

Finding Irish Ancestors: A Guide to Civil and Church Records

Class 3: Leveraging Church Parish Records

March 2026

THE BRUE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER





Meet today's presenter

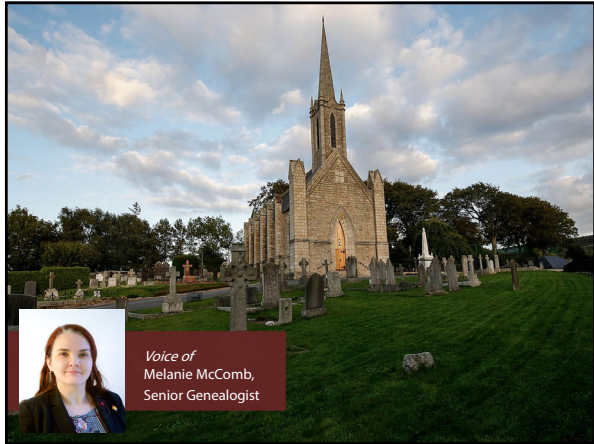


Melanie McComb
Senior Genealogist



OVERVIEW

- **Presentation (60 mins.)**
 - Church of Ireland Parish Registers
 - Catholic Parish Registers
 - Presbyterian Parish Registers
 - Published Resources
- **Q&A (30 mins.)**



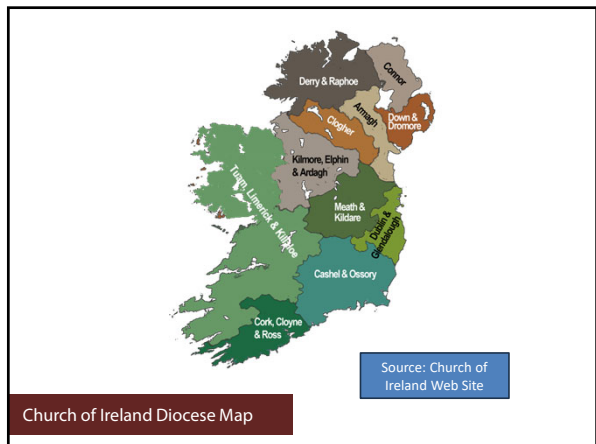
Steps for Success

- Determine your ancestor's location(s)
- Determine your ancestor's religion
 - Vital records
 - Census records (immigrants who went to Canada)
- Understand the records
 - for some time periods and locations, your ancestor may appear in records of another faith
- Familiarize yourself with Ireland's religious history

Church of Ireland Parish Registers

Civil Parishes

- Territorial divisions based on medieval ecclesiastical boundaries adopted by the Anglican Church following Reformation
- Formalized by the 17th century Down Survey – approximately 2,500 units
- Civil parishes consist of approximately 25-30 townlands
- Until the 19th century, the civil parishes were responsible for collecting taxes
- Did not go through the same restructuring that Roman Catholic parishes did

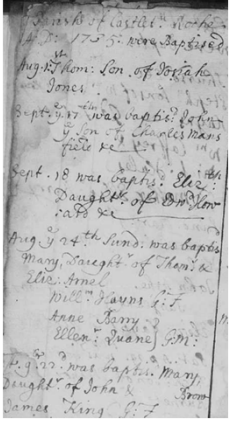


Types of Records

- Baptismal registers
- Marriage registers
- Burial Registers
- Other types of records may include vestry minute books, bastardy bonds, records of the poor, and parish census records (to be discussed in more detail in Class 4)

Pre-19th Century Baptism Records

- Baptisms were conducted weeks or months following birth
- Some baptisms conducted privately and recorded as such in the parish registers
 - High society individuals
 - Children near death
- Details included the following:
 - Date of baptism
 - Date of child
 - Parents' names
 - Mother's maiden name is not usually provided
 - Godparents' names



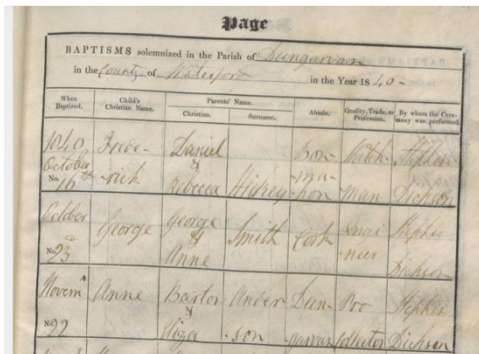
Baptisms, 1735, Castletownroche, County Cork, FamilySearch

Pro Forma Registers

- In 1807, registers started being used in Ireland to record the information for baptisms, marriages, and deaths
- The registers included pre-printed columns with headers
- Each pro forma register included a specimen page, which illustrated how the clergy should fill out the registers
- In the 1820s these registers were improved to record information such as the residence, occupation of father, etc.

