GETTING STARTED

Do your homework!

- **Start with what you know** and work backwards. Note basic facts such as when and where you, your parents and grandparents were born.

- **Talk to family and friends** as they will remember useful snippets of information. Make a note of what each person tells you as accounts may differ. You can refer to your notes to verify your research and fill in gaps.

- **Look for other sources at home**: Family Bibles may contain details of births, marriages and deaths. Look on the back of old photographs for names, dates and places. Many people keep certificates, news-cuttings and other mementoes to remind them of significant events. Think where you keep these things and check attics, wardrobes, old shoeboxes, etc.

- **Check family gravestone inscriptions** for names and vital dates – your local council may have access to a searchable database.

- **Gather the paperwork**, eg, birth, death and marriage certificates. Civil certificates can be obtained from the General Register Office.

Key information is:

- **Names** – often repeated within families: check the given names of grandparents, uncles, etc. for a common family name. Remember, spelling was not standard in the past and variations in the spelling of surnames are common.
• **Dates:** dates of significant events, eg, birth, marriage, death. Date of emigration, if relevant, is helpful.

• **Places** – the area your family came from is very important, a place name is vital to locate records such as church registers. Note references to townland names, parishes and counties.

Remember, it is not vital to have all of this detail to begin with, but the more information you can gather, the better you will be able to target your research. These few basic facts will help you to be more selective when you are ready to **Go Online!**

Visit our website at [www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk) to access the PRONI eCatalogue

Search some of PRONI’s most significant family history resources digitised and available online:

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<tr>
<th>PRONI eCatalogue</th>
<th>Online Databases</th>
<th>Online Guides and Indexes</th>
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<tr>
<td>With over one million entries the catalogue is fully searchable by key word and phrase.</td>
<td>Names Search (including Coroners' inquests to 1920)</td>
<td>Guide to Church Records</td>
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<td>Will Calendars (to 1900 – links to wills images)</td>
<td>Privately Deposited Archives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ulster Covenant (links to digitised forms including signatures)</td>
<td>Newspaper Index</td>
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Consult the comprehensive series of family history leaflets also available.

Link from PRONI website to other genealogical websites, eg, 1901 and 1911 Census for Ireland, at [www.nationalarchives.ie](http://www.nationalarchives.ie) and Griffith’s Valuation at [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) are useful free sites.

Try websites such as Google Earth to familiarise yourself with the significant places you have discovered and their proximity to one another.

Complete this initial fact finding to prepare you to begin your family history research.
FIRST STEPS IN PRONI

Where you start your research in PRONI depends on the information you have been able to gather.

1. What if I have no relatives to ask and little or no information on my family?

   - Start with the **PRONI eCatalogue** available either in the Search Room or on-line at [www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk). Searchable by keyword, phrase or reference number, the eCatalogue search results provide names, dates, locations and some information on the documents.

   - Try **PRONI Names Search** and other databases including Will Calendars, Ulster Covenant, Freeholders and Street Directories – all link names and places.

   - Look at the 1901 or 1911 Census freely available at [www.nationalarchives.ie](http://www.nationalarchives.ie)

   - Try Griffith’s Valuation, a record of householders from c. 1860, also a free site available at [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie)

2. If I know that my family has always lived in a particular area, what are the best sources for me?

   - All of the sources listed above will be useful.

   - **Church records**: registers of baptisms, marriages and sometimes burials. Pinpoint the parish to limit your search (more straightforward for rural areas than cities or towns where there can be many churches in a relatively small area). Check the PRONI Guide to Church Records, listing records by parish, available on our website.

   - **Search Room Geographical Index**, only available on-site. The index, arranged by townlands, gives a PRONI reference number for records including the earliest valuation books and corresponding maps. Valuations were carried out on buildings and land to determine what rates should be paid. PRONI also holds the Valuation Revision records (PRONI ref VAL 12B) allowing researchers to track name changes for property ownership. This can point to a date of death or a family leaving the area.

   - **Alphabetical Index to the Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland**, in the PRONI Library to connect townlands and parishes.
(Ireland was sub-divided in a particular way: counties into baronies, baronies into parishes, and parishes into townlands. The townland is a unique feature of the Irish landscape and is one of the most ancient divisions in the country. Other divisions to look out for are Poor Law Unions (PLU), administrative divisions for the Workhouse system and District Electoral Divisions (DED), which can be needed to locate some records. The Geographical index available on the PRONI website is a helpful guide to understanding and locating administrative divisions within Northern Ireland)

- Note the townland, parish and names of other divisions as this information will help you to locate other records as your research continues.
- **Tithe Applotment Books**, 1823–1837 are also place related (although cities and larger towns were excluded). These are available on microfilm in PRONI with an index at PRONI reference MIC 15K.
- **School Registers** are available at PRONI ref SCH.

**What if I Cannot Come to PRONI**

If you are unable to visit us in person, you can still make use of the PRONI eCatalogue, guides, indexes and databases and links to other sites available on our website.

PRONI can also undertake specific searches for a fee. You must put your request for a copy or a search in writing (e-mail is fine). We cannot provide a comprehensive research service but a list of commercial researchers operating in Northern Ireland who undertake this work can be obtained from PRONI and is available on our website. Please note the commercial researchers listed do not work for PRONI, we cannot recommend any particular person or organisation, nor can we be held responsible for the standard of their work, or for any qualification or title they may claim to hold.

Further information on search options, together with details of the copying service, can be found on the PRONI website: [www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk).
1901 is the earliest and most complete surviving census of Ireland. 1901 and 1911 census records have been digitised by The National Archives of Ireland (custodians of the original census forms) and are freely available on-line at www.nationalarchives.ie

Census records can be used to find a date of birth for people born before the introduction of Civil Registration in Ireland in 1864, for example someone aged 51 in 1901 would have been born in 1850 – 14 years before birth certificates were available. The early 19th century census records also provide information on people who were born before the Great Famine.

