Preparing for a Research Trip
to Ireland

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Genealogical travel can take all sorts of directions. Do you have a business trip or family vacation that just happens to take you close to where an ancestor lived? Are you attending a family reunion, wedding or other event? Will you be attending a genealogical conference? Have you decided on a dedicated genealogical trip to Ireland to visit your ancestral homeland? No matter what the reason, to get the most out of your trip you need to prepare...that means doing your homework both online and off before you leave. During your trip you'll want to spend your time researching records that only exist in Ireland as well as visiting the places where your ancestors lived.

If this is your first trip to Ireland, consider an escorted tour or research trip. Having someone who is familiar with the area and repositories will make your trip more productive. It's also nice to have other people with similar interests with whom you can share meals and research successes. If you are traveling with others who are not interested in research, a tour is a great way to familiarize yourself with the country (with plans to return for research).

Ready

Once you have decided on the type of trip, analyze your database to determine what information is missing. In order to be successful researching in Ireland, you need to know the location where your ancestor lived, preferably something more than the county. If possible, sort your database by location, then begin with those close to the area where you will be traveling to create a research plan for the missing information. Can you fill in the missing information using local resources or the Internet? You don't want to spend your valuable time in Ireland filling in information you could have accessed from home. Prioritize your research by location and family.

Obtain maps of the area. If you will be driving, look at other possibilities for research on your route to and from your destination. Mark the locations of the repositories, cemeteries and churches and include county libraries and archives, as well as places of historical interest.

Learn about the history of Ireland as well as the area where your ancestors lived. What were the specific influences that forced people to leave? What were the migration routes out of the area that might help you better understand how your ancestors left? Some areas have specialized records that you may not be aware of, or have not worked with before. Make sure you understand the context of the records…why they were created…which may explain why your ancestor was, or was not in the record.

Set

   Research the repositories (libraries, archives, churches, cemeteries) you plan to visit. Check their hours and any closing information. You don't want to arrive at your location only to find that the repository is undergoing renovations, or that there is a local holiday and the facility is closed. Frequently churches or cemeteries only have part time workers and limited hours. Does the facility require a Reader's Ticket, and if so, what are the requirements? The National Archives of Ireland, for example, requires two forms of identification, one of which must have your home address. Check policies on electronics. Will you be able to use your laptop? Is there Internet access? Can you use a digital camera or scanner? Do they use copy cards or do you have to have change? If you are using microfilm, do they have printers and are they paper or digital? If the information is not on their website, make a phone call or send an email.

   Once the housekeeping issues are taken care of, use catalogs to determine what records will answer the questions in your research plan. Find out if the documents are onsite, or whether they need to be ordered prior to your arrival.   The National Library, the National Archives and the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland are "closed stacks." With the exception of some general material and microfilms, will order the material you wish to review using your Reader's Ticket and it will be pulled by the staff. This also requires some planning so material is waiting for you and not the other way around. Read the repository's policy to understand the requirements for a Reader's Ticket. Usually, it is a matter of filling out an application, providing identification: a passport and sometimes a second form of photo ID with your address.

   Plan for downtime. Working from 9 am until 5 pm every day without time to analyze and adjust your research plan will leave you overwhelmed. Plan to spend some time each evening reviewing the information you collected and adjusting your research plan as necessary.

GO

   Travel light! Overseas flights, and especially those through Europe have strict weight limits. Light weight clothing which can be layered works best (you can never guess whether a repository will be warm or cold). The most important items for genealogists are our records and the best system is the one that works for you! I travel with very little paper, but if you're a paper person, work to get the material in as concise a form as possible. I would recommend report folders as opposed to rigid binders. You are not likely to have a great deal of space to work in. Another suggestion… keep your files in your carry-on, along with a change of clothes. If the airline loses your luggage, you can live without your clothes, but not your files. Since my files are typically electronic, they're on my laptop, tablet and my phone (as well as backups in the Cloud).

   Make certain you have the correct power adapters for your electronics. Most electronic devices have switching power supplies so you'll only need a plug converter, but verify with your manufacturer.   If you plan to use your phone, check with your carrier about adding international service. Make certain you understand how your phone works, and turn off "roaming" so you don't get hit with a huge bill on your return. You will usually be able to use the wireless service at your hotel or research facility. There may be a charge for this…always check before you go.

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19. CyndisList - Organizing   http://www.cyndislist.com/organizing/general/
20. CyndisList - Travel & Research http://www.cyndislist.com/travel/general/

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Places to Visit
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45. Ulster American Folk Park   http://tinyurl.com/y9rwrvb6
46. National Museum of Country Life www.museum.ie/Country-Life
47. Cobh - Queenstown Experience http://www.cobhheritage.com/

   Research Plan Template can be found at http://moughty.com/links/getting-started.html