

Video tutorial 2

Thank you for joining us for this week's tutorial on birth and baptismal records.

Once you are on our homepage at www.ancestryireland.com, click on 'Search for Irish Ancestors' box which will take you to our databases containing over 2 million birth, marriage & death records.

Next click on Irish birth/baptismal records. The Ulster Historical Foundation holds almost 900,000 birth & baptismal records for Counties Antrim and Down. Our earliest baptismal records are from Blaris Church of Ireland in Lisburn from 1661, our most recent are Roman Catholic baptismal records up to 1930 for the city of Belfast. We are always adding new records to our database. As well as baptismal records, we have a large collection of birth records for Belfast from the start of civil registration in 1864.

One important note regarding baptisms is that the mother's name is often not recorded in the baptismal register. For example, if we were looking for the baptism of a William Gordon, son of William and Catherine Gordon in the 1730s, we would find no results. However if we were to remove the mother's name, we then find a result: William baptised on the 13th August 1739 in Blaris Church of Ireland.

Returning to other baptismal records of a William Gordon, we find that the 1765 entry from Down Church of Ireland records the parents as William Gordon and Elizabeth, whereas the 1812 entry from St Anne's Church of Ireland in Belfast records the parents as William and Mary Gordon.

It was quite common, particularly in the earlier baptismal records to record either the mother's first name or no name at all, which makes the searching more difficult. We sometimes find that some children's baptismal records will contain the mother's name, whereas others won't so it is worth examining the database for all records relating to the family, rather than just that of your direct ancestor as this may provide additional details.

As a final example relating to a William Gordon, we find this baptismal record from 1874 from St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church in Belfast. This contains the full names of both the father and mother as well as a note stating that the father belonged to the Church of Ireland.

One useful tip regarding Roman Catholic baptismal records, often you receive two records for the price of one! If someone was to marry outside their parish, they needed to show evidence that they had been baptised and so their Church was contacted which led to the details of their marriage being entered beside their baptismal record. For example, if we search for the baptism of Bryan Rogan when we view the full record, we find the details of his baptism in St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Belfast in 1897 and also a note that he married Lily Cowan on the 25th March 1930 in St Constantine's in Govan, Glasgow, Scotland.

We would always recommend that you examine both the baptismal and the birth records, if you are searching for ancestors after civil registration began in 1864. This

is because slightly different information can be recorded on each record, which may assist your research. For example the birth record contains the full address and the father's occupation, the baptismal record may not record these details. The baptismal record name the sponsors at Roman Catholic baptisms and these are often siblings of the mother or father.

Finally sometimes we find a child who was baptised before they were born! If we look for the birth and baptismal records of Catherine McCafferty, daughter of James McCafferty and Mary Tracey, we find both her baptismal record and her birth record on our database. Her birth record states that she was born on the 27th January 1895 and her birth was registered by her mother Mary McCafferty on the 7th February 1895. However when we look at her baptismal record, we find that this states she was born on the 27th December 1894 and baptised on the 30th December 1894.

Roman Catholic children were usually baptised on the day of birth or within a few days of birth, due to the Church's belief in unbaptised children. It should also be noted that births were to be registered within 4 weeks or the family would be fined. It would seem that perhaps the family did not get round to registering their baby until the 7th February 1895 when the child was 6 weeks old so to avoid the fine, they simply changed the date of birth! We find this happened more often than people think and would therefore suggest that the date of birth listed on the baptismal record is the more accurate. This shows us why even official records may not tell the whole story, there are always reasons why people may not have stated the true facts.

Check our website for more video tutorials on using the online databases!