

A Primer in
Irish Genealogy

Sean J Murphy MA

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Centre for Irish Genealogical and Historical Studies
Carraig, Cliff Road, Windgates, Bray, County Wicklow, Ireland**

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Lesson 1: First Steps

What is Genealogy?

The author has been teaching genealogy through the Adult Education Centre in University College Dublin since 1989. This course is the only one of its kind at third level in Ireland and currently leads to a Certificate in Genealogy/Family History (Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications).¹ The present primer is based on lectures for the introductory Module 1 of the course and is offered both as a text for students and as a guide for those in this country and abroad who wish to trace their Irish ancestors.

It is a good idea to commence study in any discipline by examining the precise meaning of the word which describes it. The term ‘genealogy’ is derived from the Latin via Greek word *genea*, meaning ‘race’ or ‘kin’, and the Greek *logos*, which means ‘word’ or ‘account’. A good working definition of genealogy is provided by Greenwood, who describes the subject as ‘That branch of history which involves the determination of family relationships’.² It cannot be stressed too often that genealogy is a branch of history, subject to the rules thereof, and is not an activity out on its own or one in which people can make up their own rules as they go along.

While it is acceptable loosely to equate the terms ‘genealogy’ and ‘family history’, more exactly the first refers to the bare bones of family relationships as set out in pedigrees,

¹ UCD Adult Education Centre, <http://www.ucd.ie/adulted/>.

² Val D Greenwood, *The Researcher’s Guide to American Genealogy*, Baltimore, Maryland, 1983 Edition, page 1.

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and the second to a more detailed or narrative account of families. As in history, in genealogy we are concerned with establishing facts through careful and critical documentary research, and the main sources relevant to Irish genealogical research will be introduced in the appropriate order in future lessons.

The development of genealogy can be divided into three stages, the first in pre-literate pagan societies when genealogical information on gods, heroes and rulers was transmitted orally, and the second following the invention of writing when royal, religious and aristocratic pedigrees were recorded. The third or modern stage started in Europe from about 1500 onwards, when the expansion of bureaucracy and official record-keeping gradually led to a situation where all members of society high and low were recorded.³ It can be observed that in the first and second stages genealogy is very much an aristocratic pursuit, but that in the third it is potentially democratic and inclusive, though it is only in this century that genealogy has shaken off its upper class associations and become a mass pursuit.

Preparatory Work

Whether Irish-born or the descendant of an Irish emigrant living abroad, it is vital that the task of seeking information on ancestors should begin at home, so that before going near the record repositories one should do one's homework. Typically this preparatory work will involve writing down what you yourself know about your ancestry, seeking further information from parents, aunts and uncles, and grandparents or other older relatives if living, not forgetting of course to make allowances

³ 'Genealogy', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/228297/genealogy>, viewed 4 October 2009.

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for the limitations of human memory. Just as importantly, having secured permission where necessary, you should search through old family papers and photocopy such items as birth, marriage and death certificates, grave receipts, memorial cards, bible entries where kept, photographs and so on. Few families will be without an older relative with a store of genealogically relevant information or a deed box or bundle of old documents, and it does not make sense to neglect these sources and the vital signposting information they contain. Those of Irish descent abroad have the additional task of searching for county of origin, and other crucial identifying information on ancestors, in records of their own country, including shipping, citizenship, census, vital, property, church, legal, occupational, obituary and other records. This work of course will be an element of the larger task of tracing those of your ancestors who were born and died in your own country.

A question frequently asked by beginners is how far back can I trace my Irish ancestry? The answer unfortunately is probably not as far back as some would expect, for on average the period 1800-20 is usually the cut-off point for detailed genealogical information in this country. In England and other European countries genealogists can expect to trace families back to the eighteenth century or earlier, but in Ireland only the lucky few can expect similar results, and these are almost always the descendants of wealthy or prominent families. Where no documentary evidence has been produced, one is entitled to be sceptical of claims to have traced a pedigree back to Brian Boru or the Milesians. The mania for 'family crests' and 'clan' organisations is inspired by a need to claim an ancient and prestigious lineage, while skipping the 'academic' work of searching through the records for authentic information.

Due to the poverty of the great mass of the Irish population before this century, and the country's colonial status,

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but more particularly our past and continuing carelessness concerning our documentary heritage, the records simply do not exist to enable most families to be traced in detail before 1800. The greatest blow to genealogists and historians was probably the destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland during the Civil War in June 1922, and especially the loss of the 1821 Census. However, despite such terrible losses, it must be stressed that there is a great wealth of surviving documents, indeed probably far more than we deserve, as demonstrated by examples of continuing neglect such as the treatment of school roll books. Despite the legacy of documentary neglect, most of us have the positive prospect of being able to trace our ancestry over a period of nearly 200 hundred years or five to six generations. Indeed, the amount of work involved in searching the available records is so substantial that only a dedicated minority will persevere to trace all the lines of their ancestry as far back as possible. Yet even those who attempt a little will find the work rewarding if they approach it in the right spirit and using the correct methods.

There is a growing number of how-to textbooks relating to Irish genealogy, not all it has to be said of high quality, and we will recommend a few more useful works at this point. Firstly, there is Grenham's guide, important for its county source lists and which might be worth purchasing.⁴ Then there is a comparable work by Ryan, which is harder to come by and contains similar lists of sources and clearly illustrated county maps.⁵ MacLysaght's paperback guide to Irish surnames⁶ would

⁴ John Grenham, *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*, 3rd Edition, Dublin 2006.

⁵ J G Ryan, *Irish Records: Sources for Family and Local History*, 2nd Edition, Salt Lake City 1997.

⁶ Edward MacLysaght, *The Surnames of Ireland*, 6th Edition, Dublin 1991

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also be a useful addition to your personal reference library. While now out of date, Falley's voluminous guide to Irish genealogical sources remains useful.⁷ See Appendix 1 below for a select range of publications relevant to Irish genealogy.

Pedigree Sheets

Right from the beginning, and especially as the volume of genealogical data gathered grows in size, we need to consider some method of recording information systematically in order to keep track of it. Everyone will be familiar with the simple drop-line pedigree, where horizontal and vertical lines show B and C to be descended from A, D E and F to be descended from B, and so on. Most experienced amateur and professional genealogists use a more sophisticated and flexible system of pedigree sheets modelled on the tried and tested Latter-Day Saints (Mormon) system, because regardless of what one thinks of the spiritual motivation involved, this Church has unrivalled expertise in genealogical methodology. An increasing number of genealogists use computer programs such Family Tree Maker to organise data, and it will be found that the on-screen sheets accord with or are derived from the Mormon standard. However, it is advisable to ensure that you know how to compile pedigree sheets manually as well.

Students are advised to start by using the four-generation pedigree sheet provided (see illustrations below), which is adapted from the Mormon system. It is recommended that a supply of pedigree sheets should be copied from this master for personal use and kept accessibly in your files. You should start by heading a blank pedigree sheet 'Draft', number it '1' on top, and at the far right enter from top to bottom the continuation

⁷ Margaret D Falley, *Irish and Scots-Irish Ancestral Research*, 2 volumes, Strasburg, Virginia, 1962, reprinted Baltimore, 1981.

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sheet numbers '2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9', in that order (do not confuse the numbers given to pedigree sheets with the numbers allocated to the persons appearing in same). Considering that on average we can only trace back 5 or 6 generations, it will be seen that using this system a total of just 9 pedigree sheets will suffice to record the most important information on most people's ancestral lines (those systems which squeeze 5 generations into a sheet actually require a total of 16 continuation sheets!).

When filling out sheets, it is recommended that you enter yourself at position 1 in pedigree sheet 1, and if married note your spouse at the succeeding unnumbered position (if tracing your spouse's family, the preparation of a separate series of sheets is advised). You should then record your father at position 2, your mother at position 3, your paternal grandparents at positions 4 and 5, your maternal grandparents at positions 6 and 7, and your great-grandparents at positions 8-15. Females appear in the pedigree sheets under their maiden names, and with the single exception of position 1 on pedigree sheet 1, should be entered below their husbands, shades of patriarchy notwithstanding. Note that there are spaces for places as well as dates of birth, marriage and death, and that you will need to start appropriately numbered continuation sheets when you reach your great-grandparents.

Exactitude should be our watchword, and uncertain information should be marked with a question mark or 'c' in the case of dates (eg, c1798, from Latin circa meaning 'about'). When completing sheets, always enter your name, address and date on these sheets, and maintain the discipline of listing sources briefly, even if at this stage they consist mostly of oral information or family papers. It is a good idea to keep draft pedigree sheets at the top of one's working file, in order to see what has been accomplished and what has yet to be achieved,

and in time the drafts with their gaps and uncertainties will be replaced by more finished sheets.

Family Group Sheets

It can be seen that there is no room for siblings or brothers and sisters on the pedigree sheet, and the family group sheet is used to record this and other more detailed information. See illustrations below for a sample family group sheet, and again a supply of these may be copied for personal use. Note once more the space provided on the family group sheet for a brief note concerning sources of information. As well as continuing work on your draft pedigree sheets, a few draft family group sheets at least should also be compiled, although frankly it must be admitted that only a dedicated minority will complete family group sheets as fully as pedigree sheets. For someone who traces all ancestral lines back five generations, there will be a potential total of 16 family group sheets, and these optionally may be referenced to the numbered pedigree sheets as 1/1, 1/2-3, 1/4-5, and so on.

Lesson 2: Research Methods

Research Methods

We continue to deal with genealogical theory in this lesson, both because too little attention is generally paid to this aspect, and because a good grounding in first principles will enhance the quality of one's work and improve the chances of success. It would be going too far to state that genealogy or indeed history in general are exact sciences, in the sense that say astronomy is. Nevertheless, it must be repeated that the facts concerning family relationships, and the past in general, can only be determined by precise and critical research, that is, according to scientific principles, and not by the free exercise of imagination, which is the basis of pseudo-genealogy. Ireland, it would be fair to say, has been particularly bedevilled by confusion between real and fantasy genealogy, as exemplified by claims to Gaelic chiefship based on fabricated pedigrees.⁸

Genealogy, as has been indicated, is a branch of history concerned primarily with determining family relationships, which it does by seeking records of the three vital events of birth, marriage and death (BMD). We seek to trace individuals who are related by blood or marriage, and who coexist in family groups, or sets of parents and children. Information on ancestors is obtained from sources, which in the main will be documentary or unpublished, though some will be printed, and which can be classified further as primary and secondary sources. A primary sources is one compiled about the time of an

⁸ Sean J Murphy, *Twilight of the Chiefs: The Mac Carthy Mór Hoax*, Bethesda, Maryland, 2004.

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event, for example, a birth registration, while a secondary source is one compiled from primary sources at a later stage, for example, a completed pedigree.

The good genealogist, like the good historian, always lists sources, and while there is no such thing as an infallible source, by striving always to refer to a primary source error can be minimised. Research notes and copy documents should be filed carefully, whether in hardcopy form or on computer. In every case the title and date of each source should be noted, as well as the repository and reference number, and the date on which it was extracted or copied. Consider your research notes and writings to be a constantly developing personal genealogical portfolio, on which you may draw over the years for many purposes, academic, sharing information with relatives or other interested parties, or indeed locating a certificate for family needs. It is very important to cite the sources one uses and in particular never to copy the words of another without attribution, for to do otherwise constitutes plagiarism, one of the cardinal scholarly sins.

