

Your Family Tree: 3

CHURCH RECORDS

PRONI holds copies and some originals of Church records for the main historical denominations in Ireland. The majority date from the early-mid 1800s, with some covering the 1700s and a small number dating to the 1600s.

The Church records at PRONI predominantly relate to the counties of present-day Northern Ireland, as well as the three counties of Ulster now situated in the Republic of Ireland (Cavan, Donegal, Monaghan), while a smaller number cover some denominations across the island (see Appendix for further information by denomination).

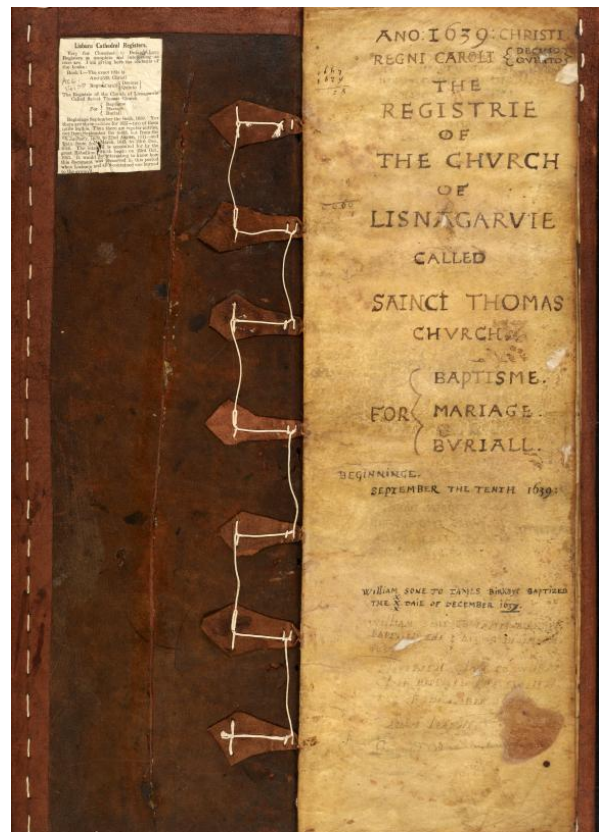
The types of Church records largely include registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials. Other records include communion rolls, vestry minutes, and account books.

Why should I use Church records?

Church records are one of the most useful resources available at PRONI, especially prior to civil registration (civil registers of births, deaths, and Roman Catholic marriages begin from 1864, and Protestant marriages begin from 1845).

Church records are very valuable in showing key life events and dates within families, and in establishing and/or confirming links between different generations of families and between one family and another. Many also include details on residence.

Local historians will also find Church records useful as churches played a central part in the community, including in the areas of education and welfare, which is often documented within some of the minute books, account books, etc.



Christ Church Cathedral, Lisburn (1637-1646). PRONI Reference: CR1/35/A/1

How do I find out what Church records exist?

[PRONI's Guide to Church Records](#) (available in the Search Room and on PRONI's website) shows what records exist for each church, the covering dates for each series of records and the relevant PRONI reference number. Church records are listed by civil parish and by denomination within each parish.

How can I access Church records at PRONI?

Most Church records at PRONI are copies of the original records, available to consult in digital form or on microfilm, with a smaller amount available only as manuscript.

Church records at PRONI in either digital form or on microfilm (PRONI reference **MIC**) can be consulted in the Search Room (a list of Church records which have been digitised is available to access both online and in the Search Room). Original records (usually those with the **CR**



PRONI microfilm machines in the Search Room.

reference) can be consulted in the Reading Room and must be ordered via the computer terminals in the Search Room. You will need to obtain the PRONI reference number which you can find in the **Guide to Church Records or on the eCatalogue**.

Roman Catholic registers up to 1915 for all the counties of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are available online via on the National Library of Ireland's website (registers.nli.ie/), which can be accessed online at PRONI.

If I cannot find Church records at PRONI, does this mean that they do not exist? Where else might I find them?

