

University of Strathclyde Centre for Lifelong Learning

Family History Research: An Introduction



University of
Strathclyde
Humanities &
Social Sciences

Week 4: Part 2: A quick guide to Irish Records

Four Courts in Dublin

It is often said that there are no Irish records, because they were all destroyed in 1922 when the Four Courts, then the Irish Public Records Office, were besieged. This isn't strictly true.

What **was** lost:

- Virtually all original wills before 1900.
- Over 1,000 Church of Ireland registers.
- Most census returns, 1821-51.

Civil Registration Records

These records are available from:

- Births – 1864 onwards
- Deaths – 1864 onwards
- Marriages – 1845 onwards for Protestant marriages
- 1864 onwards for all marriages

Civil Registration Records

Civil Registration records from 1864 to 1922, for all Ireland, and from 1922 for the Republic are held at the Office of the Registrar General in Dublin.

Northern Irish records since 1922 are held at the GRO-NI, in Belfast.

Birth Records

Birth Certificates include:

- Child's name
- Sex
- Birth date & place
- Parents' names (including mother's maiden name);
- Father's occupation and residence
- Informant's signature, residence and qualification (often gives the relationship to the child being registered).

Marriage Records

- Marriage date, place and denomination (for church marriages)
- Names of bride and groom
- Ages (frequently given as "full age")
- Occupations
- Condition, i.e. marital status
- Residences at the time of marriage
- Names and occupations of fathers and whether their fathers were deceased
- Signatures of the bride, groom, and witnesses.

Death Records

- Name
- Occupation
- Age at death
- Marital status of deceased
- Duration of illness
- Date, place and cause of death
- Signature, qualification, and residence of the informant.

For a married or widowed woman a spouse's name is sometimes recorded.

Finding BMD Records

The Irish government has recently added BMD indexes to their genealogy website at www.irishgenealogy.ie

The records start at the earliest Protestant marriages from 1845 and cover births up to 100 years ago, marriages over 75 years ago and deaths over 50 years ago.. The indexes are free to access.

The LDS Church has transcribed the civil registration indexes, 1845-1958 – 21 million records. Available on www.familysearch.org (however, these indexes do not include Northern Ireland after 1922)

Ancestry also has the civil registration indexes, 1845-1958. (These are the indexes the LDS Church made, but Northern Ireland after 1922 is included). Available on www.ancestry.co.uk

You can use the information in the index entry to obtain a copy of the entry in the original register from the relevant General Register Office...

Northern Ireland

Note that records up until 1922 are also held in Dublin.

For records held in **Northern Ireland**, copies can be requested from the **GRO-Northern Ireland**.

You can use the **GRO-NI Online tool** to access records immediately.

GRO-NI Online <https://geni.nidirect.gov.uk/>

Using the online search tool, you can access indexes and records for:

- birth records over 100 years old
- marriage records over 75 years old
- death records (including World War II death records) over 50 years old

This means that unlike ScotlandsPeople, you cannot view index entries for records that fall after the cut-off date. For these you'll need to use the indexes or visit the GRO-NI search room in Belfast.

To use GRO-NI Online, you'll need to create an account and buy credits; you need a minimum of one credit available on your account to search the basic index which you then don't have to pay anything further to search. A credit costs £0.40 (as of October 2015) and the minimum credit you can buy is one. An 'enhanced' search of the indexes costs £0.40 per search and viewing a record costs £2.00.

Unlike ScotlandsPeople, you can't download the records onto your own computer, you can only view them onscreen – they do have a very useful 'magnifier' which comes up if you move your cursor over

the image.

Copies of certificates relating to any entries traced may be purchased at a cost of £15.00 each but cannot be provided immediately. The certificates can either be collected from GRO-NI or posted to the applicant.

General Register Office [Northern Ireland]. <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/government-citizens-and-rights/order-life-event-certificates.htm>

The Republic of Ireland

For records held in **Ireland**, copies can be requested from the **GRO** offices in Roscommon. It is important to note that only the indexes are open to the public; to obtain the full information contained in the original register entry, it is necessary to purchase a photocopy of the record.

Photocopies of records for genealogical purposes can be obtained from the Roscommon office for 4 Euros each if a GRO index code is known. If not, an extra 2 Euros search fee is charged. The GRO in Roscommon can also be used to order photocopies of northern records pre-1922, which is obviously substantially cheaper at about a quarter of the price of ordering from GRO-NI, though do check out the new GRO-NI Online service (see above). Official certificates can also be bought at 20 Euros each, but there's no need to do so, as photocopies have exactly the same info.