Speculation is vital to all the enquiring sciences provided it is employed in a controlled and sparing way, and when a thorough search has failed to locate sources, it is legitimate for example to suggest a relationship or estimate a year of birth, provided one makes it clear that what is involved is merely speculation. Finally, an important rule in genealogical research is to work from the known to the unknown, from the present back to the past, from one's self back to one's ancestors, which again underscores the importance of completing the 'homework' recommended in the first chapter.

Record repositories

The principal Irish record repositories relevant to those engaged in genealogical research are firstly the National

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Archives of Ireland, the National Library of Ireland and the General Register Office, all in Dublin, and for Ulster cases the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast. The National Library of Ireland has a Genealogy Room supervised by staff, with a range of reference materials and free introductory advice. The National Archives now has a self-service facility for microfilms, which greatly speeds up work there, but its Genealogy Room is staffed by contracted professionals and geared towards free consultations rather than general reference. While the General Register Office charges search fees, the records of the other principal repositories can be inspected free of charge, although readers' tickets must be obtained. Facilities in the National Archives and National Library of Ireland have been improved significantly in recent years, but they still cannot compare in terms of quality of service with the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Research facilities in the General Register Office cannot be said to be at all adequate. The refurbishment of Dublin City Library and Archive in Pearse Street, Dublin, has provided an excellent new facility, whose holdings include a range of Latter-Day Saints microfilm copies of Irish records. For further information on the principal record repositories, see Appendix 2 below.

Other more specialised repositories, such as the Valuation Office, Representative Church Body Library and Registry of Deeds, will be mentioned at the appropriate points in future lessons. A growing quantity of sources is being made available in copy form in regional Irish libraries and archives, in larger repositories and society libraries abroad, and of course through the network of Mormon or Latter Day Saints Family History Centers. A growing number of records are being digitised and placed online and reference will be made to these at appropriate points below.

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The most important records to be searched by the genealogist, and which will be dealt with in the appropriate order in future lessons, are as follows: 1901 and 1911 census returns and pre-1901 fragments, birth, marriage and death registrations from 1864 onwards, Griffith's *Valuation* and the Tithe Applotment Books 1820s-60s, and church registers. There are of course other records relevant to Irish genealogists, especially the lucky minority who possess wealthier ancestors, but for the majority of us, the above are the core sources which contain most of the available information on our ancestors. Vague advice is sometimes given to start research by referring to church or parish registers, but these essential and difficult sources generally should be left until a later stage, and the records tackled in the order in which they are listed above.

Lesson 3: Computers and the Internet

Computers and the Internet

Genealogy and computers were of course made for one another, as the activity involves the manipulation of large amounts of data. The computer is in fact revolutionising genealogical research, and as the cost of the new information technology has fallen, increasing numbers of amateurs can afford the kind of awesome processing power previously only available to governments and large organisations. The Internet has dramatically increased the quantity (although not always quality!) of information accessible to genealogists through the growing number of websites of libraries, archives, associations and commercial firms, all of which enable one to tap into information hundreds or thousands of miles away. A growing number of digitised records are now searchable online, some for free and others on payment of fees.

It is hardly necessary to emphasise the particular importance of the Internet to those who do not live in or near Dublin and Belfast Cities, where the principal repositories holding records of genealogical relevance are located. Using the Internet, you can identify Mormon Family History Centres and other repositories in your locality which hold copies of Irish records. When evaluating websites for their usefulness, consider in particular presentation and accessibility, quality of content (including ‘blarney’ factor), links to other sites and when last updated.

Digitisation of books and records, CD-ROM publications and the Internet are now radically changing the way we access

information. While the thorough researcher will still want to visit libraries and record repositories personally, an increasing range of material can be accessed remotely via the Internet in the comfort of your own home. The downside is that payments by credit card will be required to access much of the online material, but the increased speed, flexibility and convenience of access make payment worthwhile. See Appendix 2 below for a range of online resources.

There are many computer programs available designed to organise and present genealogical information. One of the most popular commercial programs is Family Tree Maker, a demo version of which can be downloaded from the Internet.⁹ The Latter-Day Saints also distribute for free an extremely sophisticated program called Personal Ancestral File, which is easy to use and is also a good learning tool, but alas apparently is no longer being updated.¹⁰ These computer programs enable one to store large quantities of genealogical information, and to arrange and output it in various ways, including in the form of pedigree sheets.

Photographs and Digital Images

Photographs should be considered as important genealogical documents in their own right, and they also literally flesh out the details in a pedigree. There are few households without at least some old photographs, and these should be sought out and copied by the family genealogist or genealogists. Photographs of course are only useful when the identities of the individuals portrayed are known. In some cases names and dates will have been helpfully written on the reverse

⁹ Family Tree Maker, <http://www.familytreemaker.com>.

¹⁰ Personal Ancestral File can be downloaded from <http://www.familysearch.org>.

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side of prints (something we should do with our current photographs), and older relatives may be able to help in identifying people whose names have not been recorded. Many of us now have digital cameras, and can scan and upload old photographs to our computers, where they can be enhanced using a program such as Photoshop Elements, and labeled and used in various contexts, for example, illustrated pedigrees, publications, webpages and of course class assignments. In addition to still images, the growing availability of camcorders enable family videos to be made, and for the genealogist the recording of older relatives reminiscing is a vital task.

With the advances in information technology and the increasing availability of documents online, genealogists find that they are also storing images of documents and images on their computers. It is important to keep this digital material well organised and accessible in folders on your computer, so that it can again be retrieved when necessary. Remember that an uncompressed bitmap image is very large, taking up megabytes of storage, and can be compressed to smaller size using JPEG, GIF or other formats. Of course compressed images lose some of their quality, yet as against this images can be enhanced using the features of programs like Photoshop. Also, one should not publish online or in hardcopy any images in which one does not have copyright, or indeed photographs of or documents relating to living individuals where permission has not been obtained.

Lesson 4: Placenames and Surnames

Placenames

The study of names is crucial to genealogy, as we seek to trace named individuals who lived in named places.¹¹ The Celts were great bestowers of names, and the stock of Irish placenames runs into many millions. Most will be familiar with the division of Ireland into 4 provinces and 32 counties. Each county in turn is divided into baronies (often based on the old Gaelic *tuatha* or petty kingdoms), the baronies are divided into parishes (which can be either civil or church), and the parishes are further subdivided into townlands and towns (the corresponding division in urban areas being the street). The townland is the smallest officially-recognised unit, but it can be further divided by the use of minor local names, or subdenominations, which in fact make up the great bulk of Irish placenames and still have not been fully recorded.

Most placenames are called after natural features, man-made features or personal names. The language of origin is overwhelmingly Gaelic, but placenames derived from English are to be found, with a much smaller stock derived from Norse, Latin, Norman-French and indeed possible pre-Celtic languages. Some of the most common placename elements derived from natural features are as follows: abha(in) - river, carraig - rock, cnoc - mountain, coill - wood, doire - oak, droim -ridge, loch - lake. The following are some of the more common terms

¹¹ Useful general texts on placenames are P W Joyce, *Irish Names of Places*, 3 volumes, Dublin, undated, and Deirdre Flanagan and Laurence Flanagan, *Irish Place Names*, Dublin 1994.

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derived from man-made features: baile - townland, town, caiseal - fort, cill - church, dún - fort, ráth - large fort, enclosed dwelling, teampall - church. Examples of placenames incorporating personal names are Ballymurphy, Baldwinstown, Castleconnor.

In considering official placenames, and particularly their application in genealogical research, it is important to distinguish between civil and church denominations. As noted, the parish can be both a civil and a church denomination, and while Church of Ireland parishes are usually the same as civil parishes, Roman Catholic parishes frequently differ. The diocese is a uniquely ecclesiastical denomination, consisting of groups of parishes.

As a result of the growth of government functions in the nineteenth century, it was found necessary to create new administrative divisions. The introduction of a system of poor relief in the 1830s was accompanied by the creation of poor law unions, and these in time formed the basis of registration districts when civil registration of births, marriages and deaths were introduced (make a note, PLU = RD). With the expansion of the franchise or right to vote, the electoral division was created, and this division also came to be of importance in the compilation of censuses.

As we shall see in the case of surnames, it is important to remember that variations in the anglicised spelling and even pronunciation of placenames can occur. Furthermore, the official spelling of a placename may be different from that used locally. Thus placenames with the element baile may be spelt Bally- or Balli-, and occasionally Bal-, while droim may be anglicised Drom- or Drum-. A complication occasionally encountered is the transmission in family lore of a subdenominational name, which must then be related to the official townland name.

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In summary then, the most important administrative divisions are the county, barony, parish, townland, town, street, poor law union, registration district and electoral division. It will be found that the various classes of records of genealogical relevance are organised according to these divisions, and indeed documents cannot be searched efficiently without knowledge of same. Our chief reference aids when studying placenames are the *Townlands Index 1851*¹² and the *Townlands Index 1901*, supplemented by Lewis's two-volume topographical dictionary.¹³ The *Irish Times* online genealogy reference service features a free placename search.¹⁴ Maps of counties showing the barony and civil parish divisions are to be found in the National Library of Ireland *Index of Surnames* (which will be described in more details in a future lecture) and also in J G Ryan's above cited work. Detailed Ordnance Survey maps of the Twenty-Six Counties are now available online for a fee, but free to users of the National Library,¹⁵ while a private firm sells copies of OS maps covering the whole of Ireland, and also provides an online browsing subscription service.¹⁶

¹² Full title *General Alphabetical Index to the Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland, Based on the Census of Ireland for the Year 1851*, republished by the Genealogical Publishing Company of Baltimore, Maryland, 1984.

¹³ Samuel Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, 2 volumes, London 1837, and *Atlas of Ireland*, London 1837, reprinted Galway 1995.

¹⁴ *Irish Ancestors*, <http://scripts.ireland.com/ancestor/>, visited 18 October 2006.

¹⁵ *Ireland's Historic Mapping Archive*, <http://www.irishhistoricmaps.ie/historic/>, visited 18 October 2006.

¹⁶ *Irish Townlands Maps*, <http://www.pasthomes.com/>, visited 18 October 2006.

Surnames and Their Origins

A surname may be defined as an hereditary second or family name handed down from one generation to the next, and can be distinguished from first or personal names which refer only to individuals. In the Irish context, MacLysaght's works on surnames have yet to be superseded,¹⁷ although Woulfe's earlier publication¹⁸ is still useful when read in conjunction with MacLysaght. MacLysaght's publications can be supplemented by reference to Bell's work on Ulster surnames,¹⁹ and Hanks and Hodges's standard dictionary of international surnames.²⁰ Information relating to surnames found on the Internet should be treated with caution, but the above mentioned *Irish Times* website also has a free surname search feature.

Surnames can best be understood firstly by dividing them into two main classes, monogenetic and polygenetic. Monogenetic surnames have a single origin from one individual or family, possible examples being Faherty or Asquith, while polygenetic surnames arose independently in different places and at different times, examples being Murphy or Smith. Surnames can be further divided into four broad classes, namely, those derived from ancestral personal names or patronymics, those derived from placenames or toponymics, occupational names derived from trade or status, and descriptive names referring to an individual's person or appearance. A good mnemonic, or memory recall device, for the first two terms is

¹⁷ Edward MacLysaght, *The Surnames of Ireland*, cited above, also *Irish Families*, Dublin 1985 Edition, and *More Irish Families*, Dublin 1982.

¹⁸ Rev Patrick Woulfe, *Sloinnte Gaedheal is Gall: Irish Names and Surnames*, Dublin 1923.

¹⁹ Robert Bell, *Book of Ulster Surnames*, Belfast 1988.

²⁰ Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges, *A Dictionary of Surnames*, Oxford 1989 Edition.