What is recorded?

All those in the house at the time were included. This means that servants, lodgers, boarders and even visiting friends are listed but members of the family, away from home on the day were not included with the other family members. The census, gathered on 31 March 1901 and 2 April 1911, recorded the following:

- First name
- Surname
- Relationship to the head of the household
- Religious denomination
- Literacy level
- Age
- Gender
- Occupation
- Marital status
- Place of birth
- Ability to speak or write Irish
- Specified disabilities
The 1911 census asked married women to state the number of years they had been married, the number of their children born alive and the number still living. This is a pointer towards the year of marriage and to children not surviving at the time of the census.

**Using the Census**

The returns for each townland or street are:

- **Form A** – filled in by the head of each household, giving the names of all people in that household on census night and their age, occupation, religion and place of birth. There should be a separate form for each household.

- **Forms N, B1 and B2** were filled in by the official taking the census, summarising the returns for each townland or street.

- **Form N** is the enumerator's abstract for a townland or street;
- **Form B1** summarises the houses and buildings;
- **Form B2** is a summary of the outhouses and farmsteads;
- **Form B3** is a shipping return.
- **Forms C** is a return of the sick at their own homes
- **Form D** is a return of lunatics not in institutions

**Forms E – K** are institutional returns for example, workhouses, hospitals, asylums, barracks etc and in these cases many names are indexed by initials only. The information on the form (place of birth, occupation and marital status should help you to confirm the identity of the person you are looking for.

- **Form E** is a return of inmates in the workhouse;
- **Form F** is a return of those in hospital;
- **Form G**, those at college and boarding school;
- **Form H**, the military, Royal Irish Constabulary and Metropolitan Police in barracks;
- **Form I** lunatics in institutions and private lunatic asylums;
- **Form K** is a return of those confined in prisons, bridewells and police stations.
Missing Townlands/Streets

A number of townlands/streets do not appear in the online census for 1901 and 1911, in most cases this material has never been microfilmed and so was not digitised. This will explain a nil return in some cases.

Census on Microfilm

Microfilm copies of the original census returns for 1901 are held at PRONI, Ref. MIC354.
What church records are available at PRONI?

PRONI holds microfilm copies of church records for most of the main religious denominations, relating to Northern Ireland and also some relating to the Republic of Ireland. These include the Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Moravian, Congregational and Non-Subscribing Presbyterian. Some original church records have also been deposited with PRONI.

Is there a guide to these records?

Yes. PRONI has produced a *Guide to Church Records* that details which records are held at PRONI for each individual church, the covering dates for each series of records and what the PRONI reference number is. The Guide is arranged alphabetically by parish. Normally there will be churches relating to more than one denomination in each parish and these can be identified in the Guide. The Guide is available in the Public Search Room and on the PRONI website – [www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk)

What documents are contained in Church Records?

The records usually contain the registers of baptisms, marriages and burials, many of which pre-date civil registration and sometimes communion rolls, vestry minutes, account books, etc., that can be equally useful, especially as they often pre-date the registers.
What information is contained in the records?

This varies greatly between individual churches.

**Baptism records** – The information contained in these records varies but they may contain the following:

- The name of the child
- The date of baptism and of birth
- The name of the father
- The maiden name of the mother
- The townland where they lived

Sometimes the occupation of the father is also given. Less detailed entries will give only the date of the baptism and the name of the father.

**Marriage Records** – From 1845, church marriage registers are the same as the civil registers, and always contain:

- the date of the marriage
- the names of the two parties
- their age (often the record will state only ‘full age’, meaning that they were over 21 years old)
- the names of the fathers of each party and their respective occupations
- the townland where each party resided

Pre-1845 marriage entries are as varied in content as the baptism entries. In addition to the names of the parties and the date of marriage, the townland where each resided is often given but rarely the names of the fathers.

**Burial registers** – These records are more standardised and usually contain the following information:

- Name
- Date of burial (or sometimes that of death)
- Address
- Age

How do I view these records?

Most of the Church records are on microfilm (PRONI reference **MIC**), available in the Public Search Room self-service microfilm cabinets.
Others, however, have not been microfilmed (usually those with the CR reference) and these can be ordered via the computer terminals in the Public Search Room and consulted in the Reading Room. In many cases only those Church records pre-dating 1900 have been copied or deposited.

**What information do I need to search for a record?**

You will need to know the name of the person you are looking for, the approximate date of the event (baptism, marriage, burial, etc.), the parish where the church is located and the religious denomination of the person.

This information will allow you to identify a church or churches whose records may contain the information you are looking for. You can then use the *Guide to Church Records* to find the reference number of these records. Once you have the reference number you can retrieve the microfilm in the search room or order an original document via the electronic ordering system.

**How can I find out the name of the parish?**

If you do not know the name of the parish but you do have a place name, search the printed townlands index available in the search room. This lists the towns and townlands for Ireland along with the parish to which they belonged. There is also a geographical index available on the PRONI website. This lists townlands within parishes and counties, parishes in each county and Dioceses, Baronies or Poor Law Unions within Northern Ireland.

In built up urban areas a parish is less meaningful and within the *Guide to Church Records* no attempt has been made to locate churches in Belfast within a civil parish since most of Belfast fell within one parish - these have been listed under 'Belfast' and no cross-references have been made to these churches.

**Can I have a copy of a record I have found?**

This varies between different denominations. For most records it is acceptable to copy a single page for your own personal use. Roman Catholic records cannot be copied without permission from the parish priest. For Methodist, Non-Subscribing Presbyterian, Congregational
and Reformed Presbyterian records permission is required from the relevant church before copies can be made. For Quaker records permission is required from the Religious Society of Friends only if the record is under 50 years old.

**Is there a charge for copying?**

There is a charge for making copies. If the record is on microfilm you can purchase a copy card from the Collection Point in PRONI for use with the self-service microfilm printer. If you wish to copy a paper record you can make use of the PRONI copying service or use the self-service camera in the Reading Room.