19th Century - Present Baptism Registers

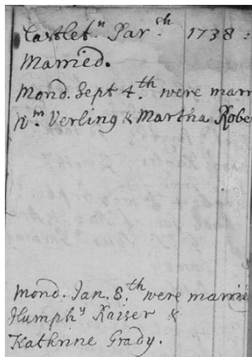
- Date of birth
- Date of baptism
- Date of child
- Parents' names (including mother's maiden name)
- Parents' residence
- Father's occupation
- Name of officiant who performs ceremony



Baptism Register, 1840, Dungarvan, County Waterford, Virtual Treasury of Ireland

Pre-19th Century Marriage Records

- Weddings would traditionally take place at the bride's parish church
- Details included the following:
 - Names of the parties
 - Date of wedding



Marriages, Castletownroche, County Cork, FamilySearch

19th Century – Present Marriage Registers

- Details included the following:
 - Names of the parties
 - Date of wedding
 - Addresses of the parties (usually the name of the parish)
 - Names and addresses of witnesses
 - Often members of the family
- Parties could sign the register or make a mark if they were illiterate

19th Century to Present Burial Registers

- Name of deceased
- Age of deceased
- Date of burial
- Address (usually the name of the parish)
- Family relationship
 - Names of parents if child died young
 - Name of spouse

| Name | Surname | When Buried | Age | By whom the Ceremony was performed |
|----------|--------------|-------------|-------|------------------------------------|
| Marianne | Ballypintock | Nov 14 | 50 | R. P. O'Connell |
| Margaret | Ballypintock | 19 | 2 | Do |
| William | Ballypintock | 20 | 4 1/2 | Do |
| James | Do | 27 | 49 | Do |
| John | Do | 28 | 3 | Do |
| John | Do | 28 | 51 | Do |
| John | Do | March 10 | 51 | Do |
| Margaret | Do | 5 | 70 | Do |
| John | Do | 20 | 35 | Do |
| John | Do | 22 | 74 | Do |
| Thomas | Do | 27 | 50 | Do |
| William | Ballypintock | April 0 | 21 | Do |

Burials, 1841, Dungarvan, County Waterford, Virtual Treasury of Ireland

1922 Fire

- It is estimated approximately 1,000 sets of Church of Ireland parish registers were destroyed
- They were sent to Dublin for safekeeping at the Public Records Office following the 1869 disestablishment of the church
- Registers that remained in local parish custody survived









Document Library Directory Vacancies Safeguarding Contact

About Our Faith Children & Youth Prayer & Worship Find a Church Parish Resources News

Home > The project came about > Anglican Record Project

Anglican Record Project

The Anglican Record Project, which is the work of Mark Williams, is an ongoing endeavour to make the registers of baptism, marriage and burial from Church of Ireland parishes available in a digital format (ie as indexed transcripts). The Project feeds into the Library's long-term goal of digitizing and indexing all of its parish registers for a worldwide audience.

churchofireland.org/about/rcb-library/anglican-record-project

About Our Faith Children & Youth Prayer & Worship Find a Church Parish Resources News

Clonmel, Moyacomb, St Fliaac's Church (Carlow/Wexford/Wicklow, Ferns)
Baptisms - 1792-1903
Marriages - 1792-1906
Burials - 1792-1903
Original registers at RCB Library
Note: All entries for this parish have been included in a separate master index for Bunclody Union, which is available [here](#)

Delany, (Wicklow, Glendalough)
Baptisms - 1666-2000
Marriages - 1666-2000
Burials - 1666-2000
Original registers in local custody and subsequently deposited at RCB Library.
Note: All entries in the five volumes have been included in a separate master index, available [here](#)

Derryloran, (Cookstown) parish church (Armagh)
Volume 1: Baptisms - 1796-1842; Confirmations - 1824, 1828, 1833, 1837, 1840
Volume 2: Baptisms - 1843-1896; Confirmations - 1843, 1848, 1849, 1852, 1856

churchofireland.org/about/rcb-library/anglican-record-project

About Our Faith Children & Youth Prayer & Worship Find a Church Parish Resources News

Home > The project came about > Bunclody Union (Ferns)

Bunclody Union (Ferns)

churchofireland.org/about/rcb-library/anglican-record-project

An Index to the Parish Registers of the Newtownbarry (Buncloody) Union may be downloaded as a PDF by clicking [here](#).

To view the register transcripts for each church, please click on the relevant link below.