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‘mono-poly’, while the first letters of the four classes of surnames spell ‘APOD’ (think of ‘peas in a pod’).

There was no fixed beginning or end to the period during which surnames began to be used in Europe, the process being associated with feudalism and the need to have a more reliable means of identifying individuals for taxation and other purposes. Neither were surnames adopted at the same time by all classes, and in general, the rich and powerful and urban dwellers assumed them first, while the poor and rural dwellers tended to be slower to adopt them. The process started earlier in some areas, while in others it started later and in some places continued even down to the 19th century. However, while it was the norm in Europe in the 11th century that people were without surnames, by the 15th century it was the norm that they did possess them.

As was the case in other ancient societies, the inhabitants of Ireland in early times were known by one, personal name, eg, Art, Conn or Niall, as surnames had yet to evolve. It is true that the Irish had from a remote period a system of collective or ‘people-names’. These names were used in the plural and referred to the whole population group, or probably more accurately, to its ruling dynastic elite or aristocracy. Examples of these people-names include the Uí Néill, descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages, the Uí Briúin, descendants of his brother Brian, and the Eóghanachta and Dál gCais, descendants of Eóghan Mór and Cormac Cas respectively. Woulfe pointed out that many of these ancient names are similar in form to modern family names, and cautioned against confusing them. Thus, for example, Muintear Ifearnáin is the ancient people-name of the O’Quins of Thomond and the family name of the O’Heffernans of Owey, while Clann Dálaigh is the people-name of the

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O'Donnells of Tirconnell and should not be taken as referring to the surname Daly.²¹

Given the high profile of Irish 'clans', it is worthwhile considering what the late Dr Edward MacLysaght, the great authority on Irish surnames, had to say on the subject. In the introduction to *Irish Families*, he specifically stated that he avoided the term 'clan' in the Irish context because 'its use might imply the existence in Ireland of a clan system like that so highly developed in Scotland, which in fact we never had in this country'. MacLysaght preferred instead to use the term 'sept', which he defined as a 'collective term describing a group of persons who, or whose immediate and known ancestors, bore a common surname and inhabited the same locality'.²² The belief that every Irish surname has its own 'clan' and sometimes also its own 'chief' is at base a romantic fiction.²³

While feudalism did not develop in Ireland at the same pace as in the rest of Europe, nevertheless as society became more complex and population grew there must have arisen difficulties of identification, so that personal names were no longer sufficient and a further distinction became necessary. From an early period a system of temporary patronymics was in use, whereby Mac was fixed to the genitive case of the father's name, or Ua or Ó to that of the grandfather, eg, Cormac Mac Airt, Laoghair Mac Néill, and so on. Yet these second names were not surnames in the modern sense of the term, in that they were not fixed or hereditary or common to all members of a family, and they ceased to be used when the individual so described died.

²¹ Woulfe, *Sloinnte Gaedheal is Gall*, pages 685-86.

²² MacLysaght, *Irish Families*, page 12.

²³ Murphy, *Twilight of the Chiefs*, pages 8-10.

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When this system of transient patronymics itself became insufficient, surnames began to evolve in the 11th and three centuries following. The patronymic began to become fixed and hereditary, not in a planned way, but by a process of gradual evolution. Keating and O'Curry claimed that surnames became fixed in Ireland as a result of an edict of King Brian Boru. However, both Woulfe and MacLysaght state that there is no basis for this claim. Indeed Brian himself did not adopt a surname, as it was only in his grandson's time that the surname Ó Briain or O'Brien first came into existence, 'Boru' or Bóruma being in fact a nickname meaning 'of the tributes'.

The process by which fixed surnames came into use in Ireland was thus as gradual and unplanned as elsewhere, in short, it was an evolutionary process in response to societal changes. In general, the named ancestors after whom the most distinguished Irish families were named flourished in the period from the middle of the 9th and the end of the 13th century. Another characteristic of Gaelic Irish surnames is that the great majority are patronymic, that is, derived from named ancestors and prefixed by Ó or Mac, as surnames derived directly from places, occupations or nicknames are relatively uncommon. The polygenetic origin of a significant number of Gaelic surnames must also be kept in mind, so that for example Murphy, the most common surname in Ireland, derives from three distinct and unrelated Ó Murchadha septs which arose in Cork, Roscommon and Wexford, as well as from a fourth Mac Murchadha sept associated with Tyrone and later Armagh.

Settler Surnames and Variants

We should also take account of the surnames of successive waves of invaders and settlers which have become naturalised in this country over the centuries, for it is limiting to define Irish surnames as those of Gaelic origin only. Surnames

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of Norse origin are comparatively few in number, examples including Arthur and Harold. In contrast, surnames of Anglo-Norman origin are very numerous and many have become almost exclusively Irish, examples being Burke, Costello, Cusack, Dillon, Fitzgerald and so on. The plantations of the 16th and 17th centuries saw the introduction of many common English and Scottish surnames, such as Smith/Smyth, Brown(e), Murray, Wilson, Campbell, and so on. Smaller settlements, usually of refugees, have also left their mark in terms of surnames, for example, the Huguenot Boileau, La Touche and Le Fanu, and the German Palatine Bovenizer and Switzer.

It is vital for the genealogist to be aware of the possible variants of a surname, in order to avoid missing crucial entries during research. The first reason for variations in the spelling of Irish surnames is the fact that the bulk of them are of Gaelic origin, and their translation into English was not performed in a standardised manner. Although most surnames lost their O or Mac prefixes, some never did, and from the late nineteenth century onwards the national revival led to their widespread resumption. Thus in the case of surnames such as O'Brien and MacMahon, it is prudent to search indexes and records for the forms Brien and Mahon also. Then there are surnames which have appeared under a wide variety of spellings, such as Ahearn/Ahearne/Ahern, Cavanagh/Kavanagh, (O)Donoghoe/Donoghue/Donohoe, Malloy/Molloy/Mulloy, and so on. Furthermore, there are those Gaelic surnames which been both anglicised and assimilated to English surnames of similar sound or meaning, for example, (Mac)Brehon/Judge, Cuneen/Rabbit, (Mac)Gowan/Smith. Of course, surnames of settler origin have also been subject to variation, examples being Allison/Ellison, Carr/Kerr, Cockburn/Coburn. The prudent approach therefore is to search first under the received form a surname, then under relevant variants, and many of these

can be identified by reference to MacLysaght's Surnames of Ireland.

Top Ten Irish Surnames

Over a century ago, the then Registrar General of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Sir Robert E Matheson, commenced his pioneering study of Irish surnames, the results of which he published in the early 1900s.²⁴ Using directories of telephone subscribers, the present writer has been engaged in a survey of Irish surnames. There follows a listing of the ten most common surnames of Irish and Northern Irish (NI) telephone subscribers in the 1990s, with the tentatively estimated total population bearing each surname, and comparison with Matheson's 1890 ranking.²⁵ It will be noted that the new ranking differs significantly in a few cases from Matheson's list of a hundred years previously, in particular, (O)Connor has apparently risen from ninth to fourth position, while Smith/Smyth has dropped from fifth to ninth position, but further study is required to determine the reasons for these changes.

²⁴ Robert E Matheson, *Varieties and Synonymes of Surnames and Christian Names in Ireland*, Dublin 1901, and *Special Report on Surnames in Ireland*, Dublin 1909, both reprinted as *Surnames in Ireland*, Baltimore 1982.

²⁵ Survey of surnames based on *Irish Telephone Directory 1997/98*, CD-ROM, and *Phone Book, Northern Ireland, 1993*, publication pending.

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***Ten most common surnames of Irish telephone subscribers
1992-97 (with estimated numbers and position in 1890)***

- 1 Murphy 70,930 (1)
- 2 (O)Kelly 59,800 (2)
- 3 Walsh(e) 44,090 (4)
- 4 (O)Connor 42,950 (9)
- 5 (O)Sullivan 41,500 (3)
- 6 (O)Byrne 41,250 (7)
- 7 (O)Brien 39,650 (6)
- 8 Ryan 39,220 (8)
- 9 Smith/Smyth 38,760 (5)
- 10 (O)Neill 34,950 (10)

Lesson 5: Census Records

Earliest Censuses

It is necessary to start by pointing out that the earliest surviving census covering the whole of Ireland north and south is that of 1901, principally because of the destruction of documents in the Public Record Office of Ireland in 1922. Before this date there are only fragments of national censuses from 1821 onwards and local censuses, as well as census substitutes, which will be dealt with in a future lesson.

The earliest census is sometimes said to be the so-called Census of Ireland dated about 1659, which has been published.²⁶ This appears rather to have been based on tax records, and in any case lists by full name only ‘tituladoes’ or those who held title to land, but it does give useful totals of Irish surnames. The earliest census proper in fact appears to be of part of the baronies of Newcastle and Uppercross, Co Dublin, compiled about 1650 for a purpose which is not clear, and it has been published in the *Irish Genealogist* in the 1989 and succeeding volumes.

In 1731 and 1766 a religious census was ordered to be taken to establish the total numbers of ‘Papists’ and Protestants, but fragments only survive, and in many cases numbers of individuals only without names are given (see catalogue in National Archives). An important census of a district is that of the Diocese of Elphin, taken in 1749 at the behest of the Church

²⁶ Seamus Pender, Editor, *A Census of Ireland circa 1659*, Irish Manuscripts Commission, Dublin 1939, reprinted 2003.

of Ireland Bishop, Edward Synge, and recently published.²⁷ Elphin covered most of Co Roscommon, part of Co Sligo and nine parishes of Co Galway, and the 1749 census lists heads of households by name, with numbers of children and servants. The next local census of note is that of the City of Dublin, taken in difficult circumstances by Rev James Whitelaw in 1798, which again listed only heads of households by name. The original of Whitelaw's census was destroyed in the Public Record Office of Ireland in 1922, though a summary of its findings was published in 1813. An important local census listing all inhabitants by name is that of Carrick-on-Suir, Co Tipperary, dated 1799, and a microfilm copy is available in the National Library of Ireland.

Modern Censuses

The first government-administered national census commenced in 1813, but was badly organised and never properly completed, and the modern series of decennial or ten-yearly censuses dates from 1821. Of the decennial censuses, those of 1861 and 1871 were destroyed by government order after the results had been tabulated, while those of 1881 and 1891 are said to have been pulped during the First World War, or even as late as 1921. The census returns of 1813, 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851 were destroyed in the Public Record Office of Ireland in June 1922 during the Civil War, with the exception of some fragments and copies, most of which are held in the National Archives. For example, there are significant surviving sections of the 1821 census for sixteen parishes in Co Cavan and seven parishes in Co Galway, of the 1831 census for 41

²⁷ Marie-Louise Legg, Editor, *The Census of Elphin 1749*, Dublin 2004; this work is unindexed, but a database of the names can be searched via the Irish Origins website.

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parishes in Co Derry, and of the 1851 census for 13 parishes in Co Antrim. There is a list of heads of families in Dublin City copied from the 1851 census, now published on CD-ROM.²⁸ Grenham's guide contain fuller county-by-county listings of census returns (and substitutes) than can be given here, and these should be checked for relevant material as a matter of routine by all genealogical researchers.

Following the introduction of old age pensions in 1908, the earlier nineteenth-century censuses were used to provide proof of age, as civil registration of births was only established in 1864. Results of census searches by Public Record Office of Ireland staff before 1922, the so-called 'green forms', have survived and are held in the National Archives. It should be pointed out that not all such searches were successful, and of course only a fraction of the population is represented in the search forms.

