Irish Roots

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Local Resources For Family History Research

County Derry

By James G. Ryan

This article deals with researching Derry ancestors, but with an emphasis on the resources specific to the county, or only available within the county. The county was historically called Tirowen and was the territory of the O'Cahans or O'Kanes. The main Gaelic families are O'Donnell, O'Mullan, McCloskey, O'Hegarty, O'Corr, McGurk, McRory, Diamond, Mc Crilly, McGilligan, O'Deery and McColgan. The county population is 247,000 and major towns are Derry (or Londonderry) city (founded as a monastic site in AD 546), Coleraine, Limavady, Magherafelt and Portstewart.

The Norman invasion of Ireland in the twelfth century had little effect on this part of the country because of the power of the Gaelic families. However, the failed rebellion of the O'Neills and O'Donnells in the early 17th century led to confiscation of their territories. In 1609 the British began a plantation of these confiscated lands with settlers from England and Scotland. Derry City was given to the Guilds of the City of London who undertook to populate the city with tradesmen and others, and was renamed Londonderry. The use of Derry or Londonderry as a name for the city has been contested ever since and researchers should note that both names are used in records, depending on the origin of the information.

The settler families included Elliott, Campbell, Anderson, Baird, Thompson, McClintock, Hamilton, Brown, Barr, Stewart, Smith, Johnson, Irwin, Morrison, Young and White. The plantation, and the later 'Penal Laws' which repressed Catholics and Presbyterians, lead to bitter local divisions which have persisted to recent times. As a result, many Presbyterians left to settle in America. In 1922 the county was one of the six which remained as part of the United Kingdom when the Irish Free State (now the Republic) was formed.

Derry has all of the major national records. Although part of the UK, many of the older records are more easily available on-line from archives in the Republic of Ireland. Civil records of birth, death and marriage (from 1864) are available free at www. Irishgenealogy.ie. The General Register Office of Northern Ireland (GRONI) offers access online for a cost of £2.50 / $3.25 per record. Griffith's Valuation (land occupiers in 1850s) is available free on www.askaboutireland.ie; and 1901 and 1911 census returns are free at www. nationalarchives.ie. A major publication for understanding local history is the book 'Derry/Londonderry History and Society'. www.geographypublications.com/product/derry-londonderry-history-society/.

Archives and Libraries

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) is the major archival resource (www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni) but is based in Belfast. The local resource is Derry City and Strabane Archive and Genealogy Service, which is run by the local council and is responsible for *preservation, interpretation and access to civic records of the Council and its predecessor, the Londonderry Corporation.* Their records include minute books (1673-1901 – (see www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/londonderry-corporation-minute-books), Registers of Freemen of the City from 1675 (see www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/freemen-records) and legal and civic planning documents.

Private material includes business collections relating to industry, railways, political movements and social history. They also hold a Genealogical database of over 1 million records. If you are unable to visit, this material can be accessed through Derry/Londonderry Genealogy (http://derry.rootsireland.ie/) which conducts research for individuals. Brian

What's New? Review

By Claire Santry

A good early crop of new and updated record collections has been released in recent months, along with announcements of more to come in the near and not so near future.

The start of the year began as it so often does, with a rumour that IrishGenealogy.ie would enjoy a new upload of civil registration records before January was out. This failed to materialise, but official sources have confirmed that a 'rolling years' update of the Republic's civil births, marriages and deaths will be along 'fairly soon'.

Of more interest to most family historians with ancestors from the 26 counties is a date for the site to add death register images from 1864 to 1871; these have been outstanding for some years with no plausible explanation being offered by the GRO.

While GR0 staff are not prepared to go on the record with a likely date, I'm hearing that late May is the deadline they are currently working to for this update. This would – at last – make freely available nearly all historical civil BMD indexes and register images from both the Republic and, pre-1922, what is now Northern Ireland. Subject, of course, to the widely accepted 50-75-100-year rule.

