

ALL IRELAND SOURCES NEWSLETTER

A Monthly Newsletter: Editor: Terry Eakin, 38 Cabarita Road, CONCORD NSW 2137

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Introduction: ‘All Ireland Sources’ is a monthly newsletter distributed free by E-mail to Family History Societies and interested researchers near the end of each month. Volume 1 will have 14 issues, then Volume 2 and others will have 12 issues. Distribution by Australia Post will cost 50 cents/month (\$6.00 annually) within Australia. The aim is to bring items of interest regarding Irish record sources to the Australian genealogist through family history societies and groups. The editor would appreciate being made aware of records relating to the Irish, held in Australia. Last month we looked at the “**Registry of Deeds**” and “**Land Records**”. School Records in PRONI has been held over waiting for an update. This month we examine the “**Church Records**”, part 1.

PARISH AND CHURCH REGISTERS OF BAPTISMS, MARRIAGES AND BURIALS:

Registers are kept locally in churches unless otherwise stated. The National Archives of Ireland (NAI), Dublin and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), Belfast have copying schemes in progress for registers. Church of Ireland registers were of printed format to encourage consistent record keeping. However, not all the columns were filled in. Irish Genealogical Centres have indexed the majority of these church records up to 1920 and work is continuing in counties Dublin, Cork and others.

Baptism registers give the name of the child, the date of the baptism, the date of birth, the name of the father, the maiden name of the mother and the townland address where they lived. Occasionally the father’s occupation is given. The least complete entry only records the name of the child, the name of the father and the date baptised.

From 1845 marriage registers are the same as the civil registers and contain the date of the marriage, the names of the bride and groom, their ages (full sometimes if over 21 years of age), both fathers’ names with their occupations, and the townland where each of the bride and groom lived. Pre-1845 marriage registers are not as detailed and rarely list the names of the fathers of the bride and groom.

Burial registers usually list the name of the deceased, date of death or burial, age and place of residence.

Church Of Ireland:

The clergy of the established Church of Ireland (Episcopalian) were not required by canon law to keep parish registers until 1634. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, there was considerable laxity in keeping of registers and many were lost over the years. The archivists in the then recently established Public Record Office of Ireland (PROI) took the initiative of having registers of the disestablished Church of Ireland declared public records in the Parochial Records Act (Ireland 1875-6).

The Church of Ireland was disestablished in 1870. All pre-1871 baptismal and burial registers and all marriage registers before 31 March 1845 (civil registration of Protestant and Jewish marriages became obligatory on 1 April 1845) were declared public records.

For over 1,000 parishes where secure storage for records was not available, these early registers were transferred to the Record Office under warrant. The deposit of these registers in the National Archives took place over a period of some 20 years from 1875 with the result for some parishes, baptismal and burial registers up to about 1890 were deposited and only up to about 1870 for others. The cut-off date for marriage registers required for deposit was 1845.

637 parishes were wealthy enough to install a safe in their parish vestries and these parishes were permitted to retain or withdraw their registers into their own custody. This proved to be a providential move because in June 1922, virtually all of the deposited Church of Ireland registers and many vital records of all Ireland were destroyed in an explosion and fire in the Four Courts building in Dublin.

Over the past 70 years, the NAI and PRONI have been making transcripts or photocopies of the surviving Church of Ireland registers. In Belfast in the 1950s and early 1960s photostat copies were taken of registers and since then microfilm copies.

The NAI has microfilm registers for the diocese of Cashel, Cloyne, Cork, Limerick (including an adjoining diocese), Lismore, Waterford and Ross; in Connaught the archdiocese of Tuam including Achonry and Killala and in Leinster the dioceses of Ferns, Glendalough, Kildare and Meath. They have now filmed the diocese of Dublin.

In the province of Ulster, including the border counties of Cavan, Donegal, Monaghan and Louth, most of the pre-1900 Church of Ireland registers surviving locally have now been copied by PRONI. There are nearly 400 parishes in the province of Ulster and for about 125 of these parishes, registers survive from before 1800 and 12 parishes have registers starting before 1700.

It is significant that the bulk of these early registers are for parishes in the Lagan Valley from Belfast south east towards Lurgan, an area of heavy English settlement in the 17th century. However, there are gaps in even the earliest of these registers, such as those for the parish of Blaris (Lisburn) which survive from 1641. For this parish, baptisms and burials 1751-63, and burials 1779-1820 are missing.

For the city of Dublin, Church of Ireland registers survive from an exceptionally early period and many of these registers have been published by the Parish Register Society of Ireland in the early years of this century. The only Ulster parish included in this series is the parish of Templemore, Co. Derry, for which there are baptismal and burial registers from 1642 and marriage registers from 1649.

In counties Clare, Leitrim, Sligo, Kildare and Meath all pre-1900 Church of Ireland registers have been indexed by the Irish Genealogical Project centres and most other counties in the Republic have now been completed except for counties Cork, Dublin and perhaps one or two others.

