Using the Internet for...
Family history

Introduction

This is a guide to researching your family history on the web for people of Irish descent. The guide is intended to assist people work their way through the Internet labyrinth, identifying some of the most useful websites for conducting Irish family history and guiding them through these sites.

What is Available?

There are many web resources available for a person of Irish descent who is researching his or her family history. Records from official sources, such as government departments, and church and state institutions, are the most useful when trying to build a family tree.

Some websites make the resource directly searchable while other sites provide a guide to what is available at a particular centre, requiring the person to attend at that centre to conduct the research. Of the websites considered in this guide, at least three require a trip to Dublin to view the resources there, but these websites

may save you a trip by telling you what is available before you go.

All but two of the websites listed in this module are free resources. The two subscription sites are
ww.genealogy.com
and
www.ireland.com/ancestor.
These sites require payment by credit card and this is done online.

Three important resources are not available, in their entirety, on the web. These are the Tithe Applotment Books, Trade Directories and the Census Records for 1901 and 1911. They are available on the web for some counties. In order to present as complete a guide as possible, the location (physical not virtual) of these resources is given.

Guide to Manual
This manual concentrates on only web resources and in particular web resources that are searchable. The searchable website is a great boon to family history research. There is a very useful guide to researching your family history available at http://www.nli.ie/pdfs/famil1.pdf which does not restrict itself to web resources.

Some resources are not available on the web at this stage but are mentioned in this manual to save the reader a fruitless search for an online equivalent of a resource that does not exist.

Need to Know

A basic familiarity with the Internet and with a PC is required.

It is also assumed that you know the last name or family name of the person who is the subject of your research. In many cases this will be your own last name.

Need to Have

1. A credit card for payment in the case of two sites considered. The remaining sites are free.
2. At least one Irish ancestor!

Related Guides

'*Internet Basics'* covers the Need to Know requirements for this guide.

Quick Guide

The websites in this list are presented chronologically. The National Library document and The Irish Times' Ancestors page are presented first as they are not confined to a particular date or dates.

   1. A general guide to researching your family tree is available from the National Library of Ireland, http://www.nli.ie/pdfs/famil1.pdf

   2. The Irish Times' Ancestors page is a search tool which guides the user towards what is available and where it is to be found. For the most part, it will steer you towards resources which are not available on the web. In such cases, it will provide the addresses (physical not virtual) of where these resources are to be located. As the site itself stresses 'Please be clear: the record references returned by the searches are, in the main, bibliographical and do not include the original records -in other words, they are detailed aids to research rather than the research itself ' (http://scripts.ireland.com/ancestor/subscription/index.cfm, 19 July 2004). This is a subscription site and costs $60 for a thorough search of the site. http://www.ireland.com/ancestor

   3. Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild lists half a million passengers who arrived in the United States since the 1600s right up to 1929. The site is searchable. http://immigrantships.net/index2.html

4. When looking at Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages there are, at least, three websites to consider. All three document records available at their offices; the actual records are not available online but are

available in Dublin, Ireland. However, the information you are seeking may simply not be available anywhere so it is worth referencing these sites first as this may save you an unnecessary trip. (a) The National Library of Ireland lists its collection of Roman Catholic Church records. These predate 1880. http://www.nli.ie/family_hr.htm#pr (b) The General Register Office gives an account of its collection of civil or State registers which cover the period 1864 to the present. http://www.groireland.ie/research.htm (c) Church of Ireland registers are described at http://www.ireland.anglican.org/library/libroots.html. These cover the period 1750 to the present.

5.   Trade Directories from 1751 to 1894. These list the owners of businesses in urban centres. Copies may be available at the local public library in your area, or in the National Library of Ireland. Some public libraries also have a selection of these crucial primary sources freely available on their website.

6.   The National Archives of Ireland Transportation Records Database is a searchable database of records relating to convicts transported to Australia between 1788 and 1868 inclusive. http://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/transportation/search01.html

7.   Tithe Applotment Books compiled between 1823 and 1837. These list the occupiers of land holdings in rural parishes. In Ireland, Copies may be available at the local public library in your area, or in the National Library of Ireland. Some public libraries also have their local Tithe returns freely available on their Internet website e.g. www.clarelibrary.ie

8.   Famine Irish Passenger Record Data File. This is a searchable database of 604,596 persons who arrived in the United States between December 1846 and December 1851. http://aad.archives.gov/aad/series_description.jsp?series_id=639&coll_id=1002

9.   Griffith's Valuation, compiled between 1848 and 1864, lists all occupiers of property living in Ireland at this time. An index* of names occurring in the Valuation can be searched at http://www.genealogy.com. This is a subscription site and at the time of writing the cost of subscribing is $14.99 per month or $79.99 per annum. One important warning about this site is that subscription is automatically renewed. In the case of an annual subscription you will receive a warning before renewal; in the case of a monthly subscription you will receive no such warning. Some local public libraries also have these indexes freely available on their website.