**Is there anywhere else I can find church records?**

Some records have not been given to PRONI or copied. In the *Guide to Church Records* these are identified as being ‘in local custody’. In this instance you should contact the church directly to enquire about access to these records.

**A record I want does not seem to be available. Why is this?**

If PRONI does not hold the records you are looking for you should try contacting the church directly to enquire about their availability. There are however gaps in the church records, not least because many parish registers deposited in the Public Record Office of Ireland in Dublin were destroyed in the fire there in 1922.
PRONI holds records relating to the valuation of property in Northern Ireland from the 1830s to 1993. Following the valuations in the 1830s and 1860s, re-valuations were done in 1935, 1956, 1975 and 1993. The original purpose was, and still remains, the assessment of every building and every piece of land and an estimation of its financial value. The valuation is, in theory, the amount that an owner would expect to receive if they hired out their property for one year. The valuation of a property is subsequently used in assessing the rates to be paid.

The levying of a rate in Ireland, to raise money to meet the costs of local government, dates from 1635. An Act of that year gave Justices of the Peace power to levy certain sums, known as the County Cess or Grand Jury Cess, upon the inhabitants of a locality for the execution of public works such as the building of roads and bridges. By 1824 Parliament recognised the need for a more equitable method of measuring liability for cess and rates. The First Valuation Act was introduced in 1826, and a valuation of the whole of Ireland was prepared. Not all land and property, however, was subject to rates: national schools, for example, and glebe land (land belonging to the Church), or land too poor or stony to be worth anything, were all excluded. The information given in the valuation books usually includes the name of the tenant, the person or organisation from whom they leased the land, the acreage and the rateable value.

**The Townland Valuation (VAL/1B)**

The **Townland Valuation** of 1828-40 was primarily a valuation of land but with a valuation of certain houses, initially houses with an annual value of £3 or more. From 1838 this was increased to £5. The majority of parishes in Ulster had been valued before 1838 so many more houses were included in the valuation of property in Ulster than for the rest of the country. Details of the ownership and nature of the buildings can be found at the end of the land valuation for each townland but more detailed descriptions of the buildings will be found at the end of each volume, arranged by townland. The Townland Valuation should not, therefore, be ignored by family historians. Containing as it does many personal names, it is an invaluable
source of information on the nature and physical condition of buildings, including mills and factories, and on the nature and scope of pre-Famine agriculture. The maps that accompany this valuation are available under reference VAL/1A.

**Griffith's Valuation (VAL/2B)**

The *Primary Valuation of Ireland*, 1848-1864, gives a complete list of occupiers of land, tenements and houses. Better known as *Griffith's Valuation*, it is arranged by counties and within counties by Poor Law Union Divisions and within Unions by barony and then by parish and townland. For each townland the following information is recorded:

- Occupier of the land or houses
- Name of the person from whom the property was leased
- Description of the property
- Acreage of the farm
- Valuation of the land and buildings

The Griffith's Valuation is a useful, if flawed, substitute for the 1851/1861 census returns, in that it only gives the name of the leaseholder, and does not list the other family members. It is available in manuscript form but a printed edition is available on the shelves of the Public Search Room. While this is much easier to use, it is not as detailed as the original field books which will give more information on mills and factories and will occasionally include plans. For information on how to use the Griffith's Valuation, see the leaflet on *‘How to access Valuation Records’*. The *Householders’ Index* (also available on the Public Search Room shelves) can be used as a guide to the surnames listed in the Griffith's Valuation. The maps accompanying Griffith's valuation are available under VAL/2A. The entire printed valuation has been digitised and indexed and can be accessed at www.irishorigins.com and at www.askaboutireland.ie

**Annual Revision Lists (VAL/12/B)**

The First General Valuation was completed by 1863-4. Thereafter, properties were valued annually from 1864 until the early 1930s, the details of which are recorded in the annual revision books, with each volume covering approximately a ten-year period. Each year, valuers recorded any change in the quality or dimensions of the properties, or in the names of occupiers or immediate lessors, and any differences in the acreage and value. The changes were recorded in different colours of ink, one colour for each year, and the alterations are usually dated. This can help to establish significant dates in family history, such as dates of death, sale or migration. Associated maps at a scale of 6 inches to a mile can be found under VAL/12D and town plans under VAL/12E.
Also of interest are a series of valuers' note-books (VAL/12A). These first appeared in 1894 and record the details behind the revising valuer's decision to revise, upwards or downwards, the valuation of those premises where an addition or other alteration had been made. There is an extensive catalogue of the series on the shelves of the Public Search Room.

**Revaluation of Belfast, 1900-6 (VAL/7B)**

Belfast was the only council to exercise the revaluation option granted to local councils by the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898. The valuers' note-books, arranged by ward, not only give a detailed description of every property (for example, age and size) but also record appeals against valuation. A ‘Street Names’ card index in the Public Search Room lists the volume number, and the page number within the volume, in which the street is recorded. This revaluation, carried out at a time when Belfast was reckoned to be the fastest-growing industrial city in the British Isles, is a particularly valuable source for any family historian wishing to trace ancestors who migrated to the city at this time. Associated maps can be found in VAL/7A.

**First Northern Ireland General Revaluation, 1935, and its revisions (VAL/3)**

The First General Revaluation came into force on 1 April 1936 - the first undertaken after the establishment of the government of Northern Ireland. It is an important source for historians interested in the more recent past. As well as the lists of the Revaluation itself (VAL/3B), there are also the revision lists in VAL/3C detailing changes in the ownership of property etc. until 1957. The maps, on the scale of 6 inches to one mile that accompany this valuation are also available, under VAL 3A, together with town plans under VAL/3G.