Newtownbarry - St Mary's Church
 Baptisms 1799-1903
 Marriages 1799-1903
 Burials 1799-1903

Barragh - St Paul's Church
 Baptisms 1799-1805 And 1831-1879
 Marriages 1799-1805 And 1830-1903
 Burials 1799-1805 And 1838-1878

Clonegal - St Fiaac's Church
 Baptisms 1792-1903
 Marriages 1792-1906
 Burials 1792-1903

churchofireland.org/about/rcb-library/anglican-record-project

**THE PARISH REGISTERS OF
 ST FIAAC'S CHURCH, CLONEGAL**

BAPTISMS 1792-1831
MARRIAGES 1792-1831
BURIALS 1792-1831

TRANSCRIBED AND INDEXED

Diocese of Ferns Counties of Carlow,
Wexford and Wicklow

churchofireland.org/about/rcb-library/anglican-record-project

| CHURCH (County, Diocese) | BAPTISMS | MARRIAGES | BURIALS |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Longcross, Christ Church (Surrey, Guildford) | 1847-1990 | 1847-1990 | 1847-1990 |
| Rilgarvan, St Peter's Church (Kerry, Ardfert & Aghadoe) | 1811-1850 | 1812-1947 | 1819-1850 1878-1960 |
| Fermoy Garrison Church (Cork, Cloyns) | 1920-1922 | | |
| Barragh, St Paul's Church (Carlow, Ferns) | 1799-1805 1831-1879 | 1799-1805 1830-1844 | 1799-1805 1838-1878 |
| Newtownbarry, St Mary's Church (Wexford, Ferns) | 1799-1903 | 1799-1903 | 1799-1903 |
| Afpuddle, St Laurence's Church (Dorset, Salisbury) | 1728-1850 | 1731-1850 | 1722-1850 |
| Barragh, St Paul's Church (Carlow, Ferns) | | 1845-1903 | |
| Kenmare, St Patrick's Church (Kerry, Ardfert & Aghadoe) | | 1819-1950 | |
| Clonegal, St Fiaac's Church (Carlow/Wexford/Wicklow, Ferns) | 1792-1831 | 1792-1831 | 1792-1831 |

churchofireland.org/about/rcb-library/anglican-record-project

| BAPTISM | NAME | PARENTS | ABODE/REMARKS | MIN'R |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------|
| 8 Apr 1798 | Charles HUTCHINS | Rob't/Elizabeth | | |
| ~ ~ ~ 1798 | John WILLIAMS | John/Elizabeth | Monaug--- | |
| ~ ~ ~ 1798 | Catharine FORSTER |) Isaac/Eliz'th |) twins, | |
| | Mary FORSTER |) |) Clonegal | |
| ~ ~ ~ 1798 | Edw'd JENKINSON | William/Ann | Coolroe | |
| ~ ~ ~ 1798 | William FORSTER | Thomas/Mary | Ballyredmond | |
| ~ ~ ~ 1798 | William YOUNG | William/Elenor | | |
| ~ ~ ~ 1798 | Barbara MURPHY | Arthur/Barbara | Clonegal | |
| ~ ~ ~ 1798 | Alice TWAMLEY | Peter/Henrietta | P/Coolkenno | |
| ~ ~ ~ 1798 | Hawtrej BROWNE | Rev John/Catharine | P/Kilrush | |
| ~ Oct 1798 | Sarah HOPKINS | William/Susannah | Clonegal | |
| ~ 7 Apr 1799 | Elenor BEAGHAN | Laurence/Mary | Ballyred'd | |
| ~ ~ ~ 1799 | Mary PLUMMER | Ralph/- | Clonegal | |
| ~ ~ ~ 1799 | Mary MANORGAN | John/Judith | Clonegal | |
| ~ ~ ~ 1799 | Ann WALKER | Thos/Jane | Clonegal | |
| 29 Sep 1799 | Benjamin DIXY | James/Jane | Park | |
| 29 Sep 1799 | Letitia YOUNG | Will'm/Elenor | Newry | |
| 29 Sep 1799 | Rob't FORSTER | Isaac/Elizabeth | Clonegal | |
| 27 Oct 1799 | William DAGG | William/Jane | Ahold | |
| 27 Oct 1799 | Maria SEABROOK | Edward GOFF/Mary | Clonegal, a basta-- | |
| 24 Nov 1799 | Cath'e SMYTH | John/Mary | Abbydown | |
| 30 Dec 1799 | Susannah STERNE | John/Mary | Cloneg-- | |
| 12 Jan 1800 | Susannah COLLIER | Thos/Rachael | Miltia | |
| 6 Jan 1800 | Samuel USHER | John' (/Mary) | | |
| 23 Feb 1800 | Mary TACKABERRY | John/Ann | Abby-- | |
| 3 Mar 1800 | Wm Henry DOWSE | R'd H'y/Martha | | |