Even though most of the original census returns with full lists of names have not survived, the published statistical reports on the censuses of 1821 and after should not be ignored. These official reports give details of total population in townlands, parishes, etc, with information on houses, occupations and so on, and are available in the National Library of Ireland. See especially the report on the 1851 census, which has been republished and gives population figures for 1841 and 1851 side by side, so that the effects of the Great Famine can be evaluated in a given townland or district.

Censuses of 1901 and 1911

The earliest surviving census covering the whole of Ireland is then that of 1901, and is available for inspection in the

²⁸ Eneclann, *The 1851 Dublin City Census: Chart's Index of Heads of Households*, CD-ROM, also on Irish Origins website.

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National Archives together with the succeeding census of 1911. The first Free State census of 1926 is not due to be made available until 2027.

It cannot be stressed too often that the record which most beginners should refer to first is the 1901 Census, followed by that of 1911. Of course descendants of Irish emigrants abroad will not find these records of prime value unless the date of emigration was shortly before or after 1901, but they are vital for tracing relatives who remained in Ireland. It may seem to some that the censuses of 1901 and 1911 are too recent, but bear in mind that they will contain information on the families of our grandparents or great-grandparents on average, and will guide research in other records by giving estimates of years of birth and marriage, details of counties of birth and so on. In fact, few of us will ever again find so much information on one sheet relating to a family group, as appears in the 1901 and 1911 census forms.

The 1901 Census was taken on 31 March of that year and is arranged by county, electoral division and townland or street. The information provided includes name, age, religion, occupation, ability to read and write, marital status, relationship to head of household and county or country of birth. The 1911 Census was taken on 1 April of the year and follows the same lines, but contains important additional information stating the number of years a wife was married, with the number of children born and number still living. Note that only those staying in a house on the night of the census are listed, and absentees are included in the returns for the residences where they were staying. It should also be remembered that stated ages on census forms are often inexact, not usually because of any dishonesty, but due to the fact that most of the older population was still semi-literate or illiterate, the latter being demonstrated by the presence of an 'X' in place of a signature.

Locating 1901 and 1911 Returns

While US and British censuses have been digitised and made available online commercially, progress with digitisation projects in Ireland has been much slower. Since 2005 the National Archives has been working to digitise and place online free of charge the 1901 and 1911 Censuses. In 2009, having expended nearly €4 million, the Archives completed the placement of the entire 1911 Census online.²⁹ It should be noted that there is no soundex facility and there are significant errors in the search database, for example, misreadings of names and garbling of O and Mac prefixes.

Pending completion of digitisation, the steps necessary for locating microfilms of the 1901 Census returns in the National Archives can be summarised as follows: obtain electoral division number relating to a given townland by reference to the *Townlands Index 1901* or the new computer database accessible in the Reading Room, and then obtain townland number from the relevant census county catalogue. Armed with this information you can then proceed to the self-service Microfilm Room in the National Archives and obtain the relevant reel for viewing on a reader in the Reading Room.

Note that electoral division and townland reference numbers frequently, but not always, change slightly between 1901 and 1911. The National Archives may allow access to an original census return where it can be clearly shown that there is a problem with a microfilm or a digitised copy. Because Ireland is so recently urbanised, and most of us are familiar with our rural roots, a majority will have little trouble establishing the townlands of residence of their ancestors in 1901 and 1911. For those who cannot establish the townlands of residence, or whose forebears moved frequently between rented

²⁹ Census of Ireland 1911, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie>.

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accommodation in a large city, we will consider some techniques using other sources to aid identification in the next lecture.

Pending the completion of digitisation of the 1901 Census, certain older indexes retain their usefulness. Indexes to the 1901 census have been published in book form for County Longford,³⁰ and in microfiche form for Counties Fermanagh and Tyrone (microfiche, Largy Books, Alberta, Canada).³¹ Indexed versions of the 1901 Census may be searched freely online in the cases of County Clare,³² and Counties Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo and Sligo.³³

While copies of the digitised 1911 Census returns can be easily printed out and stored, remember also that you can print out from the microfilm photocopies of 1901 Census forms in the National Archives using a purchased copy card (always remember to record full reference numbers). As soon as census details begin to accumulate in your files, the next exercise is to abstract the information on to pedigree and family group sheets. Note that all years of birth and marriage calculated from a census are approximate only, and should be preceded by a 'c' for circa. Thus if someone's age is given as 40 on the 1901 form, but 55 on the 1911 form, their year of birth should be entered as 'c1856-61'.

³⁰ David Leahy, Editor, *County Longford and its People*, Dublin 1990.

³¹ Linda K Meehan, Editor, *Index to Census of Ireland 1901, County Fermanagh*, and *Index to Census of Ireland 1901, County Tyrone*, microfiche, Largy Books, Alberta, Canada, 1994.

³² '1901 Census of Population of County Clare', http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/genealogy/1901census/1901_clare_census.htm, viewed 27 October 2005 (organised by district electoral division and not indexed by name).

³³ *Leitrim-Roscommon Genealogy Website*, <http://www.leitrim-roscommon.com>, viewed 18 October 2007.

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As already indicated, the information from census forms, however approximate, is of crucial importance in guiding research in other records. This is particularly true in the case of research in the records of the General Register Office, namely, civil records of births, marriages and deaths from 1864, and of non-Catholic marriages from 1845, which form the main subject of the next lesson.

Lesson 6: Vital Records

Background

Civil or state registration of births, marriages and deaths was introduced in stages in Ireland, starting with non-Catholic marriages in 1845, and incorporating all births, marriages and deaths in 1864. While research can be carried out at a number of local registries around the country, or in the Belfast General Register Office, it is generally more efficient to work in the General Register Office research room in the Irish Life Centre in Dublin.

Registration of vital events originated as part of the Victorian poor law and public health system. This is why the poor law union was the same as the superintendent registrar's district or registration district. The poor law union and its workhouse were generally centered on a large town, and covered the adjoining area. Again, it will greatly assist research in vital records if it is remembered that the poor law union was the same as the registration district (PLU=RD), and that details of relevant poor law unions are obtainable from the 1851 *Townlands Index*. Furthermore, it is important to note that poor law unions could cross parish and sometimes also county boundaries.

Though vital records constitute an extremely important part of the national archival heritage, the old as well as current records remained under the control of the Department of Health. A new act was passed in 2004 as part of the process of modernising the system of registering births, marriages and

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deaths,³⁴ and the GRO has passed from the control of the Department of Health to the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The process of relocating the General Register Office (GRO) from Dublin to Roscommon naturally caused concern among genealogists, but it is unfortunate that there was less emphasis on the potential benefits to users of the ongoing project of computerising vital records.³⁵ While it is understood that the work of digitising vital records is at an advanced stage, there is disappointment and concern over the fact that these are not yet accessible to users in the GRO research facility in the Irish Life Centre, Dublin, or indeed via the Internet. However, the digitised database is in use internally, and where an entry cannot be located via your own research, you should consider the option of commissioning a search from the GRO in Roscommon or from a Superintendent Registrar's Office, where the response time may be faster.³⁶ In 2009 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) provided a remarkable free research aid by placing online 23 million index entries relating to Irish births, marriages and deaths 1845-64 on the FamilySearch website.³⁷ Of course individual registrations have still to be ordered from the GRO, whose facilities for genealogical research could not be said to be adequate.

³⁴ *Civil Registration Act 2004*, Number 3 of 2004; a copy may be downloaded from <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/bills28/acts/2004/a304.pdf>.

³⁵ See the website of the General Register Office at <http://www.groireland.ie/>, which while giving advice on research, does not contain a great deal of specific guidance for genealogists.

³⁶ See list of Superintendent Registrars' Offices at <http://www.groireland.ie/fees.htm>.

³⁷ FamilySearch, <http://www.familysearch.org/> (click 'Search Records' then 'Record Search pilot').

Introduction of Registration

The 1844 Marriage Act determined that there should be official registration of all Protestant marriages, those of Presbyterians and other dissenters as well as members of the established Church of Ireland, so that the majority Catholic element of the population was not included. The 1844 Act provided for the establishment of a General Register Office in Dublin and the appointment of a Registrar-General, and registration of marriages began on 1 April 1845. For those with non-Catholic ancestors therefore, these civil records of marriage from 1845 are of the greatest importance.³⁸

While civil registration of all English births, marriages and deaths dates from 1837, it was not until 1863 that an act requiring similar general registration in Ireland was passed. People of all religions, Catholic as well as Protestant, now had to register vital events under the act, which took effect from 1 January 1864. In the earlier years of registration, it is likely that significant numbers of births, marriages and deaths were not recorded, but by 1880 it can be taken that the system of registration was reasonably comprehensive, though omissions continued to occur. For all ancestors who were born, married or died after 1864, it should therefore be the genealogist's aim to secure copies of the registrations of these vital events, and transfer the information therein to pedigree and family group sheets.

Research in the General Register Office

The fees charged in the GRO are €2 per five-year search for one entry in the indexes of births, marriages or deaths, or

³⁸ For a short history see General Register Office, *Registering the People 150 Years of Civil Registration*, Dublin 1995, a version of which is available online at <http://www.groireland.ie/history.htm>.

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€20 per day for an unrestricted general search, and an additional €4 is payable for each photocopy registration.³⁹ It should be noted that direct access is allowed only to the indexes of births, marriages and deaths, but unfortunately not to the registers themselves or even copies of same, hence the necessity to purchase copy registrations. Note again that the indexes may be searched online without charge at the FamilySearch site, but while the standard of accuracy of this facility appears high it may be advisable to double check for certain entries in the printed indexes. Attested certificates for official purposes cost €10 each including search fee, but in general genealogists prefer to carry out their own research in the GRO search room and rely on the cheaper copy registrations, which are quite adequate for research purposes.

Most indexes of births, marriages and deaths commencing in 1864 are bound in red, green and blue respectively, and are on self-service access to those who have paid the relevant fees. The indexes are a single volume yearly until 1877, but are divided into four quarterly sections (bound in one or two volumes) from 1878, so it is important to note that from that year four indexes, to 31 March, 30 June, 30 September and 31 December respectively, must be searched. Births registered late are at the back of the yearly indexes, and it is important to remember to check these also.

All the indexes give year, and quarter where relevant, name, registration district and volume and page in the register, which information should be copied carefully in order to apply for a copy registration. The marriage indexes also contain the full name of the bride cross-referenced with that of the groom,

³⁹ GRO fees were raised by order of the Minister Health in 2006, and in particular the fee for a copy registration was increased by over 100% from €1.90 to €4.

and the death indexes show the age of the deceased, this information being useful in eliminating irrelevant entries. Only the more recent birth indexes also give the mother's maiden name, so that when searching for individuals with more common surnames in the earlier indexes, one may find multiple birth entries needing to be checked out. A thorough knowledge of the possible variants of a surname is also required, in order to ensure that a relevant entry is not overlooked. Where more than one entry of possible relevance is found in any of the indexes, there is no alternative to ordering copy registrations of each systematically, in the hope of finding the correct one by a process of elimination (the humorously-titled 'lucky dip' system). There is a limitation on the number of copy registrations which can be produced on one day, so that it may be necessary to receive others by post. It is indeed ironic that users of Mormon Family History Centres may gain access to microfilm copies of Irish birth, marriage and death registrations, while users of the General Register Office in Dublin cannot.

Birth, Marriage and Death Registrations

A copy birth registration gives the following information: date and place of birth, name of child, father's name and address, mother's name and maiden name, father's occupation, name and address of informant and date of registration. A copy marriage registration gives the following information: church and denomination, date of marriage, names of groom and bride, ages (in years or merely as 'full'), whether single or widowed, occupations, addresses at time of marriage, fathers' names (and sometimes whether alive or dead), fathers' occupations, celebrant's and witnesses names. A copy death registration gives the following information: date and place of death, name of deceased, whether married or single, age, occupation, cause

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of death, name and address of informant and date of registration.

