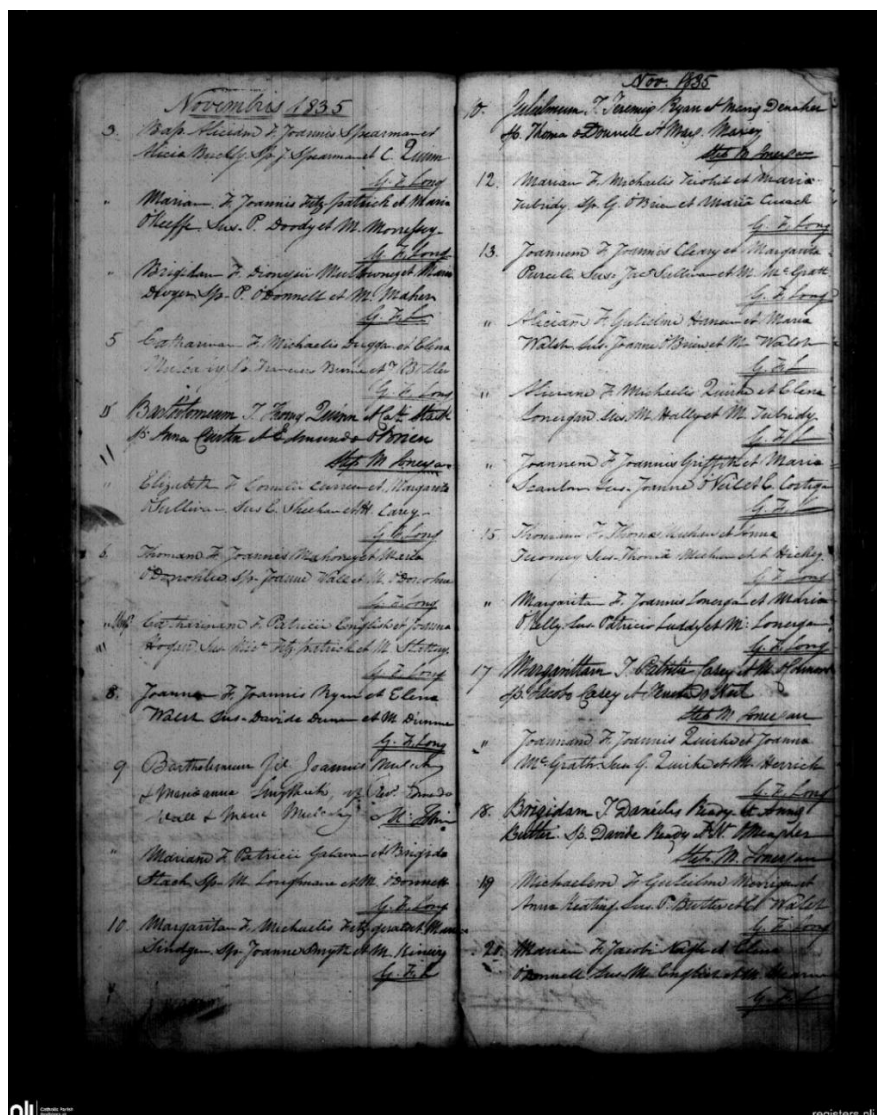
In the end, there are credible potential explanations for the absence of Mary and Patrick Merigan from the family's 1851 England Census record, and consequently that absence provides no reason to disregard the evidence cited above which convincingly verifies that they were Elizabeth's siblings.

