

FamilySearch's Irish Civil Registration Index

By Donna M. Moughty

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Ireland, Civil Registration Indexes 1845-1958

Ireland, Civil Registration Indexes

How To Use This Record

Civil registration indexes provide the easiest access to civil registration records. Rather than searching district by district where names are not in alphabetical order, you can look in one name index for the period through 1921 and in either of two indexes after 1921.

Why The Record Was Created

Civil registration indexes were created in order to provide name access to the records.

Record History

Ireland kept two sets of registrations, one local and the other national. This document describes the national indexes, not the local ones. Prior to the separation of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in 1922, all national civil registration records and indexes for the island were kept by the General Register Office in Dublin. Beginning in 1922 there were two General Register Offices, one in Dublin for the Republic of Ireland and one in Belfast for Northern Ireland.

Record Description

All Ireland, pre-1922. From 1845-1877, the national civil registration indexes are yearly and arranged alphabetically by a person's family and given name. From 1878-1921, each year is divided into quarters, generating four index volumes per year. The March quarter contains events registered in January-March, the June quarter in April-June, the September quarter in July-September, and the December quarter in October-December. A second index for 1903-1921 created by the General Register Office, and only available there, is arranged by year.

Republic of Ireland, 1922 to present. For the years 1922-1927, 1933, and 1966-present, the General Register Office copy of the birth indexes is filed by year while the Family History Library microfilm copies (1922-1958) are all filed by quarter. Indexes for all other years and all other events through 1966 are by quarter.

Northern Ireland, 1922 to present. Physical description not provided at this time.

[Ireland Civil Registration Indexes.pdf](#)

For those researching their family history in Ireland, the limited number of resources requires the use of every piece of information you can find to sort out your family. Beginning in 1845, Protestant marriages had to be registered in Ireland. All other registrations began in 1864, including births, deaths, and all marriages. If your ancestors were famine-era immigrants, you might be saying, "A lot of good that does me ... they were gone before 1864." Yes, but it's likely not everyone in the family emigrated, and now you might be able to find those individuals in the indexes.

In the past, I've looked at these indexes either on microfilm at the Family History Library (or at a local Center) or in Dublin at the General Registrar's Office (where you are charged €2 for access to five years of indexes for one individual, or €20 per day for an unlimited number of indexes). The indexes are by type of record (birth, death, or marriage) and by year. After 1877, there are four volumes for each year. To effectively use these indexes, you need to know approximately when the event took place and where it happened.

Each index follows a similar format. Names are alphabetical by surname, then by given name. A registration district is listed, then a volume and page number. Death indexes also give the age at death. To obtain a copy of the certificate, you must have the name, the year (and quarter if after 1877), and the registration district, as well as the volume and page number. The year is self-explanatory; however I would caution you that just because you've found records abroad showing a specific birth date in Ireland, they could be wrong. I usually go with plus or minus five years. After putting together a scrapbook for my husband's aunt, she told me that I had her father's birth date wrong. The family had always celebrated his birthday in September and they believed he was born in 1888. His naturalization stated that he was born 11 September 1887... I however had his birth certificate with a birth date of 20 December 1886. If the church records for this area were extant, I would look for a baptismal record. The fines were quite stiff for not registering an event within three months, so it was not uncommon for the parents to simply adjust the birth date. (Had my husband's grandfather been baptized before the birth date, that would be a good indication of an adjusted birth <g>.) It should also be noted that there was not 100 percent compliance in the early years of registration. Also, there may have been a delayed registration if the person needed to prove their age (for an old-age pension, for example). These

late registrations were normally added to the end of the index in the year the registration should have occurred.

Registration Districts were originally the Poor Law Unions (which tended to be large market towns), and some cross county boundaries. In the index shown below we have three Ellen Penders, one each from Ballymoney (Antrim and Down), Rathdown (Dublin and Wickford) and Enniscorthy (Carlow and Wexford). As this example points out, not knowing the location can cause difficulty in identifying the correct individual. You could order all three of these certificates, however at €4 each that would be equivalent to about \$15.50. You can imagine the problem if you were looking for Michael Daly over a five-year period! A good online resource for the Registration Districts is [Connor's Genealogy](#).

INDEX to BIRTHS REGISTERED in IRELAND in 1866.			
Dist.	Vol.	Page	Name
.....	7	411	Pender, John Joseph, Dublin, North
.....	18	898	Pender, Anna Maria, Dublin, South
.....	90	898	Pender, John, Listowel
.....	6	991	Pender, Catherine, Ballinacree
.....	1	999	Pender, Catherine, Dublin, South
.....	17	715	Pender, John Joseph, Dublin, South
.....	11	992	Pender, Mary, Portlaoine
.....	7	272	Pender, Marian Sydney, Dublin, North
.....	5	110	Pender, (Thomas), Dublin, South
.....	11	222	Pender, Ellen, Tralee
.....	90	104	Pender, Ellen, Tralee
.....	11	782	Pender, Margaret, Kilkenny
.....	7	937	Pender, Mary, Dingle
.....	7	732	Pender, Mary, Ellen, Kilkenny
.....	3	447	Pender, Patrick, Listowel
.....	20	437	Pender, Anne, Enniscorthy
.....	19	909	Bernard, Carrick-on-Shannon
.....	14	82	Briget, Enniscorthy
.....	14	476	Briget, Enniscorthy
.....	10	128	David, Gorty
.....	6	179	David, Gorty
.....	7	349	Elizabeth, Nenagh
.....	15	294	Elizabeth, Carlow
.....	20	134	Ellen, Ballymoney
.....	10	755	Ellen, Rathdown
.....	2	728	Ellen, Enniscorthy
.....	11	112	James, Wexford
.....	6	813	John, Carlow
.....	14	376	John, Enniscorthy
.....	1	173	John, Mullingar
.....	3	701	Joseph, Acty
.....	17	989	Laurson, Carlow
.....	5	930	Mary, Wexford
.....	4	204	Mary Anne, Carlow
.....	18	399	Mary Catherine, Carlow
.....	11	531	Mathew, Wexford

