

The Five Basic Sources for Irish Genealogical Research

www.IrishAncestors.net www.IrishSurnames.net

From *An Introduction to Irish Ancestry*

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Census Returns

A census of Ireland was taken in 1813 and every 10 years from 1821. Very little has survived of the returns prior to 1901. There are some returns from the census of 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851, covering part of the counties of Antrim, Cavan, Cork, Derry, Fermanagh, Galway, Meath Offaly and Waterford. There are no enumerators returns from the census of 1861, 1871, 1881, or 1891, these were destroyed by Government order.

The Census Returns for 1901 and 1911 are now available online.

Census 28th May 1821

These returns list; names, ages, occupations, and relationships.

What has survived and is available for consultation in the National Archives is:

County Cavan: Parishes of Annageliffe, Ballymacue, Castlerahan, Castleterra, Crosserlough, Denn, Drumlummon, Drung and Larah, Kilbride, Kilmore, Kinawley, Lavey, Lurgan and Munsterconaght, Mullagh.

County Fermanagh: Parishes of Derryvullen and Aghalurcher.

County Galway: Baronies of Arran and Athenry. Copies of returns for various families (58th Report, p. 33).

County Louth: A number of extracts for families principally relating to Drogheda (55th Report, p. 110).

County Meath: Baronies of Upper and Lower Navan.

County Offaly: Barony of Ballybritt (including Birr).

County Tipperary: Clonmel heads of households (58th R., p. 44).

Counties Cork, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo: Copies of returns for various families (58th Report, p. 33).

Census 1831

These returns list; names, ages, religion, occupations and relationships.

What has survived and is available for consultation in the National Archives is:

County Derry: Parishes of Agivey, Macosquin, Ballyaghan, Killowen, Aghanloo, Tamlaght, Finlagan, Templemore, Arboe, Termoneeny, Banagher, Glendermot.

Census 6th June 1841

These returns list; names, ages, date of marriage, occupations, relationships and whether each person can read or write.

What has survived and is available for consultation in the National Archives is:

County Cavan: Parish of Killeshandra.

County Fermanagh: Parish of Currin.

County Waterford: Parish of Lismore.

Counties Cavan and Monaghan: Miscellaneous extracts for various names (58th Report, p. 18).

Census 30th March 1851

These returns list; names, ages, date of marriage, religion, occupations, relationships and whether each person can read or write.

What has survived and is available for consultation in the National Archives is:

County Antrim: Parishes of Tickmacrean, Carncastle, Grange of Killyglen, Kilwaugher, Larne, Craigs (Ahoghill), Ballymoney, Donaghy, Rasharkin, Killead, Aghagallon, Aghalee, Ballinderry.

County Cavan: Miscellaneous extracts for various names (58th Report, p. 18).

County Fermanagh: Parish of Drumheeran.

Counties Cavan and Monaghan: Miscellaneous extracts for various names (58th Report, p. 18).

Census Search Forms

The census search forms or "Green Forms" were completed by the Public Records Office from information supplied by applicants for the Old Age Pension (which was introduced in 1908) seeking evidence of their age. A person had to be 70 years of age for the pension. The forms were drawn up between 1910 and 1922 and were an internal office record of searches made in the census of 1841 and 1851. An applicant provided information by letter and where

there were sufficient details a search was carried out. A certified copy of the return was then issued. The documents are arranged by County, Barony, Parish, Townland/Street and surname of family searched. The information contained in these forms is varied.

Civil Registration

The Marriages (Ireland) Act 1844 provided for the registration of marriages (except those celebrated by the Roman Catholic Clergy) with effect from 1st April 1845. The Registration of Births and Deaths (Ireland) Act 1863 provided for the registration of births and deaths with effect from 1st January 1864. Civil registration of births and deaths began later in Ireland than elsewhere. In England and Wales registration began on 1st. July 1837 and in Scotland on 1st. January 1855. Many Irish were born, married and died in Britain so such registrations should not be ignored.

Ireland was divided into Registrar's Districts, each under the charge of a local registrar, to whose office the registrations were made. There were about 800 Registrar's Districts and these were grouped into 140 Unions. The Registrar of the Union was responsible for collecting the registrations made by his district registrars, and he returned them to the Registrar General in Dublin. The Registrar-General's office then compiled composite indices for the whole country.

The Index to Civil Registration records is now available online.