Elizabeth's brother Michael

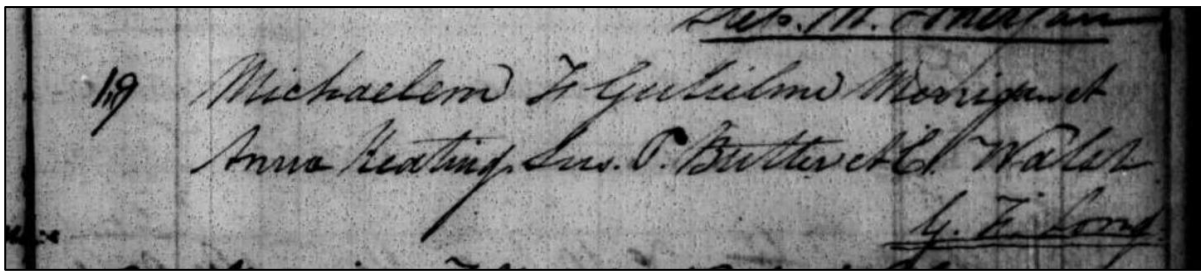
Tom Moore travelled to Ireland in 2025, and visited Tipperary to do some family research. Tom had requested that the Tipperary Family History Research Centre look for relevant family records, and one they did locate which had not previously been located was for a baptism of Michael Merrigan on 19th November 1835. Tom reported that the Tipperary Family History Research Centre had advised that the baptism was recorded in the records of either the Waterford-Lismore Diocese, or the Cahir Diocese.

Searching for such a baptism on Family Search did not locate any relevant record, but armed with the date, and going to the Cahir parish baptism records held online by the National Library of Ireland, the record was located on page 53 of "Cahir Microfilm 02459/06", see

<https://registers.nli.ie/registers/vtls000632135?locale=en#page/53/mode/1up>:



This is a close up of the relevant entry:



The entry reads:

19 Michaellem F⁷⁴ Gulielmo Merrigan et Anna Keating Sus.⁷⁵ P. Butter et C. Walsh

As noted above, Guglielmi is anglicised to William. Also, Anna in Latin translates to Ann.⁷⁶

Consequently, given that any child born to a William Merigan and Ann Keating in or near Cahir in the 1830s or 1840s was born into Elizabeth's family for the reasons explained above, Michael Merrigan baptised in Cahir on 19th November 1835 was a child of Elizabeth's parents William and Ann Merigan, and a brother to Elizabeth.

As with Mary and Patrick, for reasons unknown, there is no record of Michael in Kath Palyga's papers (or the writings of the Burkes), nor does he figure in received family history. Nor was any County Tipperary event relating to him located on a Family Search search.⁷⁷ As perhaps happened with Mary, he may have decided to stay in Ireland when the family emigrated to England in the late 1840s, or he may have commenced working by then (he would have been about 13), or he may have died in the Famine or in infancy.

Elizabeth's brother James

The post at <https://irelandxo.com/ireland-xo/history-and-genealogy/ancestor-database/william-merrigan> suggests that William and Ann Merrigan also had a son James in Ireland in 1837. However, and although he was still alive, see below, no James is listed in the above 1851 England Census record for the family, when he would have been about 14. That absence may be explained by the fact that by that age he would have been old enough to be apprenticed and, as noted below, he was a stone mason.

The author of the post says that both this son of William and Ann, and also their son William, who is recorded in the 1851 England Census (see above), married Bensleys, Sarah and Julia, in 1860 and 1881 respectively. Although the marriages are said to be 21 years apart, if their wives were sisters or relatives, that associates the two men.

A James Merigan did indeed marry a Sarah Bensley in the June quarter of 1860, notably in Hackney which is adjacent to Shoreditch, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2DWV-JLT>. Sarah's person record at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/LYL8-8L3> says she was born in the Blything district of Suffolk in 1842 (which a FreeBMD search confirmed),⁷⁸ and that her parents were from Halesworth, a town in Suffolk

⁷⁴ "F" is short for "filius" or "filia", the Latin words for "son" and "daughter" respectively. See <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/news-wires-white-papers-and-books/nature-family> and https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Latin_Genealogical_Word_List#F.

⁷⁵ "Sus." is short for "susceptores", Latin for "godparents". (As would be "Sp." which is also used on the same page, set out above). See https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Latin_Genealogical_Word_List#S.

⁷⁶ See <https://www.etymonline.com/word/Ann>.

⁷⁷ Although one of the 11 records returned related to a death in Tipperary town in 1872 of a Michael said to be born in 1836. See <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/record/results?count=20&q.anyDate.from=1845&q.anyPlace=County%20Tipperary%2C%20Ireland&q.givenName=Michael&q.surname=Merigan&c.deathLikePlace1=on&f.deathLikePlace0=9&c.deathLikePlace2=on&f.deathLikePlace1=9%2CIreland&f.deathLikePlace2=9%2CIreland%2CCounty%20Tipperary>.

