

Finding Irish Ancestors: A Guide to Civil and Church Records

Class 4: Exploring Other Church Records

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Before you begin, set yourself up for success

You may hit a brick wall when searching church records for details about an ancestor's birth, marriage, or death. However, it does not necessarily mean the end of the road for your research. Taking the time to search other types of church records, such as the diaries of ministers, church meeting minutes, and even certain church publications including newspapers and journals could result in a breakthrough with your research. As you begin to expand your search for these types of records, remember these tips:

1. Learn more about the history of the religious community you are researching, using resources such as research guides, books, and articles. Doing so will help you become familiar with the types of records available, as well as any possible gaps in record availability.
2. A number of books, articles, and websites are mentioned in the lecture and listed in this handout. Take the time to review any bibliographies in these sources for additional reading material. It may sound obvious, but also be sure to read the introduction section of a book, as well as any appendix items. These sections may provide additional information about collections spotlighted in the book, or include a transcription of records not found in other sources.
3. Explore the websites of various Irish libraries and archives. You may discover a database or online journal posted on the website that will help with your research. If you are searching for a particular set of records or additional resources and don't know where to look, reach out to the reference staff at those repositories. In most cases, you can easily contact them via email or even a live online chat. Remember there will be a time difference, so you may not hear back immediately.

Church of Ireland

- Crockford's Clerical Directories, database available at www.ancestry.com. Useful for obtaining names of Diocesan Bishops and members of the clergy in Ireland.
- Thom's Directory, available at www.familysearch.org. Included in this source is an ecclesiastical directory.

- The Representative Body Church (RCB) Library website (<https://www.churchofireland.org/about/rcb-library>) includes an online catalogue of its manuscript collection. Several entries include links that provide additional information about a particular manuscript item. It is beneficial to review these listings because in some instances, information regarding other sources tied to the manuscript item, is included in the description. One example is the entry for the Visitation notebook of Charles Lindsay, bishop of Kildare, dated 1804-1818 (MS 8 in the catalogue). It is noted in this entry that the manuscript was published in *Journal of the Co. Kildare Archaeological Society*, which may be accessed online. Also available on the RCB Library website is a handlist of Church of Ireland Vestry Minute Books.

Presbyterian

- The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland website is a valuable resource for those researching Presbyterian ancestors (<https://presbyterianhistoryireland.com>).
- Several books containing Fasti lists—which contain biographical information and service details of ministers—have been published, covering the years 1613–1910 (see resources list in this handout).
- Session minute books are also a great resource. Information contained in these records include births, marriages, arrivals of new members, and details about members who were brought before the session for disciplinary matters.

Methodist

- Experienced a split in 1816, resulting in two groups known as the “Primitive Methodists” and the “Wesleyan Methodists.” The two groups were once again unified in 1878. Two websites of note for learning more about these groups and locating resources for research are “My Primitive Methodists” at <https://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk>, and “My Wesleyan Methodists” at <https://www.mywesleyanmethodists.org.uk>.
- It can be challenging to locate details about where ministers served, since they moved frequently. Be sure to check the database *Index of Ministers who Served in Ireland*, available on the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland website (<https://methodisthistoryireland.org>) to obtain biographical and service details about a particular minister.
- The Methodist Historical Society of Ireland also provides a database titled *Index of Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Magazine Obituaries* containing the name of the individual, year of death, and the volume and page number where the obituary was published. Also available online are the Methodist newspapers *The Irish Evangelist* and *The Christian Advocate*.

Quaker

- The Friends Historical Library Dublin website provides several resources for those researching Irish Quakers (<https://quakers-in-ireland.ie/historical-library>).
- The *Jones Index to Quaker Births, Marriages and Deaths in Ireland’s Monthly Meetings, ca. 1606-1872*, is available online at FamilySearch.org. It was compiled by Isabel Jones, and is commonly

referred to as the “Jones Index.” It contains over 2,000 surnames, and provides information on geographical locations where a particular surname appears in the meeting minutes.

- Quaker migration records, available online at FindMyPast.com, provides biographical information about members, including the name of the former meeting house where they were members.
- Quaker suffering records are compiled details about hardships experienced by some Quakers after the English Civil War in the mid-1600s, including prison sentences and/or fines imposed on these individuals.

