

National Archives of England and Ireland - 1

St. Louis Genealogical Society
26 October 2024 | Virtual Presentation
David E. Rencher, AG®, CG®, FUGA, FIGRS, FNGS

A

DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR THIS SESSION

At the conclusion of this session, participants should have an understanding of the following:

- A. The collections in The National Archives, London relating to Ireland.
- B. The collections of the National Archives of Ireland, Dublin and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast.

A

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES, LONDON (TNA)

Irish History from 1700: A Guide to Sources in the Public Record Office

An excellent guide to the Irish history records available in The National Archives, London is Alice Prochaska's book *Irish History from 1700: A Guide to Sources in the Public Record Office*, published in 2002. She served as the secretary and librarian of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. The major record classes of note with Irish content are (class code followed by title):

BT: Records of the Board of Trade

Much of the Irish material relates to trade and business with Ireland. For genealogical content, the records of the Registrar-General of Shipping and Seamen are noteworthy. They are contained in BT 107-30, 138-45, 162-5, and 167. The names of seamen are found in these records, 1702-1786 with fuller information after 1835.

C: Records of Chancery

The wealth of material contained in the records of Chancery may not be overstated. Much relates to the mediaeval and early-modern time period covering Ireland. The records of note are the Close, Charter, and Patent Rolls along with the other records of Chancery. Identifying a case in Ireland may have produced copies held by TNA.

CO: Records of the Colonial Office

The records here are noteworthy due to the content relating to immigration and applications for immigration. Much of this material has been mined by noted genealogists and published. The works of John Camden Hotten, Peter Wilson Coldham, and David Dobson in particular are noteworthy. There are FamilySearch Research Wiki pages for these authors with the volumes relating to Irish immigrants.

Dobson https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/David_Dobson

Coldham https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Peter_Wilson_Coldham

Hotten https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Barbados_Emigration_and_Immigration

CRES: Records of the Crown Estates

There are registered files of old estates in (CRES 34) which are the Crown Estates. These were maintained with excellent records and contain information on emigration

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schemes from the Crown estates. The names of these immigrants were published in the journal *Analecta Hibernica* No. 22. It was republished separately by Eilish Ellis.

E: Records of the Exchequer

Similar to the content available in the records of C: Chancery, there are numerous cases presented in the court of the Exchequer containing information on Irish subjects.

HO: Records of the Home Office and Ministry of Home Security

The Royal Irish Constabulary (HO 184) was the police force for the whole of Ireland (with the exception of Dublin) for the years 1836-1922. The entries list the name, age, height, religion, trade, marital status, and nationality of officers and their spouses.

Also noteworthy is the material in (HO 45/2521) relating to the administration of the poor in Ireland and efforts to provide relief. These contain individual petitions for relief from houses being tumbled in the Poor Law Union of Kilrush, Clare, Ireland.

The Home Office records have an enormous amount of untapped content relating to the Irish famine that yet remains undiscovered.

IR: Records of the Inland Board of Revenue

Of consequence in the records of the Inland Board of Revenue is (IR 1 and IR 17 indexes), the Board of Stamps Apprenticeship Books, 1710-1811 recording the names of masters and apprentices. The record was created to record the amount paid. While not complete, they help to augment other guild and corporation records. IR 29-30, IR 18 deal with the Records of the Tithe Commission and converting tithe payments into rent charges.

LRRO: Records of the Office of Land Revenue Records & Enrolments

Specifically, the records of yearly rentals on the Crown lands for the years 1830-1968 contained in (LRRO 12)

NDO: Records of the National Debt Office

Included in (NDO 3) are the records of the Irish Tontines. The records have been imaged by FamilySearch and are available to browse by images for the three Irish Tontines of 1773, 1775, and 1777 (last survivor died in 1870). Includes names of subscribers, nominees, payment books, certificates of death and marriages and declarations of identity.

PRO: Records of the Public Record Office [The National Archives]

This is the 'catch all' category for the collections of numerous authors. The guide describes each of the collections with brief details about the highlights and major significance of the collection.

