



Your Family Tree: 31

Registers of the Chief Electoral Office (CEO)



What is the Chief Electoral Office archive?

The CEO archive comprises the electoral registers that were created by the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI) from 1972 to 2001. The EONI supports the Chief Electoral Officer in the maintenance of electoral registers for Northern Ireland. Electoral registers were published annually, and can be used to identify individuals living at a specific address at a specific time.

Whilst a number of sources can help identify the head of household in a domestic property (e.g. Valuation records and Street Directories), electoral registers are unique in that they may identify more than one occupant of a property (i.e. anyone of 18 years or older and registered to vote). The CEO archive is the only resource available at PRONI that can be used to identify occupants of domestic properties from 1994 onwards.

What kind of information might I find in CEO electoral records?

A CEO electoral register will record an address, and the full name of individuals registered to vote who are residing there at a certain date of that year (termed the qualifying date).

How do I search for a named individual in CEO registers at PRONI?

First you need to identify the appropriate register for your search. Districts in Northern Ireland are divided into electoral areas, which are further sub-divided into wards. You need to know within which ward a property is situated in order to identify the correct register.

If you are not sure of the appropriate ward, the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service website can be used. To search for information on this website, a full postcode or street name is required.

www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk/mapxtreme/default.asp

Please note that ward boundaries may have changed over time.

To identify a catalogue reference for the electoral register you want to search, go to the eCatalogue. You can use the ward name as a keyword search using CEO as a prefix in the PRONI Ref field, and then identify the appropriate reference by date from the search results.

Alternatively, you can use the browse function of the eCatalogue to identify a register. Within the CEO archive, select:

- CEO/2 which is divided into Local Government Election Registers (CEO/2/1) for 1972 and 1973, and Parliamentary and Local Election Registers (CEO/2/2) for 1972 to 1983; or
- CEO/3 which includes Parliamentary and Local Election Registers for 1984 to 2001.

Under one of the above, select a year, then you can browse through the electoral areas, and the wards beneath.

For example, the PRONI reference for the 1979 register for Newhill ward, Ballymoney (**CEO/2/2/H/4/12**) would be identified by navigating through the eCatalogue as follows:

CEO - Records of the Chief Electoral Office

CEO/2 - Election Registers, 1972-1983

CEO/2/2 - Parliamentary and Local Election Registers for 1972 to 1983

CEO/2/2/H - 1979 (year)

CEO/2/2/H/4 - Ballymoney (electoral area)

CEO/2/2/H/4/12 - Newhill (ward)

Once you have identified the correct register, search for the relevant address (townland or street) within the ward to find the list of occupants registered to vote at that property.

A number of finding aids which pre-date the eCatalogue and the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service website are also available at the helpdesk in the Search Room:

- A Guide to Electoral Registers, organised by date and then by electoral area (listed as constituency or district)
- A guide providing an alphabetical list of street names with corresponding PRONI references.

Some Street Directories may also give information on the ward in which a street is placed.

Can I have a copy of a CEO register?

You can transcribe details from a CEO register.

Making a copy of a CEO register or register entry is not permitted. This means you must not use a digital camera or the self-service copying machine, or submit a copy request form to PRONI.

If you require certification, staff will transcribe the details on a designated form. This form will be certified, sealed and signed by PRONI staff, and will incur a certification charge.

Where else might I find electoral information pre-dating 1972?

Pre-1972 electoral and voters records can be found in a number of archives. These are not comprehensive, and appear under a range of terms, including Freeholder registers and Poll Books, Election Check Books, Lists of Voters, Registers of Voters, Lists of Electors, and Registers of Persons Entitled to Vote.

Electoral records from the mid-19th century until the formation of the Chief Electoral Office are mainly found in Court records. Court records are catalogued using a prefix identifying the six counties of Northern Ireland and Belfast City. For example, ANT for Antrim, BELF for Belfast, DOW for Down, etc. These cover the years 1852 to 1970. For example:

DOW - Down Crown and Peace

DOW/5 - Franchise and Jury

DOW/5/1 - Electoral Registers

DOW/5/1/1 - Parliamentary Register of Electors for the West Down Division of Co. Down, 1908.

A number of 20th century records can also be found in the Local Authority archive (PRONI Reference prefix LA).

Earlier records dating back to the 17th century can be found in a range of privately deposited collections. These include a significant selection of pre-1840 Freeholders' records dating back to 1727. Freeholders were men entitled to vote based on a land qualification. Freeholders' records have been digitised and indexed, and can be searched on the PRONI website.

Opening Hours

Mon-Wed and Fri 9:00am-4:45pm
Thurs 10:00am-8:45pm

(Please check in advance for late evening opening)

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