While civil records of births, marriages and deaths are generally of a high standard of reliability, errors and omissions can occasionally occur. In particular, if some months have elapsed before a birth or marriage has been registered, incorrect dates or other particulars may arise, especially in the case of illiterate or semi-literate individuals. As already noted, a certain percentage of births, marriages, and particularly deaths, may have escaped registration, or may have inadvertently not been indexed. However, if an entry cannot be found, query your own methods first - doublecheck and treblecheck, consider all possible surname and first name variants, recheck your information - before blaming your ancestors or the register offices for an omission.

It should by now be obvious that if one is unprepared for GRO research, not only will time be wasted and little or nothing found, but money will be wasted also due to the charging of official fees. This once again underlines the necessity of securing all relevant identifying information through searches of family papers, interviews with older relatives, and particularly through research in the 1901 and 1911 censuses, before visiting the GRO. Armed with names, at least approximate years of birth and marriage, particulars of registration districts or at least counties of birth, one should be able to carry out research in the GRO with the minimum of time and expenditure and the optimum possibility of successful results.

In the case of the unfortunate minority whose ancestors changed address frequently, particularly poorer families in Dublin City, the schedule of research we have been outlining may have to be altered. If the family cannot be located in the online 1911 Census, research may have to begin in the GRO.

Try selecting a few ancestors whose years of birth or marriage you know or can estimate to have occurred about the turn of the century, and then search for relevant registrations. If successful, proceed to the National Archives and check the 1901 and 1911 census forms for the addresses given in these registrations, in the hope of locating the returns for the required families.

Mid-point Review

We have now passed the half-way point in our course of lessons, so it may be appropriate to review progress to date. We have noted the importance of gathering information from older relatives and family papers ('homework') and introduced the use of pedigree sheets. We have looked at research methods, record repositories and computers, and showed how the family group sheet supplements the pedigree sheet to provide a complete recording system. We have dealt with placenames and surnames, showing how knowledge of these is vital for the genealogist. The previous lesson dealt with census returns, and the current lesson has covered records of births, marriages and deaths.

At this midway point it would also be advisable to go through your files, whether manually compiled or on computer, ensuring that notes and copy documents have been arranged properly and analysed critically, and that the information gathered has been abstracted on to draft pedigree and family group sheets. Our next lesson will deal with nineteenth-century census substitutes, specifically Griffith's *Valuation* and the Tithe Applotment Books, and will describe the use of a range of indexes to same.

Lesson 7: Valuation Records

Census Substitutes

As explained in the fourth lesson, it is an unfortunate fact that most Irish census material before 1901 has not survived, due to the destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland in 1922. This loss can be compensated for at least partly through reliance on what are known as ‘census substitutes’. In the Irish context, any pre-1901 dated list of names and addresses, be it large or small, is regarded as a census substitute and should not be overlooked. The most important nineteenth-century census substitutes are property valuation records compiled for purposes of local taxation, in particular, Griffith’s *Valuation*, dated 1848-64, and the Tithe Applotment Books, dated 1820s-30s.

Griffith’s *Valuation*

The first attempt to prepare a uniform valuation of property for the purpose of assessing local taxes was under an act of 1826, which was followed by amending legislation and the Poor Law Act of 1838. The results were unsatisfactory, and legislation from 1846 onwards provided for a consolidated uniform valuation of buildings and land in Ireland. Sir Richard Griffith, a geologist, engineer and surveyor, played such an important role in directing the painstaking valuation of property that the finished work is known as ‘Griffith’s *Primary Valuation*’, or ‘Griffith’s *Valuation*’ for short. Griffith was called the ‘father of Irish geology’, and he also made a valuable although unintentional contribution to Irish genealogy, so

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important has the *Valuation* become as a substitute for lost census records.

Griffith's *Valuation* was printed in volumes arranged by poor law union, parish and townland, the work commencing in the Dublin area in 1848 and concluding in the north of Ireland in 1864. The *Valuation* can be referred to in the National Archives, National Library of Ireland and Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, and it must be viewed on microfiche in the first two repositories to protect the overused printed volumes (other libraries in Ireland and abroad have purchased the microfiche edition). Microfiche reference numbers can be obtained from a catalogue arranged firstly by county and then by parish. Increasingly the preferred option for accessing Griffith's *Valuation* is via the Irish Origins pay-to-view online service, which features both a database of all names in the record and digitised images of pages.⁴⁰ The Irish Origins service can be used without charge in the National Library Genealogy Room, and images can now be printed out there. In what is a duplication of labour worthy of note, the Library Council of Ireland has sponsored a free online version of Griffith, but printout are marked with a conspicuous copyright notice.⁴¹ Griffith's *Valuation* gives the following information: townland, Ordnance Survey sheet number and special plot references, name of house- or landholder, immediate lessor (person from whom property was leased), description of holding, area and valuation.

Note that for the country at large, Griffith's *Valuation* was a relatively comprehensive listing of house- and landholders, ranging as it did from the smallest cabin or garden to the largest house or estate. Yet for cities and large towns, the *Valuation* is

⁴⁰ Irish Origins, <http://www.irishorigins.com/>.

⁴¹ Library Council of Ireland, <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/>.

quite limited as a genealogical source, in that it tended to list only landlords or principal householders in the case of houses occupied by a number of families. Thus while only about 20 percent of heads of families are listed in the case of Dublin city, A J Morris's statistical analysis of the *Valuation* for Cos Mayo and Wicklow enables us to estimate that an average of about 70-80 percent of heads of families are included for the country at large, which is quite a respectable figure.

Tithe Applotment Books

Tithe was a tax in on land due to the established Protestant Church of Ireland, and was often paid in kind as opposed to money. Catholics, Presbyterians and other non-members of the Church of Ireland had to pay tithes, so the tax naturally aroused strong resentment. There were outbreaks of violent protests against tithes in the eighteenth century, which culminated in a 'Tithe War' in the 1830s. There was no standard method of evaluating land for taxation, and in some cases, especially in the south of Ireland, the tax seems to have fallen disproportionately on poorer landholders. However, the landless and town and city dwellers were exempt from tithes, though the latter were liable to a similar tax known as 'cess'.

In 1823 the government attempted to rationalise the collection of tithes through a composition act which specified that the tax could be paid in money, and a further act of 1832 abolished payment in kind altogether. As a result of the Tithe War a compromise was reached in 1838, when a further act abolished tithes as a separate tax and substituted a reduced fixed rent charge, and the tax was finally abolished completely on the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869.

The Tithe Applotment Books were compiled for each parish generally between the years of the tithe acts, 1823-38, and are available in microfilm form in the National Archives,

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National Library of Ireland and Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, as well as in a growing number of other libraries in Ireland and abroad. Microfilm reference numbers can be obtained from a catalogue again arranged in order of county and parish. Typically, a Tithe Applotment Book for a given parish contains the following information: townland, landholder's name, area and sometimes quality of land, valuation and tithe payable. Note again that these records are not a comprehensive listing of heads of family, due to the exclusion of the very poor and landless. An analysis of a small sample of seven Tithe Books indicates that an average of about 40-50 percent of heads of families are included, ranging from a low of 21 percent in the case of Ballyhooly, Co Cork, to an unexpected high of 85 percent in the case of Kildrumsherdan, Co Cavan.

Mention should be made of the Tithe Defaulters' Lists of 1831, which are among the Official Papers Miscellaneous and Assorted (OPMA) in the National Archives (recently published on CD-ROM by Eneclann). Lists exist for significant numbers of parishes in Counties Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford, Cork, Wexford and Limerick, with smaller holdings for Counties Laois (Queen's), Offaly (King's), Carlow, Louth and Meath. These lists are a useful supplement to the Tithe Applotment Books, in that they indicate those who did not pay tithes, and usually also state the occupation of each individual.

Valuation Office Records

In addition to the great Griffith's *Valuation* itself, the Valuation Office amassed other records of importance to genealogists. These are firstly the preparatory notebooks of the valuers dated mainly in the 1840s, namely, the perambulation, field, house and tenure books, which are divided between the National Archives, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

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and Valuation Office (the latter Office is now in the Irish Life Centre, Abbey Street Lower, Dublin 1). In the wake of the *Primary Valuation*, updated books showing changes in occupancy and holdings were maintained from the 1850s onwards. These 'Cancelled Valuation Lists' are held in the Valuation Office and Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, and are a vital census substitute for the period between Griffith's *Valuation* and the 1901 Census. The Cancelled Lists are particularly useful for establishing approximate date of death or removal, by noting when the name of an occupier is deleted. Mention should also be made of the unique Ordnance Survey plot maps referenced to Griffith's *Valuation*, the northern copies of which are in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, and the southern copies of which were in a deteriorating condition in the Valuation Office until their recent replacement by scanned copies. Valuation Office records tend to be referred to in the main by the more experienced researcher rather than the beginner, though the southern books and maps should become more accessible when the process of their transfer to the National Archives has been completed and they have been properly catalogued.

Indexes

Commenced in the 1950s under the direction of Richard J Hayes, the National Library of Ireland *Index of Surnames* is an invaluable surname-only index to both Griffith's *Valuation* and the Tithe Applotment Books. A remarkable example of the intelligent exploitation of limited resources in a pre-computer age, the index was prepared manually by a team headed by the late Ned Keane and issued in typescript copies. There are volumes for all of the 32 counties, with three volumes for County Cork and two for County Tipperary because of their

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larger size, but it should be noted that Dublin and Belfast cities were not included. The index shows the distribution of surnames firstly by barony and then by civil parish, using the abbreviations 'G' and 'T' to denote Griffith's *Valuation* and the Tithe Applotment Books, and in the case of Griffith only, giving the total number of householders. In addition, each volume contains a useful county map showing barony and civil parish boundaries, as well as lists of civil parishes in numerical and alphabetical order, and a tentative correlation of civil and Catholic parishes.

Many are the uses to which the Index of surnames can be put, for example, in trying to trace a family where the exact place of residence is unknown. Study of clusters of principal and allied surnames, especially where they are of medium or low frequency, can help track down such families. Every serious genealogist should make himself or herself thoroughly familiar with the work, and it is recommended that as a matter of routine you should check the appropriate volumes of the index for information on the distribution of the surnames of all the lines you are tracing.

The National Library Index has not been entirely superseded by new computerised indexes, particularly the important Irish Origins online version of Griffith mentioned above. Family Tree Maker's CD-ROM full-name indexes to Griffith's *Valuation* for all Ireland⁴², and the Tithe Applotment Books for the Six Counties of Northern Ireland only,⁴³ are no longer apparently for sale but may be found in some libraries. Mention should be made as well of Grenham's *Irish Surnames*, an Eneclann publication on CD-ROM, whose most useful

⁴² Family Tree Maker, *Index to Griffith's Valuation of Ireland, 1848-64*, CD-ROM 1997.

⁴³ Family Tree Maker, *Index to Tithe Applotment Books [Northern Ireland], 1823-38*, CD-ROM 2000.

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feature is a searchable database of surnames in Griffith's *Valuation*. In short, refer firstly to the online versions of Griffith, but do not neglect the other indexes listed.