The indexes

There are volumes which list alphabetically all the entries contained in the registers. The indexes of birth, marriage and death are separate and are in chronological order.

In the volumes, each year is divided into quarters: March, June, September and December.

The quarters are divided as follows:

March quarter entries January, February, March

June quarter entries April, May, June

September quarter entries July, August, September

December quarter entries October, November, December.

Each quarter is divided alphabetically.

The indexes will list the name of the person alphabetically (Surname and Christian name), the Union where registered, the volume and page in the register as follows: Surname, District, Volume and Page.

The Union is the only guide to the address; remember that the Unions crossed county boundaries. The author has found mistakes in the indexes, so one should be aware of that.

You should remember that registration of an event may not necessarily take place on the same date as the event. Registration could have taken place some time later, so that if you are looking for an event which occurred in September it may be recorded in either the September or the December quarter.

Remember while you are searching these records, that it is best to start with someone you know. Start one year before the birth. In genealogical research you must (as stated earlier) always go from the known to the unknown. If you are unsure of Christian names, remember the tradition as to the naming of children.

Birth certificate

The information contained at each entry for which a certificate can be issued is as follows:

District

Reference number

Date of birth

Place of birth

Name of child

Sex of child

Name & dwelling place of father

Name & maiden name of mother

Rank or profession of father

Informant (usually a parent)

A child may have been registered in the maiden name of the mother. The index will only provide the name of the child. This can present difficulties with a numerous surname. It would be of great assistance to genealogists if the index could also show the name of the parents. At the present time indexes are being prepared showing the maiden name of the mother. Seeking a child with an unusual surname is easiest. It should not be assumed that all births were registered. In the early years of registration, many births were not recorded.

A birth certificate will provide you with the exact date of birth, the names of both parents and an address. If you do not already have such information they are worthwhile.

Marriage certificate

The information contained at each entry for which a certificate can be issued is as follows:

District (usually the home place of wife)

Reference number

Date of marriage

Place of marriage

Name & Surname of both parties

Age of each party (Unfortunately it often gives "of full age" that is over 21 rather than the actual age)

Condition of each i.e. Bachelor/Widower, Spinster/Widow

Rank or profession of each

Residence of each at time of marriage

Fathers of each: Name & Surname; Rank or Profession

It often happened that a widow and widower would marry each other. If a widow remarries the name on the marriage certificate is not the maiden name, but her previous married surname.

Marriage certificates are most useful. They give most information and bring one back a further generation, because they give the names of both fathers. There are few errors in the Index of Marriages and given that the two parties are listed, there is verification in the index itself. With marriages you can cross check the index by looking for the marriage partner.

One should not waste time searching for a marriage of unknown date. It is possible to get a good idea of the date from the censuses of 1901 and 1911 (this will actually state how long the marriage has lasted). There should be no difficulty tracing a marriage, if the names of both parties are known. If you have no information on the wife, you should firstly seek a birth certificate of a child of the marriage. This will give the mother's maiden name.

Death certificate

The information contained at each entry for which a certificate can be issued is as follows:

District

Reference number

Place of death

Date of death

Surname

Christian name & Sex of deceased

Marital status

Age

Rank or Profession

Cause of death

Informant (usually a relative)

It can be seen that the death certificate offers the least information. In addition it cannot be assumed that the age at death is correct. A death certificate will verify a date and place of death, if you are seeking such information. If you do not know a date of death, it might not be worth the time spent finding it out.

Parish Registers of the Churches

The parish registers of the various religious denominations take on an added importance, for the period prior to 1864 or 1845 (as the case may be) because civil registration began so late in Ireland. The parish registers in Ireland are circumscribed by the restrictions imposed on the Catholic Church in penal times.

The repositories where the parish registers may be consulted are considered in later Chapters, though brief mention is made of them in this Chapter. The repositories have on open access: details of the parish registers that they have available for consultation.

Catholic Church

The penal laws effectively outlawed the Catholic Church and in those circumstances it was not feasible for records to be kept. The Catholic Church, nevertheless required the clergy to keep records of baptisms, marriages and burials. However it was not until very late, that this was carried out in rural areas. The earliest parish registers date from the beginning of the nineteenth century and many particularly in the west, only begin after the records of civil registration.