The downside with the GRO is its records cannot be paid for online - some records can be bought online, however, as certificates only, by using the Republic's Health Services Executive website, but coverage here is not complete. The charge for certificates through the Health Services Executive is 20 Euros. Website: www.groireland.ie and https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/GRO_Research.aspx.

Advice and a link to the 4 Euro photocopy order form (for faxing or posting) is on: <http://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/civil-records/help/i-want-to-get-a-copy-of-a-certificate-what-do-i-do>

Church Records

A recent initiative has seen the digitisation of the Roman Catholic parish registers which are held at the National Library of Ireland. These are available free. <http://registers.nli.ie/>

You need to enter the parish name and then you can browse through the relevant records. Note that they are **not indexed**. You can download any images found.

The Irish government site www.irishgenealogy.ie also has some church records including Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic records for a number of dioceses and some for Dublin and County Cork. These are all available free and many images are available.

The **LDS Church** has 3 main databases for Irish church records – these cover a variety of denominations. Not all areas are represented:

- Birth & baptismal records, 1620-1881 (5.3 million)
- Marriages, 1618-1898 (424,447 records)
- Deaths, 1864-1870 (51,249 records)

Available on <http://www.familysearch.org>.

Ancestry has the 'Catholic Parish Records (1742-1884)' database. It holds baptism, marriage/bann and death records from various counties on the island. Not all parishes are represented.

For births, marriages and deaths pre-1845/64, you will need to try consulting church records.

Major Denominations

- Roman Catholic Church
- Church of Ireland
- Presbyterian Church (Reformed, Non-Subscribing, etc.)
- Methodist Church
- Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
- Congregational Church
- Baptist Church

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRO-NI) has copies or originals of records for most churches in Ulster (the records themselves are not online here). <http://www.proni.gov.uk/>

The National Library of Ireland in Dublin has microfilms of most Roman Catholic registers. <http://www.nli.ie/>. These are now available online at <http://registers.nli.ie/>.

The National Archives of Ireland provide a PDF list on their website of surviving Church of Ireland parish registers that have been microfilmed. <http://www.nationalarchives.ie/PDF/CofIMicrofilms.pdf>.

The Representative Church Body Library has copies of many Church of Ireland registers. <http://ireland.anglican.org/library/> and they are beginning to provide some registers online for free.

The Presbyterian Historical Society has originals of some church registers. <http://www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com/>

A few records remain in private custody - contact those chapels/churches individually.

Irish Census Records

A census was held in Ireland every 10 years from 1821 to 1911. The census continues to be held and now is every 5 years in Eire.

Only a few fragments of the 1821-1851 survived the fire at the Four Courts in Dublin.

1821 – fragments survive for parts of counties Antrim, Armagh, Cavan, Down, Fermanagh, Monaghan, Tyrone

1831 – Abstract for Co. Londonderry, naming heads of household

1841 – part of Killeshandra parish in Co. Cavan

1851 – returns for several parishes or parts of parishes in Co. Antrim

The census returns for 1861, 1871, 1881, and 1891 were destroyed by the government.

Census returns for 1901 and 1911 survive. The National Archives of Ireland in Dublin has the 1901 & 1911 Irish (Eire and NI) census records.

The 1901 & 1911 censuses have been digitised and can be searched and viewed for **free** at: <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/>. You can also search this site for the earlier surviving census fragments.

Census Substitutes

Tithe Applotment records were records of assessment placed on the occupiers and owners of land, taken from 1823 – 1837. Fifty-five percent of the parishes had been surveyed by 1830. The records list the names of the tenants, townlands, area by acreage, valuation of the property and the amount of the tithe payable.

<http://titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/search/tab/home.jsp> Free.

"**Griffith's Valuations**" replaced the Tithe Applotment records as the means for collecting fees on tenements and land. The Griffith's Valuations (named after the originator Richard Griffith) were the original assessments and were conducted in the 1850's and 1860's. Subsequent valuations were taken annually throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century.

www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/index.xml Free.

The FamilySearch Research Wiki has a good list of census substitutes at:

https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Ireland_Census

Ireland Census Records website is a list of links to census fragments and substitutes:

<http://www.censusfinder.com/ireland.htm>

Also see the **Irish Family History Foundation** for online Griffith's Valuation rolls -

<http://www.rootsireland.ie/>

Ancestry.co.uk has both Griffith's and the Tithe Applotment records available to search but the entire individual record is not available. You just see the name and place not full details on the land. This may be enough for genealogical purposes, however.