While this particular waiting game continues, other repositories and agencies have kept to their programmes and released more records for researchers to dig into. One such was the 13th instalment from the Military Service (1916-23) Pension Claims collection (tinyurl.com/MSPC1916-23), delivered with, ahem, military precision by the Military Archives team bang on schedule.

This was the largest single pension files release since digitised copies of MSPC material began to make its way online eight years ago, and like all earlier instalments, the material is yielding fresh insights into how our ancestors lived during the period and are a rich source of genealogical information.

More than 5,000 files made up the most recent tranche. They relate to 1,835 new individuals and you can download a list of names at tinyurl.com/MSPC13names. Among them is the final tranche of 1,658 service pensions claims by women. In total, 6,445 women made a claim for a pension – 25% of them were successful – and all are now catalogued and digitised.
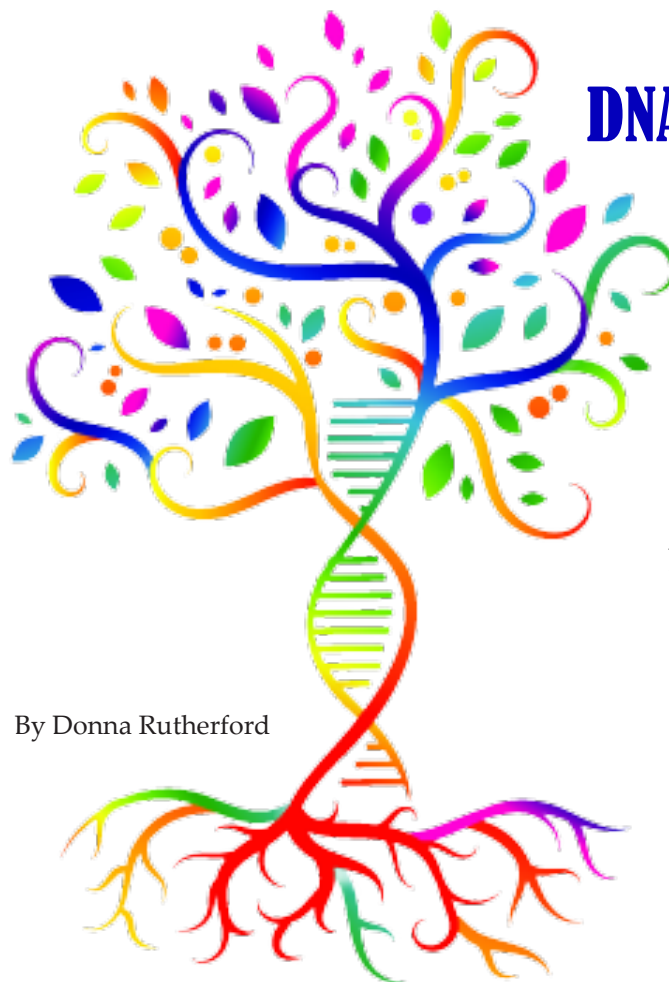
RootsIreland.ie has long kept up a steady flow of records into its bulging database. Most recently, three updates saw 27,000 names to its County Clare, https://rootsireland.ie/clare/online-sources.php, sources (Tithe Applotment Books, 1824—43); some 3,295 Roman Catholic baptism and marriage records, 1850—99 from the coastal parish of Prior in County Kerry, https://rootsireland.ie/kerry/online-sources.php; and some 1,800 RC marriage records from the parish of Dromtariffe. The latter is located entirely in North West County Cork but these records have joined the County Kerry database because it is the Diocese of Kerry.

Genealogists with ancestral links to County Tipperary continue to benefit from the hard working team at Tipperary Studies, the local history and heritage department of the county's library service. The most recent free addition to its Digital Archive (tinyurl.com/NorthTippRevisionBooks) is a delivery of 57 volumes of Valuation Revision/Cancelled Books from 23 District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) in North Tipperary. They date from 1902 to 1917 and can be used to trace the occupiers of a particular property over a period of years.