⁷⁸ She was one of only four Sarah Bensleys born in England between 1st July 1837 and 31st December 1845, and the only one with no middle name. An image of her birth record in the General Register Office index to its registers is linked at https://www.freebmd.org.uk/cgi/information.pl?r=5136342:7327&d=bmd_1705870475.

and a sub-district of the Blything district,⁷⁹ and that she had a sister Juliana born in 1851. The 1871 England Census record for James and Sarah Merigan's family at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VB64-T7J> also names her birthplace as Suffolk.

And a Juliana Bensley did indeed marry a William Merigan in the March quarter of 1881 in Shoreditch, see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2DRY-R9W>. Juliana's person record at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/LDYT-SFM> confirms she was born on 27th March 1851, and also in the Blything district (which a FreeBMD search confirmed).⁸⁰ Her family's 1881 England Census record at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q279-PZYL> specifically names her birthplace as Halesworth.

This William is obviously the son of William and Ann born on 2nd April 1851 (see below). In the March quarter 1881, both that William, as well as Juliana Bensley, would have been about to turn 30, so their ages in relation to each other correlate. That William also grew up in Shoreditch, so the fact of a marriage there correlates, especially given the paucity of Merigans in England at the time.

The wives Sarah and Juliana/Julia are obviously the sisters from Halesworth, Blything. Two men with the same surname marrying two sisters who hail from a completely different locality (Halesworth in Suffolk is almost 90 miles north-east of Shoreditch) signifies that one couple met through the other, and therefore that the men were related,⁸¹ as the probability of both sisters marrying men with the same surname at random is very low, and in fact negligible if that surname is uncommon, as was the case here given the paucity of Merigans in England at the time (see above).

That is because, assuming, very generously, that 1% of the male population of England at the time was named Merigan, the random chance of each sister marrying a Merigan is 1 in 100. The probability of both marrying Merigans randomly is therefore 1 in 10,000.⁸²

Steve Mitchell, the husband of cousin Jennifer Mitchell (nee Dunsmore), also concluded that William and Ann Merigan had a son James. Steve added him as their son in a person record for William (senior) at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/G4BQ-N2W>. James' name in that record links to a person record for him at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/G4BQ-7NN> where, under "Latest Changes" it is noted that Steve added him as a son to William on 6th December 2020.

That "Latest Changes" also records that, on 9th November 2022, another Family Search contributor added links to the 1871 and 1881 England Census records of the family of James Merigan. He is said in both census records (at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VB64-T7J> and <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q27S-RQCZ>) to have a birthplace of Ireland and an age of 44 (giving an estimated birth year of 1837). That information in the census record could only have come from him.

Also, in addition to the birth place and year, there are further links between James and William and Ann Merigan. As noted above he married in 1860 in Hackney adjacent to Shoreditch, actually in St Mathias Parish Church, Wordsworth Road, Stoke Newington, London, which is just over a mile north of Wilmer Gardens and Phillips Street in Shoreditch. Further, both the 1871 and 1881 England Census records give his residence on the census date as in the district of "Bow Aka St Mary Stratford-Le-Bow", the home of the Bow Bells, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Mary-le-Bow. Shoreditch is in the same district, see above.

Also, James is listed in both the 1871 and 1881 England Census records as a "stone mason", and this correlates with the occupations of William senior and William junior. That of William (senior) was listed as "Stone Mason" in the marriage certificate for his 1870 re-marriage to Mary Henley (see the brief relating to William Merigan). The Burkes recorded in their paper *Some 1998 Research* that William (senior) was a stonemason's labourer at the

⁷⁹ See <https://www.ukbmd.org.uk/reg/districts/blything.html>.

⁸⁰ Her name was spelt Julyaner in the GRO birth register. She was one of only four female Bensleys born in England between 1845 and 1855. The others were named Martha, Fanny and Anna Maria, so there was no other Julyaner, Julie, Julia, Juliana or similar. An image of her birth record in the GRO index to its registers is linked at https://www.freebmd.org.uk/cgi/information.pl?r=17028209:6103&d=bmd_1705870475. Note: the person record says she was born on 27th March 1851, but the GRO record notes her birth as in the June quarter.

