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Story from: Cyril Fair, Shinagh, Bandon, Co. Cork

In 1850 my great, great, great grandfather George, got married to Mary, my great, great, great grandmother in Co. Cork. At that time the famine was still going on throughout the country. One million Irish people died and two million Irish people emigrated during the famine. A year later in 1851 my great, great grandfather James was born. That same year George, James' father, signed up for the British Army. Britain controlled Ireland back then so it was common for Irish men to join the British Army because there were few options for them. At that time approximately one third of the entire British Army was made up of Irish men. Joining the British Army meant you were sent over seas, for example to Africa or India. My great, great, great grandparents were sent to South Africa. Their baby James was too young to have any chance of surviving the journey so he was left in Ireland. So in 1851, George and Mary set sail to South Africa. The journey at that time would have lasted sixty to eighty days, so it was very difficult. Some people even died on those ships. In Africa, if disease didn't get you, war did. In Africa at that time, three quarters of the soldiers died from disease alone. When in South Africa,

my great, great, great grandparents went on to have ten more children but unfortunately four died quite young. My great, great grandfather, James continued to live in Co. Cork and contact was kept up with the African side of the family. Even today, relatives from that side of the family still keep in touch with our family here.