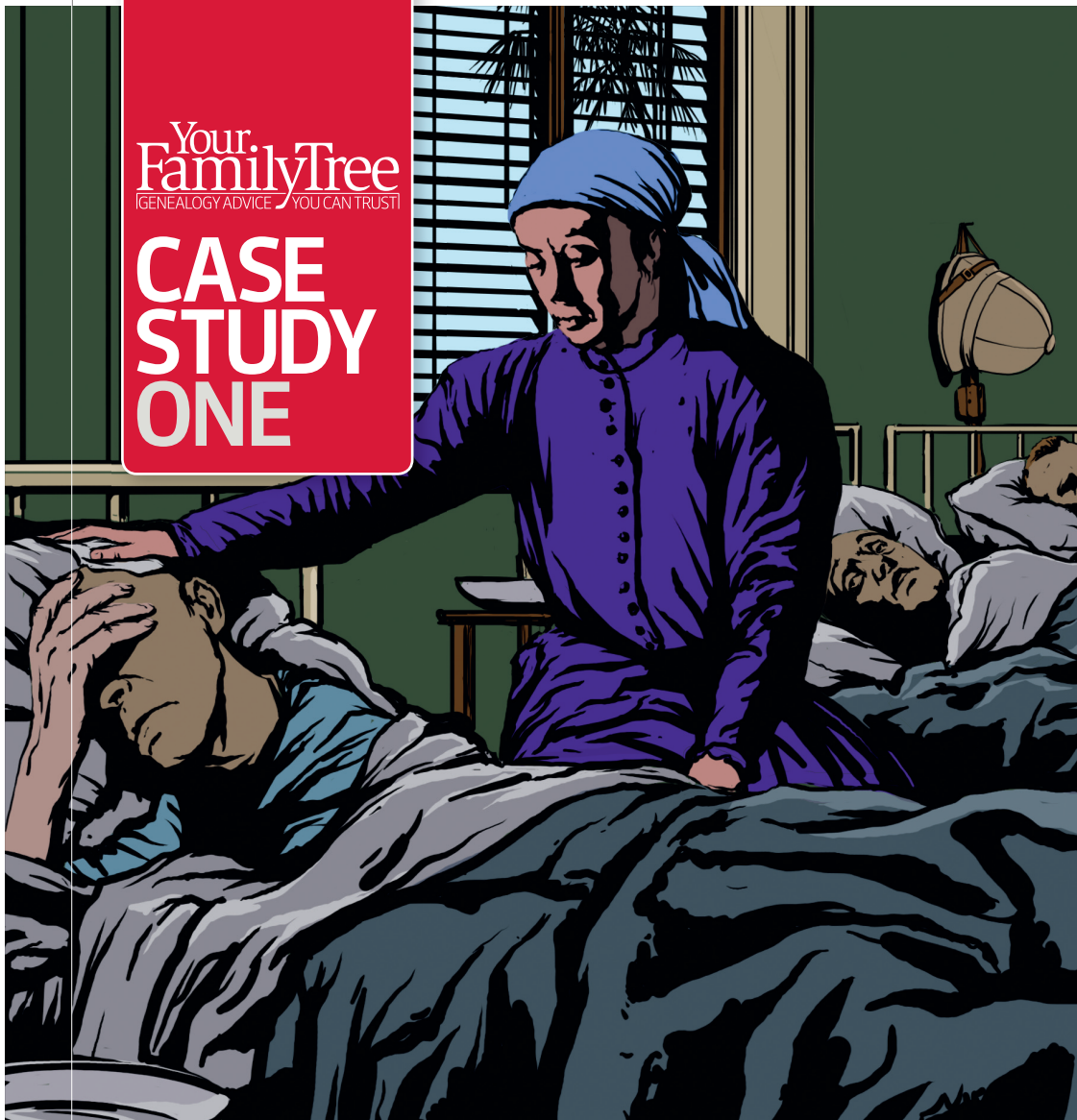


## CASE STUDY ONE



# A brave battle against death

How the Irish 1911 Census transformed an ancestor's story to reveal a fight with death

By **Chris Paton**



Formerly a BBC television producer, Chris is now a full-time family historian and author based in Ayrshire.

**O**ccasionally, we come across a record that transforms the story of an ancestor. In the case of my 2x great-granny, this discovery raised as many questions as it provided answers! Little did I know that a lass from Belfast had travelled around the

world as a child, encountering a deadly epidemic she was lucky to survive.

Florence was the wife of Edwin Graham, a riveter from Belfast, and the mother of my great-grandfather Ernest, born in the city in 1893. When I first explored Ernest's story seven years ago, there was little source material available to work with. I had a fortunate break when I discovered Edwin in the 1881 Census, working in Barrow-in-Furness, but by 1891 he was gone, likely having returned to

### CHINA

#### Opium Wars

The Queen's Regiment's 1st Battalion fought in China to clear resistance endured by British diplomats sent to renegotiate the 1842 Treaty of Nanking, following the Opium Wars. The battalion was awarded honours for Taku Forts and Peking

Belfast. With a common Ulster name like Graham, I soon found myself putting him to one side.