⁸¹ That is overwhelmingly more likely than just being friends or acquaintances, given they both have the same very uncommon name.

⁸² Of course, in practicality, the chances would increase if there was a concentration of Merigans living near the sisters, but, as stated, there was a paucity of Merigans in England at the time, as is demonstrated above.

time of his 1879 death, and they also note that his son William (junior) was also listed as a stone mason (albeit “unemployed”) in the 1881 Census (see <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q279-PZYS>).

William (senior) was also recorded as being a “Stone Mason’s & General Labourer” in Kath Palyga’s family tree set out above. He is recorded in the 1851 and 1861 England Census records (above) as a “labourer”, and in his death certificate (see the brief relating to William Merigan) as a “general labourer”. (All of which perhaps explains the occupation description given to him by Kath Palyga).

It is thus concluded that James was a son to William and Ann, although no baptism or other Irish event record for him could be located through Family Search. In particular, given the dates of the baptisms of Mary and Patrick, their parents William and Ann appear to be in Cahir from 1834 to 1838, but a physical search of the microfilmed Cahir baptism records for 1837 located no James baptised to them there. See pages 67 to 79 at <https://registers.nli.ie/registers/vtls000632135#page/67/mode/1up>.

In order to further verify that the James Merigan who married Sarah Bensley in 1860 was indeed the son of William and Ann, the certificate for the marriage was ordered from the UK General Register Office in mid-2025. This is the certificate provided:



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 16960446/1

1860. Marriage solemnized at <i>St Matthias Church in the Parish of Stoke Newington in the County of Middlesex</i>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
<i>60</i>	<i>April 8</i>	<i>James Merigan</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Stone Mason</i>	<i>Howard Road</i>	<i>William Merigan</i>	<i>Stone Mason</i>
		<i>Sarah Bensley</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Spinster</i>		<i>Howard Road</i>	<i>Elishama Bensley</i>	<i>Master</i>

Married in the *Parish of St Matthias* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by *Benav* or after *P. W. Pontin* by me.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *James Merigan* in the Presence of us, *William Dabney* and *Frederick Watson Lord*

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of Hackney
 Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 5th day of September 2025

MXK 241689

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 25/04/19 09:37 APS/ANP


TRO

The certificate verifies that James was indeed the son of a William Merigan, stone mason.

Also that Sarah Bensley was the daughter of Elishama Bensley, a man with a most unusual given name (and of Halesworth, Suffolk, see further his person record at <https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/details/MCWM-LWV>). The Church of St Matthias in Stoke Newington is 1¼ miles north of Wilmer Gardens.

And, also, to further verify that the William Merigan who married Juliana Bensley in 1881 was also the son of William and Ann, the certificate for that marriage was also ordered from the UK General Register Office in mid-2025. This is the certificate provided:



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 16960446-2

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
151	January 24 th 1881	William Merigan	Full	Bachelor	Mason	42 Mortimer Road	William Merigan	Labourer
		Juliana Bensley	Full	Spinster	-	42 Mortimer Road	Elishama Bensley	Master

Married in the Above Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by James or after Banns by me,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, William Merigan and Juliana Bensley in the presence of us, Lucy Jane Tolly and John Wright Min. Rector Man.

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of Shoreditch
 Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 5th day of September 2025

MXK 241899

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25/06/19 09:25 APS/AISP


GMB

The certificate verifies that William was indeed the son of William Merigan. Also that he was a mason. Also that Juliana Bensley was the daughter of Elishama Bensley, Malster, as was Sarah Bensley.

Interestingly, notwithstanding that James was a brother to Elizabeth, and in the Shoreditch area for his 1860 marriage and presumably living there when Elizabeth was living at Wilmer Gardens (as is noted in her 1863 marriage certificate), no record found in Kath Palyga's papers (or elsewhere) indicate that Elizabeth ever mentioned him, nor does he figure in received family history.⁸³

As to James birthplace, the above referred to 1871 and 1881 England Census records are instructive. This is the 1871 England Census record for the household at 14 Ford Road, St Mary Stratford le Bow (now Old Ford Road, and about 1 mile east-south-east of Wilmer Gardens):

⁸³ But, as noted above, there is also no indication that Elizabeth ever mentioned Mary and Patrick.