**Northern Ireland General Revaluation, 1956/7 (VAL/4)**

As a result of World War II, the Second Revaluation did not take effect until 1 April 1957. PRONI only holds the revisions of this valuation (VAL/4B) and the associated maps (VAL/4A).

**Third General Revaluation, 1975, and Revisions up to 1993 (VAL/14)**

This is the most recent valuation held in PRONI (VAL/14A); the subsequent revisions are to be found in VAL/14B and VAL/14C and the associated maps in VAL/14D.
**Using The Valuation Records**

To use the valuation details for a townland you will need to know the following: county, poor law union, barony, parish and district electoral division.

These administrative subdivisions can be found by consulting the Topographical Index on the Public Search Room shelves; some will also appear on PRONI’s website. The place name index in the Public Search Room in PRONI will give you the exact reference number for valuation books in VAL/2B and VAL/12B.
In the early years of the 19th century there were numerous schools in Ireland but many were in poor condition and were badly conducted. The Province of Ulster, for example, had 3,449 schools in 1821 (Counties Antrim and Down had over 1,000 schools between them). However, they were fragmented in structure with numerous types of schools, including ‘charter’ schools, schools of the London Hibernian Society – to which Roman Catholics did not want to send their children because they were all of a proselytising character - and ‘pay’ or ‘hedge’ schools.

**Grant-aid Applications**

It was against this background of haphazard educational provision that the Irish system of National Education was founded in 1831 under the direction of the Chief Secretary, E.G. Stanley. The national schools which resulted were built with the aid of the Commissioners of National Education and local trustees. Some 2,500 schools came into existence in Ulster between 1832 and 1870. Schools could apply to the National Education Board for a grant to cover the cost of, for example, books, an additional teacher or a new classroom. To do so they had to make an application in the form of a questionnaire. These grant-aid applications, 1832-1889, arranged by county, are to be found in ED/1 but should be ordered out under MIC548. They provide much information about the establishment of the schools, the names of the teachers, the number and size of the classrooms and the number of enrolled pupils. They are occasionally accompanied by correspondence.

**Inspectors’ Reports**

School inspection was very much part of the national school system from the beginning. In ED/5 there are inspectors’ district books and notebooks detailing the reports of their school visits. These reports can be particularly revealing to the local historian as they can include details of the standard of education in a particular area; the attitude of the local landlord and of local people to the state control of education; and the rivalry between neighbouring townlands. The attitude of the local clergy towards the national school system is also of interest. Due to the fact that the newly established primary school system was to be non-denominational, all of the main churches were united in their dislike of the separation of the religious from the academic. On occasion this clerical opposition resulted in the establishment of rival schools in the area.

You will also find Inspectors’ observation books in the archive of each individual school (PRONI Ref SCH).
National Education Board Registers
Also of interest to local historians are the National Education Board registers (continued by the Northern Ireland Ministry of Education) summarising the Commissioners’ dealings with particular schools. They exist in an almost complete series from 1855 to 1948 and will give details of where the school was located, when it was established, when it first came under the authority of the Board and financial details. The names and religious denominations of the patrons and of any clerical or lay correspondents are also given. (PRONI Ref ED/6/1) Originally the volumes were arranged by province and then by county but from 1855 by education district. Ireland was divided into 61 education districts. The district volumes were later discontinued and a new series of county books was begun and continued by the Northern Ireland Ministry of Education. In addition to the information in the original series, the books often provide information on the standard of instruction of the schools and the state of repair of school buildings. Some of these registers are held in the National Archives of Ireland in Dublin. Those in PRONI can be found under the PRONI Ref ED/6/2

Teachers’ Salary Books
If you want to find out who taught in particular schools you should consult the Salary books kept by the National Education Board and continued by the Northern Ireland Ministry of Education. The volumes held in PRONI only date from 1899 and are incomplete up to 1905 but thereafter run continuously up to 1927. The pre-1899 volumes and the missing ones between 1899-1905 are in the National Archives of Ireland in Dublin. These salary books will give the names of the teachers, their academic qualifications and their date of appointment and resignation in addition to particulars of their salaries. Salary Books can be found under the PRONI Ref ED/7.

National School records
PRONI holds the records of over 1,600 national schools which are of primary importance both for the local and family historian. They consist almost entirely of registers and inspectors’ observation books. They earliest records begin in the 1860s; there are only a few schools with any registers earlier than this date. The registers will record the names of the pupils, their date of entry into the school, their age, their address and the fathers’ occupation. If a child attended a previous school then this will also be recorded and will allow you to trace the movement of families, including those who moved into Northern Ireland from Scotland or England.

For a fuller description of education records in PRONI see the Guide to Educational Records available in PRONI and online.
The first properly organised census in Ireland commenced in 1821, and, thereafter, with some exceptions, a census was taken every ten years. Unfortunately, most of the 1831-1891 returns were either pulped into waste paper during the First World War or were destroyed later during the Irish Civil War. However, returns for a small number of parishes have survived:

1821

This census was organised by townland, civil parish, barony and county and took place on 28th May 1821. Almost all the original returns were destroyed in 1922, with only a few surviving for Cos Fermanagh and Cavan (PRONI Reference MIC/5A).

1831

Once again this census was organised by townland, civil parish, barony and county. It only records the name of the owner/occupier of the property, the townland or street, the number of the house, the number of persons in the family (and whether male or female) the number of servants in the house (and whether male or female), the total number of people in the house and the numbers of each denominations (whether Established Church, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian or other). Very little of this census survives, with most of the remaining fragments relating to Co. Londonderry:

| MIC/5A/5 and 6 | Barony of Coleraine; |
| MIC/5A/6 and 7 | City of Londonderry; |
| MIC/5A/8A-B | Barony of Loughlinsholin; |
| MIC/5A/9A | Barony of Tirkeeran. |

1841

The government census, taken on 6 June 1841, followed the same general pattern as that of 1831 except that the returns were compiled by the householders themselves rather than government enumerators and the name of every person in the household is
recorded. Unfortunately, no part of the census for Northern Ireland has survived but some returns for Co. Cavan did survive (PRONI reference MIC/5A/9B). However, the 1841 census was the earliest to be of use when the Old Age Pensions were introduced in the early twentieth century. Proof of age was accepted if the claimant could be identified in the 1841 or 1851 census. The resultant searches in the 1841 and 1851 census are to be found in the Old Age Pension claim forms which have survived (PRONI Reference T/550). There are also some individual returns (see PRONI reference MIC/15A).