It wasn't until the National Archives of Ireland made the 1911 Irish Census freely available at [www.census.nationalarchives.ie](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie) in 2010 that I had another look. I found Edwin and Florence in Belfast's Duncairn Gardens. Not only did they have Ernest and a further seven sons, but there had been another nine children, all of whom died prior to 1911. Six of the surviving boys were from Ireland, one from England and another from Scotland. The biggest surprise, however, was that Belfast lass Florence was born on the island of Gibraltar! What were her family doing there?

### Born abroad

The fact their eldest son, also called Edwin, was born in Scotland, provided a starting point. Using [www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk) I found his birth record and established that Florence's full name was Florence Teresa Halliday. Scottish birth certificates provide more detail than their British counterparts, so I also learnt that she and Edwin senior married in Barrow-in-Furness on 27 June 1881. I tried to find Florence in Barrow (or indeed anywhere in England) during the 1881 Census, which had been taken some two months earlier, but was unsuccessful. She must have travelled from Belfast for the event. Knowing the marriage date, I sent for the certificate from the English GRO, and learnt that Florence's father was William Alexander Halliday, a deceased bandmaster, implying a military connection.

The next task was to find Florence's birth certificate in Gibraltar. The indexes to most overseas BMD records for British subjects are freely available on FamilyRelatives ([www.familyrelatives.com](http://www.familyrelatives.com)). I found a listing for

# The Empire

The Hallidays saw service in many vital outposts of the British Empire

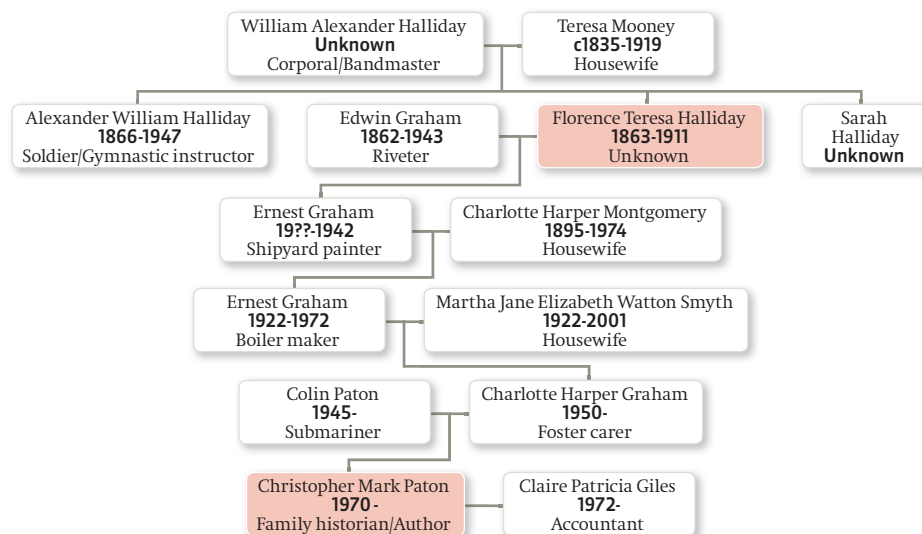
Malta became part of the Empire in 1814, providing an important stopover en route to India. It gained its independence in 1964. Its citizens were awarded a collective George Cross for bravery in World War II, an honour shared only by the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

The Greek islands of Corfu, Paxos, Lefkas, Ithaca, Cephalonia, Zante and Kythira were gained by Britain in 1814 too, and formed a protectorate known as The United States of the Ionian Islands, until they were ceded to Greece in 1864.

The English first settled in Bermuda in 1612, and Gibraltar came under British rule in 1704. Both islands have been important to the Navy since, and they remain British territories.

*"The biggest surprise, however, was that Belfast lass Florence was born on the island of Gibraltar!"*

## THE HALLIDAY/GRAHAM FAMILY TREE



Case Study One – Bravely battling yellow fever

a Florence T Halliday in the GRO Regimental Birth Indexes collection, and ordered the certificate. When it arrived, it confirmed her name and date of birth (7 September 1863), and stated that her father was Corporal Alexander Halliday of the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Regiment, and her mother, Teresa.

**Intrigue** The 1911 Census for Florence in Belfast, showing Gibraltar as her birthplace

Knowing her parents' names, I decided to see if I could find their marriage. I found nothing in the English and Welsh indexes, so I tried the overseas records again. Within the GRO Ionian Islands Civil Register of Marriages, I soon found an Alexander William Halliday marrying in Corfu in 1862. When the certificate arrived, it showed that Alexander, again noted as a corporal, was the son

## WORKERS

### Shipyard

Shipyard workers were a mobile workforce in the 19th and early 20th centuries and many workers' children were born across the UK. If you can't find your ancestor in his home town, check other major shipbuilding locations: Glasgow, Barrow, Sunderland, Portsmouth, Belfast and Cork

of William Alexander and Martha Ann Halliday, while his spouse was Teresa Mooney, daughter of Thomas and Mary Ann Mooney.