Lecture 8: Church Records

Introduction

For the period before the introduction of civil registration in 1864, we must rely in the main on church registers of the various religious denominations, for indications of dates of birth, marriage and death. Bear in mind that the main interest of the churches was to record in their registers the religious ceremonies of baptism, marriage and burial, and that dates of birth and death need not necessarily coincide with dates of baptism and burial. However, from about the middle of the nineteenth century or thereabouts, an increasing number of baptism registers began to include date of birth and other comprehensive information, making them comparable with civil records. The usefulness of church registers depends as we shall see on the religious denomination, starting dates and condition of the registers.

Catholic Registers

Due to the operation of the penal laws and the poverty of its members, parish registers of the Roman Catholic Church tend to start at a relatively late date. Most registers of parishes in the less prosperous west and north of the country commence on average in the period from the early to mid-nineteenth century. In contrast, in the case of cities, large towns and more prosperous farming areas in the east and south of the country, most registers tend to commence in the period from the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Thus, for example, the registers of County Clare date on average from the 1830s-

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40s only, while those of Dublin City date from the 1740s-50s. In most cases, Catholic registers record baptisms and marriages only, but some parishes recorded burials also.

Before the mid-nineteenth century or thereabouts, a majority of Catholic parish registers are written partly in Latin, but the terms used are few and will soon become familiar. Some of the more common Latin terms and names used in Catholic registers are as follows:

B, Bapt - baptisavi, baptised

Conj - conjunxi, married

de - of

et - and

Filia - daughter

Filius - son

Sp, sps, ss - sponsore, sponsors or godparents

Brigida - Bridget

Gulielmus - William

Jacobus - James

Johanna - Johanna, Nora, Honora

Joannis - John

Maria - Mary, Maria

Patricius - Patrick

Thoma - Thomas

The typical Catholic baptism entry gives date of ceremony, name of child, names of parents including usually mother's maiden name, names of sponsors or godparents, and occasionally also place of residence of family. Note that it was generally the custom for Catholic baptisms to take place a few days after birth, and in the absence of exact information on date of birth, the date of baptism should be entered in the pedigree or family group sheet and specified as such. The typical marriage entry gives date of ceremony, names of groom and bride, names of witnesses, and only rarely places of residence. While older

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Catholic parish registers tend to be handwritten notebooks of varying sizes and quality, remember that from the late 1850s some, usually the wealthier parishes began to use printed form registers, with space for additional information, and note in particular that the marriage entries could include information on the parents of both groom and bride not included in the civil marriage entry.

The quickest way to establish the name of a Catholic parish corresponding to a given civil parish is to refer to the tentative lists correlating them at the beginning of the county volumes of the National Library of Ireland *Index of Surnames*. It is also advisable to check this correlation of civil and Catholic parishes against another source, the most convenient being Mitchell's guide.⁴⁴ Bear in mind that a comprehensive catalogue of registers has yet to be prepared, so that details such as the date of formation of newer parishes from older ones will require additional investigation.

The majority of Catholic parish registers, from their commencement date to a cut-off point about 1880, can be consulted on microfilm in the National Library of Ireland. A Catalogue is available in the Library and also on its website, with parishes arranged by diocese in alphabetical order, and giving the microfilm reference numbers.⁴⁵ The registers were microfilmed back in the 1950s on the initiative of Richard J Hayes and with the participation of Edward MacLysaght. Though the project was not fully completed nor the microfilm stock properly maintained or refurbished subsequently, it is hoped that the National Library is will take up the work again, perhaps this time using new computer scanning technology.

⁴⁴ Brian Mitchell, *A Guide to Irish Parish Registers*, Baltimore 1988.

⁴⁵ Click on 'Parish Registers in the National Library' at http://www.nli.ie/new_what_res.htm; see also a copy of the catalogue of registers in Grenham, *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*, pages 360-493.

While most bishops and parish priests generously allow us the privilege of searching the microfilm copies of registers without restriction, written permission must be obtained to view registers of parishes in the Dioceses of Kerry and Cloyne, and the Library has now reopened access to microfilms of Cashel and Emly registers despite objections from the Archbishop. In the case of a register not available on microfilm or illegible, it may be necessary to commission a search from the relevant parish priest, for whose address see the current *Irish Catholic Directory*, available at the desk in the National Library.

Searching microfilm copies of parish registers is usually a time-consuming affair requiring attention and patience, particularly if bad handwriting in the originals is compounded by poor quality or damaged old film. Finally, it should be borne in mind that a considerable number of church registers, especially those of Catholic denomination, have been indexed by Irish Genealogical Project centres, and searches can be commissioned in these for a fee. Note that where practicable, all extracts from indexes should be checked for errors against microfilm copies of the original registers.

Church of Ireland Registers

After the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, its baptism and burial registers before 1870, and its marriage registers before 1845, were declared public records under the parochial records act, to be deposited in the Public Record Office of Ireland. However, where secure facilities for keeping registers were shown to be available in a parish, the registers could be retained in local custody. The original registers of 1,006 parishes were deposited in the Public Records Office by 1922, and all but 4 of these were destroyed in the holocaust of that year. Fortunately, the registers of 637 parishes had been retained in local custody and therefore survived.

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In some cases copies or extracts of destroyed registers survived also. For details of registers destroyed and saved, see the list of Church of Ireland parochial records in the National Archives, a copy of which is also available in the National Library. The column for Church of Ireland parish registers in the already mentioned guide by Mitchell appears to contain quite a few errors and omissions, so make thorough investigations before accepting that no register survives. Though the work started belatedly, the National Archives is apparently now well advanced in the work of microfilming surviving Church of Ireland parish registers, and these eventually should be made available in Bishop Street. Ulster registers have long been available on microfilm in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast, while a growing collection of surviving original registers, including nearly all those of Dublin city, is held in the Representative Church Body Library (Braemor Park, Dublin 14). Where it is necessary to commission a search of registers still in local custody, the address of the relevant minister can be found in the current *Church of Ireland Directory*.

Church of Ireland registers tend to commence earlier on average than those of other denominations, and a few go back as far as the early seventeenth century. Of 22 parishes in Dublin City, the registers of only 5 perished in 1922, and some of the destroyed registers had been printed by the Parish Register Society. The earliest surviving Church of Ireland registers are those of St John's Parish in Dublin, starting in 1619. Some areas of the country fared less well, for example, County Kildare has only about 17 Church of Ireland registers with pre-1870 starting dates, and County Clare about 7.

Church of Ireland parish registers are almost universally written in English, and the information characteristically given includes date of baptism, child's name, parent's names generally

without mother's maiden name, place of residence and occasionally father's occupation, but only rarely sponsors. From the 1820s approximately the standard of register-keeping improved, and date of birth began to be included as well as date of baptism in many cases. Note that in the Protestant tradition a period of weeks, months or in a few cases over a year, could elapse between the birth of a child and the ceremony of baptism. It is also important to remember that burials of Catholics and other non-members of the Church of Ireland were recorded in Church of Ireland registers, as it controlled so many churches and attached burial places. Before the beginning of the nineteenth century it was not unusual for Presbyterians and members of other dissenting Protestant denomination to have baptisms and marriages registered by the Church of Ireland. Finally, bear in mind that the Church of Ireland was in charge of issuing marriage licences before 1845, that non-Catholic marriages were recorded by the state from that year until general registration was introduced in 1864, which classes of records are held respectively in the National Archives and General Register Office.

Other Denominations

Most Presbyterian congregations have been concentrated in Ulster, and the fact that registers were organised by church and not parish, together with the tendency of congregations to split or secede, makes the subject of these registers very complicated. Original registers tend to be held in local custody or by the Presbyterian Historical Society in Belfast, and a relatively comprehensive collection of copies of Ulster registers is available in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Incomplete lists of Presbyterian registers can be found in Falley's and Mitchell's guides. Addresses of Presbyterian ministers can be found in the *Directory of the Presbyterian*

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Church in Ireland. Most Presbyterian registers tend not to predate the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, and the information they contain is similar to that in Church of Ireland registers. As noted above, entries for Presbyterians will be found in Church of Ireland burial registers, and in some cases also in baptism and marriage registers, while marriages of Presbyterians and other dissenters were also recorded by the state from 1845.

Methodists did not establish a separate church organisation until 1816, and until that date records of baptism, marriage and burial of their members are to be found in Church of Ireland registers. The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland has copied Ulster Methodist registers, but locating registers in the rest of Ireland is difficult and depends on making enquiries at local level.

From a genealogical point of view, Society of Friends or Quaker records are probably the most useful, and date from the foundation of the movement in Ireland in the mid-seventeenth century. Quaker records for the south are held in the Society of Friends Library in Dublin, with copies of many on microfilm in the National Library, while those for the north are held in the Society of Friends Library in Lisburn, with copies in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. While few original Huguenot registers have survived, those for Dublin city have been published by the Huguenot Society of London. Moravian registers are very detailed in the information they contain, and most originals are in Gracehill, Co Antrim, with copies in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Finally, for information on the records of other minority denominations such as Baptists and Jews, and indeed useful information on

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church registers in general, see Ryan's guide to church records.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ J G Ryan, Editor, *Irish Church Records*, Dublin 1992.

Lesson 9: Miscellaneous Records

Introduction

This lesson deals more briefly with some sources that do not have the same general or wider application of the records already covered. Nonetheless, these ‘miscellaneous’ sources are of importance, usually but not always in the case of wealthier families, and the beginner who stays the course to become a more experienced researcher will have need to become familiar with them. In introducing these sources, reference will be made where appropriate to text-books which provide more detailed information.

Wills

Before 1858 testamentary jurisdiction or responsibility for processing wills lay with the Established Protestant Church of Ireland. Wills were ordinarily processed or probated in the Consistorial Court of each diocese, and letters of administration were issued in the case of those who died without leaving a will. However, if the deceased possessed property worth more than £5 in a second diocese, then the will or administration issued from the Prerogative Court of Armagh. The 1857 Probate Act transferred testamentary jurisdiction to a new civil Court of Probate, and established a Principal Registry in Dublin and eleven District Registries.

Nearly all original wills were destroyed in the Public Record Office of Ireland in 1922, so reliance has to be placed on surviving indexes, copies and abstracts, in the National

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Archives, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, National Library of Ireland and elsewhere. Will searches before 1858 should commence by checking Prerogative and relevant Consistorial or Diocesan indexes, and after 1858 by referring to the yearly printed Calendars, which can be done in the National Archives or in other repositories in Ireland and abroad which hold microfilm copies. For further information on wills, see an essential article by ffollott and O'Byrne.⁴⁷

Deeds

Deeds, like wills (and a will of course is a kind of deed), in general relate only to wealthier families, as the vast majority of smallholders, labourers and tradesmen would not have had either the resources or need to have property transactions recorded and registered. Because of their complicated legal phraseology, deeds are especially difficult to use, and the trick is to be able to scan them quickly but alertly, noting names, addresses, relationships and other information of relevance. While deeds, some dating from medieval times, are held in the National Archives, National Library of Ireland, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and various other repositories, the greatest collection is held in the Registry of Deeds, which was founded in 1708 and is located in the King's Inns Building in Henrietta Street, Dublin. The Registry of Deeds charges a small daily search fee, and the records are arranged in large volumes of transcripts or 'memorials' of deeds, which are indexed according to grantors, but not grantees, and placenames (the original memorials may not be inspected, but copies can be purchased). The various kinds of deeds found in the Registry of

⁴⁷ Rosemary ffollott and Eileen O'Byrne, 'Wills and Administrations', Donal F Begley, Editor, *Irish Genealogy: A Record Finder*, Dublin 1981, pages 157-80.