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PROB: Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury

The Prerogative Court of Canterbury was the highest court in the ecclesiastical structure of the British court system prior to 1858. The records have been indexed and digitized by The National Archives and copies of the records are available for a fee to be downloaded immediately. Those dying in Ireland with property valued at more than £5 in more than one country within the British Isles (i.e., Ireland and England) had their wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

T: Records of the Treasury

The records of the Irish Reproductive Loan Fund (T91) relate to families in the provinces of Munster and Connaught, specifically parishes in the counties of Cork, Clare, Galway, Limerick, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo and Tipperary. The fund was established to assist industrious poor individuals to better their circumstances through hard work and initiative. The funds had to be secured and it was necessary to produce two guarantors in addition to the debtor. Details generally include the name, occupation and residence of the debtor and the names (signatures) of the guarantors. The records are available on the *Findmypast* website with the title, “Ireland, Poverty Relief Loans, 1821-1874.”

WO: Records of the War Office, Board of Ordnance, and Army Departments

This is obviously the strongest complete set of records due to none of it being destroyed in 1922 in the loss of the Public Record Office of Ireland. All of the military records for the War Office were safely located in London. All of the muster, payroll, pension and other records that include Irish subjects can be searched there or in the online digitized collections on *Findmypast* and *Ancestry.com* (*Fold3.com*). (WO 118 and WO 119/120) are the records for the Royal Kilmainham Hospitals, the latter founded in 1679 to serve the needs of disabled soldiers, also known as “in-pensioners,” the hospital was also in charge of distributing funds to “out-pensioners.” Registers for admissions (1704-1922) and discharge books (1783-1822) are available on *Ancestry* and *Findmypast*. There is also a chance that you will find Irish soldiers names listed among the records of the Royal Chelsea Hospital (WO 22/141-205; 209-225). There are many wills of Irish sailors listed in the Navy wills of (ADM 142).

The website for The National Archives is: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> . It contains numerous finding aids and helps to assist researchers. Explore the options, start by typing in a name into the search field—you never know what might appear.

Currently, they have 156 research guides available for genealogists. To view the list, see: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/?research-category=family-history> .

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THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF IRELAND, DUBLIN (NAI)

Researcher Sean Murphy has created a very nice online guide to the National Archives of Ireland with an overview of the various government departments You may view it at: <http://homepage.eircom.net/~seanjmurphy/nai/index.htm> .

Wood, Herbert. *A Guide to the Records Deposited in the Public Record Office of Ireland* . The official guide to the Public Record Office was written by the then Assistant Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, Ireland, Herbert Wood. It was published in 1919, just three short years prior to the destruction of the record office and the massive collection of records that detailed the history of a nation. It is strategically important for three reasons:

- ❖ It details precisely what records existed and which of those were deposited in the Public Record Office and thus, destroyed.
- ❖ It is an authoritative source for much of the history of the creation of certain record sets and governing body that created the record.
- ❖ It served a huge roll in the creation of the Beyond 2022 project to create The Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland launched on 27 June 2022, the one-hundred-year anniversary of the destruction of the Public Record Office, Ireland (30 June).

The introduction to the volume is worth reading as it gives a detailed description of the events, issues and challenges that led to the creation of the record office and its ultimate placement in the Four Courts complex. Some of the major categories of records addressed in the volume are:

1. Court of Chancery
2. Court of Appeal
3. Plea Rolls
4. Court of King's Bench
5. Court of Common Pleas
6. Court of Exchequer
7. Chief Secretary's Office
8. Ecclesiastical and Testamentary Collection
9. Extinct Jurisdictions
10. Extinct Commissions
11. Miscellaneous, including Guild Records, Huguenot Records, etc.

Manuscript Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation, compiled by Richard J. Hayes, 1965; First Supplement 1979; Articles in Periodicals 1970. This compilation lists many of the resources available in the National Archives of Ireland, although because of its publication date preceding the change of name, they are listed as Public Record Office, Ireland.

Much of the material contained in the National Archives of Ireland is detailed in the Hayes Manuscript Sources. It serves as a good substitute for the lack of an updated guide to the record office.

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THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF IRELAND, DUBLIN (NAI)

The most tangible evidence of the good that came from the destruction of the Public Record Office was the publication of what is commonly referred to as “Hayes Manuscripts.” With the lack of primary source materials, the staff at the National Library of Ireland set out to create a guide to the miscellaneous materials scattered in various archives throughout Ireland and in the National Library to assist the researcher in locating records by name of person; subject; locality; and time period. Research elsewhere in the British Isles would be greatly benefited by a similar work if it existed.