10.   Ellis Island Records. This lists all people who came through Ellis Island between the years 1892 and 1924. The site is searchable at http://www.ellisisland.org/search/index.asp

11.   The Censuses of 1901 and 1911 lists all people living in Ireland in these years. These may be accessed at the National Archives of Ireland or at the local public library in your area. Some public libraries also have their local returns freely available on their website e.g. www.clarelibrary.ie

12.   Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Debt of Honour List is a searchable database of all soldiers in Commonwealth countries who died during the two World Wars. It is estimated that 35,000 Irish people were killed in the First World War while serving in the British army (http://www.tcd.ie/General/Fusiliers/DUBFUS/RDFA/HTML/rdfa_top.htm, 19 July 2004) http://www.cwgc.org/cwgcinternet/search.aspx

*The microfilmed version of Griffith's Valuation, available at the National Library of Ireland, providesmore information than the index.In Ireland, copies of Griffith's Valuation may also be available at the public library for your area.

Step-by-Step Guide

We will first look at the National Archives of Ireland Transportation Records Database
(http://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/transportation/search01.html)
and then look at Ellis Island Records
(http://www.ellisisland.org/search/index.asp)
Both sites are searchable and free.

1. National Archives of Ireland Transportation Records Database 1788 to 1868
What is it?
An online database of 'a wide range of records relating to transportation of convicts from Ireland to Australia covering the period 1788 to 1868. In some cases these include records of members of convicts' families transported as free settlers.'

The database was compiled from transportation registers and petitions to Government for pardon or commutation of sentence. All transportation registers compiled before 1836 were destroyed in the Four Courts fire of 1922. Consequently, if the object of your research was convicted prior to 1836 and their sentence was not the subject of a petition, he or she is not included in this database.

Where can I find it?
The National Archives of Ireland Transportation Records Database can be found at
 http://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/transportation/search01.html

How do I search it?
Below is a screen shot of the search box on the first page. A search is not case sensitive. Simply type your ancestor's last name into the search box provided and click on the 'Submit Query' button. The default number of records returned after each search is 10. You are then presented with the option of retrieving the next 10 etc. so it is not absolutely essential to change this number. Increasing the number will result in receiving more records in more time. This is not an issue if you are using broadband. If you are using a telephone line to connect to the internet, you should be wary of going above 80 as this generates a web page of 80KB (the site tells you that each record is about 1KB in size).

Having searched for 'fitzgibbon', I retrieved 10 records and am told there are 16 records in total.

At the bottom of the screen there is a button labeled 'Click here for 6 more records'.

I then tried a more refined search. I typed 'fitzgibbon john' in the search box and retrieved one record.

2. Ellis Island Records 1892 to 1924

What is it?
A searchable database of 22 million people, immigrant passengers and crew members, who came through Ellis Island and the Port of New York during the years 1892 to 1924. The list has been compiled from shipping lists by volunteers of The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints.

Where can I find it?
Ellis Island records are available from this website: http://www.ellisisland.org/search/index.asp
How do I search it?
This is a screen shot of the first page. Click on the button '*New Search'*.

Enter the person's last name in the field provided. It is generally best to leave the other fields blank.

This is a screen shot of the results page for a search for people whose last name is 'Fitzgibbon'. If the previous search fails, click on the '*Alternate Spellings Only'* tab. This will retrieve names that sound similar. For example, Fitsgibbon, with an 's' rather than Fitzgibbon with a 'z' is retrieved. Fitzgibbons (with an 's' at the end of Fitzgibbon) is also retrieved.

If you wish to view the passenger details in more detail you will need to login in order to see the entire records. For a first time user simply click on '*Are you new to this site'*. Next, choose '*Yes, I am new to this

site', click on *Register now*. This is a free service. Fill in the details requested and you will be given a user name and password for future searches.

Now click on '*Continue on to Activity'*.

Glossary

Browser:
See Web Browser.

Database:
A database is a collection of information stored on a computer. The database is made up of records – each product record might include a name, a price, a description and a picture. Databases are structured – they contain the same sorts of information for a collection of similar items. Databases are an essential element of most computer systems, including large websites, e-shops, etc.

Griffith's Valuation:
Between the years 1848 and 1864 a valuation of property was undertaken in Ireland. A tax levy for the support of the poor would be based on this valuation. The results of the survey lists, among other things, every householder and landholder in Ireland at this time. The Commissioner of Valuation was Richard Griffith (http://scripts.ireland.com/ancestor/browse/records/land/grva.htm 20 July 2004).

Link:
A link, or hyperlink, is a part of a web page that, if clicked with a mouse, opens a different web page. Links are usually shown in blue and underlined on a webpage.

