

Finding Your Irish Ancestors

VBGS Education Committee – How-To Class – 5 October 2021

Essential Facts:

The island of Ireland was divided into two countries in 1922.

- Northern Ireland part of the United Kingdom along with Wales, Scotland, and England.
- The Republic of Ireland¹

Townlands are the most basic and oldest of the land divisions in Ireland. They can be less than an acre and up to 7,000 acres.²

A civil parish was used for census and taxation purposes. In 1898, Poor law unions replaced civil parishes as the basic local government unit. Civil parishes are still used in some legal situations.³

Poor Law Unions were established in 1838 when the Irish Poor Law Act divided the country initially into one hundred and thirty Poor Law Unions with a workhouse in each of the Poor Law Unions.⁴

District Electoral Divisions (DED), subdivisions of Poor Law Unions, are now known as Electoral Divisions (EDs) and are used for voting and census tasks.⁵

Baronies are historical subdivisions of counties and are no longer used for most government administrative purposes.⁶

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) is the official archive for Northern Ireland and holds public records dating from around the formation of Northern Ireland along with a small number of documents from the 18th and 19th centuries.⁷

1. Maurice Gleeson, *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors: Irish Research a Practical Guide* (Ontario, Canada: Moorehead Magazines Ltd., Inc., 2018).

2. Ibid.

3. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_parishes_in_Ireland: accessed 24 September 2021), "Civil parishes in Ireland."

4. "Guide to the archives of the Poor Law," National Archives.ie, (<https://www.nationalarchives.ie/article/guide-archives-poor-law/>: accessed 30 July 2021).

5. "County Clare District Electoral Divisions (DEDs)," Clare County Council Libraries (<https://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/ded/deds.htm>: accessed 30 July 2021).

6. Wikipedia, *The Free Encyclopedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barony_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barony_(Ireland)): accessed 24 September 2021), "Barony (Ireland)."

General Register Office (GRO) is the central civil (government) repository for records relating to births, deaths, marriages, and adoptions in the Republic of Ireland.⁸

Public Records Office (PRO) was the office in the Four Courts Building in Dublin where the records were destroyed in 1922.⁹

Representative Church Body Library (RCBL) is the repository for the Church of Ireland.¹⁰

Penal Laws excluded Catholics from holding public office, voting, owning land, and holding arms. In addition, Catholics were required to pay tithes to the Church of Ireland.¹¹

Catholic Emancipation occurred in 1829 when the Catholic Relief Act was passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom. This removed many of the restrictions of the penal laws.¹²

General Guides to Searching for Irish Ancestors:

- Ireland Genealogy at the FamilySearch Wiki:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Genealogy
- How to trace your Irish family history: a step-by-step guide (by John Grenham)
<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/abroad/how-to-trace-your-irish-family-history-a-step-by-step-guide-1.3423973>
- Irish Genealogy Toolkit
<https://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/>
- John Grenham (part 1 of 3) Tracing Irish Ancestors Using Online Resources
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xj62-yef_gs

7. "Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)," *Department for Communities* (<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/public-record-office-northern-ireland-proni>: accessed 31 August 2021).

8. "General Register Office," gov.ie (<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/af7893-general-register-office/>: accessed 30 July 2021).

9. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_parishes_in_Ireland: accessed 24 September 2021), "National Archives of Ireland."

10. "RCB Library," *Church of Ireland* (<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/rcb-library>: accessed 30 July 2021).

11. "Anti-Catholic Penal Laws In Ireland," Your Irish Culture (<https://www.yourirish.com/history/17th-century/introduction-of-anti-catholic-penal-laws>: accessed 30 July 2021).

12. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_emancipation: accessed 24 September 2021), "Catholic emancipation."

- Finding the Irish Cousins Who Stayed Behind
<https://www.familysearch.org/rootstech/rtc2021/session/finding-the-irish-cousins-who-stayed-behind>
- Irish Naming Conventions and Baptism Traditions
<https://irelandxo.com/ireland-xo/news/irelandxo-insight-irish-naming-and-baptism-traditions>
- Ireland Emigration and Immigration wiki at FamilySearch
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Emigration_and_Immigration

Religious Records:

- Ireland Church Records with links to information about available church records
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Church_Records
- Ireland Jewish Records
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Jewish_Records
- Church of Ireland – Parish Registers
<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/news/7250/church-of-ireland-parish-record>

This list of Church of Ireland parish registers tells what survives, where it can be found, with additional information about copies, transcripts, and online indexes.

