

BACKGROUND SOURCES

Names

- Surnames—to find spelling variations of surnames use www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/surname.
- First names and nicknames—for example, Delia or Bidy were nicknames for Bridget. For more information, see *A Rose by Any Other Name: A Guide to Irish Christian Names*, by Judith Eccles Wight (FHL film 1162446 Item 2).

Place names, Gazetteers, and Maps

Levels of Jurisdiction. In Ireland geographic organization went from smallest to largest in the following order: townland or town, civil parish, barony, county, country. In the case of a large city, there might be several parishes in that city. Ireland was all one country until 1922, when it divided into the Republic of Ireland (which includes the counties of Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Leitrim, Limerick, Longford, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly, Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary, Waterford, Westmeath, Wexford, and Wicklow) and Northern Ireland (which contains the counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Tyrone, and Derry, also known as Londonderry).

Parishes. There are two types of parishes in Ireland, civil and ecclesiastical. Typically the civil parishes share the same names and boundaries as the ecclesiastical parishes of the Church of Ireland (Anglican Church). The parishes of the Roman Catholic Church were only ecclesiastical and often have different names and boundaries than the civil parishes in their area. The Church of Ireland had its own dioceses and the Roman Catholic Church had its own dioceses.

Background information sources such as maps, gazetteers, local histories, etc., will help you understand what is going on. Knowing the area where your ancestor lived is very important!! Look on-line at www.genuki.org.uk. Look under the heading Maps and also Gazetteers on both the country and county level. Also, try the following books (if available):

- *A New Genealogical Atlas of Ireland*, 2nd edition, by Brian Mitchell (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Pub. Co., 2002)
- *Alphabetical Index to the Townlands and Towns of Ireland* by Alexander Thom (FHL microfilm 476999 item 2; fiche 6020345-53). This is the 1871 edition. This index also exists for 1851 (not on microfilm) and 1901 (FHL film 865092). On-line at www.seanruad.com.

CHURCH RECORDS

Roman Catholic

Contrary to popular belief, these were not lost in the 1922 fire. Some have been lost through the centuries by careless record keepers. The real problem is that most parishes did not keep registers until the 19th century. The exceptions were urban areas.

Baptism—Child's name, father's name, mother's maiden name, sponsors (godparents), date of baptism (children were to be baptized as soon as possible after birth)

Marriage—Groom's name, bride's name, witnesses (often related to the bride or groom, date of marriage)

Burials—Burial registers were kept by only about 20% of parishes until 1880. When they do survive they typically give only the name of the deceased and the date of burial

Roman Catholic Records at the Family History Library (FHL)

- The FHL has about 30% of Catholic parish registers on microfilm—check the Family History Library Catalog (FHLC) for availability by doing a Place or Keyword search for the name of the civil parish (the Catholic parishes are cross-referenced).
- The FHL has transcripts of some other Catholic parish registers.
- The Casey Collection covers the Upper Blackwater River—North Cork and East Kerry.

Records not at the FHL

- The National Library of Ireland (www.nli.ie) has virtually all Roman Catholic parish registers prior to 1880 on microfilm.
- The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI, www.proni.gov.uk) has many Roman Catholic records for Northern Ireland.

- Heritage Centers have indexed many Roman Catholic records (see section below).
- Local custody. To find contact information for the local parish priest, do a Google search for the name of the parish and county and “Roman Catholic,” such as “**Ballintra Donegal Roman Catholic.**” Write a letter or call him. Be courteous and offer a donation to the parish for his time.

Searching Catholic records

The records are in Latin, but the Latin is very basic:

Filia—daughter of

Filius—son of

conj./conjuncti—joined together in marriage

de—of

afinitatus—related through a previous marriage of the two families

coram—in the presence of (witnesses)

Patrini or Sp. or Ss.—sponsors (godparents)

et—and

consanguinati en tertio grado—second cousins

Check surrounding parishes if a register begins too late.

Check the Church of Ireland records in that area!

See the appendix to Grenham’s book for a good listing of records (including those not at the FHL). This information can be found on the Internet at www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/browse/counties/rcmaps/index.htm.

Church of Ireland

Approximately one-third to one-half of the Anglican records were destroyed in the 1922 fire. That means half to two-thirds survive in some form. The records of the Established Church were the only ones considered legal in a court of law until the 19th century. Consequently, ancestors of other religions might appear in them.

Baptisms—Child’s name, father’s name, mother’s name (but not maiden), date of baptism, (from 1820s onwards) date of birth, occupation of father, and “abode”

Marriages—Name of groom, name of bride, date of marriage, (from 1820s onwards) addresses of parties, names and addresses of witnesses

Burials—Name of deceased, date of burial

Church of Ireland records at the FHL

- The FHL has little on microfilm for the Church of Ireland, but it does have some published and donated transcripts, such as Dublin, Limerick. Do a Place or Keyword search of the FHLC for the parish in question.
- Indexes to Marriage License Bonds of the Church of Ireland. Do a Place search in the FHLC for Ireland and then look under the subject “**Church Records—Indexes.**” Please note that only these indexes survive, not the actual licenses.