1851

Taken on 30 March 1851, this government census added a column for religious affiliation. Most of the surviving returns relate to Cos Antrim and Fermanagh (see PRONI reference MIC/5A/10-26). There are also some surviving returns for Cromac Ward in Belfast that are held in the National Archives, Dublin but a microfilm copy is available in PRONI (PRONI reference MIC/689). The census returns for 1851 were also used for Old Age Pension claims (see comments above on 1841 census). There are also some individual census returns (see PRONI reference MIC/15A).

1861, 1871, 1881 and 1891

The census records for 1861 to 1891 were destroyed by government order. Nothing survives for the Northern Ireland area. See Family Tree Series No 6 - Census Substitutes.

Indexes

An index to the census returns for 1841 and 1851 that appear in the Old Age Pension claim forms (T/550) is available on microfiche (see PRONI reference MF/9/1-15). The final version of this index is still being worked on.
In 1708 James Maguire made a survey of the town of Downpatrick, Co. Down. He described each premise by name, giving its size, its principal tenant and the half yearly rent due. A manuscript copy of this survey, made by the Rev. David Stewart in 1927, is available under the PRONI Reference MIC/637/8.

In 1740 the Irish House of Commons ordered a religious census of Protestant householders to be carried out. Although the original returns were lost when the Public Record Office of Ireland in Dublin was destroyed in 1922, transcripts of some have survived for parts of Cos Antrim, Armagh, Down, Donegal, Londonderry and Tyrone. The returns are arranged by county, barony and parish and give names only. The typescript copies can be found under the PRONI Reference T/808/15258 and T/716/9 but copies of them are available on the Search Room shelves in PRONI. The following parishes are covered:

**Co. Antrim:** Ahoghill, Armoy, Ballintoy, Ballymoney, Ballyrashane, Ballywillin, Billy, Clough (Dunaghy), Culfeightrin, Derrykeighan, Drummaul, Duneane, Dunluce, Finvoy, Kilraghats, Ballymena (Kirkinriola); Loughguile, ‘Manybrooks’ (no parish of this name now); Ramoan, Rasharkin and Rathlin.

**Co. Armagh:** Derrynoose, Mullaghbrack, Shankill and Tynan

**Co. Donegal:** Clonmany, Culdaff, Desertegny, Donagh, Fahan, Moville and Templemore.

**Co. Down:** Kilbroney and Seapatrick.

**Co. Londonderry:** all parishes except for Agivey, Arboe and Derryloran (may be covered in the Co. Tyrone part of Co. Londonderry).

**Co. Tyrone:** Derryloran and Kildress.
In March and April 1766, Church of Ireland rectors were instructed by the government to compile complete returns of all householders in their respective parishes, showing their religion, as between Church of Ireland (Episcopalian), Roman Catholic (termed ‘Papists’ in the returns) and Presbyterians (or Dissenters), and giving an account of any Roman Catholic clergy active in their area. Some of the more diligent rectors listed every townland and every household, but many drew up only numerical totals of the population. All of the original returns were lost when the Public Record Office of Ireland in Dublin was destroyed in 1922 but extensive transcripts survive and are available under the **PRONI Reference T/808/15264, 15266 and 15267, T/283/C, T/664 and T/3901**. Copies of the T/808 items are available on the shelves in the Search Room in PRONI. The following parishes are covered:

**Co. Antrim:** Ahoghill, Ballintoy, Ballymoney and Ballynure.

**Co. Armagh:** Creggan.

**Co. Cavan:** Kinawley (partly in Co. Cavan); Lurgan and Munterconnaught.

**Co. Down:** Inch, Kilbroney and Seapatrick

**Co. Donegal:** Leck

**Co. Fermanagh:** Derryvullan, Devenish, Kinawley (partly in Co. Cavan) and Rossory.

**Co. Londonderry:** Artrea, Ballynascreen, Banagher, Bovevagh, Cumber, Desertlyn, Desertmartin, Drumachose, Dungiven, ‘Inch Island’ and Magherafelt.

**Co. Tyrone:** Aghaloo, Artrea, Carnteel, Clonfeacle, Derryloran, Donaghenry, Drumglass, Kildress, Tullyniskan, Magherafelt and Dungannon Town.

**1770**

In 1770 a census was carried out for the town of Armagh giving individual names and occupations, size of family and religion and is arranged street by street. It can be found under the **PRONI Reference T/808/14938 and T/808/14977**.

**1775**

Petitions of Dissenters and members of the Established Church (the Church of Ireland) to the Irish Parliament or the Lord Lieutenant can be found in T/808/15307. A copy is found on the Search room shelves. The names are arranged by parish or name of congregation. The following parishes/congregations are covered:
Co. Antrim: Antrim Borough; Old Antrim; Ballyclare town and neighbourhood; Ballymena town and neighbourhood; Ballynure town and neighbourhood; Ballynure Established Church; Belfast parish and town; Carnmoney parish; Carrickfergus town and county; Donegore, Kilbride and Nilteen; Dunmurry congregation in Drumbeg parish; Larne, Raloo, Carncastle, Kilwaughter, Glenarm and Ballyeaston; Lisburn town and neighbourhood.

Co. Armagh: Armagh parish; Clare congregation in Ballymore parish.