The website for National Archives, Ireland (NAI) is: <https://www.nationalarchives.ie/>. It has a genealogy section and many useful helps/guides to assist the researcher. The genealogy section is: <https://www.nationalarchives.ie/genealogy/>. The guides may be found at: <https://www.nationalarchives.ie/genealogy/guide/>.

The National Archives of Ireland has free digitized images online for the following collections: <https://www.nationalarchives.ie/genealogy/our-genealogy-website/>

- Census Records, 1901 and 1911
- Census survivals, 1821-1851
- Census Search Forms, 1841-1851
- Tithe Applotment Books, 1841-1851
- Soldiers' Wills, 1914-1917
- Diocesan & Prerogative Marriage Licence Bonds Indexes, 1623-1866
- Catholic Qualification & Convert Rolls, 1700-1845
- Valuation Office House, Field, Tenure & Quarto Books, 1824-1856
- Shipping Agreements & Crew Lists, 1863-1921
- Will Registers, 1858-1900
- Calendars of Wills & Administrations, 1858-1922
- Prerogative & Diocesan copies of some wills & indexes to others, 1596-1858

The Index to articles in periodicals pre-dated the effort in the United States by the Allen County Public Library that spawned the Periodical Source Index (PERSI). A credible guide to Hayes Manuscript Sources is on the FamilySearch Research Wiki, see https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Hayes_Manuscript_and_Periodical_Sources_for_Irish_Research. It describes the content of each volume. It is easy to overlook the supplement published in 1979, but that should always be consulted as well.

The efforts of Frank Smith after created a suitable update to this material with the creation of “Smith’s Inventory” for Ireland. See the FamilySearch catalog entry: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/745738?availability=Family%20History%20Library>. For those who are familiar with PERSI, this is its Irish equivalent.

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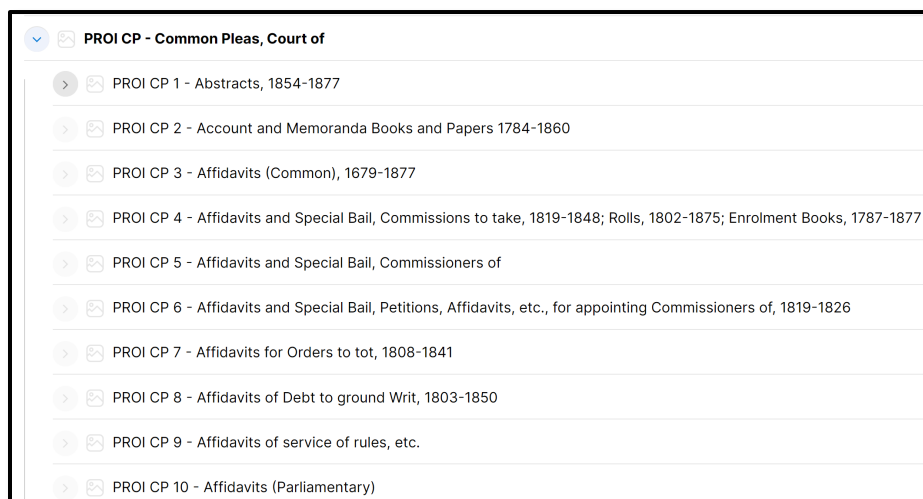


THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF IRELAND, DUBLIN (NAI)

The most exciting news is the launch of The Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland launched on 27 June 2022, one-hundred-years after the Public Record Office and its seven-hundred plus years of records were destroyed by explosion and fire on 30 June 1922. The new website is: <https://virtualtreasury.ie/>. The official project launched in 2017-8 as the Beyond 2022 project, originally formed with the National Archives, Ireland, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, and The National Archives, London in conjunction with Trinity College Dublin and the Science Foundation Ireland ADAPT Centre for digital technologies. Soon thereafter, the Irish Manuscripts Commission and the Trinity College Dublin Library joined the coalition. To date, they have been joined by more than seventy other archives, libraries, and societies in Ireland, Britain, and the United States.