Deeds include leases, mortgages, sales, rent charges, and of particular importance to the genealogist, marriage settlements and wills (the latter published in abstract form by the Irish Manuscripts Commission, as indicated in the last article). For further information on the complicated subject of deeds, see the authoritative article by ffollott.⁴⁸

Memorial Inscriptions

Gravestone inscriptions and memorial inscriptions in general have a special importance in the Irish context. Due to the destruction or late starting date of so many documentary records, in some cases an inscription may be the only surviving record of the death of an individual. Furthermore, even if the burial register of a graveyard has survived, a tombstone inscription will frequently contain more detailed information than a register entry, for example, date of death, details of occupation, address, relationships, and so on. Of course, until the present century, only the better-off minority of families could afford to erect monuments over the graves of loved ones. Unfortunately, memorials of the dead have suffered neglect and destruction like other old artefacts in this country, and common vandals are not always to blame for destructive acts. Thus in Dublin many old tombstones have been removed from city graveyards over the years, and others stacked so that their inscriptions are rendered illegible.

A principal source for published memorial inscriptions is the *Journal of the Association for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead in Ireland*, with a general index covering the period 1888-1909. Unfortunately, transcribers for this journal rarely copied all the inscriptions in a graveyard,

⁴⁸ ffollott, 'The Registry of Deeds for Genealogical Purposes', same, pages 139-56.

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concentrating instead on more notable or wealthy individuals. Memorial inscriptions from many graveyards around the country have been published in local historical works, in the *Irish Genealogist* and other society journals, and as individual pamphlets. Some Cork and Kerry graveyards are included in Albert E Casey's *O'Kief, Coshe Mang*, while the Ulster Historical Foundation has been systematically publishing Northern Ireland inscriptions, and Richard Henchion has also been extremely active in County Cork. Typescript volumes of Wicklow and Wexford inscriptions by the late Brian Cantwell are held some of the major libraries, and there is also a survey of County Dublin graveyards by Michael Egan. A guide to published memorial inscriptions, by no means comprehensive, is to be found in the county sources section of Grenham's guide.

One can also carry out a personal search for inscriptions in a graveyard, a difficult task if it is overgrown. Amateur genealogists should also give thought to transcribing and publishing inscriptions in graveyards not yet covered, in which case they should obtain permission from custodians, take care not to injure themselves, and under no circumstances use abrasive materials in an effort to make difficult inscriptions legible (ordinary water and a soft bristle brush gently applied usually solve this problem).

Estate Papers

Where they have survived, and are of sufficient detail, rentals and other documents relating to landed estates are of great importance as genealogical sources. However, not all estate owners kept detailed records of their tenants, especially if they had farmed out the collection of rents to 'middlemen'. Furthermore, like other classes of Irish documents, estate papers have suffered horrendously from destruction both in times of peace and war. Collections of surviving estate papers are held

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in the National Library of Ireland (some still in the process of being catalogued), the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (generally much better catalogued and arranged), and also in the National Archives and some other repositories, while a few substantial collections are still in private hands (for example, the Meath Papers in Killruddery, County Wicklow).

The first step in determining whether relevant estate papers are extant is to establish the name of the landlord, which is usually done by referring to the 'immediate lessor' column in Griffith's *Valuation*. As most of these entries in Griffith are for middlemen and sublessors, as opposed to substantial landlords, it is advisable to identify the larger lessors of land within a given parish by roughly totting up their acreages. The next step is to refer to Hayes's manuscripts guide⁴⁹ to check whether estate papers are listed under the relevant landlord's name, whether they are in public or private custody, and whether a report on or catalogue of the collection exists. The county sources section of Grenham's guide contains shortlistings of estate papers by landlords' names for a number of counties. It may not be possible to search privately held or unsorted estate papers, and once again it is pointed out that priority should be given to cataloguing and microfilming these and other neglected sources.

Newspapers

Newspapers can contain significant genealogical information on certain classes of individuals, but are difficult to work with because of their size and usually unindexed state. In general of course, only middle- and upper-class families would

⁴⁹ Richard J Hayes, Editor, *Manuscript Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation*, 11 volumes, Boston 1965, First Supplement, 3 volumes, Boston 1979 (GR 016.091).

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have notices of birth, marriage and death published. The earliest newspapers were published in Dublin City, and from the 1750s onward publications such as Faulkner's *Dublin Journal* and the *Freeman's Journal* contain notices and advertisements of genealogical relevance. Other cities and provincial towns published newspapers later, examples being the *Corke Journal* (1765), the *Belfast Newsletter* (1737) and the *Limerick Chronicle* (1768). Old newspapers are best searched in The National Library of Ireland, referring first to the catalogues of newspapers,⁵⁰ most of which can only be searched on microfilm. See also ffolliott's excellent article on newspapers.⁵¹ A commercial firm now offers online access to the *Freeman's Journal*, *Irish Independent* and some provincial titles, while the *Irish Times* from 1859 is also now available online.⁵²

Directories

Trade and professional directories, giving addresses and indicating dates when an individual was in business, are of obvious genealogical relevance. Of course these publications included urban dwellers in the main and the poorer classes were excluded. Dublin City again saw the publication of the first trade directories, Wilson's *Dublin Directory* commencing in 1751, which was overtaken by Pettigrew and Oulton's *Dublin Almanac* in 1834, succeeded in turn in 1844 by the well-known Thom's *Directory* which is still in existence. The limited social coverage of directories is shown by the fact that Thom's, the

⁵⁰ See the National Library online catalogue of newspapers at http://www.nli.ie/new_cat.htm.

⁵¹ ffolliott, 'Newspapers as a Genealogical Source', Begley, Editor, *Irish Genealogy: A Record Finder*, pages 117-38.

⁵² Irish Newspaper Archives Ltd, <http://irishnewspaperarchives.com>; *Irish Times* Archive, <http://www.ireland.com/search>.

best of them, probably included only about 20% of heads of families in Dublin City until the early twentieth century.

Dublin's example was followed by John Ferrar's *Directory of Limerick* (1769) and Richard Lucas's *Cork Directory* (1787). The first publications covering cities and towns throughout the country were Pigot's *Directory* (1820 and 1824) and Slater's *Directory* (1846, 1856, 1870, 1881 and 1894). Professional directories did not commence until the nineteenth century, examples being clergy lists in Lea's *Ecclesiastical Registry* (1814) and the *Irish Catholic Directory* (1836-), and the *Irish Medical Directory* (1846). The best and most accessible collections of directories are held by the National Library of Ireland and Dublin City Library and Archive. For further information on directories, see an article by ffolllott and Begley,⁵³ and the county source lists in Grenham's guide.

Occupational Records

Original documentary records relating to occupations have not always survived, nor indeed for humbler occupations were they always kept. Once again Dublin City proves to be the best-documented part of the country, and a substantial quantity of trade guild records has survived for apothecaries, stationers, weavers, and so on. For a review of occupational records, see the relevant chapter of Grenham's guide. The records of the British Army, in which so many Irish people have served over the centuries, are held in the National Archives, Kew, and it is usually necessary to know name of regiment and approximate dates of service if a soldier's service records are to be located. The original service records of the Royal Irish Constabulary are

⁵³ ffolllott and Begley, 'Guide to Irish Directories', same, pages 75-106.

also in the English National Archives, but microfilm copies are available in our National Archives, together with copies of the records of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, and a full-name index to both classes of records has been published.⁵⁴

Printed Sources

There is much genealogical information relating to specific families and individuals buried in the pages of books and journals printed over the centuries, but it has to be said that until recently, most of this information relates to the upper and middle classes. The exception would be those individuals of poor backgrounds who through involvement in rebellion or crime, or because of professional or artistic accomplishment, have been deemed worthy of biographical study. These individuals would be a minority of their class, and it is worthwhile considering that those of you who publish the results of your research on your ancestors will be helping to throw light on the largely unwritten lives of ordinary people.

Burke's Peerage and other publications by this firm⁵⁵, and also Debrett's publications, are useful sources for information on gentry and titled families. Volumes on the histories of single families have been published, and articles on families are to be found in genealogical and local historical journals. For references to such family histories, see published bibliographies such as that in Falley's guide, Hayes's periodicals guide,⁵⁶ and

⁵⁴ Jim Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary*, Dublin 1999, and *The Dublin Metropolitan Police*, Dublin 2001.

⁵⁵ The most recent edition of *Burke's Peerage*, the 107th, was published in 2003, and for the first time includes Irish chiefs.

⁵⁶ Richard J Hayes, Editor, *Periodical Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation*, 9 volumes, Boston 1970.

also a bibliography produced by MacLysaght.⁵⁷ Reference should also be made to the catalogues of the National Library of Ireland and other larger reference libraries, most of which can now be accessed via the Internet.

DNA and Genetics

Genetic science has shown that there is a hitherto unknown type of record encoded in our very bodies, namely, deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA. Each of us possesses 23 pairs of chromosomes composed of DNA, one half inherited from the father and the other half from the mother, 'XY' signifying the male chromosome, 'XX' the female. By studying DNA 'markers' geneticists can determine probable relationships and ethnic origins. This is obviously of interest to genealogists, but there may be a tendency to overstate the current utility of 'genetic genealogy'. For example, the claim that living descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages have been identified through DNA analysis is clearly absurd, particularly as historians are unsure if Niall and his offspring were real as opposed to mythical figures.⁵⁸ No names, addresses or dates of ancestors whatsoever are revealed by DNA analysis, this information can only be reliably be obtained from documents. The science of genetics is developing and in time a more realistic assessment of its role in genealogy will be possible.

⁵⁷ Edward MacLysaght, *Bibliography of Irish Family History*, Dublin 1982.

⁵⁸ 'High King Niall: the most fertile man in Ireland', *Sunday Times*, Irish Edition, 15 January 2006, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/ireland/article788652.ece>, viewed 4 October 2009.

Lesson 10: Conclusion

Recapitulation

Now that we have come to the end of our primer, it would be worthwhile recapitulating the main points covered in each lesson. It will be recalled that we started our classes with a definition of genealogy as ‘that branch of history which involves the determination of family relationships’, and advised that research should begin with ‘homework’, that is, gathering available information from family papers and older relatives. Lesson 1 also gave a list of recommended text-books, and the use of pedigree sheets was explained. Lesson 2 covered research methods, record repositories, computers and the Internet, and introduced the use of the family group sheet, to supplement the pedigree sheet. Lesson 3 dealt with computers and the Internet. Lesson 4 dealt with placenames and surnames, showing how a thorough knowledge of these and their variant forms is essential in genealogical research. The subject of Lesson 5 was the census returns of 1901 and 1911, and pre-1901 census fragments, while Lesson 6 dealt with civil records of births, marriages and deaths commencing in 1845/1864.

In Lesson 7 we dealt with the principal sources used as substitutes for lost nineteenth-century census records, namely, Griffith’s *Valuation* 1848-64 and the Tithe Applotment Books c1823-38, together with the various indexes to same. Lesson 8 covered church registers of the main denominations, as of course records of baptism, marriage and burial are a vital genealogical source for the period before the introduction of civil registration. Lesson 9 gave a summary account of wills,

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deeds, memorial inscriptions, estate papers, newspapers, directories, and other ‘miscellaneous’ sources. It should be noted again that while the sources dealt with in Lessons 5-8 cover all or a significant proportion of the population, the sources covered in Lesson 9 document only a small minority, usually those of the wealthier classes.

The various records of relevance to a genealogical search should be tackled systematically and in the correct order, which means starting with the most recent events and then working progressively backwards in time. Most Irish residents should start with census records, then approach civil records of birth, marriage and death, moving on to Griffith’s *Valuation* and the Tithe Applotment Books, which leads to church registers of the various denominations, and finally to wills and other miscellaneous records where relevant. Descendants of Irish emigrants abroad should start with the records contemporaneous with their emigrant ancestor’s departure and work backwards, while of course not neglecting to search later records for information on relatives who remained in Ireland. We should stress that the research schedule we have outlined is not meant to be inflexible, as some will need to alter it according to their varying circumstances. What we have been trying to get away from is the unsystematic approach of vaguely directing beginners first to church records or birth records, or worse still to records of limited coverage such as wills and deeds.