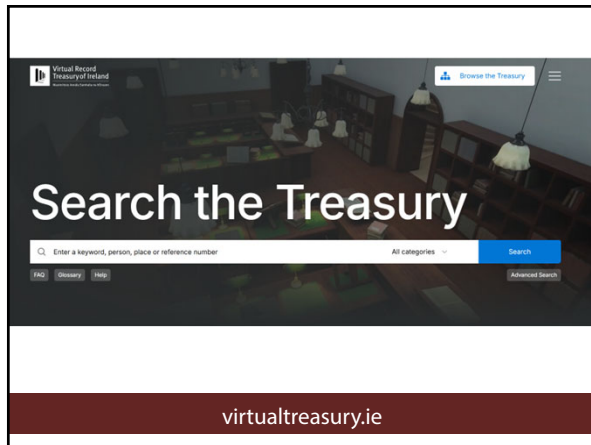
Clonegal Parish Registers

The screenshot shows the nidirect website with a search bar and navigation menu. The main content area features a banner for PRONI (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland) and a news article titled "Digitised Church Records Available in PRONI". The article text reads: "The following digitised church records are now available to view onsite at PRONI. Church of Ireland: Christ Church, Derrriaghy, (CR1/1), Lisburn, Co. Antrim; Annalong Parish Church, (Kilborne), (CR1/12), Co. Down; Christ Church, (CR1/13), Belfast." Below the article is a red banner with the URL: nidirect.gov.uk/articles/digitised-church-records-available-proni

The screenshot shows a list of digitised church records available in PRONI. The list includes: Christ Church, Derrriaghy, (CR1/1), Lisburn, Co. Antrim; Annalong Parish Church, (Kilborne), (CR1/12), Co. Down; Christ Church, (CR1/13), Belfast; Magheracross Parish Church, (CR1/20), Ballinamallard, Co. Fermanagh; Knockbreda Parish Church, (CR1/24), Belfast, Co. Down; Donaghedy Parish Church, (CR1/26), Co. Tyrone; Christ Church Cathedral, (CR1/35), Lisburn; Derryvullan North parish church, (CR1/37), Co. Fermanagh; Seagoe Parish Church, (CR1/49), Co. Armagh; Craigs Parish Church, (CR1/55), Cullybackey, Co. Antrim; St Matthew's Parish Church, (CR1/65) Shankill, Belfast, Co. Antrim; Donaghcloney Parish Church, (CR1/103), Co. Down; St Columb's Cathedral (CR1/113), Londonderry; Derryloran parish (CR1/114), Co. Tyrone; St. Anne's Cathedral (CR1/115), Belfast; Drumcree parish (CR1/116), Co. Armagh; St. Andrew's parish (CR1/117), Hope Street; St Mary Magdalene parish (CR1/118), Donegal Pass, Belfast; Drogheda Cathedral (CR1/119), Drogheda, Co. Down. Below the list is a red banner with the URL: nidirect.gov.uk/articles/digitised-church-records-available-proni

- St. Luke's (CR1/120), Mullaghglass, Co. Armagh
- St. George's parish (CR1/121), High Street, Belfast
- St Patrick's parish (CR1/122), Ballymacarrett, Belfast, Co. Down
- Christ Church, Lisburn, (CR1/123), Co. Antrim
- Magheragall Parish Church, (CR1/124), Lisburn, Co. Antrim
- St Mark's Parish Church, (CR1/125), Ballysillan, Belfast, Co. Antrim
- St James' Parish Church, (CR1/126), Dunaghy, Cullybackey, Co. Antrim
- Killagan Parish Church, (CR1/127), Cullybackey, Co. Antrim
- St Columba's Parish Church, (CR1/128), Kings Road, Belfast, Co. Down
- St John the Evangelist Parish Church, (CR1/129), Orangefield, Belfast
- St John the Baptist Parish Church, (CR1/130), Ballyrashane, Co. Londonderry
- Ballinderry Parish Church, (CR1/131), Lisburn, Co. Antrim