This massive undertaking is done in conjunction with archival partners around the world—all trying to contribute information that will compensate for destroyed records with either duplicate copies, transcripts, or abstracts. One example is the restoration of the 1766 Religious Census where the archive previously held approximately seven percent of the record information and working with partners at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and the Representative Church Body Library, they estimate that they have fifty-percent of the original record online and searchable by name.

The collections of The Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland may be explored at: <https://virtualtreasury.ie/browse>. At this link, you can see all of the partners listed with the contributions each has made to the record treasury to date. An example:



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PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND, BELFAST (PRONI)

Research in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) is enriched by the quality of the finding aids, publications, and services of the record office. The Family History Library has digitized the class lists in the search room. These record class listings often give detailed information and extracts/abstracts/transcripts from the records, thus providing key pieces of genealogical information even though the original record may not have yet been digitized.

The website for the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland is: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/public-record-office-northern-ireland-proni>. They have chosen not to allow persistent URLs to their catalog, so other resources such as the FamilySearch Research Wiki cannot link directly to the records in the archive. Instead, the number can be listed, and you can enter it in the search box to link. For example, if you are trying to link to the estate records for William Robert Adair and you retrieved the reference number from the FamilySearch Research Wiki page for “Ireland Estate Records,” you would type T1333/3 into the PRONI Ref: box to begin your search.

The screenshot shows the PRONI search interface. At the top, it says "Search using one or more of the fields below." There are several search options: "Any Text:" with a text input field and a "Show Help" link; radio buttons for "Description and Title", "Description Only", and "Title Only"; radio buttons for "Match ALL words", "Match ANY word", and "Match Phrase"; "Date:" with fields for Year, Month, and Day, and a "To" section with similar fields and a "Show Help" link; "PRONI Ref:" with a text input field containing "T1333/3" and a "Show Help" link; "Results per Page:" with a dropdown menu set to "10"; and "Sort By:" with a dropdown menu set to "PRONI Reference". At the bottom right, there are "Search" and "Clear" buttons.

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland has long been friendly to genealogists and overseas visitors. For many years, they surpassed their colleagues in providing expert services to assist genealogical researchers. They provide an extensive series of leaflets on various research topics, see: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/information-leaflets>.

For example, there are thirty publications under the “Family Tree Series” on a variety of topics, including, how to trace your family tree; 1901 and 1911 census, church records, Valuation records, wills & probates, Militia, yeomanry lists and muster rolls, poor law records, encumbered estates, grand jury records, gravestone inscriptions, tithe records, and Land Registry records to name a few. There is also a selection of papers under the headings, “Local History series,” and “Historical Topics series.”

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PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND, BELFAST (PRONI)

With the one-hundred-year anniversary of the creation of Northern Ireland, there has been extensive effort creating information for what has been termed, “The Decade of Centenaries.” It focuses on historical events, memorabilia, and records created for the time period 1912-1922. Generationally, there is still a lot of family lore that has been passed to the current generation from the troubles during those times. Historians and archivists have done an excellent job capturing the memories and writings of those who had first-hand knowledge of what was happening in the months and years leading up to Irish Independence. You can view the work done by PRONI at:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/decade-centenaries>. Among others, these memorable events include the signing of the Ulster Covenant, the Titanic, the 400th commemoration from the Plantation of Ulster, the First World War, Easter Rising, the War of Independence, the Government of Ireland Act, and Civil War and Partition.

They also have an online searchable set of resources, including:

- eCatalogue
- Freeholders’ records
- Londonderry Corporation records
- Name Search
- PRONI Historical Maps viewer
- PRONI Web Archive
- Street directories
- Ulster Covenant
- Valuation Revision Books
- Will calendars

To link to these resources, see: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/public-record-office-northern-ireland-proni/search-archives-online>



CONCLUSION

The three major national archives serve the Irish content for England, the Republic of Ireland, and Northern Ireland very well. While all three create different, but similar research experiences, learning how to use their online resources and catalogues is genuinely very helpful. Now adding all of their combined efforts to search the massive amounts of data being poured into The Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland it is very exciting to do Irish genealogical research in an entirely new way. Glimpses of records that heretofore were relegated to hiring an agent or making a trip to Ireland for research are now at our fingertips—it’s a brand-new day for Irish research!

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