

# Using Irish Land Records in Your Family Research

## *Class 5: Using Maps in Irish Research*

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### Why are maps helpful?

1. Navigate confusing and complicated administrative divisions
2. Serve as a census substitute
3. Learn location of ancestral home
4. Discover more about ancestor's community

### Administrative Divisions

**Townland:** Townlands are the smallest geographical division; have Gaelic origins and can vary in size. There are more than 60,000 townlands in Ireland.

**Civil parish:** Civil parishes are comprised of townlands and are utilized to administer land and tax systems. Different than an Ecclesiastical or religious parish, Griffith's Valuation and the Tithe Applotment Books are organized by civil parish. Civil parishes can span county and parish borders, as their establishment preceded the creation of both counties and Ecclesiastical parishes.

**Barony:** Obsolete historical division that may have mirrored the territories of Irish clans. Early census and property valuations are organized by barony.

**Poor Law Union:** The 1838 Poor Relief Act created the poor relief system in Ireland. Poor Law Unions were established to manage this system, including the construction and administration of workhouses. Many Poor Law Unions were created around market towns.

**Superintendent Registrar's District:** The civil registration system was established to record birth, marriages, and deaths. This system began on 1 April 1845, when Protestant marriages were first recorded within Registrar's Districts (mirrored the boundaries of Poor Law Union). When civil registration was expanded to capture all birth, marriages, and deaths in January 1864, Poor Law Unions were renamed Superintendent Registrar's Districts. Each Superintendent Registrar's District is comprised of Registrar's Districts.

**District Electoral Division (DED):** A subdivision of a Poor Law Union/Superintendent Registrar's District; it is a group of townlands. The 1901 and 1911 Ireland Census are organized by District Electoral Division.

## Why Browse Records?

- Ensures you are performing an exhaustive search
- Don't rely on another's interpretation of record
  - Transcription errors
  - Varied spellings
- More efficient if you are searching for common names

## Locating your Ancestral Home

1. Locate your ancestor in Griffith's Valuation on [askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/](http://askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/)
2. Confirm townland where ancestor leased land
3. Identify the parcels that your ancestor leased (example: parcel 10A)
4. Search [townlands.ie](http://townlands.ie) for the townland to confirm its shape and borders
5. Search corresponding Valuation Map for shape of the townland
6. Once townland located, zoom in on map to locate the parcels your ancestor's leased
7. Use the sliding tool to compare historic map and modern map
8. If buildings appear to be present, use Google Maps street viewer to view property
  - a. Use coordinates of townland from townlands.ie; copy location into Google Maps

## Sources for Maps:

Brian Mitchell, *New Genealogical Atlas of Ireland*, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc, 2002)

Marie Daly and Judith Lucey, *Genealogist's Handbook for Irish Research*, (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2016)

[Townlands.ie](http://Townlands.ie)

[JohnGrenham.com](http://JohnGrenham.com)

[Logainme.ie](http://Logainme.ie)

[Ireland Historic Towns Atlas](http://Ireland Historic Towns Atlas)

[Ordnance Survey Maps](http://Ordnance Survey Maps)

[Askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/](http://Askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/)

[SWilson.info](http://SWilson.info)

[Geohive Map Viewer](http://Geohive Map Viewer)

[National Library of Ireland](http://National Library of Ireland)

[National Archives of Ireland](http://National Archives of Ireland)

[The Linen Hall, Belfast](http://The Linen Hall, Belfast)

[Dublinhistoricmaps.ie](http://Dublinhistoricmaps.ie)

[County Councils](http://County Councils)



## Further Reading:

Fiona Fitsimons, “The Quagmire of Administrative Districts: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#),” FindMyPast.ie

Marie Daly and Judith Lucey, *Genealogist's Handbook for Irish Research*, (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2016)

John Grenham, “More maps than you can shake a stick at,”

<https://www.johngrenham.com/blog/2018/11/05/more-maps-than-you-can-shake-a-stick-at/>

John Grenham, “We still give birth, get married and die under the Poor Law,”

<https://www.johngrenham.com/blog/2023/11/09/we-still-give-birth-get-married-and-die-under-the-poor-law/>