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/AboutUs/library/registers/ParishRegisters/PARISHREGISTERS.pdf>

- Irish Catholic Parish Registers at NLI (National Library of Ireland)
<https://registers.nli.ie>

Latin in Irish Catholic parish registers

<https://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/latin-irish-parish-registers.html>

Latin Names in English

<https://www.from-ireland.net/irish-names/latin-names-in-english/>

Placenames, Available Records, and More:

- Details about placenames and **available records** at Irish Ancestors* (Subscription with some free pages)
www.johngrenham.com/places
*Before using this site, watch *Irish Ancestors: Welcome to the site*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0xYuE7wvt0>

- Irish townlands, details, and maps
<https://www.townlands.ie/>

Finding Your Ancestor's Origin:

- A Comprehensive Guide to Finding Your Immigrant Ancestor's Hometown
<https://www.genealogypuzzlessolved.com/immigration>
- Five Steps for Finding that Hard-to-Find Irish Ancestor
<https://www.legacytree.com/blog/five-steps-finding-irish-ancestors>
- Finding Your Irish Immigrant Ancestors 10 Places to Start Your Search in the U.S.
<https://www.ancestrycdn.com/mars/landing/pdf/us/finding-irish-ancestors.pdf>
- Mournful Exodus: Strategies for Finding Your Irish Ancestors' Origins (3 parts)
<https://www.familysearch.org/rootstech/rtc2021/session/mournful-exodus-strategies-for-finding-your-irish-ancestors-origins-part-1-of-3>

DNA:

AncestryDNA

<https://www.ancestry.com/>

My Heritage

<https://www.myheritage.com/dna>

23andMe

<https://www.23andme.com>

FamilyTreeDNA (offers Y DNA testing)

<https://www.familytreedna.com/>

Census:

- Information about the census of Ireland 1901/1911 and census substitutes.
<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/>
- Pre-1901 census fragments that survived the 1922 fire are described at this link
<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/help/pre1901.html>
- Search the census of Ireland 1901/1911 and census fragments at this link.
<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/>

- 1911 Census - Explanation of House and Building Return Form B.1
<http://sites.rootsweb.com/~irlker/cens11b1explan.html>
- Census Search Forms 1841-51 collection consists of applications and census transcripts from 1841 and 1851, which were used as proof of age in order to apply for a pension.
<http://censussearchforms.nationalarchives.ie/search/cs/home.jsp>
- Two often used census substitutes are the Griffiths Valuation report books from 1831-1856 and the Tithe Applotment Books ((1823-1837).

Ireland, Valuation Office Books, 1831-1856

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2329951>

Tithe Applotment Books

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

Land:

- Fáilte Romhat-Land Owners in Ireland 1876
<https://www.failteromhat.com/lo1876.php>
- Griffiths Valuation
www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/

6 Steps to Tracing Irish Ancestors in Griffith's Valuation

<https://www.familytreemagazine.com/heritage/irish/tutorial-tracing-irish-ancestors-in-griffiths-valuation/>

The Primary Valuation (Griffith's Valuation), a video tutorial

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63-ynW-CrZE>

- Landed Estates Court Rentals 1850-1885
The original notebooks that were used when the property valuations were conducted by the Office of the General Valuation of Ireland.
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2040586>

Landed Estates Court Rentals explained by Donna Moughty

<https://www.irishfamilyroots.com/post/landed-estates-court-rentals>

Civil Registration Records:

- Introduction to the Civil Registration Records at the FamilySearch Wiki
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Civil_Registration
- IrishGenealogy.ie
<https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/civil-search.jsp>

Court Records:

- Calendars of Wills and Administrations 1858-2010 (National Archives of Ireland)
<http://www.willcalendars.nationalarchives.ie/search/cwa/home.jsp>
- Calendar of Wills 1858-1918; Index 1858-1965 (PRONI)
https://apps.proni.gov.uk/WillsCalendar_IE/WillsSearch.aspx
- Find My Past has a large number of local court record collections. \$
<https://search.findmypast.com/>