I kept an eye out for other records, and discovered the birth of a William Halliday in 1866 in Bermuda. Just how much of the world had my ancestors seen? On a whim I ordered the record, and sure enough, I found that the couple had had a son there on 16

August 1866. This was a long way from Belfast!

## Origins?

It now seemed likely this branch of my family may not have been from Ulster at all, though an Irish connection was still possible with the surname Mooney. The next step was to find out more about the 2nd Regiment of Foot, also known as the Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment. An official website on the regiment was great on military achievements, but didn't have much on the history. So, I bought a book called *The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey)* by Jock



AN ENTRY IN THE ARMY REGISTER  
Book of Births, Baptisms and Marriages

CERTIFIED COPY OF  
AN ENTRY OF BIRTH SA 074236  
Application Number: 367396-7868271

Registration of Births, Deaths and  
Marriages (Special Provisions) Act 1957

2nd Battalion

Date of the Child's Birth	Place and Date of the Child's Baptism	Christian Name of the Child	Christian Name of the Father
7 Sept 1863	Gibraltar Oct 11 1863	Florence Teresa	Alexander Teresa

CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY OF THE ENTRY IN THE ORIGINAL REGISTER ONLY.

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE

WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

- Haswell, which began to flesh out why the Hallidays spent the 1860s travelling.

The 2nd Battalion was formed in Colchester in 1857, and in 1859 it was posted to Malta, then Corfu. The Battalion spent a peaceful 1860 in Cephalonia and Zante, followed by Gibraltar between 1862 and 1865. After marrying William in Corfu, Teresa accompanied him to Gibraltar, and then Bermuda, though I still don't know why she was in Corfu. In 1865, the regiment set sail for Bermuda with over 700 men, to their first real battle, though the major enemy turned out to be a plague.

The Regiment arrived on 15 July 1865, with a third of its strength posted to St George's, an area that from June had been "tainted" with yellow fever, according to the *Freeman's Journal* of 31 October 1866. A local doctor urged the commander not to base his soldiers there, but he was ignored, and within weeks, 250 soldiers were ill with fever. After it had run its course, over 100 men, including 14 officers, had been killed.

### Interesting find Florence Halliday's Gibraltar birth certificate

The conditions were grim. A Dr Barrow provided a shocking description of life at the hospital during the epidemic: "There lay these unhappy men on the floor of the pesthouse, ejecting black vomit over one another." All the doctors were struck down, and four of them died. Miraculously, in the aftermath of this ordeal, Teresa gave birth to her son.

Haswell records, "The Queens survived their many ordeals in the Caribbean with... the highest credit and an enhanced reputation". The question is, however: Did Florence's father make it out alive? The 2nd Battalion was based in Ireland after Bermuda until 1869, so the family may have travelled back, but I still can't find William's death record.

William and Teresa's son William also went by Alexander William Halliday, and like his father, he joined the Queens' Royal Regiment, serving with distinction in

"After the fever had run its course, over 100 men, including 14 officers had died"

## Overseas GRO indexes

Find your forebears' vital events around the world

If your ancestor was born, married or died overseas, you may find that the General Register Office has a record of the event. Several websites host the indexes, including Findmypast ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)) and The Genealogist ([www.thegenealogist.co.uk](http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk)). Most, though not all, are also freely available from FamilyRelatives ([www.familyrelatives.com](http://www.familyrelatives.com)). The records include the Annual Consular and UK High Commission returns from 1849 to 2005, where the events have been recorded by a British Consul or High Commissioner in an overseas territory, and various Army services' and chaplains' returns. Once you've identified a correct index entry you can order the record at [www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/default.asp](http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/default.asp).

Other sources include ScotlandsPeople ([www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk)), which hosts the Roman Catholic Bishopric of the Forces collection for all overseas bases, and BMD Registers ([www.bmdregisters.co.uk](http://www.bmdregisters.co.uk)), which has more records in The National Archives RG 32-34 collections.

## HISTORY

### Regiments

You can trace the history of many regiments and individual soldiers' careers using resources such as attestation papers, muster rolls and pay books. Use Access to Archives at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a) to find records at TNA or in local record offices

Family portrait Florence's husband Edwin Graham in 1939

India in the 1890s. His Chelsea Pension papers from 1902, at [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk), show he'd enlisted with the regiment in Dublin, having studied at the Royal Hibernian Military School in the city, which was first set up to cater for military orphans. Had Alexander been an orphan? More surprising was mention of a sister, Sarah, though again, I have yet to discover more.

The detail from the 1911 Irish Census paved the way to show that Teresa and Alexander ended their days in Dublin, and that

Teresa was indeed Irish. In Belfast, just a few months after the 1911 Census, Florence passed away, aged just 48, from chronic nephritis. A fallen headstone at a forgotten grave in Belfast's City Cemetery is all that's left to bear witness to her existence, but the hunt for her father's fate continues. ■



Resting place Florence Halliday's fallen gravestone in Belfast City Cemetery



## CONTACTS

British Library 19th Century Newspaper Collection

[w. http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs](http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs)

The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment

[w. www.queensroyalsurreys.org.uk](http://www.queensroyalsurreys.org.uk)