Wills

Even though many wills were lost in the fire of 1922, the calendars of all wills proved since 1858 are at the Irish National Archives and PRONI. Also surviving are copies of wills that were made by the District Registries, these can be found either at PRONI or the Irish National Archives (depending on the area).

These calendars give:

- Deceased's name
- Address & occupation
- Date and place of death
- Estate's value
- Executors' or administrators' names and addresses

The Irish National Archives website has good background information and a search tool for calendars from 1858-1982. You can view the calendars 1858-1983 at the reading rooms at the Archives in Dublin. You'll also find information on finding pre-1858 wills that survive.

Calendars for the years 1858-1920 can be searched by name of deceased and name of executor and/or beneficiary and viewed via a standalone website.

National Archive of Ireland. *Calendars of Wills and Administrations 1858 – 1920.*

<http://www.willcalendars.nationalarchives.ie/search/cwa/home.jsp>.

You can search pdfs for will calendars from 1922 to 1982 on the main National Archives website. Calendars for 1921 have not been microfilmed and thus are not available but it's hoped to make these available in the future. Search for 'will calendar' and the year of interest at: <http://www.nationalarchives.ie/search-the-archives/> then view a .pdf document of the year's probate calendar for free. You will have to look through the document to find a name; names are in alphabetical order.

Testamentary records from 1923-1951 have been indexed and are now available to search by name of the deceased on the NA-I's online catalogue, these records have not been digitized but you can at least know that a will is available at the Archives before you visit.

FindMyPast.co.uk (with Irish records subscription)

Has the 'Irish Wills Index, 1484-1858' database (102,000+ records).

Gives:

- Name of person leaving will or being covered by grant of probate
- Address of person
- Occupation (usually)
- Place where will was proven
- Witness names (on ½ of wills recorded)

PRONI has an online calendars' search for Armagh, Belfast and Londonderry from 1858 to c.1900. You can view the entire will calendar entry and they have digitised images of entries from the copy will books for certain time periods for the 3 district registries:

- Belfast: 1858-1909
- Armagh: 1858-1918
- Londonderry: 1858-1899

This allows users to view the full content of a will. 93,388 will images are available to view for free!

Will calendars and digitized copies of wills.

http://www.proni.gov.uk/index/search_the_archives/will_calendars.htm : accessed 10 September 2014.

Generally Good Resources

National Library of Ireland - <http://www.nli.ie>

Has newspapers, city and regional directories, estate records, Catholic records, the Householders Index and Griffith's Primary Valuation. They have much good advice as well.

Irish Family History Foundation - <http://www.rootsireland.ie/>

A federation of local family history centres in Ireland (Republic + NI) working together to offer online records and advice. Currently have 17 million plus records online:

- Church Records
- BMD (civil registration)
- Census Records
- Griffith's Valuation
- Memorial Inscriptions

This site now offers various subscription options: annual (£160); 6-monthly (£90) or for 1 month only (£18).

'Irish Genealogy' - www.irishgenealogy.ie

The Republic of Ireland is funding this website through the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It includes civil records and records from churches and it can be used for free.

PRONI - <http://www.proni.gov.uk/> The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRO-NI) has many freely available online databases of sources.

Other good places to start online

- GENUKI <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/irl/>
- Irish Times <http://www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/index.htm>
- Ulster Historical Foundation <http://www.ancestryireland.com/>
- Irish Roots <http://www.irelandroots.com/>
- FindMyPast.co.uk (need subscription with access to Irish records)

There's much more...

It is possible to find information about Irish ancestors, so don't let the obvious difficulties hold you back from beginning your search. Check with the various Archives in Ireland for more resources – there's much more than we've had time to outline here. Good luck!

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

Blatchford, Robert and Blatchford, Elizabeth (2013) *Irish family and local history handbook, 2*. Robert Blatchford Pub Ltd.

Grenham, John (2012) *Tracing your Irish ancestors: the complete guide*. 4th ed. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Maxwell, Ian (2010) *Tracing your Northern Irish ancestors: a guide for family historians*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword.

Maxwell, Ian (2008) *Your Irish ancestors: a guide for family historians*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword.

Paton, Chris (2013) *Tracing your Irish family history on the internet: a guide for family historians*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword.

Stewart, Alan (2012) *My ancestor was Irish*. London: Society of Genealogists.

In addition, there is a useful series entitled 'Tracing Your... (insert county name, eg Donegal) Ancestors', published by Flyleaf Press.

Also, there is a free online magazine entitled *Irish Lives Remembered*, available at <http://www.irishlivesremembered.com/>