Page 20

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the

*Civil Parish (or Township) of	City or Municipal Ward of	Municipal Ward of	Parliamentary Borough of	Town of	Village or Hamlet, etc., of	Local Board, or (Improvement) Commission District of	Electoral District of
St. Mary			St. Mary		St. Mary	St. Mary	St. Mary

No. of House	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSEHOLDERS	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	SEX	AGE	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN
215	23 Ford Rd.	1	James Merrigan	Head	M	33	Stone mason	Walsingham, Norfolk
			Sarah	Wife	F	32		do do
			William	Son	M	10		do do
			John	Son	M	5		do do
			Albert	Son	M	1		do do
216	do	1	James Merrigan	Head	M	34	Stone mason	Walsingham, Norfolk
			Sarah	Wife	F	33		do do
217	do	1	James Merrigan	Head	M	35	Stone mason	Walsingham, Norfolk
			Sarah	Wife	F	34		do do
			William	Son	M	11		do do
			John	Son	M	6		do do
			Albert	Son	M	2		do do
218	do	1	James Merrigan	Head	M	36	Stone mason	Walsingham, Norfolk
			Sarah	Wife	F	35		do do
			William	Son	M	12		do do
			John	Son	M	7		do do
			Albert	Son	M	3		do do
			Julia	Daughter	F	2		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		do do
			James	Son	M	1		do do
			Joseph	Son	M	1		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		do do
			John	Son	M	1		do do
			William	Son	M	1		do do
			James	Son	M	1		do do
			Joseph	Son	M	1		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		do do
			John	Son	M	1		do do
			William	Son	M	1		do do
			James	Son	M	1		do do
			Joseph	Son	M	1		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		do do
			John	Son	M	1		do do
			William	Son	M	1		do do
			James	Son	M	1		do do
			Joseph	Son	M	1		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		do do
			John	Son	M	1		do do
			William	Son	M	1		do do
			James	Son	M	1		do do
			Joseph	Son	M	1		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		do do
			John	Son	M	1		do do
			William	Son	M	1		do do
			James	Son	M	1		do do
			Joseph	Son	M	1		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		do do
			John	Son	M	1		do do
			William	Son	M	1		do do
			James	Son	M	1		do do
			Joseph	Son	M	1		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		do do
			John	Son	M	1		do do
			William	Son	M	1		do do
			James	Son	M	1		do do
			Joseph	Son	M	1		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		do do
			John	Son	M	1		do do
			William	Son	M	1		do do
			James	Son	M	1		do do
			Joseph	Son	M	1		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		do do
			John	Son	M	1		do do
			William	Son	M	1		do do
			James	Son	M	1		do do
			Joseph	Son	M	1		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		do do
			John	Son	M	1		do do
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			John	Son	M	1		do do
			William	Son	M	1		do do
			James	Son	M	1		do do
			Joseph	Son	M	1		do do
			Charles	Son	M	1		

The document is a page from a historical record, likely a census or a list of residents. It is titled 'Administrative County of...' and contains a list of names and their occupations. The names listed include James and Sarah, and their occupations are related to masonry. The document is dated 1843.

The ages of James and Sarah line up, as does his occupation of “Jobbing Mason”⁸⁴ and birthplace of Ireland, and her birthplace of Halesworth in Suffolk. Without doubt, therefore, this is the same couple, with an added bit of information, namely that James was born in Tipperary. Whether that is meant to refer to the town or not is unclear, but, at the least, James was born in County Tipperary.

Elizabeth’s brother Joseph

The Burkes located Joseph in 1992. In a letter to Kath Palyga dated 18th September 1992, they advised that whilst “in Tipperary ... hunting for Merrigans and Keatings”, they had found –

the birth⁸⁵ of a Joseph Merrigan to William Merrigan and Anne Keating in the adjoining parish of Bansha on 3 Apr 1843. Doubtless William Merrigan and Anne Keating lived at some time in the area of Tipperary between Bansha and Tipperary town. These findings are included in material subsequently confirmed in writing by the Tipperary Heritage Unit copies of whose letters are enclosed.