nidirect.gov.uk/articles/digitised-church-records-available-proni



virtualtreasury.ie

PRONI ETC. AI

Parish Registers and Parochial Returns

| Image | Title | Reference Code | Repository | Date Range | Link Type | Quality |
|-------|--|----------------|----------------------------|-------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Parish Register, Dungarvan (Waterford and Lismore dioceses). Baptisms, 1721-1801; Marriages 1740-41; Burials 1722-41 | NAI PRN/M5056 | National Archives, Ireland | 1722 - 1841 | Direct Replacement | Transcription |
| | Parish Register, Parish Register, Inch (Dublin and Clonsilla dioceses). Births 1728-1826; Marriages 1727-1825; Burials 1728-1825 | NAI PRN/M5059 | National Archives, Ireland | 1726 - 1826 | Direct Replacement | Transcription |
| | Parish Register, Macroom (Cloyne diocese). Baptisms, 1735-1837; Marriages, 1736-1835; Burials, 1727-1835 | NAI PRN/M5061 | National Archives, Ireland | 1727 - 1837 | Direct Replacement | Transcription |
| | Parish Register, Castleisnewke (Cloyne diocese). Baptisms, 1728-1804; Marriages, 1728-1803; Burials, 1733-1803 | NAI PRN/M5048 | National Archives, Ireland | 1728 - 1803 | Salved | Original |
| | Parish Register, Dungarvan (Waterford and Lismore dioceses). Baptisms 1806-1826; Marriages 1806-1826; Burials 1806-1826 | NAI PRN/M5057 | National Archives, Ireland | 1806 - 1826 | Direct Replacement | Transcription |
| | Parish Register, Inch (Dublin and Clonsilla dioceses). Baptisms, 1826-1865; Marriages, 1827-1861; Burials, 1828-1866 | NAI PRN/M5060 | National Archives, Ireland | 1826 - 1866 | Direct Replacement | Transcription |

virtualtreasury.ie





Catholic Parish vs. Civil Parish

- Catholic parishes do not follow civil parish boundaries (align with Church of Ireland jurisdictions)
- Civil parishes followed medieval boundaries from earlier plantations
- Catholic parishes followed the communities where people were living
- Catholic parishes form a diocese, which is headed by a bishop; the parish is led by priests

Penal Laws

- In 1703, the Penal Laws forbade Catholics to keep registers
- Only one priest was registered for each civil parish – the others had to leave the country
- Repealed in 1829 with the passage of the Catholic Emancipation Act

Types of Records

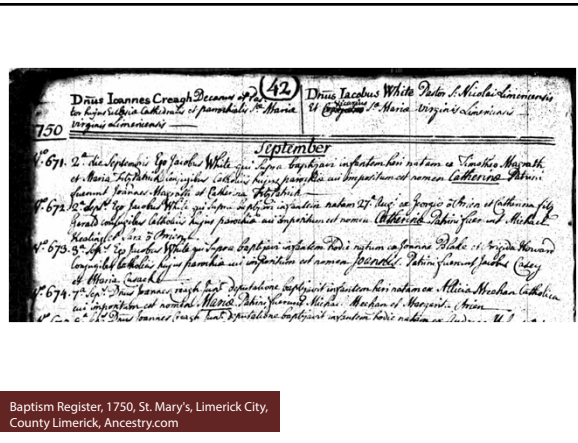
- Baptismal registers
- Marriage registers
- Burials
 - Individual burials may be mixed in with other parish records
 - Registers for Cities (1740s–1750s) and Rural areas (Started mid-1850s–1860s)
- Other types of records may include confirmations, dispensations, and parish congregational records (to be discussed in more detail in Class 4)

Infant Baptism

- Children were baptized immediately after birth, usually within a few days
- The first child was usually baptized in the mother's parish
- Very important for children who were sick and would likely die within a few hours after birth
 - Often conducted privately and noted as such in the registers

Pre-1850s - Baptism Records

- Baptism registers include the following:
 - Child's name
 - Date of baptism
 - Parents' names (mother's maiden name is not usually noted)
 - Names of two sponsors

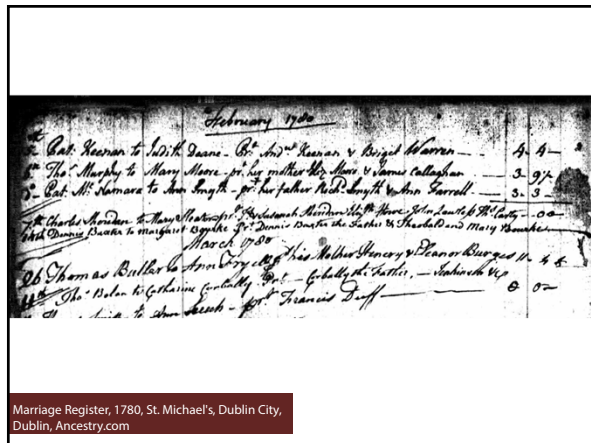


1850s - Present Baptism Records

- Pro-forma registers started being used
- Baptism registers include the following:
 - Child's name
 - Date of baptism
 - Date of birth
 - Parents' names (sometimes mother's maiden name is noted)
 - Place of residence
 - Names of two sponsors (one of each sex)
 - Name of officiant who performed ceremony

Pre-1850s Marriage Records

- Weddings would traditionally take place at the bride's parish church, where she was baptized
- Details included:
 - Name of couple
 - Date
 - Location of ceremony
 - Names of witnesses
 - Parents' names (if one of the parties was underage)
 - Dispensations issued (if applicable)