Other records of note

- *Ireland, Catholic Qualification and Convert Rolls, 1701-1845*, at www.FamilySearch.org. In the 1700s, a number of Catholics converted to the Church of Ireland in order to avoid certain restrictions experienced by Catholics, including the ownership of property. The details contained in these records vary, but may include occupation, residence, and in some cases for females, a person’s maiden name.
- Religious Census of 1766 – some images are available online through the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland (<https://virtualtreasury.ie>).

Resources and Further Reading

General Reference

Books

Daly, Marie E., and Judith Lucey. *Genealogist’s Handbook for Irish Research*. Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2016.

Grenham, John. *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*. 5th ed. Dublin: Gill Books, 2019.

Gurrin, Brian, Kerby A. Miller, and Liam Kennedy, eds. *The Irish Religious Censuses of the 1760s: Catholics and Protestants in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*. Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2022.

Mitchell, Brian. *A New Genealogical Atlas of Ireland*. 2nd ed. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2002.

Roulston, William J. *Researching Scots-Irish Ancestors: The Essential Genealogical Guide to Early Modern Ulster, 1600–1800*. 2nd ed. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2022.

Ryan, James G. *Irish Church Records: Their History, Availability, and Use in Family and Local History Research*. Dublin: Flyleaf Press, 2001.

Websites

American Ancestors, <https://www.americanancestors.org>

Association for Church Archives of Ireland, <https://churcharchives.ie>

FamilySearch Wiki, Ireland Church Records,
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Ireland_Church_Records

Irish Ancestors, <https://www.johngrenham.com>

The National Archives of Ireland, <https://nationalarchives.ie>

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/public-record-office-northern-ireland-proni>

Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland, <https://virtualtreasury.ie>

Ulster Historical Foundation, <https://ulsterhistoricalfoundation.com>

Church of Ireland Sources

Books

Refaussé, Raymond. *Church of Ireland Records*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006.

Websites

Church of Ireland Representative Church Body (RCB) Library, <https://www.churchofireland.org/about/rcb-library>

Presbyterian Sources

Books

Barkley, John M. *Fasti of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1840–1870*. Part I.
Belfast: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1986.

Barkley, John M. *Fasti of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1871–1890*. Part II.
Belfast: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1987.

Barkley, John M. *Fasti of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1891–1910*. Part III.
Belfast: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1987.

McConnell, James, and Samuel G. McConnell. *Fasti of the Irish Presbyterian Church, 1613–1840*. Belfast:
Presbyterian Historical Society, 1951.

Roulston, William J. *Researching Presbyterian Ancestors in Ireland*. Belfast, Northern Ireland: Ulster
Historical Foundation, 2020.

Websites

Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland, <https://presbyterianhistoryireland.com>

Methodist Sources

Books

Crookshank, Charles Henry. *History of Methodism in Ireland*. 3 vols. Belfast: R. S. Allen, Son & Allen, 1885.

Websites

Methodist Historical Society of Ireland, <https://methodisthistoryireland.org>

My Primitive Methodists, <https://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk>

My Wesleyan Methodists, <https://www.mywesleyanmethodists.org.uk>

Quaker Sources

Books

Fuller, Samuel. *A Compendious View of Some Extraordinary Sufferings of the People Call'd Quakers: Both in Person and Substance, in the Kingdom of Ireland, from the Year 1655 to the End of the Reign of King George the First*. Dublin: Samuel Fuller, 1731.

Goodbody, Olive C. *Guide to Irish Quaker Records, 1654–1860*, with contributions on Northern Ireland records by B. G. Hutton. Baltimore: Genealogical.com, 2014.

Grubb, Isabel. *Quakers in Ireland, 1654–1900*. London: Swarthmore Press, 1927.

Harrison, Richard S. *A Biographical Dictionary of Irish Quakers*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008.

Wight, Thomas. *A History of the Rise and Progress of the People Called Quakers, in Ireland, from the Year 1653 to 1700*. 4th ed. London: William Phillips, 1811.

Websites

Friends Historical Library Dublin, <https://quakers-in-ireland.ie/historical-library>