Those who live in the Republic of Ireland will perform most of their research in the National Library of Ireland, the National Archives, the General Register Office and the Dublin City Library and Archive, all in Dublin, or in county libraries or other regional repositories, and residents of Northern Ireland of course have the option of using the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast. As already noted, those abroad will find a growing quantity of Irish material in printed, microcopy

or electronic form in larger libraries and genealogical society collections, but most particularly in the holdings of the international network of Mormon Family History Centres. The Internet as we have said is operating to compensate for distance from major record repositories, and already some records are being made available on-line usually for a fee, with a growing range of records and indexes available for purchase via the Web.

Completing a Documented Pedigree

As indicated earlier in the course, research notes and copy documents should be evaluated as soon as possible after compilation, and relevant data should be entered in draft pedigree and family group sheets. After a certain amount of time has passed, the draft sheets will be replaced by a more finished product, such as the appended example of a pedigree sheet prepared by the writer. The writer's first pedigree was drafted many years ago and was based on limited family papers and orally transmitted information, with the result that it contained many gaps. Research in census records, records of birth, marriage and death, census substitutes, church registers and miscellaneous sources progressively filled in these gaps and enabled the main lines to be traced back to about 1800. Of course, there are still some areas where research remains to be completed, or where problems remain to be resolved. Genealogy is a never-ending activity, a cumulative process in which one generation develops the work of its predecessors and hands it on to succeeding generations to be further refined and expanded.

At all stages be sure to record fully and cite accurately the sources on which your completed pedigrees and family history research are based, both as a means of self-discipline in relation to facts, and to enable others to check or develop your information. Remember again that genealogy is properly

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considered to be a branch of history, and that facts must be established by careful documentary research, with scope of course for controlled speculation in grey areas. The free exercise of the imagination is no substitute for a factually-based approach, and unsourced pedigrees going back to Brian Boru or the Milesians are really of little value.

The final step in the process of genealogical research is to publish or disseminate the results to relatives and other interested parties, for there is no sense in letting our papers decay in the attic, or worse still be dumped after we have gone. At the most basic level a publication could take the form of a simple stapled, photocopied booklet composed of a title page and contents, a short introductory essay, copies of pedigree and family group sheets, and copies of illustrative documents such as certificates, cemetery receipts, in memoriam cards, photographs, and so on. Some may wish to produce more sophisticated short-run publications using their word processor, genealogy or desktop publisher programs, while others may seek to have articles published in genealogical magazines or journals. A more ambitious minority may go further and publish book-length studies of their ancestors, and indeed Irish genealogy requires more high-quality extended works of this kind, preferably dealing with the lower and middling classes as well as the rich.

Murphy Case Study

It would be appropriate to conclude this primer with a short genealogical case study, the family selected being the author's own, the Murphys of Ballylusky, County Kerry, and later of Dublin (see pedigree sheet in illustrations above). I obtained key details relating to the Murphys from my late father Thomas and I also picked up information during holidays in Ballylusky as a child. Orally transmitted information and indeed

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personal recollections are crucial to genealogical research, yet in the absence of documentation they cannot in themselves be considered to provide conclusive proof of pedigree.

Because the place of residence was known, there was little difficulty locating both the 1901 and 1911 Census returns for the Murphys of Ballylusky in the National Archives of Ireland. The 1901 Census shows my great-grandparents Thomas and Margaret Murphy, stated ages 62 and 45, with my grandfather John aged 19 and eight other children. The 1911 Census confirms most of this information, but gives Margaret's age as 65 rather than the expected 55, a type of anomaly not uncommonly encountered and reflecting widespread uncertainty over age in those times.⁵⁹ Both forms were signed with Thomas Murphy's mark, indicating illiteracy, so that the information was obviously recorded by the census enumerator, a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary, as was often the case.

In addition to genealogical details, the census returns provide much interesting background information. Thus most members of the Murphy family were recorded as being able to speak English and Irish, as Ballylusky was and remains a Gaelic-speaking area. Reflecting the fact that Ballylusky is located on the Dingle Peninsula near the coast, my grandfather John's occupation was given as 'Fisherman' in 1901 and 1911, while John Moran, the father of his future bride and my grandmother Ellen, who also lived in the townland, was listed as 'Farmer and Fisherman'. Interestingly, the younger Murphy children of school-going age were able to read and write, while my grandfather John like his parents was recorded as illiterate. John inherited the farm in Ballylusky and may possibly have

⁵⁹ Censuses of Ireland 1901 and 1911, Ballylusky, County Kerry, National Archives of Ireland; 1911 Census now online at

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acquired some capacity in reading and writing before his death in 1951 (which was also the year of my birth).

A crucial piece of information contained on the 1911 but not on the 1901 Census form is the number of years the parents were married, which in the case of Thomas and Margaret Murphy was 33 years. Margaret's mother Mary Kay was living with the family in 1911, confirming her maiden surname. Armed with this information a search was conducted in the records of the General Register Office and the marriage of Thomas Murphy and Margaret Key (obviously a variant of Kay) was found to have taken place in the Catholic Chapel of Kilmalkedar in May 1876. The birth registration of my grandfather John Murphy was also located, showing that he was born in Ballylusky in October 1881, parents Thomas Murphy and Margaret Kay.⁶⁰

The 1876 marriage registration provided the name of Thomas's father, and my great-great grandfather, which was David. Now Thomas Murphy only arrived in Ballylusky in the later nineteenth century and family lore held that he had come from Valentia Island. There are 18 David Murphys listed in Griffith's *Valuation* of County Kerry dated in the 1850s, of whom 13 were resident in Valentia Island, which can be considered significant.⁶¹ As Thomas was described as a widower on his 1876 marriage registration, a further General Register Office search discovered that a Thomas Murphy, aged 24, resident in Cool East, Valentia, and the son of David Murphy, had married Catherine McCarthy at Valentia Chapel in February 1864. One of the aforementioned David Murphys in Griffith's *Valuation* resided in Cool East. A death registration

⁶⁰ Marriage and birth registrations, General Register Office.

⁶¹ Griffith's *Valuation*, County Kerry, Irish Origins, <http://www.irishorigins.com/>, viewed 4 October 2009.

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for David Murphy of 'Cooil', Valentia, showing that he died in 1877 aged 60, was also located.⁶²

Unfortunately no additional information could be located for my Murphy line in relevant County Kerry Catholic parish registers, which is not unusual in the period prior to 1850. Of course records such as wills, deeds and memorial inscriptions would not be relevant in the case of a family of small farmers and fishermen in the nineteenth century. In these circumstances it cannot be said that the available documentation conclusively identifies David Murphy of Cool East as my earliest traced ancestor, but it can be suggested that he is a very likely candidate. Such genealogical uncertainties are not uncommon in the case of poorer Irish families in the period before 1850, and should never be papered over with false certainty or substitution of family lore for documentary proof.

This summary of my paternal Murphy ancestry shows that I have a pedigree of respectable length covering five generations as far back as the early nineteenth century, which is about average for Irish families. Most of those following the course outlined in this primer will achieve similar results if they put in the work, while some fortunate enough to be descended from wealthier ancestors may trace ancestors back to the eighteenth century or earlier. Genealogy of course should look forwards as well as backwards, and we carry out our work in the knowledge that the accounts of our ancestors which we construct may be amended or extended by future generations. In conclusion, it might be noted that my Murphys are now gone from Ballylusky, and reflecting the historical stream of migration from the Dingle Peninsula to Massachusetts in the United States of America, I am likely to have more Murphy cousins among the diaspora there than in Ireland.

⁶² Marriage and birth registrations, General Register Office.

Appendix 1: Select Publications

- Begley, Donal F, Editor, *Irish Genealogy: a Record Finder*, Dublin 1981.
- Bell, Robert, *The Book of Ulster Surnames*, Belfast 1988.
- Census of Ireland, *General Alphabetical Index to the Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland . . . 1851*, Dublin 1861, (short title *Townlands Index 1851*), reprinted Baltimore 1984.
- Flanagan, Deirdre, and Laurence Flanagan, *Irish Place Names*, Dublin 1994.
- Grenham, John, *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*, 3rd Edition, Dublin 2006.
- Hanks, Patrick, and Flavia Hodges, *A Dictionary of Surnames*, Oxford 1989 Edition.
- Irish Genealogist*, 1, 1937-.
- Irish Roots*, quarterly magazine, Cork 1992-.
- Joyce, P W, *Irish Names of Places*, 3 volumes, Dublin, undated.
- Lewis, Samuel, *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, 2 volumes, London 1837, and *Atlas of Ireland*, London 1837, reprinted Galway 1995.
- MacLysaght, Edward, *Irish Families*, Dublin 1985 Edition, *More Irish Families*, Dublin 1982, and *The Surnames of Ireland*, Dublin 1985 Edition.
- Matheson, R E, *Surnames in Ireland*, reprinted Baltimore 1982.
- Mitchell, Brian, *A Guide to Irish Parish Registers*, Baltimore 1988.
- Phillimore, W P W, and Gertrude Thrift, Editors, *Indexes to Irish [Diocesan] Wills*, 5 volumes, London 1909-20, reprinted Baltimore 1970.
- Ryan, J G, Editor, *Irish Church Records*, Dublin 1992.
- Ryan, J G, *Irish Records: Sources for Family and Local History*, Salt Lake City 1988.

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Vicars, Sir Arthur, Editor, *Index to the Prerogative Wills of Ireland 1536-1810*, Dublin 1897.

Woulfe, Rev Patrick, *Sloinne Gaedheal is Gall: Irish Names and Surnames*, Dublin 1923.

Appendix 2: Principal Repositories and Online Resources

- Library Council of Ireland, <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/>, providing free online access to various sources including Griffith's *Valuation*.
- Centre for Irish Genealogical and Historical Studies, <http://homepage.eircom.net/~seanjmurphy/>, the author's site, includes *Directory of Irish Genealogy* and other resources.
- Eneclann, <http://www.eneclann.tcd.ie/>, electronic publishing on CD-ROM (including *Index of Irish Wills 1484-1858*) and association with Irish Origins (see below).
- Family Search, <http://www.familysearch.org/>, free online access to databases and catalogues of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, including Irish birth, marriage and death indexes 1845-1958.
- Ancestry.com, <http://www.ancestry.com>, one of the major international commercial suppliers of online genealogical records, US and British content substantial, Irish extremely limited.
- Family Tree Maker, <http://www.familytreemaker.com>, leading commercial genealogy program now owned by Ancestry.com
- Genealogical Society of Ireland, <http://www.familyhistory.ie/>, publishes a quarterly journal and a range of genealogical source materials.
- Irish Origins, <http://www.irishorigins.com/>, commercial firm providing access to Griffith's *Valuation* and other records.
- National Archives of Ireland, <http://www.nationalarchives.ie>, contains genealogical guidance, a facility to search online lists of some records and the entire 1911 Census.

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National Library of Ireland, <http://www.nli.ie/>, contains some genealogical guidance and searchable online catalogues online.

General Register Office, <http://www.groireland.ie>, minimal genealogical content but still essential viewing.

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, <http://www.proni.gov.uk>, giving detailed guidance on using the records for genealogical research, and containing considerable information of all-Ireland relevance.