1850s - Present Marriage Registers

- Pro-forma registers started being used
- Details included:
 - Name of couple
 - Date
 - Names of witnesses
 - Priest's name (usually signed on the marriage record)
 - Parents' names
 - Date and place of baptism (if outside of parish)
 - Dispensation issued (if applicable)
 - Residence of couple

Pre-1850s Burial Registers

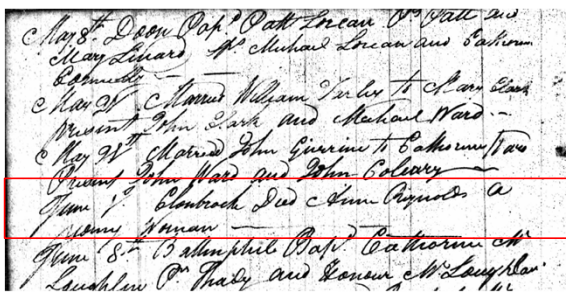
- Instructions were not issued to priests for how to record burials like they did with baptisms and marriages.
- A survey was conducted and found that only 29 parishes have burial records from the 18th century, mainly in Counties Meath and Westmeath.*
- Only 214 parishes kept burial records up to 1880*

*Irish Church Records by James G. Ryan p. 131

Pre-1850s Burial Registers Cont'd

- In the 1820s the Catholic Church started purchasing their own graveyards. Prior to this, the graveyards were the property of the established church.*
- Burials sometimes occurred outside the area where they lived. You want to look at maps to identify potential graveyards in the area where they lived, including border counties.
- Poor and landless class did not usually erect headstones for their dead. The burial register may be the only surviving document of that person.
- Detailed often included the following:
 - Name of deceased
 - Date interred

*Irish Church Records by James G. Ryan p. 131



Burial, 1829 Fohenagh, Galway, Ireland, Ancestry.com

1850s to Present Burial Registers

- Pro-forma registers started being used
- Detailed often included the following:
 - Name of deceased
 - Date of death and/or burial
 - Residence
 - Age or description (young or old)

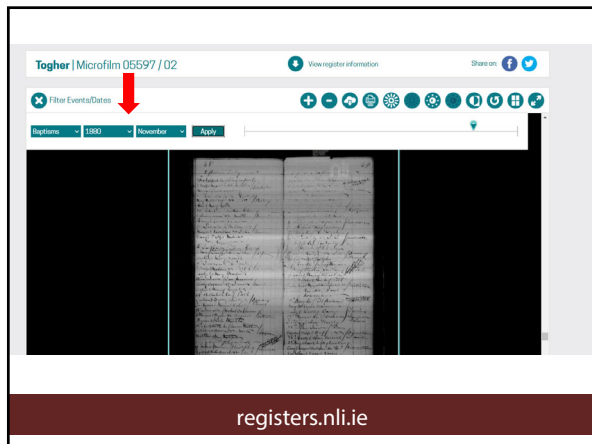


Digitized Records

- Most of the Roman Catholic Irish parish registers have been microfilmed and digitized
- National Library of Ireland holds the parish registers
- Genealogy sites: FamilySearch, FindMyPast, and Ancestry.com











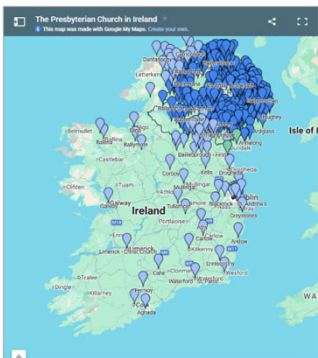


Presbyterian Parish vs. Civil Parish

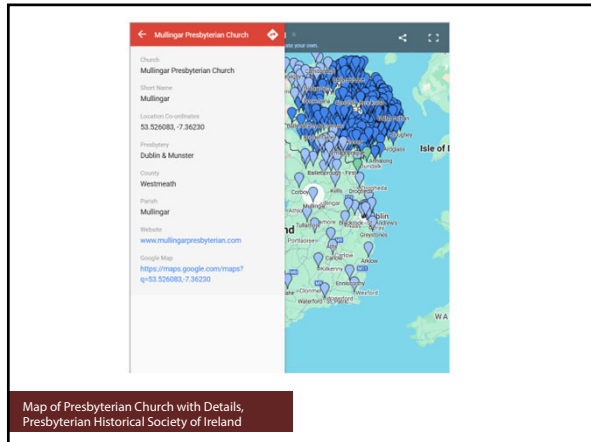
- Presbyterian parishes do not follow civil parish boundaries which often align with Church of Ireland jurisdictions
- Civil parishes followed medieval boundaries from earlier plantation boundaries
- Presbyterian parishes followed the communities where people were living.