This a first instalment from a collection made up of Books from 75 DEDs, and a second batch should be ready for release by summer.

Other useful resources recently made available were four historical titles at the BritishNewspaperArchive.co.uk and some FindMyPast subscriptions: *Roscommon Herald*, *Midland Reporter & Westmeath Nationalist*, *Dublin Sporting News* and *Dublin Advertising Gazette*, and

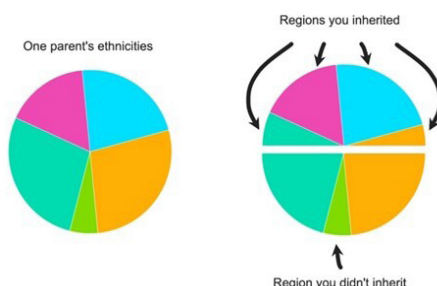# DNA Testing for Genealogy – 2022 in Review

By Donna Rutherford

If you have not looked at your DNA matches for some time you may be surprised at all the new updates and technologies that have rolled out during 2022. Over the past few years DNA testing has become an important tool in genealogical research. We will start by looking at the major updates from "The Big Four" DNA companies; AncestryDNA, 23andMe, My Heritage and FamilyTreeDNA. These four companies have the largest DNA databases for genealogy purposes.

Ancestry

Ancestry is the largest of the DNA databases and considered, in most cases, the best place to test first. In 2022 Ancestry rolled out one of the most exciting genetic genealogy developments for some time, a new technology called Sideview™. SideView can split your DNA by parent without the need for a parent to have tested, this has not been done by any other company. In April 2022 Ancestry rolled out SideView for the Ethnicity Estimate part of their DNA test. The technology created an Ethnicity Inheritance which split regional percentages into Parent 1 and Parent 2. The inheritance split is available in the DNA Story. This was enhanced in July 2022 with a Chromosome Painter. It's important to point out that a Chromosome Painter is fundamentally different than a Chromosome Browser, which other companies do have but Ancestry does not. Although Ancestry can now split your DNA into two sides, they are unable to determine which side is maternal or paternal. When SideView's Ethnicity Inheritance rolled out you were able to label each parent the way you wanted. It's important to note that Parent 1 may be maternal for some users, but paternal for others. Users had to work out their own label by using the Ethnicity Inheritance split

as a guide. Towards the second half of 2022 Ancestry applied SideView to our DNA matches, although not all accounts were given access to this immediately. The tool is still in beta, meaning it could be some time before it is rolled out to all accounts and any glitches ironed out. Generally, the genetic genealogy community are finding this tool to be accurate in the assignments. New accounts with Ancestry will not see this feature until it is updated in 2023. For those with the new tool your matches will show either "Parent 1", "Parent 2" or "Unassigned" ("Maternal" or "Paternal" if you have updated the label yourself). Not all matches can be assigned and some may stay as unassigned indefinitely. Ancestry have stated that they will soon start to apply this technology to their genetic communities. Ancestry have a support document for SideView and it is available at https://support.ancestry.com/s/article/SideView-Technology

One parent's ethnicities

Regions you inherited

Region you didn't inherit

MyHeritage DNA   NEW

Sorting for Shared DNA Matches

myheritage.com/DNA

My Heritage

In October 2022 My Heritage implemented a great new sorting feature for their shared matches, at the same time promising several new improvements to DNA Matching in coming weeks. One of the most useful tools when working with autosomal DNA is being able to see the shared matches of each match. All the companies show shared matches, but My Heritage additionally show how much DNA your match shares with the other shared matches. This is useful information to assist in working out how your matches are linked. Although this has been available at My Heritage for some time, the new update allows sorting by the matches shared amount.

This sorting ability is unique to My Heritage. Shared DNA Matches is a premium feature at My Heritage which requires a subscription. If you uploaded your DNA data you can pay a one-time unlock fee for this and other features. Details of sorting for shared DNA matches is explained by My Heritage in a blog post https://blog.myheritage.com/2022/10/new-sorting-for-shared-dna-matches