Index from Tracing Your Irish Ancestors 3rd edition, by John Grenham.

database for [Civil Registration in Ireland](#). The first thing you should do (as with all databases) is read the description of the database (click on "About this Collection"). If you are looking for someone born in Northern Ireland after 1921, that person will not be in this index. The index covers all of Ireland through 1921, and only the Republic of Ireland from 1922 through 1958. (The Family History Library has the Northern Ireland Civil Registration Indexes on microfilm from 1922–59; however, these films do not circulate to the Family History Centers and are not indexed on its Web site.) Also note that the indexing was done from the Family History Library copy of the microfilms and therefore does not contain the mother's maiden name until 1928.

If you have an unusual surname like Moughty, a search on just the surname turns up 114 records. I don't want you to think that my research is easy... I also have Dalys and a search on just that surname returns 4,700 records. I have been trying to find Mary Daly, my husband's maternal great-grandmother who appeared as a widow in the 1911 census. My initial search for her turned up zero results, as did a search for any Daly with any event in Claremorris (the registration district), Mayo, Ireland. If I searched for John Daly who died in 1901 and leave out the location, I find his listing (in Claremorris). I wrote to FamilySearch to find out what was going on. They promptly responded that the "place" in this database is not the registration district, but the county. Their rationale was that sometimes registration districts encompassed more than one county.

I appreciated the quick response, although I disagree with the premise since the registration district is the way the original was created. In fact, the county does not appear in the original index at all, which means it was added after the indexing was completed. I've provided my feedback so we'll see what happens. For the time being, type in the county, instead of the registration district, if you need to limit your search. This will typically give you a larger number of hits to work through. You should also consider searching the adjoining counties that fall within the registration district).

Once you've found a potential match, you need to obtain a copy of the original registration. Depending on the year, you may be able to find the information by ordering a microfilm from the Family History Library. According to the [Family History Library Catalog](#), the following films are available either at the Family History Library, or can be ordered at your local Family History Center:

- Deaths 1864–70
- Marriages 1864–70
- Births 1864–1955 Quarter 1 with the following exceptions: 1881 Quarter 4–1900 Quarter 1; 1909 Quarter 1 v. 1-1; and 1914–21

If the marriage or death falls after 1870, or the birth falls in one of the years not filmed, you need to order a copy of the original registration from the [General Registrar's Office](#). The cost of a photocopy if you

provide the name, registration district, volume and page number is €4 (about \$5.20).

I've been spending some time going through my database to see if I can fill in the blanks on those for whom I had no birth, death, or marriage in Ireland. It turns out that it isn't as easy as I thought it would be. One problem is the issue of common names. There might be hundreds of individuals with the same name born in the same county within a one- to two-year period. Many (but not all) families in Ireland used a naming pattern that named the first son after the father's father and the second son after the mother's father. If a family had four or five sons and they followed this pattern, then the next generation could have four or five individuals with the same name, all about the same age. And the next generation could have fifteen to twenty individuals, etc. The second problem is it's not uncommon to find records that give wildly different ages and dates. For that reason it's again important to expand the years of your search; I usually use plus or minus five years. That could get expensive!

Here's another puzzle. I have a copy of my husband's great-grandparent's marriage certificate. Bernard Moughty and Mary Lynn were married 24 August 1887 in the Roman Catholic Chapel of Empor, in the Registrar's District Ballynacargy, Union of Mullingar, District of Mullingar (all in County Westmeath). He was 25 years old; she was 20. There is no index entry for this marriage in 1887. So I pulled my copy and noticed that the marriage wasn't registered until 21 January 1888, so I checked the database for an 1888 entry ... no luck. Since Moughty is frequently misspelled, I also checked under Mary Lynn, written very clearly on the certificate ... no luck. Where are they? It turns out that by limiting the search to Westmeath I was eliminating the record since the index has the marriage registered in Monaghan. Since the name is so unusual, it was not that difficult to find. Had it been Michael Daly, I'd still be looking! Again, I've sent feedback to the LDS and their response included the following, which is an important reminder.

Record Search is still under development. This release is considered a pilot. This means that at times, Record Search will not be available while additional records are added and some features are improved. We

may also remove record collections that have been on the site previously. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. We look forward to receiving your feedback.

At the present time there is no way to submit a correction to the Record Search pilot, although they are looking at this as a possible enhancement.

If you have ancestors from Ireland, check out this new resource. Don't forget to provide feedback to FamilySearch if you encounter a problem like mine. They appreciate the feedback and it will make the final index better. **DG**

Resources

Family History Library. [Research Outline: Ireland](#).

Grenham, John. *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*, 3rd edition. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2006.

Ouimette, David S. *Finding Your Irish Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide*. Orem, Utah: Ancestry, 2005.

Ryan, James G. *Irish Records: Sources for Family and Local History*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Ancestry, 1997.



[Donna M. Moughty](#), a professional genealogist and former regional manager for a national technology company, has been conducting family research for more than fifteen years. She teaches classes for beginners and lectures on a variety of subjects, including Internet, Irish research, and computer topics. In addition, she provides consultations, research assistance, and training. Donna has attended the National Institute for Genealogical Research, the third and fourth Irish Genealogical Congresses in Ireland, Salt Lake Institute–Irish Research, and the National Institute for Genealogical and Historical Research at Samford University. She is a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists, treasurer of the Genealogical Speakers Guild, and a delegate to the Federation of Genealogical Societies. Donna writes a weekly [blog](#).