Deserted Children Dublin

Donegal, Grand Jury Presentments 1753-1899

Ireland Dog Licence Registers

Ireland, Court of Chancery Bill Books 1627-1884

Ireland, Court of Exchequer Bill Books 1627-1884

Ireland, Legal Administration

Ireland, Petty Sessions Court Registers

Irish Prison Registers 1790-1924

Military Records:

- Military Archives at Defence Forces Ireland
Pension collections, Easter Rising Records, 1922 Irish Army Census, Oral History Project, and more.
<https://www.militaryarchives.ie/en/collections/online-collections>
- Irish Soldiers' Records (National Army Museum in London). Irish units of the British Army, which were disbanded following the establishment of the independent Irish Free State in 1922. The enlistment books contain records of soldiers serving in these regiments in the period 1920-22.
<https://www.nam.ac.uk/soldiers-records/persons>
- Find My Past has a large amount of military, armed forces, and conflict records. \$
<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-united-kingdom-records-in-military-armed-forces-and-conflict>

Newspapers:

- Irish News Archive is the largest and oldest online database of Irish newspapers for both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. If you have a subscription to American Ancestors, this site is included. \$
www.irishnewsarchive.com
- Ireland Old News - Transcribed news articles from many counties along with an index of 54,867 obituaries
<http://www.irelandoldnews.com/>
- Newspaper Archives (Dublin newspapers) \$
<https://newspaperarchive.com/>
- Newspapers.com (Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland) \$
<https://www.newspapers.com/>
- Find My Past (Large collection of newspapers from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland) \$
<https://search.findmypast.com/search/irish-newspapers>
- Ancestry.com \$
<https://www.ancestry.com/>
Belfast, Northern Ireland, The Belfast Newsletter (Birth, Marriage and Death Notices), 1738-1925
Ireland, Police Gazettes, 1861-1893
Railway Gazette Worldwide Historical Data, 1860-1930
Ireland, Newspapers, 1763-1890
- Trove – Free digitized newspapers, published between 1803 to 1954, from the National Library of Australia
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/>

Cemeteries:

- Irish Graveyards
www.irishgraveyards.ie
- Find a Grave (Republic of Ireland)
<https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery-browse/Ireland?id=country> 35
- Billion Graves
<https://billiongraves.com/>

- Interment.net
<http://www.interment.net/Default.htm>
- Irish graveyard burial records. A list of graveyard burial records found online from John Grenham.
https://www.johngrenham.com/browse/retrieve_text.php?text_contentid=522

Websites with Numerous Irish Resources:

- Ancestry.com \$
<https://www.ancestry.com/>
- Find My Past \$
<https://www.findmypast.com/>
- National Archives of Ireland (NAI)
<https://www.nationalarchives.ie/>
- National Library of Ireland (NLI)
<http://www.nli.ie/>
Catholic Parish Registers at the NLI
<https://registers.nli.ie/>
- FamilySearch
Ireland Genealogy – a FamilySearch Wiki with links to Ireland’s county wiki’s, and wiki’s concerning record types, research strategies, tutorials and more.
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Genealogy

All things Ireland in the FamilySearch Catalog
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/results?count=20&placeId=76&query=%2Bplace%3AIreland>
- RootsIreland \$
<https://www.rootsireland.ie/>
- Irish Ancestors* (part free/part subscription)
<https://www.johngrenham.com/>
*Before using this site, watch *Irish Ancestors: Welcome to the site*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0xYuE7wvt0>

- American Ancestors by the New England Historic Genealogical Society \$
<https://www.americanancestors.org/about>
- Ireland Genealogy Projects (IGP) – County research aids and links as well as transcribed headstones and documents.
<http://www.igp-web.com/>
- GENUKI (Genealogy for the United Kingdom and Ireland)
<https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/irl>

More Resources:

- Wiki Tree
<https://www.wikitree.com/>
- Cyndi's List (Ireland and Northern Ireland)
<https://www.cyndislist.com/uk/irl/>
- Google Books
<https://books.google.com/>
- JSTOR – An electronic archive of journals covering many academic areas. Put the name of a townland, family member, or an event into the search. With a Google account, you can read up to 100 articles, for no cost, each month.
<https://www.jstor.org/>
- Facebook - Search Facebook for groups that may be of interest or browse Kathleen Wilson's list of Facebook Groups.
<https://moonswings.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/genealogy-on-facebook-jan-2021.pdf>