Co. Down: Ballee congregation; Bangor town and parish; Comber parish; Dundonald parish; Dromore parish; Dromara parish; Drumballyroney and Drumgooland parishes; Killyleagh parish; Newry parish; Rathfriland congregation; Seapatrick, Tullylish and Donacloney parishes.

Co. Londonderry: Coleraine and Killowen parishes; Londonderry City.

Co. Tyrone: Benburb town and neighbourhood; Coagh; Cookstown congregation; Dungannon barony; Dungannon town and neighbourhood; Strabane town and neighbourhood.

Belfast parish and town

1796
As part of a government initiative to encourage the linen trade, free spinning-wheels or looms were granted to individuals planting a certain area of land with flax. The lists of those entitled to the awards, covering almost 60,000 individuals, were published in 1796. They are to be found under the PRONI Reference T/3419 but a typescript copy is available on the Search Room shelves in PRONI. A microfilm index to the lists is also available under the PRONI Reference MF/7.

1803
The 1803 agricultural census returns for Co. Down, although a government led survey, are to be found in the Londonderry estate archive (PRONI Ref D/654/A2). Similar returns exist for Co. Antrim but they are in the National Archives in Dublin. British authorities, fearing a French Invasion of Ireland, made plans for the defence of the coastline so that in the event of an invasion they would know what to move and what support would be available for the army. The plans involved taking an inventory of livestock, provisions, crops and equipment. The returns of ‘live and dead stock’ record the names of householders by townland and parish with details of what stock each held but the names of householders are only recorded for 30 out of the 50 parishes. Nevertheless over 11,000 names are recorded.
1824-1838
The Composition Act of 1823 specified that tithes due to the Established Church, which had been payable in kind, should now be paid in money. As a result it was necessary to carry out a valuation of the entire country, parish by parish, in order to determine how much would be payable by each landowner. The Tithe Applotment Books list the occupiers of titheable land and are not a list of householders as is the case in a census. Therefore, labourers, etc. were all omitted, in addition to all purely urban dwellers. The books can be found under the PRONI Reference FIN/5A. The Householders’ Index, available on the shelves in the Search Room in PRONI, can be used as a guide to the surnames listed in the Tithe Applotment Books.

c.1860-c.1940
National school registers, which record the age of the pupil, religion, father’s address and occupation, are a valuable source of information for anyone interested in tracing their family tree. PRONI has in its custody registers, etc for almost 1,600 schools in Northern Ireland. An index to the schools with the appropriate SCH number is available in PRONI and can also be found in the Guide to Educational Records, available on the Search Room shelves in PRONI.

1848-1864
Popularly known as Griffith’s Valuation, the Primary Valuation of Ireland lists every householder and occupier of land in Ireland. It is arranged by county, barony, poor law union, civil parish and townland. A printed edition of the Griffith’s Valuation is available on the Search Room shelves in PRONI. See also Family Tree Series Leaflet 4 ‘Valuation Records’.

1876
The ‘Landowners in Ireland: Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards...’ records more than 32,000 owners of land in Ireland in 1876, identifying them by province and county. A copy of this publication is available on the shelves in the Search Room in PRONI.
What wills does PRONI hold?

PRONI holds all original wills and letters of administration for Northern Ireland from 1900 onwards. They normally transfer to PRONI from the High Court when they are seven years old.

Almost all original wills and letters of administrations from 1858 to 1900 were destroyed in the fire at the Public Record Office in Dublin, but copies have survived.

Fortunately, before the wills were sent to Dublin, the District Registries had copied most of the information into large volumes, known as ‘copy will books’.

PRONI holds the copy will books for the District Registries of Armagh, Belfast and Londonderry, while the National Archives of Ireland hold those that have survived for the other District Registries.

What about pre-1858 wills?

Before 1858 wills were proved and letters of administration were issued either in the Prerogative Court or in the consistorial or diocesan courts of the Church of Ireland (the State Church at the time). Official wills and administrations prior to 1858 were destroyed in 1922, however copies can often be found in family, estate and personal papers and in solicitors’ archives. The Name Search application on the PRONI website contains a searchable index of those surviving wills held by PRONI.

How do I search for a will at PRONI?

Using Will Calendars Online

There is a searchable index for wills on the PRONI website covering the years 1858-1943, with a gap from 1920-21. This is the easiest way to
find a will for these dates. You can view the will calendar entry online. Digitised images of entries from the copy will books covering the period 1858-1900 are also available online.

**Using Will Calendar Volumes in PRONI**

There are bound annual indexes to all wills and admons, 1858–2003 (updated annually), in what are known as ‘Calendars of Wills and Administrations’ (simply referred to as ‘will calendars’) and a consolidated index, 1858–1877, on the shelves in the Public Search Room in PRONI. Arranged alphabetically by name of testator (the person who made the will) for each year (one or two volumes per year), these give a brief abstract of the will or admon. Up until 1921 the calendars cover the whole of Ireland and thereafter only the six counties of Northern Ireland.

**How do I order the will to view it at PRONI?**

You should follow these steps to order out a will at PRONI:

- Locate the will calendar entry, either in the will calendar volumes in the search room or on the PRONI website (as detailed above).
- Note the name, date of probate and the registry.
- Use the electronic ordering system in the reading room to order the will using this information.
- You can look at the document in the reading room.

**Can I have a copy of a will?**

Yes. PRONI provides a copying service. You can request a paper copy or use the self service camera in the reading room.

**Is there a charge?**

There is no charge for ordering out a will to view. However there is a charge for copying. See the fees and charges section of our website for details.

**Can I have a certified copy?**

Yes, PRONI can make a certified copy of a will for you. There is a certification charge of £7.00 for this service in addition to the regular copying charges.
**What is ‘probate’?**

Wills cannot take effect until after the death of a person and after they have been proved in a court. The grant of probate authenticates the will and confers on the executors the power to administer the estate of the deceased. The official date of a will is therefore the ‘date of probate’, that is, the date when it was officially proved in a court. Probate can take anything from a minimum of six weeks up to several years.