The information available in the Catholic parish registers varies, as follows

Baptisms:

Name of child

Whether child was illegitimate

Date of Baptism

Names of parents

Residence of parents

God-parents (who were often relations)

Marriages:

Date of marriage

Names of parties

Residence of parties

Witnesses (sometimes)

Fathers' names (sometimes)

Fathers' residence (sometimes)

Going through these registers is a tedious job as many of the records are faded and incomplete. Latin is often used rather than English (or Irish). A person should not forget to seek out the Burial Registers of the Church of Ireland referred to below.

The parishes of the Catholic Church did not always coincide with the civil parishes and this should be remembered when one is preparing for a search through Catholic parish registers. The Townlands Index to Ireland, will show the civil parish in which a townland is situated. The Topographical Dictionary of Ireland by Samuel Lewis (1837) should then be consulted. The Index of Surnames to the Primary Valuation and the Tithe Books prepared by the National Library of Ireland lists the civil parishes and the equivalent Catholic parishes and this is available in the principal repositories.

Most of the parish registers prior to 1880 are available on microfilm in the National Library of Ireland. The microfilms may be freely consulted except in the case of parishes of the following dioceses: Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, Cloyne, Down and Connor, Galway, Kerry and Limerick. In the case of these dioceses a letter of authorisation from the Parish Priest concerned must be produced before those microfilms may be consulted. The Catholic Directory (issued annually) lists the Catholic clergy and contains the names of the Parish

Priests. This is useful if a person is seeking access to the closed registers and if one wishes to arrange access to registers locally.

It will not always be necessary to go to the National Library of Ireland to consult these registers. A person may go along to the parish church of the ancestor concerned the registrar will without doubt be easier to read than the microfilms. It is important to be aware that there are Catholic parish registers in the custody of the local clergy, the existence of which are not always recorded elsewhere.

The Public Records Office in Belfast has available a list of Catholic parish registers in local custody in the Six Counties.

Church of Ireland

It was required in 1634 that "in every parish church or chapel within this realm shall be provided one parchment book at the charge of the parish wherein shall be written the day and the year of every christening and burial". Consequently a number of Church of Ireland parish registers date from the seventeenth century.

The Irish Church Act 1869 led to the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland with effect from the 1st January 1871. The Parochial Records Acts 1875 and 1876 stipulated that the records of the Church of Ireland constituted public records and as such were to be handed over to the Public Records Office. However, where an adequate place of storage was available locally they were allowed to remain in local custody.

In 1922 the pre-1871 records of 1006 parishes were destroyed by fire in the Public Records Office. The records of 637 parishes, which were in the custody of the local clergy survived. The Appendix to the 14th Report of the Assistant Deputy Keeper, 1881-83 has a "Table of Parochial Records in the Public Records Office" and the appendix to the 28th Report of the Deputy Keeper has a list of records in local custody. The appendices to the 56th, 57th, and 58th. Reports of the Deputy Keeper have details of the surviving parish registers and of transcripts of destroyed parish registers.

An up to date list of the surviving registers specifying their whereabouts, is available in the reading room of the National Archives (see Chapter 9). The Public Records Office in Belfast (see Chapter 10) has much material.

Many Church of Ireland parish registers relating to Dublin were published prior to 1922. They cover the period from 1619 to 1825. In pre-famine Ireland, it was common for all Christian denominations to be buried in the same graveyard, thus the burial registers of the Church of Ireland will list members of other denominations.

The parishes of the Church of Ireland generally coincide with the civil parishes and there should be no difficulties as to location.

The information available in these registers varies, as follows:

Baptisms:

Name of child

Date of Baptism

Names of Father

Name of Mother (sometimes)

Occupation of Father

Residence of parents

Marriages:

Date of marriage

Names of parties

Residence of parties

Burial entries:

Name

Date of death

Age (sometimes)

Occupation (sometimes)

Relationships (sometimes)

The **Representative Church Body Library** in Dublin (see Chapter 13) holds the Church of Ireland archives and over the years has done a great deal of work to repair the loss of parish registers in 1922. Most registers do not have indexes and there is no single index to all their contents. It is better to have a name, a date, and a place name. However some registers have been indexed on a county basis.

Given the difficulties of access in relation to civil records and that these registers should be intact from 1871, a visit should be made to the parish you are interested in and permission sought to examine the actual registers. The Irish Church Directory (issued annually) gives the names and addresses of all Church of Ireland clergy. The clergy are required to make the registers available. However they are required to supervise searches and a fee is payable.

Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church is the third of the main Christian denominations in Ireland. The ancestors of most Presbyterians in Ireland arrived during the Plantation of Ulster from the lowlands of Scotland. Subsequently there was settlement in Antrim and Down as well as the six plantation counties of Armagh, Cavan, Derry, Donegal, Fermanagh and Tyrone.

The Presbyterian Historical Society Library (see Chapter 13) in Belfast has deposited in its vaults the oldest parish registers dating from the seventeenth century. Many of these are now on microfilm; in the Public Records Office Belfast and in the library itself. Most congregations have retained their registers in local custody. The library has an index covering the Presbyterian Church registers of the 367 congregations in Ireland. The earliest records of some congregations have been published.

Presbyterian births and marriages will also be found in the parish registers of the Church of Ireland. In order to gain access to the registers in local custody, contact should be made with the Minister of the congregation.

The Primary Valuation of Tenements

The Primary Valuation was a survey made under the Act of 1838 to determine the amount of tax each able person should pay towards support of the poor and destitute within his poor law union. The value of all lands and buildings was calculated to determine the annual rental of each property. The tax was fixed at about 6d in the £ and the Act required that the occupiers, tenants, and the immediate lessors were liable for the tax.

It took sixteen years to complete the survey from 1848 to 1864. The work was carried out under the direction of Richard Griffith and for this reason is commonly known as “**Griffith’s Valuation**”.

Griffiths Valuation is now available online.

Information contained

The Primary Valuation of Rateable Property In Ireland was published, on a baronial basis, after its completion by the Government. Each poor law union is divided into electoral divisions, civil parishes and townlands. Included are the names of occupiers of land and buildings and of the persons from whom these were leased, the amount of property held, and the value assigned to it. The information in respect of each townland, listed in the parish to which it belongs, is as follows:

Number and Letters of Reference to Map -

Names -

Occupier

Immediate lessor

Description of Tenement - (House office or land)

Area: acres, roods, perches

Rateable Annual Valuation -

Land

Buildings

Total Annual Valuation of Rateable Property -

The map reference number is to the location of the tenement on the six inch to one mile Ordnance Survey maps of the 1830's.

The Primary Valuation therefore provides a census of all who held property in the year or years that the survey was made. It is of great genealogical value and a good census substitute.

The majority of the occupiers of the townlands in "Griffith's Valuation" were the ancestors of families that are living in these same townlands at the present time. It is only in recent years that those who stayed in Ireland married outside their own locality. On finding an ancestor in the Primary Valuation, it is likely that a number of ancestors will be found in the adjoining townlands of the same parish as well.

The name of the father of a person born during the 1850's should be found in the Primary Valuation. The person so found would most likely have been born during the period of 1800 to 1830. The death certificate of a person listed in the Primary Valuation should be found in the civil registers.

The Primary Valuation is itself a valuable guide for the use of other genealogical sources. The name of the "Immediate Lessors" would be of assistance in seeking out Estate Records, which may have additional information on an ancestor. The same information could be a lead to sources in the Registry of Deeds (see Chapter 12).

Index

The National Library of Ireland has prepared an index to the surnames in the Primary Valuation (the same index covers the Tithe Books). Each County of Ireland has an index book. The number of occupiers having a particular surname is listed by barony and also by parish. It is possible to search through the townlands to find occupiers' bearing the surname that one is interested in. The indexation of the actual names of persons in the Primary Valuation on a county basis has been undertaken in some instances. The Primary Valuation is available in the National Library of Ireland (on microfiche), in the National Archives, in

the Public Records Office Belfast and in many other repositories. Most County Libraries have the valuation for their particular county. The Genealogical Publishing Company of Baltimore has published a CD Index.

Manuscript valuation books

The manuscript records of the valuation which include the returns of the valuers provide more information than has been published.

There are three types of books:

House books - Number, name and description, quality letter, length, breadth, height, number of measures, rate per measure, amount.

Tenure books - content of farm, rent, tenure and year let, observations.

Field books - number of lot, description of lot, quantity, value per statute acre, amount of land £. s. d., amount of houses.

These are in the National Archives and are indexed by county.

Tithe Composition and Applotment Books

Tithes were payable by all, regardless of their religion to the established Church of Ireland prior to disestablishment. The Tithe Composition Acts provided, beginning in July 1823, for the payment of tithes to the clergy of each parish of the Church of Ireland in money rather than payment in kind as had been the position before. This new method of payment involved a valuation of the country parish by parish under the direction of parochial commissioners, one of whom was elected by the ratepayers and the other nominated by the Bishop of the Diocese.