The Burkes enclosed a letter dated 24th August 1992 from the Tipperary Heritage Unit which attached a sheet with four transcribed records listed in type including the following:

PARISH OF BANSHA			
Baptism:			
DATE	CHILD	PARENTS	SPONSORS
1843.04.03	Merrigan Joseph	Merrigan William Keating Anne	Ryan Denis O'Toole Mary

(Note that the baptism was actually on the 8th April, see below, not the 3rd April as stated by the Tipperary Heritage Unit, and although the Unit specifically recorded the event as a baptism, not a birth).

⁸⁴ A “jobbing mason” (also called a fixer mason) is a traditional term for a freelance or itinerant stonemason who works on various short-term projects rather than for a single employer: see Google AI overview search.

⁸⁵ Actually, the finding of a baptism.

Bansha is in County Tipperary, and 7½ miles north-west of Cahir, and 4 miles south-east of Tipperary town. The parish is also called Bansha and Kilmoyler parish. Kilmoyler is another 4 miles further south-east of Bansha.

The Family Search database record for the baptism of Joseph Merigan in Bansha and Kilmoyler parish in County Tipperary, Ireland on 8th April 1843 is at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:66C8-VFDF?lang=en>:

The screenshot shows the FamilySearch record for Joseph Merigan. The record is titled "Joseph Merigan" and is from the "Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1740-1900" collection. The event is a baptism on 8 Apr 1843 in Bansha and Kilmoyler, County Tipperary, Ireland. The father is Wm Merigan and the mother is Ann Keating. The record is attached to a family tree for Joseph Merrigan (1843-1861). The document information section includes the collection name, date range, and a citation. The parents and siblings section lists Wm Merigan as the father and Ann Keating as the mother. A "SAY THANK YOU" button is visible at the bottom.

Joseph Merigan
Birth • Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1740-1900

SAVE EDIT SHARE

Image Unavailable

Name Joseph Merigan
Father's Name [Wm Merigan](#)
Father's Sex Male
Mother's Name [Ann Keating](#)
Mother's Sex Female
Event Type Baptism
Event Date 8 Apr 1843
Event Place Bansha and Kilmoyler, County Tipperary, Ireland

Attached in Tree to
[Joseph Merrigan](#)
1843-1861 • G4BQ-WM3

Similar Records
No similar records were found.

Document Information

Collection Information
[Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1740-1900](#)

Cite This Record
"Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1740-1900",
FamilySearch
(<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:66C8-VFDF> : Wed Nov 20 23:10:57 UTC 2024),
Entry for Joseph Merigan and Wm Merigan, 8
Apr 1843.

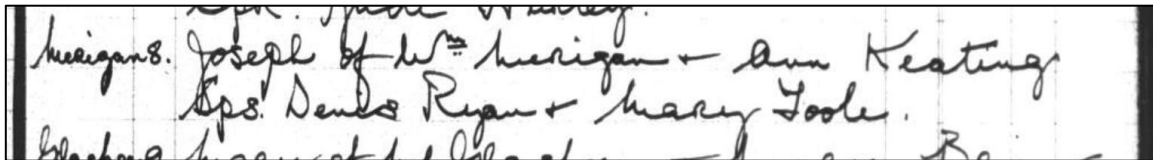
Joseph Merigan's Parents and Siblings OPEN ALL