Positive copies of registers microfilmed by PRONI have been presented to the Representative Church Body Library, Braemor Park, Churchtown, Dublin. This library also has custody of the original registers for some 400 Church of Ireland parishes, many of which are now defunct. PRONI and the UHF published a listing of all parish registers and their whereabouts in 1994. *Guide to Church Records: an Irish Genealogical Source* gives the dates of registers for all known church parish registers in the province of Ulster, counties Leitrim and Louth and includes the PRONI reference numbers. *Guide to Church Records* is available for purchase from the UHF (now out of print).

In PRONI microfilm copies are found under MIC1. Original records registers for 35 parishes have been deposited in PRONI, reference CR1 and photostat copies under T.679. In the case of a few parishes where the early registers were destroyed, some duplicates are available in collections of Bishops' Transcripts, once retained in diocesan offices but now deposited in PRONI. For the diocese of Down, Connor and Dromore there are transcripts for 11 parishes and also transcripts for two parishes in the diocese of Clogher.

Parish Vestry Minute Books (Church of Ireland):

Occasionally where pre-1870 registers were destroyed in the PROI, vestry minute books have survived in local custody. For 60 of the 400 parishes in the province of Ulster, these date from before 1800. Vestry minutes sometimes include records of private baptisms and publication of banns of marriage (Ardstraw), a census of the whole community in 1802 (Ballintoy, county Antrim and Faughanvale, county Londonderry 1803) or long lists of names of tithe and parish cess payers in the 18th century (Templemore, county Londonderry).

These vestry minutes regularly include lists of badged poor to whom relief was granted. The vestry minute books for most of the Northern Ireland counties have been filmed and are available in PRONI.

People whose ancestors were Presbyterian or Roman Catholic should not ignore Church of Ireland registers and vestry minute books as a possible source of information. The parish vestry was the smallest unit of the local administration and could include dissenters, and poor relief was given to those in need from all sections of the community regardless of religion.

Because of the penal enactments against those who refused to conform to the Established Church 1704-1782, many Protestant dissenters found it necessary to have their baptisms and marriages registered in the local Church of Ireland (Anglican) parish and Church of Ireland graveyards, which sometimes dated from before the Reformation

(Magheraculmoney, Co. Fermanagh), were often the place of burial for the whole community including Roman Catholics until late in the 19th century. For a long time Presbyterians could only have graveyards within the curtilage of their own churches.

Even in the rapidly growing city of Belfast in the 19th century, there was no separate Presbyterian graveyard until 1854. Shankill and Friar's Bush graveyards, the oldest in Belfast, served the whole community. In some Church of Ireland burial registers, for example in the parish of Magherafelt, Co. Derry, half of the entries in the 18th century were for Presbyterians.

Where marriage registers are lacking for a parish, it may be worth making a search in the index to marriage licence bonds for the appropriate dioceses. If one or both of the partners to be married were not known personally to a minister, a bond had to be issued by the diocesan authorities declaring that there was no impediment to the marriage. The indexes to these bonds survived destruction in 1922 and these indexes give dates of birth and the maiden names of wives. Copies are available in PRONI (MIC6B).

Couples usually married in the bride's parish. Permission to marry was obtained by either banns or by licence. Banns meant that the minister announced their intention to marry, on three consecutive Sundays to allow objections to the marriage to be made or impediments to be investigated. This could be bypassed by obtaining a special licence. This meant an application to the proper church authority, the bishop of the diocese. Most of these Irish allegations, bonds and licences have been destroyed. Some abstracts and indexes for various dioceses survive.

In Australia, look for Ireland – Church Records at your nearest Mormon Family History Library. To find Church of Ireland records at the Family History Library, consult the locality section of the catalogue under Ireland, [county], [parish], church records. Films can be ordered in and the cost is quite reasonable. The staff on duty in the Family History Libraries are most helpful.

Irish Gravestone Inscriptions: During 1999 I propose to commence compiling a listing of Irish monumental inscription publications held in Australia. This would make it easier for Australians to access these records locally instead of having to chase them in Ireland. I am proposing to make the database county based, then identify each graveyard within the county, religion, parish, townland location (if known), form (book, fiche, etc.), location within Australia (library & reference) and comments. Should anyone have any suggestions, or advice, relating to this project, these would be welcomed. Please contact Terry Eakin by 31 March 1999.

THE IRISH At Home and Abroad. A Journal of Irish Genealogy and Heritage published in the USA is available by contacting Perry McIntyre at McIntyre Research, 35 Myahgah Road, MOSMAN NSW 2088, telephone (02) 9969 7142 or fax (02) 9968 2874. This is included herein due to the number of enquiries regarding subscriptions. It is a quarterly publication.

Articles, suggestions or information for this newsletter may be E-mailed to: teakin@chilli.net.au or posted to Terry Eakin, 38 Cabarita Road, Concord NSW 2137.
