PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE of NORTHERN IRELAND

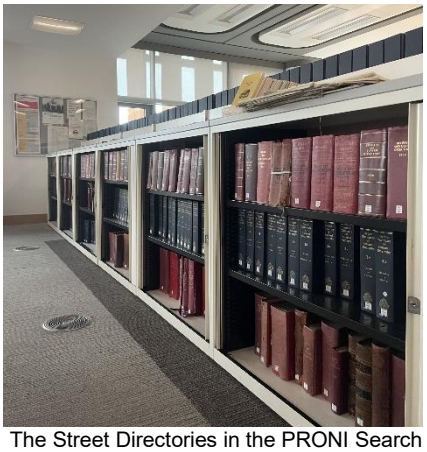
Your Family Tree: 25

TRACING YOUR FAMILY TREE AT PRONI - USEFUL SOURCES

PRONI holds so much material that it can be very confusing for the first-time user. This handout is designed to give a general overview of the most useful sources available. Individual information leaflets on a vast array of sources are available on-line on our website www.proni.gov.uk and in the Search Room, free of charge, including all of the following:

Street Directories

These are printed books containing the name, address and occupation, of every householder in Belfast. They also give the names of the principal citizens in some of the larger towns in Northern Ireland. The earliest book is 1819, continuing, with gaps, up to the 1990s. The directories are not one hundred percent accurate because not everyone was included and, by the time they were printed, the information was already out of date. Directories from 1901 are available in the Search Room, while those pre-dating 1900 are available on the PRONI website.



The Street Directories in the PRONI Search Room.

Census

The 1901 census gives the name, age, religion, occupation, and various other details on every individual in Northern Ireland. The 1911 census also gives the number of children born to a woman and the number of children surviving. The information is usually very reliable. Both censuses are now available free on-line: https://nationalarchives.ie/collections/search-the-census/

Griffith's Valuation

This was compiled between 1856-1865 for taxation purposes. It gives the name of the householder, the name of the landlord, the size of the holding and the rateable value. It also gives the relevant Ordnance Survey map reference number. Listed by county and then within Poor Law Union by barony, parish and townland. Available on the Search Room shelves and

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for free on www.askaboutireland.ie.

Landed Estate Records

Landowners were the major employers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The *Guide to Landed Estates,* available on the Search Room shelves, gives an alphabetical list of major landowners by county. Typical contents of estate archives include leases, rent rolls, rentals, wage books, maps and correspondence.

Church Records

Organised alphabetically by name of church, with a code for the various denominations (e.g. P = Presbyterian, CI = Church of Ireland, RC = Roman Catholic). Usually gives baptisms, marriages and burials and, occasionally, vestry minutes or similar material. PRONI does not hold records for every church – some are in local custody – nor are the dates consistent either over time or between churches. Consult the *Guide to Church Records*, available on-line and in the Search Room, for the relevant reference number. Most of the church records held by PRONI are available on microfilm in the Self-Service Microfilm area.

School Records

School registers usually provide the following information: name, address and age of child, name and occupation of father, religion and, sometimes, previous address. Some also give additional comments, eg, died, emigrated, now working for Harland & Wolff. All schools are listed under the SCH reference and can be found by entering the name of the school into our eCatalogue, also available on our website.

St Columb's College, Londonderry, 1885 (copy). PRONI Reference: SCH/646/14/1.

Wills

From 1858 probated wills became a matter of public record. A list of all wills probated is arranged firstly, by the year of probate (NOT the year of death) and then alphabetically by name of the deceased. As probate can take anything from six months to twenty-five years or more, it is best to start with the year of death and work forward. The will calendars and copy wills from 1858-1919 for the three District Probate Registries of Armagh, Belfast and Derry/Londonderry have been indexed and digitised. The index is now available on the PRONI website; with some wills being linked to images of the actual wills. Some earlier wills, which are classified as private records, are also available (see the Names Index on the website). Wills are extremely useful in tracing collateral branches of the family tree as bequests are often made to married daughters, grandchildren, cousins, nephews, etc., and give the names of the beneficiaries in full.

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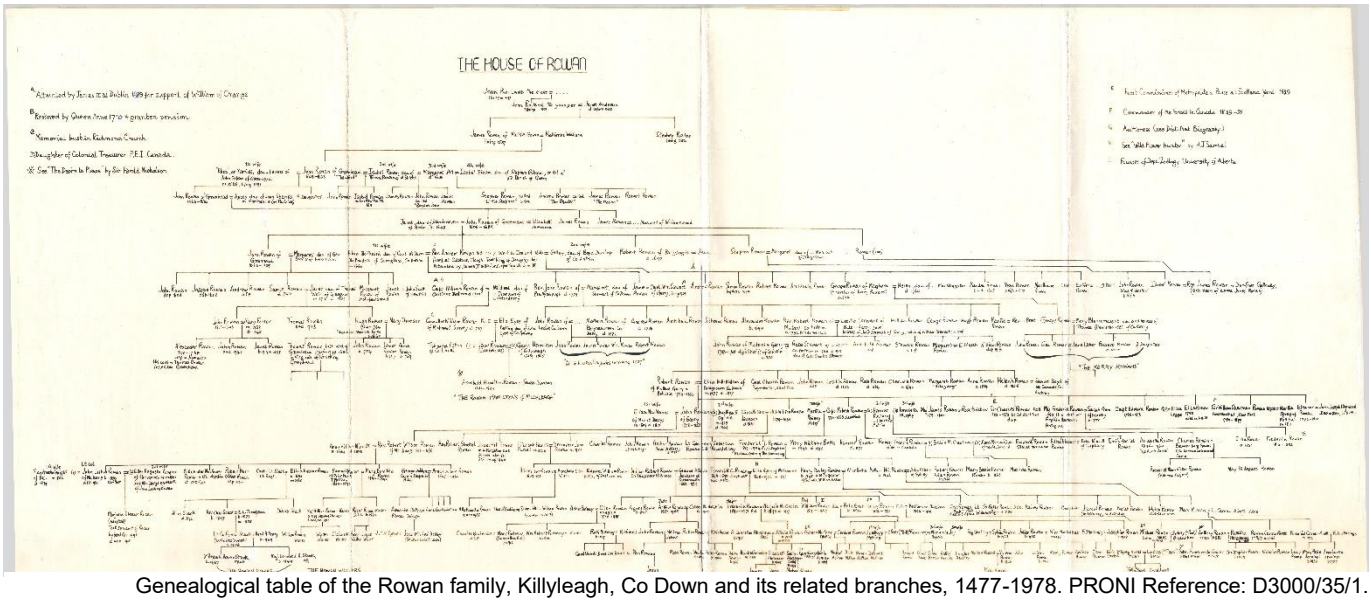
Boards Of Guardians

The Boards of Guardians looked after the 28 workhouses in Northern Ireland. The admission books give the name, former address, occupation, marital status and religion of the inmates. Most of the records are closed for 100 years. However, conditional access may be possible (write to our Access Team at access@communities-ni.gov.uk in the first instance). The records begin around 1838 and continue until the introduction of the Welfare State in 1948.

Pedigrees/ Genealogies

Genealogy is a very popular hobby and many people have carried out research into their family tree that may interlink with your own tree. As these records are the result of private research and were donated by private individuals, PRONI has no control over their accuracy and cannot be held responsible for any inconsistencies. They are worth a look but there is no substitute for carrying out your own research. Of particular interest are **D3000**, **T1075** and **T808**.



Genealogical table of the Rowan family, Killyleagh, Co Down and its related branches, 1477-1978. PRONI Reference: D3000/35/1.

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