Wm Merigan	Father	M
Ann Keating	Mother	F

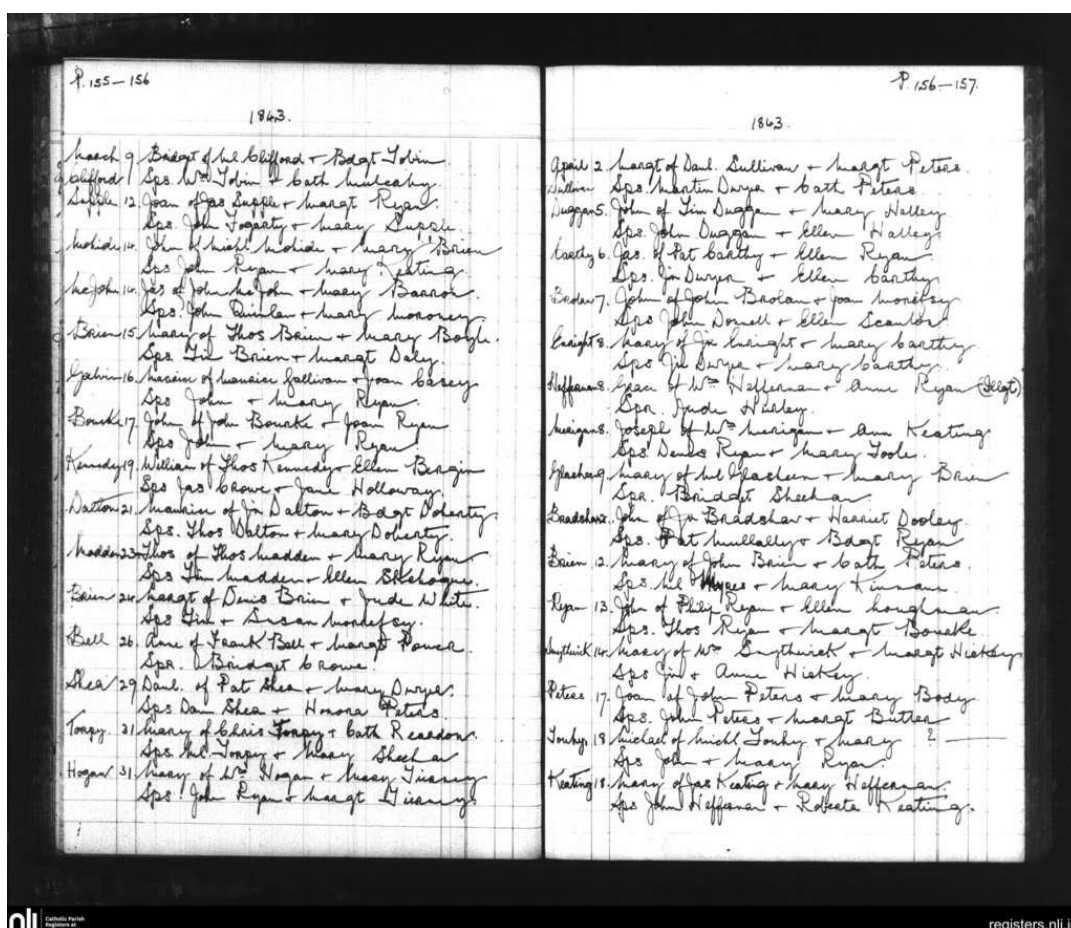
This information is available because a volunteer indexed it for you.

SAY THANK YOU

The original parish register entry of the baptism is at page 106 of Bansha and Kilmoyler Microfilm 02497/01 at <https://registers.nli.ie/registers/vtls000632650#page/106/mode/1up>). This is a close up of the entry:



This is the relevant page of the Bansha parish register in full:



Given that any child born to a William Merigan and Ann Keating in the Bansha area in the 1830s or 1840s was born into Elizabeth's family for the reasons explained above, Joseph Merrigan baptised in Bansha on 8th April 1843 was a child of Elizabeth's parents William and Ann Merigan, and a brother to Elizabeth.

Notably, also, this child appears in the records of William and Ann's family for the 1851 and 1861 England Census. He is incorrectly named as "Joshua", and as having been born in London, in the 1851 England Census record (see the record above). He is also noted as aged 7, and thus having been born in about 1843 or 1844. "Joshua" is corrected to "Joseph" in the family's record in the next England Census in 1861 (see the record above), and his birthplace is also corrected to Ireland. He is also noted as aged 18 in 1861, and thus born in about 1842 or 1843.

These correlations to the 1843 baptism record also further substantiate that the family listed in the 1851 and 1861 England Census was the same family that was having children in the Tipperary town/Bansha/Cahir area of South Tipperary in the 1830s and 1840s.

Elizabeth's sister Ann

Ann was listed in Elizabeth's family's record for both the 1851 and the 1861 England Censuses (see records above). Her name was spelled "Anne" in the 1851 record, and she was said to be 3, and thus born about 1847.⁸⁶ Her name was spelled "Ann" in the 1861 record, and she was said to be 12, and thus born about 1848.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ The 1851 census was conducted on 30th March 1851. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1851_United_Kingdom_census. If Ann was truly aged 3 on that date, she would have been born between 31st March 1847 and 30th March 1848.