Structure of Presbyterian Church

- Kirk (local church) - governed by a Kirk session, which consisted of ordained teaching elders (ministers) and ruling elders elected by congregation
- Presbytery – body of ministers and elders that supervises local sessions and ordains ministers
- Synod – has authority over a group of presbyteries
- General Assembly – oversees doctrine and assembly, led by an elected Moderator



Map of Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland



Religious Persecution

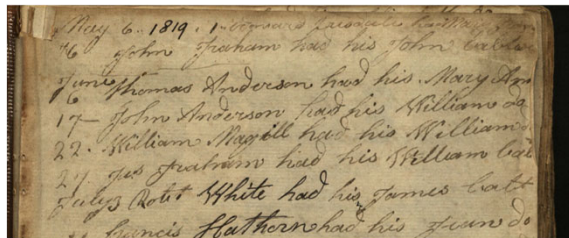
- At the end of the 16th century, legislation required all Presbyterian ministers to swear an oath to Book of Common Prayer of the Church of Ireland.
- Failure to do so resulted in ministers being deposed from their ministry
- Ministers were prohibited marrying or burying members of their congregation unless they were performed with the rites of the Church of Ireland
- In 1782, marriages performed by Presbyterian ministers were legalized
 - Marriage between Presbyterian and Church of Ireland was not legal until 1845

Types of Records

- Baptismal registers
- Marriage registers
- Burial Registers
- Other types of records include Kirk Session minutes, communicants' registers/membership lists, and more (to be discussed in more detail in Class 4)

Pre-1820s Baptism Records

- Did not closely follow the birth of a child
- Children may be baptized along with their siblings at one time
- Baptism records include the following:
 - Child's name
 - Date of baptism
 - Parents' names
 - Mother's maiden name is not usually included



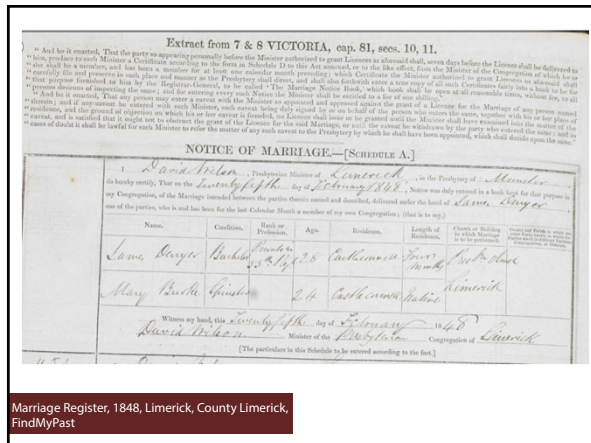
Baptism Register, 1819, Ballyrone, County Down, FindMyPast

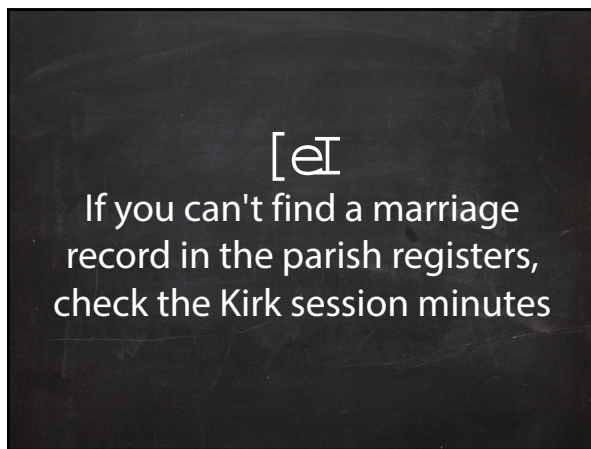
1820s - Present Baptism Registers

- Pro forma registers started being used
- Baptism records include the following:
 - Child's name
 - Date of birth
 - Date of baptism
 - Parents' names (including mother's maiden name)
 - Parents' residence (usually a townland)
 - Names of sponsors
 - Name of officiant who performed ceremony

1820s - Present Marriage Records

- Pro-forma registers started being used
- Details included the following:
 - Name of the couple
 - Date of marriage
 - Name of bride's father (even if deceased)
 - Residence of each party
 - Groom's occupation
 - Names of two witnesses