Register:
To register means to create an identity online. For many services, it is important that the website knows your name, address, phone number, etc. For example, if buying a book in an online bookshop, you need to provide this information. The online bookshop then records your details in a database of customers, which it later uses to post out the book to you. Registration is usually completed by filling in an online form, with fields for name, address and other information.

Secure site:
When you enter information into a form on a web-site and submit it to the web server, the information may be sent as plain text. If this data is intercepted it can be easily read. In the case of confidential information, such as a credit card, this is not sufficient. In the case of a secure site, the information entered into the form is encrypted before being sent to the web server. Secure websites begin with 'https' rather than 'http'. They also have a padlock on the right of the status bar.

Tithe
A tax paid to the Church of Ireland. It was fiercely resented by non-members of the Church of Ireland (http://scripts.ireland.com/ancestor/browse/records/land/tiap.htm).

Tithe Applotment Books:
An Act of 1823 decreed that the tithe would no longer be payable in kind but must be paid in money. This required a valuation of land that was done between the years 1823 and 1838 when the tithe was abolished. It was done on a civil parish by civil parish basis. The result is the Tithe Applotment Books. It lists landholders living in Ireland between these years (http://scripts.ireland.com/ancestor/browse/records/land/tiap.htm).

URL:
The Uniform Resource Locator, or address of a web page. Like the phone number of a particular person, this is unique and goes direct to the web page with which it is associated.

Web browser:
A computer program, running on the human user's PC, which gets information from web servers and displays it on the screen. These instructions are usually in the computer language HTML.

Website:
A website is a collection of web pages which displays information on a particular topic. Common types of websites include company websites (information about the company), online shops (where you buy goods and services and pay by credit card) and personal websites (where individuals share their interests). A website may consist of just one page of information, but will usually contain several pages, all linked together. All the pages in a website usually share the same 'domain' name. For example, all the pages in the large online shop Amazon have an address (URL) that starts with 'www.amazon.com'.

Links

The following are the resources considered in this guide:

- A general guide to researching your family tree is available from the National Library of Ireland.
http://www.nli.ie/pdfs/famil1.pdf

- The Irish Times' Ancestors page. This is a subscription site. http://www.ireland.com/ancestor
- Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild lists half a million passengers who arrived in the United States since the 1600s to 1929. http:// immigrantships.net/index2.html
- Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages: there are three websites to consider. The list of parish registers held by the National Library of Ireland details what Roman Catholic church records are available at the National Library of Ireland http://www.nli.ie/family_hr.htm#pr. These records pre-date 1880.
- The General Register Office, http://www.groireland.ie/research.htm, holds civil or State registers covering the period 1864 to the present.

- Church of Ireland church registers are described at http://www.ireland.anglican.org/library/libroots.html These sites cover the period 1750 to present.
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http://www.ireland.anglican.org/library/libroots.html

- The National Archives of Ireland Transportation Records Database holds records relating to convicts transported to Australia between 1788 and 1868 inclusive.
http://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/transportation/search01.html
- Famine Irish Passenger Record Data File. This is a database of 604,596 persons who arrived in the United States between December 1846 and December 1851.
http://aad.archives.gov/aad/series_description.jsp?series_id=639&coll_id=1002
- Griffith's Valuation, compiled between 1848 and 1864, lists all occupiers of property living in Ireland at this time. This is a subscription site. http://www.genealogy.com/188facd.html
- Ellis Island Records. This lists all people who came through Ellis Island between the years 1892 and 1924. http://www.ellisisland.org/search/index.asp
- Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Debt of Honour List. This is a database of all soldiers in Commonwealth countries who died during the two World Wars.
http://www.cwgc.org/cwgcinternet/search.aspx

Other useful addresses

- Garda Museum/Archives, Record Tower, Dublin Castle. http://www.garda.ie/angarda/museum.html
- Genealogical Office, 2 Kildare Street, Dublin. http://www.nli.ie
- Heraldic Office, Kildare Street, Dublin 2. http://www.nli.ie/fr_offi2.htm
- Land Registry, Setanta Centre, Dublin 2. http://www.irlgov.ie/landreg/
- Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. http://www.proni.gov.uk

- Valuation Office, Irish Life Centre, Abbey Street Lower, Dublin 1. http://www.valoff.ie

Final Notes

By now I hope you will realise that researching your family history on the web is not an overly daunting task. There are many very interesting websites out there. Not all resources mentioned in this manual are available on the web yet, but in due course this will probably change.

Further assistance
National Archives of Ireland, Dublin (http://www.nationalarchives.ie) offers a free genealogical advisory service.
National Library of Ireland, Dublin (http://www.nli.ie) offers a free genealogical advisory service.
The Irish Genealogical Project (http://www.irishroots.net) provide, for a fee, an ancestry tracing service for the public.