⁸⁷ The 1861 census was conducted on 7th April 1861. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1861_United_Kingdom_census. If Ann was truly aged 12 on that date, she would have been born between 8th April 1848 and 7th April 1849.

Ann Merigan was also named as a witness at Elizabeth's 1863 marriage to Patrick Bolan – see the marriage certificate, and also the church record of the marriage, above. However, this may have been Elizabeth's mother rather than her sister, as her sister would only have been about 14 in January 1863.⁸⁸

A FreeBMD search for an Ann or Anne Merigan or Merrigan born anywhere in England in the period 1840-1851 returned no matches, which makes it almost certain that she was born in Ireland, most likely in County Tipperary. However, a Family Search search for the birth/baptism of Ann Merigan in County Tipperary about 1847-1848 failed to locate a relevant record.

Elizabeth's brother William

William was listed as Elizabeth's sibling in her family's record for both the 1851 and the 1861 England Census (see both records above). He is noted as aged 1 month ("1 mo") in the 1851 record, and 9 in the 1861 record. Obviously, the former is likely to be more accurate, being an age which itself indicates that it was stated by his parents immediately after his birth.⁸⁹ His birthplace is given in both records as London.

The Burkes located William's birth certificate in 1998. In their paper called *Some 1998 Research* they listed the family as recorded in the 1851 England Census, and then noted that:

We sought, and subsequently obtained, the birth certificate of William. It was clearly "our" William. It says:

REGISTRATION DISTRICT						
1851 BIRTH in the Sub-district of						
				Shoreditch		
				Haggerstone West	in the	County of Middlesex
When and where born	Name	Sex	Father	Mother	Occupation of Father	Informant
Second April 1851 43 Phillips Street Shoreditch	William	Boy	William Merigan	Anne Merigan formerly Keating	Labourer	Anne Merigan Mother 43 Phillips Street Shoreditch.

This is the certificate obtained by the Burkes from the Family Records Centre, and provided to Kath Palyga:

⁸⁸ There was no English law forbidding children as marriage witnesses, but a custom against it, although not rigid: "Children should not be allowed to act as witnesses, but ... a clergyman would not consider it right to object to young persons as witnesses": James Hammick, *The Marriage Law of England*, Shaw & Sons, 1873, page 129. See <https://books.google.com.pe/books?id=N2INAAAAIAAJ>.

⁸⁹ But note the discussion above that the birth date in the birth certificate postdates the 1851 England Census.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH

Application Number W006991

REGISTRATION DISTRICT Shoreditch
1,851 BIRTH in the Sub-district of Haggerstone West in the County of Middlesex

Columns: 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
492	Second April 1851 43 Phillips Street Shoreditch	William Boy	Boy	William Merigan	Anne Merigan formerly Keating	Labourer	Anne Merigan Mother 43 Phillips Street Shoreditch	Seventh May 1851	Nathaniel Brown	Registrar

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the District above mentioned.
 Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 24th day of August 1998.

BXBY 486024

CAUTION: It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

WARNING: THIS CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON PRESENTING IT.

DA 0034 - 200M - 12/97 - Mon 20/2/71

A FreeBMD search also picks up William's birth registered in Shoreditch in the June quarter of 1851, see https://www.freebmd.org.uk/cgi/information.pl?scan=1&r=17112975:0721&d=bmd_1753236484. There is a link on that webpage to the page containing William's entry in the General Register Office index of births for the June quarter 1851. Here is the relevant part of that page:

SURNAME of Parent	NAME (if any) or Sex of Child	SUP. REGISTRAR'S DISTRICT	Vol.	Page
		1116		
Merifield	Martha	Shaftesbury	viii	71
Merewood	Mary Ann	Portsea	vii	123
Merga	John	Sussex	xx	176
Merideth	Alfred James	Warrington	xi	170
Merifield	Emily	Shaftesbury	viii	100
Merifield	Fanny	St Edmund	ix	70
Merifield	Frank Jane	Exeter	x	114
Merifield	Mirsa	Bedmin	ix	33
Merifield	Walter Hickins	Strand	i	130
Merigan	John	Sussex	xx	140
Merigan	William	Shoreditch	ii	377
Merkin	Reba	Peckham	xxiii	42