Records not at the FHL

- See Reid, Noel, ed., *A Table of Church of Ireland Parochial Records and Copies* (Naas, Ireland: Irish Family History Society, 1994), for survival of the records and where they are deposited.
- The Representative Church Body Library (www.ireland.anglican.org/library) has many originals.
- PRONI (www.proni.gov.uk) holds many copies for Northern Ireland.
- Many have been indexed by Heritage Centers (see that section below).
- Local custody. To find contact information for the local parish priest, do a Google search the name of the parish and county and “Church of Ireland,” such as “**Drumhome Donegal Church of Ireland**” for contact information of the local priest. Write a letter or call him. Be courteous and offer a donation to the parish for his time.

Presbyterian

These were NOT destroyed in the 1922 fire. As with Roman Catholic records, the real problem is that most congregations did not keep registers until the 19th century. The exceptions were urban areas.

Baptism—Child’s name, date of baptism, parents’ names. In 19th century it was more common to also include date of birth, mother’s maiden name, names of the sponsors, and the townland.

Marriage—Name of groom, name of bride, name of bride’s father (sometimes), date of marriage

Burials—Presbyterians rarely kept burial records. Look for Presbyterians in Church of Ireland burial records and churchyards as well as their own.

Presbyterian records at the FHL

- A few copies and transcripts are at the FHL. Do a Keyword search in the FHLC for the name of the congregation to locate any records available.

Records not at the FHL

- PRONI has an extensive collection. See *An Irish Genealogical Source Guide to Church Records* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation on behalf of [the] Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, 1994).

- James G. Ryan, ed., *Irish Church Records, 2nd edition* (Glenageary, Ireland: Flyleaf Press, 2001).
- Many have been indexed by Heritage Centers (see that section below).
- Local custody. To find contact information for the local minister, do a Google search for the name of the congregation and county and “Presbyterian,” such as “**Castledawson Londonderry Presbyterian.**” Write a letter or call him. Be courteous and offer a donation to the parish for his time.

Kirk Session Minutes

Always check kirk session minutes for the congregation. These often contain notices of intention to marry, and sometimes even baptism and marriage entries. Sometimes information about migration can be gleaned from the minutes or from Certificates of Transference where they survive.

Tips for finding Presbyterians

Always check records of the Church of Ireland in the area of your ancestors.

Also check the Indexes to Marriage License Bonds of the Church of Ireland. Do a Place search in the FHLC for Ireland and then look under the subject “**Church Records—Indexes.**” Please note that only these indexes survive, not the actual licenses.

Heritage Centres—These have typically indexed at least the Roman Catholic records for their area, and many have also indexed the extant Church of Ireland and some Presbyterian records. They research on commission. They are a valuable resource if you know what county your people came from, some dates and relationships for your ancestor, but you don’t know where in the county he/she was from. They are even more valuable in counties where the FHL has no Catholic records. See www.irish-roots.ie for a complete listing. Over half of the centres have their records online pay-per-view but with free indexes!

Summary Table: Sources for finding Irish church records in other repositories

Religious denomination	Finding aid
Roman Catholic	See Appendix, John Grenham, <i>Tracing Your Irish Ancestors</i> , 3 rd edition (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Pub. Co., 2006); also www.irishtimes.com/ancestor under Browse and then Roman Catholic parish maps
Church of Ireland	Noel Reid, <i>A Table of Church of Ireland Parochial Records and Copies</i> , (Naas, Ireland: Irish Family History Society, 1994)
Presbyterian	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, <i>An Irish Genealogical Source Guide to Church Records</i> (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation on behalf of [the] Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, 1994).
All denominations (the Heritage Centres have indexed more Catholic records than Church of Ireland or Presbyterian)	www.irish-roots.ie Some counties have records pay-per-view online, or you can commission the services of a Heritage Centre.

Methodists, Quakers etc.

The FHL has an almost complete collection of Quaker records. See the FHLC for the *Guide to Irish Quaker Records 1654-1860* by Olive Goodbody (Dublin: Stationery Office for the Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1967). The FHL has few records for other denominations in Ireland. See *Irish Church Records, 2nd edition* by James G. Ryan, editor (Glenageary, Ireland: Flyleaf Press, 2001) for more information and listing of records.

CIVIL REGISTRATION

Civil Registration of Catholic marriages began on January 1, 1864 in Ireland. Registration of non-Catholic marriages began on April 1, 1845. Civil registration was a system where people were to report births, marriages or deaths to the government. See the lesson on Ireland Civil Registration for more information and helps.

Good Books for Irish Research

Grenham, John. *Tracing your Irish Ancestors, 3rd edition*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2006. Much of this book is on-line at www.ireland.com/ancestor/browse/.

Maxwell, Ian. *Tracing your Ancestors in Northern Ireland*. Edinburgh: The Stationary Office, 1997.

Radford, Dwight and Kyle Betit. *Ireland: A Genealogical Guide*. Salt Lake City: The Irish at Home and Abroad, 1998.
(FHL film 1145947 item 3)
A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering your Irish Ancestors. Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books, 2001.

Ryan, James. *Irish Records: Sources for Family and Local History*. Provo, UT: Ancestry Inc., 1997. (now in 2nd ed.)
Irish Church Records : Their History, Availability and Use in Family and Local History Research. Glenageary,
Dublin, Ireland: Flyleaf Press, 2001.

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