You Have Your DNA Results Back - What Now?

By Dr. Maurice Gleeson

So you've finally decided to do a DNA test (or maybe you got one for Christmas) and the results have just come back from the lab – now what do you do?

I'm going to focus on the most popular DNA test, namely the autosomal DNA test, which is offered by Ancestry, MyHeritage, 23andMe, LivingDNA and FamilyTreeDNA (as their separate Family Finder test). By early 2019, over 30 million of these tests had been sold. There are two main outputs from these tests - your "ethnic makeup" (i.e. where your DNA is likely to have come from within the last 500 years or so) and your genetic matches. These matches are genetic cousins with each of whom you share a common ancestor sometime in the last 300 years or thereabouts. The challenge is to find out where the connection is and identify the common ancestor. And to do that you will need to compare your family tree with the family tree of each of your matches in turn. And that can be a daunting task! Here's how to make it easier and optimize your chances of successfully finding the connection.

Build Your Own Family Tree Back As Far As You Can

A lot of Irish records are available for free online and can be used to trace most Irish ancestral lines back to the early 1800s.

The different record sets cover different time periods so it is important to use a strategic approach to researching these records. This topic is covered in one of my videos on the Legacy Webinars website. [1]

At some point you will hit a Brick Wall on each of your ancestral lines and it is important to characterize your MDKA (Most Distant Known Ancestor) on each of these lines. Possible siblings of your MDKA may be found as witnesses at his/her wedding or sponsors at the baptisms of his/her children. Possible parents of your MDKA can be postulated using Irish Naming Convention. This is covered in my YouTube presentation on Marrying DNA & Irish Genealogy. [2]

Put Your Tree Online (Preferably)

There are many websites where you can host your family tree. Some are free (e.g. WikiTree, GENI, FamilySearch) and some require a subscription (e.g. Ancestry, MyHeritage, FindMyPast). I personally use Ancestry as I am familiar with it, they have great record sets, there are lots of user-created family trees that are relevant to my own research, and their hints feature allows me to connect quickly with potentially relevant records and trees. All this allows me to extend each ancestral line as far back as it can go. And to share your tree with a match, all you have to do is give them the link.

But you don't need to have an online tree if you don't want to. All you really need to compare with your match is a pedigree diagram or ancestral chart. A pdf version or even a photo of a paper and pencil version is easy to attach to an email to your match and is a great way of starting a conversation.

A screenshot of a basic pedigree chart. This is all you need to send in an initial message to your match with the question: any common locations, surnames or people?

What's New?

Review

Claire Santry brings us another glittering array of good news, record release updates and the latest developments from the sparkling world of Irish genealogy

The latest releases and developments from Irish database suppliers, local archive teams and volunteer transcriptions projects is, as usual, a mixed bag of local, national and overseas records. While there are a good few packages to which some family historians will want to stick a glossy gold rosette, there is also a small handful of glittering star developments that have potential benefit to most Irish genealogists.

Top of the 'special mention' contestants has to be the National Archives of Ireland's project to correct many tens of thousands of inaccuracies and mis-transcriptions in its online census collection. Professional genealogist John Grenham (whose 5th edition of Tracing Your Irish Ancestors is newly published) has slogged his way through the huge backlog of researcher-suggested corrections over the last two years, checking, verifying, discarding and actioning as appropriate. With the final correction made, it's important to note that the NAI's Genealogy database at http://genealogy.nationalarchives.ie is the exclusive recipient of these updates, making it the first choice destination for any family historian seeking ancestors through the Irish census.

Another NAI collection – the Chief Secretary Office's Registered Papers (CSORP) – has also seen significant progress. Its searchable catalogue, first online in 2012 at the collection's dedicated website at http://www.csorp.nationalarchives.ie, had one big update in 2017 and two uploads this year;

catalogued entries now span the years 1818 to 1833. The work has been funded by the Professor John Crowley bequest.

This important resource is one of Ireland's most valuable 19th-century collections. The Chief Secretary's Office, located in Dublin Castle, was a key political office for the British administration at the time. As well as the official records, the files include unofficial correspondence from private individuals and bodies on a wide variety of topics; some are subjects of national importance but there are also many personal stories and plights concerning employment, health, unfair incarceration/punishment, religious intolerance, neighbour disputes, and so on. Among the material are many petitions accompanied by long lists of signatures – an untapped resource that genealogists will enjoy.