While PRONI holds a large collection of Church records, it is not comprehensive. Some records are held elsewhere (e.g. individual churches and overarching denominational bodies such as the Representative Body of the Church of Ireland, your local Roman Catholic diocese, and the Presbyterian Historical Society). These have been indicated in the **Guide to Church Records**. Additionally, it is important to note that not all records created have survived to this point, particularly in the case of earlier records.

Can I make copies of Church records at PRONI?

Many Church records are freely available to copy while others require permission, which varies on a denominational basis. For further details, please consult the **Guidance on Copying Church Records information leaflet** in the Search Room.

Where else might I find information on births, marriages, and deaths?

Civil registers provide set information on births, deaths, and marriages. For more information, please see [Your Family History leaflet no. 24](#) on civil registration.

Appendix: Additional Information by Denomination

More detailed and specific information regarding what records exist for each individual church is available within the PRONI **Guide to Church Records**.

Church of Ireland (PRONI ref MIC/1 and CR/1): The Church of Ireland was the official state church of Ireland until 1871, and clergymen recorded baptisms, marriages and burials.

It is important to note that Church of Ireland registers often include local families of different denominations prior to 1870, because of its official status as the established church.

Roman Catholic Church (PRONI ref MIC/1D and CR/2): Roman Catholic registers start in the 1820s with many starting much later than this. The registers are almost entirely of baptisms and marriages and those on microfilm relate to churches up to 1880. It is important to note that some of the entries in these registers are written in Latin (an advice sheet is available upon request for assistance in reading Latin).

Digital records of most Roman Catholic parishes in Ireland up to 1915 are freely available via the National Library of Ireland's Catholic Parish Registers website.

Presbyterian Church (PRONI ref MIC/1P and CR/3): Most records date from the early 19th century and those copied by PRONI cover most of the churches in Northern Ireland and in the border counties of Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan.

Some early baptisms, marriages and burials of Presbyterians (often listed as 'Dissenters') will be found in the registers of the Church of Ireland, a practice that continued well into the 18th century. Burial registers are uncommon as there were few Presbyterian burial grounds before 1871.

Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church (PRONI ref MIC/1B and CR/4): The records include one of the earliest Presbyterian session minute books, that of Templepatrick, dating from 1646, and PRONI has copied other records such as baptism, marriage, and burial registers and accounts books.

Reformed Presbyterian Church (or Covenanters) (PRONI ref MIC/1C and CR/5): The earliest records begin mainly in the mid-19th century, apart from some early 19th century session minutes.

Methodist Church (PRONI ref MIC/1E and CR/6): The earliest Methodist baptismal registers, date from 1816 when Methodism emerged as its own denomination, although the majority do not begin until the 1830s. Marriage registers generally only start in 1845. There are few Methodist burial registers because most Methodist churches did not have their own burial grounds. A comprehensive record is held under **MIC429/1**, which is a microfilm copy of a large volume of baptism entries dating from 1815 to 1840 for Methodist churches throughout Ireland. Although incomplete, the baptisms recorded often pre-date existing individual church baptism registers.

Congregational Church (PRONI ref MIC/1G and CR/7): The records date mainly from the 1880s, though there are a few earlier records, and consist of baptism and marriage registers and minute books for churches in Northern Ireland and in Dublin.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) (PRONI ref MIC/16 and CR/8): The records are comprehensive and in most instances are continuous from the late 17th century. PRONI has copied those of the Meeting Houses at Lisburn, Lurgan, Ballyhagen, Richhill, Grange, Charlemont and Cootehill and include registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials in addition to various administrative records.

Moravian Church (PRONI ref MIC/1F and CR/9): The records copied by PRONI include those of congregations at Gracehill, Kilwarlin, Ballinderry, Belfast, and Dublin, most dating back to the mid-18th century and consist of baptism, marriage and burial registers in addition to accounts and minute books.

Baptist Church (PRONI ref MIC/1H and CR/11): PRONI holds the records of some individual Baptist churches in Ireland. A list of members has been kept by each church. Minute books are useful sources of information and record details of those who have been received into membership and often the date of their deaths. Most Baptist churches do not have their own burial ground and, therefore, do not retain burial registers. PRONI's holdings include five volumes relating to Swift's Alley, Dublin, which, in 1653, was the first building for a Baptist meeting house in Ireland.