The books were compiled between 1823 and 1838 as a survey of the tithable land in each parish. The Catholic Emancipation Act 1829 had not been enacted when the tithe valuation had become law and Catholic parish registers are not generally available for this period. It has been stated that "It was the first complete register of the people in relation to the working and tenancy of the land, and its worth is heightened by the fact that it is a duly certified recording of the occupation and usage of the land for the two decades immediately preceding the upheaval wrought by the Famine of 1847". After the Famine, people dispersed themselves throughout the townlands rather than living in clusters and many dispersed themselves further by emigrating.

Between the years 1823 and 1830, 1,353 parishes out of 2,450 parishes in Ireland had been accessed. The Tithe Books do not cover towns or cities. Tithe Books are not available for all parishes, in some cases this is because the parish did not exist at the time, or was united with

another parish at the time of the tithe survey and the area surveyed as part of another parish.

The land divisions contained in the Tithe Books are not the same as the present divisions, which exist from the Ordnance Survey of 1837. Because of this the Tithe Books are a record of the sub-divisions that comprised each parish in quarterlands, ploughlands and townlands and the names of such sub-divisions, as they were known at that time.

Information contained

The information contained varies but can include:

Name of the occupier

Name of townland

Acreage

Classification of land - into four classes

The amount of tithe

Areas not subject to tithe

Landlords' names

An ancestor found in the Tithe Books would most probably have been born during the period 1780 to 1800. It is possible that a person that you come across could be the father of a person listed in the Primary Valuation, given the lapse of a generation.

Where available

The Tithe Books, numbering two and a half thousand manuscript volumes, were transferred from the custody of the Commissioners of Church Temporalities to the Land Commission and from there to the Public Records Offices. They are expected to be put online in 2012.

The Tithe Books will now be found in the National Archives (for the Twenty Six Counties) and in the Public Records Office Belfast (for the Six Counties). The National Library of Ireland has microfilm copies of the Tithe Books for the Six Counties. The Public Records Office in Belfast has a card index of names contained in the Tithe Books covering Ulster. In addition to the index of surnames, which also cover the Primary Valuation, there is an index by parish and county. In the index of surnames the letter "T" distinguishes a surname that is contained in the Tithe Books.

Mode of inquiry

The recommended mode of inquiry to be followed when searching through the civil and parish registers is best considered in two stages:

Stage one

On the basis of information already obtained, estimate the date of birth of eldest child of a family, and then find the birth (baptism) certificate of this child which will verify the name of both parents.

Stage two

A birth (or baptism) certificate of the eldest child generally indicates a marriage during the previous year. An estimate of the year of marriage can then be made and a marriage certificate obtained. This will indicate (in the case of the civil registers) the dates of birth of the parents and give the names of the grandfathers (grandmothers are not noted).

The birth certificate of the husband and wife (or their eldest brother or sister) can then be sought and the process begun again

This can be continued back in time until one is faced with the problem that the civil records only began in 1864 (or 1845 as the case may be). However with the information obtained from the Baptism, Burial and Marriage entries you may now have got back a further generation.

Surnames in Ireland

First Edition December 2000

* Seven hundred surnames

* Gaelic form

* English variants

* Septs

* Branches

* Territory of origin

* Distribution in Ireland

* Estimated number of bearers

* Frequency in England and Wales

* Frequency in Scotland

* Frequency in United States

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An Introduction to Irish Ancestry

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The third edition has been expanded and updated. In addition to the five basic records (Census, Civil, Parish, Primary Valuation and Tithe Books), reference to additional genealogical records from the sixteenth century is included. In addition to the principal repositories in Ireland, reference is made to repositories in: Britain; United States; Canada; Australia; New Zealand; and South Africa. In all cases with respect to repositories location; telephone; fax; opening times; fees; and websites are given. Basic information with respect to the hundred most numerous surnames in Ireland and county distribution of surnames is given. With respect to the keeping of family records there is reference to links that make genealogical forms available.

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- A. The Introduction to the Book of Genealogies, by Dubhaltach Mac Fírbhí.
- B. The Ancient Tract on the Distribution of the Aithech-tuatha.
- C. The Lecan Miscellany, being a collection of Genealogical Excerpts in the Book of Lecan.

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