In 2007 I accompanied Wayne (Atkinson) to Ireland as he spoke at the ‘Settler Colonialism’ conference about the British colonial policy parallels in Ireland and Australia. We both agreed that it would be an opportune time to visit my Irish roots.

I am a direct descendant of Arthur Guinness the Brewer. Arthur's youngest son married the widow of D'Esterre after her husband was mortally wounded in a duel with Daniel O'Connell, in 1815. Their eldest son was Henry Grattan Guinness who was both my great grandfather and the founder of a missionary dynasty. This makes me a personification of the coloniser – privileged as Anglo-Celtic, but also descended from a line of missionaries, a group that gets plenty of flack these days for their collusion with colonial governments.

In Ireland we studied the history of British colonisation, drawing comparisons with Indigenous experience in Australia. At the same time we followed the Guinness story, visiting the sites where my ancestors lived and reading the numerous books about them. Not for the first time I had to confront my family’s response to Indigenous issues, recognising when self-interest took precedence over humanitarian action.

This is not an academic paper but an exploration of some connections between history and personal accountability. My question is this: how can the act of coming to terms with the past in a personal way lead to a deeper level of reconciliation between colonisers and Indigenous people? Irish Australians were part of the colonising force, and face the same challenge as the other immigrants who have arrived since the British assumed ownership of Aboriginal land under the guise of *terra nullius*. How can we make peace after such a legacy of exploitation and discrimination?

**Catherine Guinness** is the great-great-great-granddaughter of Arthur Guinness. She has worked in community development roles with diverse communities, including Indigenous, refugee and migrant communities in London and Australia.