**What if the will was probated in the last seven years?**

If the will was probated within the last seven years it will not yet have been transferred to PRONI. In this case you should contact the Probate Office of the Northern Ireland Court Service to request a copy.

**What information is contained in a will?**

Wills contain the name, address and occupation of the *testator* (the person who made the will), as well as details of the *beneficiaries* (people to whom the testator left something) and of the property owned (land and goods). Many wills also include the addresses and occupations of witnesses and *executors* (those whose duty it is to see that the terms of the will are carried out) who may also be related to the testator.

**What if the person I am interested in did not leave a will?**

If a person dies without making a valid will, the court can grant letters of administration (known as admons) by appointing persons to administer the estate of the deceased. Admons will contain the name, residence and occupation of the deceased and of the person or persons appointed to administer the estate. Admons do not survive prior to 1900.

**What is an admon with will annexed?**

Sometimes a grant of probate cannot be given by the court because there is a legal issue with the will. For example, where one of the executors named in the will has died prior to probate being applied for. In this case the court can grant letters of administration to remedy the problem (such as appointing a new executor) and this admon with a copy of the will annexed is probated.
During the 18th and 19th centuries the majority of the Irish population lived on large estates. The administration of these estates produced a large quantity of records, including maps, rentals, account books, etc. Landed estate records, particularly the rent rolls, rentals and maps listing the tenants on the estate, are a useful source of genealogical information. They may in fact be the only source available for the period before 1830. Although they rarely record information on under-tenants and cottiers, the records of the landed estates are of great importance as a result of the destruction of the 19th century census returns.

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) holds the largest collection of estate records in Northern Ireland. Some estates are better documented than others. In general, it can be said that the larger the estate the more likely it is that extensive and continuous records have survived.

Some of the landed estate archives to be found in PRONI relate to estates that are solely in what is now the Republic of Ireland. These include the extensive Kenmare estate in Co Kerry and many of the larger estates in Co Monaghan. Other estate records in PRONI for property in the Republic of Ireland are there because many Ulster landlords also had property outside of the present six counties of Northern Ireland.

If you do not know the name of the local landlord in a particular area you can normally find it by looking at the printed Griffith’s Valuation Books for 1860, which are available on the shelves in the Search Room. The landlord’s name normally appears in the column headed ‘lessor’. When the name of the landlord has been identified the references to any records held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland can be located by:

1. Consulting the Guide to Landed Estate Records, which is available on the Search Room shelves. Estate names are arranged alphabetically within county, with a description of the records together with the relevant reference numbers.
2. Checking the Prominent Persons Index in the Public Search Room under the landlord’s name; this can also be viewed on the PRONI website.

The rentals and rent rolls are often the earliest estate records to use, but they are not the only type of record in landed archives, which are useful for genealogical purposes. Leases, wages and account books and often maps, all contain names of tenants occupying land on an estate or of people working on or connected with the estate in some way.

In general the best order in which to consult the different types of estate records for genealogical searching is:

1. rentals/rent rolls: these normally list the tenants, townland by townland and will record the acreage of their holdings and sometimes details of arrears;

2. leases: give the tenant’s name and often those of some of his children, with their ages where a tenant got a lease for 3 lives;

3. lease books; these will summarise details of the leases, often recording if the persons mentioned in leases for 3 lives are still alive or if they have left the estate;

4. rent ledgers: show how much and when each tenant paid his rent;

5. maps: these are usually on a large scale and plot tenants’ holdings;

6. wages books: record the names of estate labourers, household servants and gardeners who may not appear as tenants;

7. account books: often record the names of persons supplying goods and services;

8. land agents’ note-books: sometimes a page is devoted to a tenant and his family;

9. Militia, yeomanry and muster records can often be found in landed estate archives. They consist of lists of men liable for service in local defence forces.
Your Family Tree:  10

VOTERS’, POLL AND FREEHOLDERS’ RECORDS

Voters’, Poll and Freeholders’ records are lists of people entitled to vote, or of people who actually voted at elections. They are normally arranged on a county basis.

Poll books record the actual votes cast at parliamentary elections. They contain the name and address of the voter and often the address of the ‘Freehold’ which entitled the voter to his vote. Voters Lists and Freeholders registers give similar information to the Poll books but do not record how people voted at a particular election.

From 1727 to 1793 only Protestants with a freehold worth at least 40 shillings per year had a vote. Between 1793 and 1829 both Protestants and Roman Catholics with 40 shilling freeholds had votes. In 1829 all 40 shilling Freeholders lost the vote.

The most generally useful Poll books and Freeholders’ registers are:

**Co. Antrim**

- T/808/14900 Freeholders’ List, 1768-75 (6 names only)
- D/1364/L/1 ‘Deputy Court Cheque Book’ Poll Book 1776 – covers only half the electorate. *(See transcript in catalogue)*
- D/2977/22/1-12 Printed Lists of freeholders, leaseholders etc, 1833-40 for Co. Antrim, and 1856-7 for the baronies of Cary, Upper and Lower Dunluce and Glenarm.
- ANT/5 Registers of Voters, 1888-1900
Co. Armagh

T/808/14936 Poll Book 1753
T/808/14949 Objections to Voters in poll book 1753
ARM/5/2/1-17 Freeholders’ Lists 1813-32
T/808/14934 Freeholders’ Registers 1830-39 taken from the Newry Telegraph
T/808/14961 Freeholders’ List 1839
T/808/14927 Voters’ List 1851
D/1928/F/1-103 Freeholders’ Registers, c 1710, 1753 and 1800-30
D/2394/3/5 and T/281/5-6 Printed and typescript list of Freeholders for the Portadown district, 1747-53 and 1796-1802. (These were copied before 1922 by Canon Leslie from manuscripts in the Parliamentary Returns in the Public Record Office of Ireland)