Burial Registers

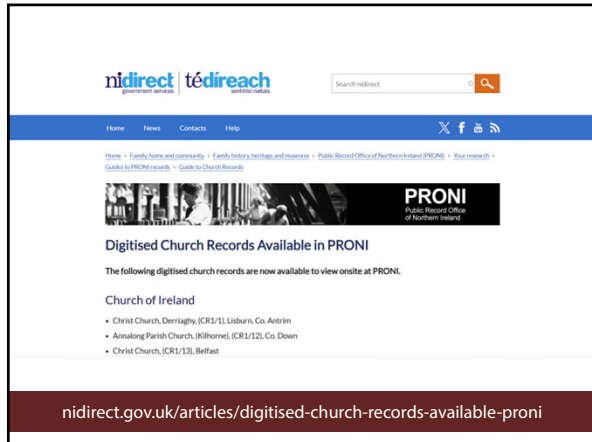
- Rarely kept by Presbyterian churches
 - Penal laws prevented maintenance of their own graveyards
 - Until the 19th century, dissenting ministers could not perform burial services unless Church of Ireland rector was present
- Detailed included the following:
 - Name of deceased
 - Date of burial
 - Age
 - Residence (late 19th century)

FindMyPast (\$)

- Ireland, Non-Conformist Births & Baptisms (1701-1913)
- Ireland, Non-Conformist Marriages
- Ireland, Non-Conformist Burials
 - Ireland Down Ballyroney Presbyterian burial plots 1895

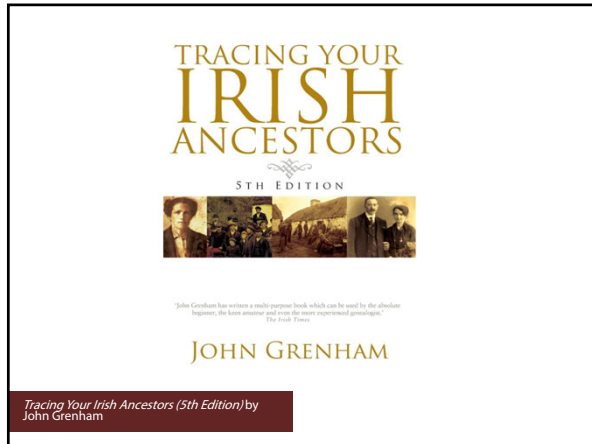
Ireland Down Ballyroney Presbyterian burial plots 1895

- Records include the following details:
 - Name
 - Denomination
 - Year
 - Plot Number
 - Parish
 - County
 - Source

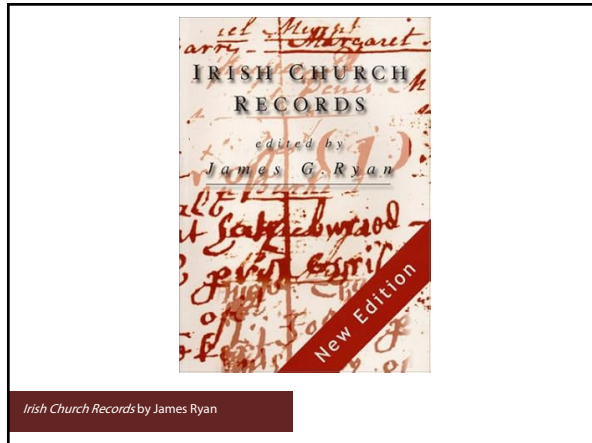




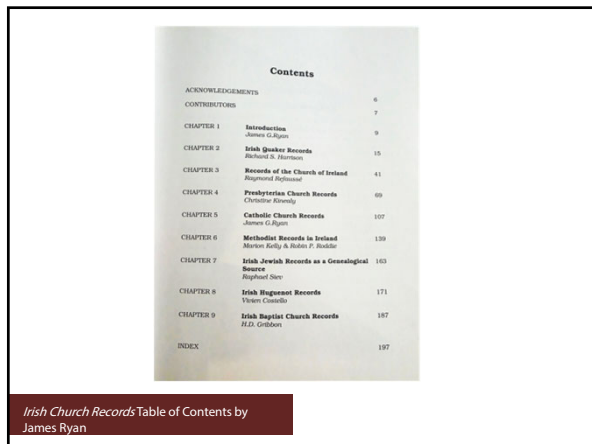




Tracing Your Irish Ancestors (5th Edition) by John Grenham



Irish Church Records by James Ryan



Irish Church Records Table of Contents by James Ryan

Review

1. Church of Ireland parish registers should be consulted for pre-19th century records of Catholics and Presbyterians when not found in their own respective parish records.
2. Review the notes columns on the baptism and marriage records as they may hold new details about your ancestors and help you confirm you found the correct person.
3. Not everything is online! While many records are digitized, offsite repositories should be checked.

QUESTIONS?

Schedule a consultation
consultations@americanancestors.org

Hire Research Services
research@americanancestors.org

Consultations

Book a one-on-one consultation with a genealogist and receive help with your family history research!

AmericanAncestors.org/
Expert-Help/Consultations




SCAN ME