Shifting on a century, the Military Archives released this year's instalment from the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection (MSPC). It homed in on IRA Brigade Activity, along with a complementary bundle of finding aids for researching the War of Independence.

Papers in the Brigade Activity Reports (BAR) were originally created between 1935 and 1941. They were created by the Brigade Activity Committees set up around the island to assist the Referee and Advisory Committee in the verification of subsequent pension claims.

They provide details of IRA operations and activities across more than 8,000 locations, including names of those who took part in them. Most of the activities date from April 1920 to July 1921, when the War of Independence was at its height, but there are also a small number of files holding information about earlier and later activities in which the Irish Volunteers and IRA were involved. Hugely popular with genealogists and historians, this release was celebrated with a dedicated symposium in Dublin. Recordings of the lectures can be heard, free of charge, at bit.ly/2VIWJtJ and bit.ly/2Wp59Uo.

Making its online debut at FindMyPast (bit.ly/2GXBlrn) was a collection of some 54,000 transcripts dating from 1756 to 1850. These transcriptions were the work of highly regarded genealogist

Surviving 19ᵗʰ Century Irish Census Data

by Adam Winstanley

It is well known that the pre-1901 census returns from Ireland were destroyed due to a combination of the mistaken policy of civil servants and civil strife. Full governmental censuses were taken in Ireland every ten years from 1821 until 1911. The household returns and enumerators' summaries for the first four (1821- 1851) were mostly destroyed in the explosion and fire that followed the siege of the Four Courts in Dublin during the Irish Civil War in 1922. Those for the next four decades (1861 – 1891) had been comprehensively destroyed prior to this by the Civil Service in a combination of administrative efficiency and paper recycling. The main surviving material consists of the summary reports published after each census.

However, terrible as this is, it is not often realised that there is a considerable amount of 19ᵗʰ century census material surviving and easily accessible. This includes not only surviving fragments of the official census but also unofficial census surveys of different forms made by landlords, parish priests and others. In addition, a few private transcripts of the official census had been made before 1922.

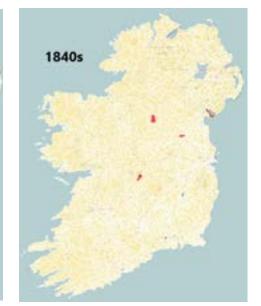## Returns From The Official Censuses, 1821-1851

Following an abortive attempt in 1813, from 1821 to 1911 Ireland's population was measured every ten years in a series of comprehensive censuses. The Irish census was in many ways more extensive than its equivalent in Britain (Table 1). Except in 1831, the census named all household members. Additionally, in 1841 and 1851, persons who had left the household or died in the previous ten years were recorded, as well as the years in which marriages had taken place.

Year	Name	Age	Occupation	Relationship	Acreage	Storeys in house	Religion	Year of marriage	Literacy	Absentees	Deceased
1821	X	X	X	X	X	X					
1831	H						X				
1841	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X
1851	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X

Table 1: Data contained in 19th century Irish censuses with surviving fragments (H means only the head of household is named along with metrics for each household).

No schedules or lists survive from the censuses of 1861-1891. However, some fragments do survive from the earlier counts. Copies of the earlier census returns were kept locally and some of these have survived, notably for parts of Meath, Cavan and King's County in 1821 and Londonderry in 1831. In addition, census returns were used to prove the ages of applicants for the old-age pension, introduced in 1908 for the over-70s. (Civil registration and birth certificates had been introduced only in 1864, too late for this purpose.) Some census returns had been removed for use in searches in the pension office and not returned. In addition, the forms with results from previous searches had been archived. Furthermore, to facilitate searching for pension claims, D.A. Chart of the Public Record Office compiled an index in 1910 of the names of heads of all households in Dublin City in 1851. Table 2 and Table 3 estimate the extent of these survivals both in terms of the individuals represented and the number of households they occupied.

	Surviving Returns	Search Forms	Dublin Heads	Total Survivals	Total Population	% pop
1821	275,792	53		275,845	6,801,827	4.06%
1831	80,472	4		80,476	7,767,401	1.04%
1841	15,893	2,691		18,584	8,175,124	0.23%
1851	58,862	30,704	58,994	148,560	6,552,385	2.27%

Table 2: Number of named individuals in surviving census fragments compared to the total population.