Co. Donegal

T/808/15006 Freeholders registered in Co Donegal, 1775-81 and 1789-90

Co. Down

D/2223/21/1 Candidates name book for Downpatrick electors (names starting with ‘A’ and ‘B’ only)
DOW/5/3/1 & 2 Registers of Freeholders 1777; 1780-85 and 1790-95
D/654/A3/1B ‘Deputy Court Cheque Book Freeholders’ Register 1789
T/393/1 Freeholders’ List (Lecale Barony only) c.1790
D/654/A3/1 Freeholders’ Registers 1813-21 and 1824
T/761/19 & 20 Freeholders’ Lists c.1830
D/671/O/2/5-6 Poll Book, Co. Down (Part of) 1852
D/671/O/2/7-8 Poll Book, Co. Down (Part of) 1857

Co. Fermanagh

T/808/15063 Poll Book 1747-63
T/1385 Poll Book 1788
T/543/1 Poll Book 1788
T/808/15075 Poll Book 1788
D/1096/92/1 Freeholders’ Registers 1796-1802
FER/5 Registers of Voters, 1895-1900
Co. Londonderry

T/3161/1/4  List of gentlemen and Freeholders who voted for James Lennox and William Jackson, 1697
D/2094/46  Resolution of the Freeholders in Tamlacht Finlagan Parish about subscribing to a petition to Parliament, 1774
T/2123  Freeholders’ Registers (names A to L only) c.1813
T/1048/1-4  City of Londonderry Voters’ List 1832
D/834/1  Freeholders’ Register, City & County of Londonderry c.1840
D/1935/6  City of Londonderry Voters’ List 1868

Co. Tyrone

T/808/15127  Tyrone Freeholders in the Cookstown area, 1768-95
TYR/5/3/1  Freeholders’ List. (Dungannon Barony only) 1795-98
TYR/5  Registers of Voters, 1892-87

Belfast

D/2472  Poll Book for Belfast 1832-1837
BELF/5/1/1/1-2  Register of Electors, Belfast 1855 and 1876

Most of the Freeholders’ records before 1840 have now been indexed and digitised and are available on the PRONI website.
Ireland and its counties are sub-divided in a unique way, counties into baronies, baronies into parishes, and parishes into townlands. The townland is a unique feature of the Irish landscape and certainly existed long before the parishes and counties. An ancient division dating back to pre-Norman times, it is the common term or English translation for a variety of small local land units that varied in name and meaning throughout the island of Ireland. In the north there had been a large division called a 'ballybetagh,' generally divided into around 12 'ballyboes', but into around 16 'tates' in the area of Fermanagh and Monaghan. The 'ballyboe' was notionally of 120 acres and the 'tate', 60 acres, but these measurements clearly referred to useable land in an area that might also include marsh and mountain waste. The 'ballyboe' might be further divided into three 'sessiaghs' while the term 'carrow' (Irish 'ceathramh', a 'quarter') may refer to either a quarter of a 'ballybetagh' or a quarter of a 'ballyboe'. The 'ballybetagh' disappeared after the Plantation and the subdivisions became the modern townlands, the average size of which, in most of Northern Ireland, is now c.350 acres but c.180 acres in Fermanagh. The spelling of townland names is subject to considerable variation due largely to the difficulties of representing the pronunciation of Irish language names in English spelling.

The original Irish names of townlands were eventually written down in anglicised form as they sounded to English court scribes. A good example of names being written down in this fashion can be found in the Raven maps (T510/1). It is possible to trace how they became increasingly anglicised in the General Alphabetical Index to the Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland and in the Ordnance Survey maps.

In naming townlands frequent use was made of natural or man-made features of the landscape as well as names of families. The townland name may originally have referred to an easily identifiable feature of the landscape such as Carraig (meaning rock) or Tullagh (meaning a hill) or a botanical feature such as Annagh (meaning marsh). The social customs or history of the people who have lived in a particular place can also be reflected in the name of the townland. Often these names are the only records which survive of the families who held the land in pre-plantation times.
**Bally** or **Baile** (both meaning settlement) are usually compounded with personal or family names and examples can be found all over Ireland including such names as Ballywalter, Ballyrussel and Ballysavage. Many townlands throughout Ireland took their names from early habitation sites, both ecclesiastical and secular, and these include **Rath** (meaning fortification) or **Dun** (meaning fort) or **Chill** (meaning church).

There are approximately 62,000 townlands in Ireland and great variations are evident in their size and shape. They may be as small as an acre or as large as 7,000 acres. In Northern Ireland there are over 9,000 townlands ranging from Acre McCricket in County Down with 4 acres to Slievedoo in County Tyrone with 4,551 acres. It is not known exactly why there should be such discrepancies in size - it may be due to local topography or perhaps farming practices. Anything from five to thirty townlands may be grouped together to form a civil parish.

Up until the early 19th century townland boundaries altered considerably, following subdivisions. While townlands are almost all compact units it is possible to find parts of a townland in different civil parishes.

Townlands were used as the basis for plantation grants in the 16th and 17th centuries so you will find that land was let by landlords on a townland basis. Information in rentals, for example, will be arranged by townland and estates were mapped by townland. Townland names were recorded in a variety of documentation concerning land throughout the 19th century. The Tithe Applotment Books used the townland as its smallest division and it was adopted by government as the administrative unit for the decennial census and for valuation purposes. The boundaries of townlands are marked on the Ordnance Survey maps.

An alphabetical list of all the townlands in Ireland can be found in the *Alphabetical Index to the Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland* published at various dates. The indexes were compiled during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries after each census and will indicate in which county, barony, parish, poor law union and district electoral division each townland is situated. They are available in the Public Search Room. Once you have located your particular townland you should consult the Geographical Index (also available in the Public Search Room) which is arranged by townland and describes what archives exist for that townland as well as the PRONI reference numbers.