



FAMILY HISTORY Federation

Family History Federation's *Archive Liaison Newsletter*

February 2025 Issue 1

FHF Archive Liaison

Welcome to the first issue of the *Archive Liaison Newsletter*.

I want to introduce myself, my role and the purpose of this newsletter.

I have been fascinated by family history for about twenty-five years now. This fascination led me to joining the Peterborough Family History Society where I am both secretary and journal editor.

I am passionate about family historians having access to the many 'name rich' sources that archives, and other repositories hold.

And this is where my role as the Archives Liaison Officer is important.



Through a network of volunteers I want to let you know about all the records that archives hold, which will be useful in your research.

I also want to reach out to archives. If you work within an archive or repository and have records that you would like to be brought to the public's attention, then please get in touch with me; they can be included in future editions of the newsletter. The Federation can also offer support in assisting you to bring these records to light.

It is my goal for us all to work together for the benefit of family historians everywhere.

Sadie McMullon

In this issue...

Learn more about Family History at the National Library of Wales

What is the Community Archives and Heritage Group?

How can you use PRONI to fill those missing gaps in your Northern Irish Family History?

What's new at the Kent Archives?

www.familyhistoryfederation.com



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Family History at the National Library of Wales

The National Library of Wales, housed in a majestic building overlooking the town of Aberystwyth and Cardigan Bay, probably has one of the best views in the world from a national library. It is considered to be one of the great libraries of the world and also the main centre for family history research in Wales. Family and local historians can access a vast number of records pertaining to research in parish records, nonconformist records, census returns, probate records, maps and newspapers to mention just a few.

As with visiting any archive office, some homework will need to be done before visiting the National Library of Wales. Gather as much information as possible about your family members and working backwards from generation to generation, talk to friends and family, search for evidence to corroborate information – certificates, photographs, letters, newspaper cuttings etc. Once this information has been sorted, you can then consider contacting or visiting us in person. The VISIT page on our website will show <https://www.library.wales/> information on opening times, obtaining a reader's ticket and other facilities that are available.

As with most archive offices, we can offer free access to Findmypast, Ancestry and are an affiliate of FamilySearch within the Library building. Many of you will already be familiar with their digital collections, however, there is so much more to discover within the National Library's vast collections that will never be digitised. These collections

include bishops' transcripts, nonconformist records, estate and manorial records, personal archives, pictures, photographs as well as screen and sound archives. The main Library catalogue can be searched through Discover <https://discover.library.wales> Specialist catalogues with many relative to family history search can be found here <https://www.library.wales/catalogues-searching/catalogues/specialist-catalogues> Some of these Specialist catalogues are searchable and some include digital images of records, but not all, so you may well want to visit or to request a copy.

All those with digital images give free online access including probate records before 1858; Welsh newspapers up to 1919 and Welsh journals up to 2007.

Information leaflets on various family history topics can be found on the website <https://www.library.wales/catalogues-searching/help-to-search/information-leaflets>

Otherwise, contact the Enquiry Service <https://www.library.wales/enquiries> for any information prior to your visit, requests to view items and also requests for copies of any item.

Beryl Evans
Research Services Manager



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PRONI

How can the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland help you?

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) was established by legislation on 22 June 1923 with the passing of the Public Records Act (NI) 1923. Despite Northern Ireland only recently coming into existence, the importance of a record office as part of the new state apparatus was clearly recognised and supported given the speed of PRONI opening to the public nine months later on Monday 3 March 1924.

The creation of PRONI took place in the aftermath of the catastrophic loss of seven centuries of records during the Irish Civil War following the destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland (PROI) in Dublin in June 1922. In less than one day, Ireland went from being one of the best documented administrations in Europe to one of the worst, having lost collections dating from the thirteenth century to the late nineteenth century.

It should be noted that records do not exist in isolation. Many of the records created by the Dublin administration had copies which survived in other institutions, eg The National Archives (UK), local

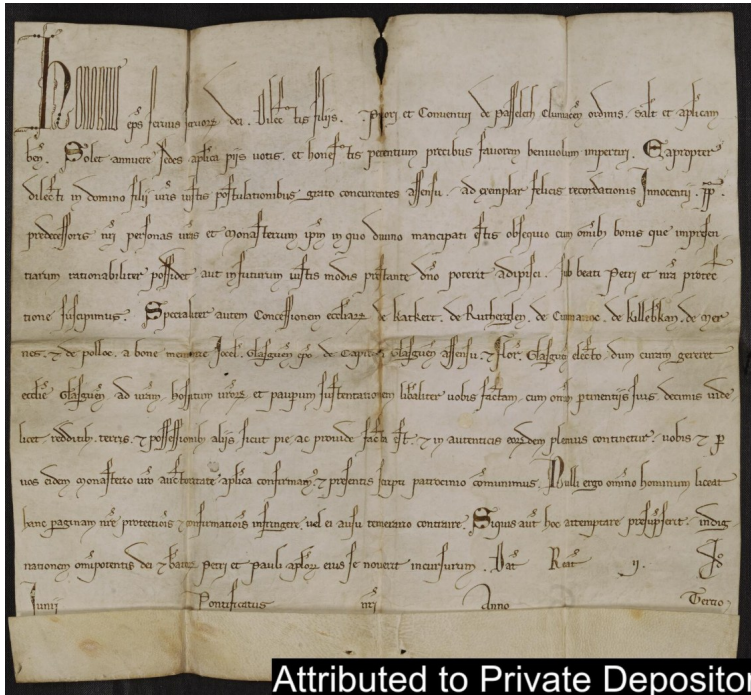
record offices or in the private possession of individuals. There were also notes made by antiquarians and local historians using sources in the PROI. This knowledge of these copies and surrogates informed the framing of PRONI's original legislation, the Public Records Act (NI) 1923, which made statutory provision for the receipt of records from government departments, wider public bodies and, more pertinently, private individuals.

In the following 100 years since the fire, PRONI was proactive to fill the gap in the records by amassing over three million records emanating from both government and privately deposited archives. PRONI's first Deputy Keeper, Dr David A. Chart, and successive Deputy Keepers took full advantage of the opportunity to collect private records and successfully lobbied solicitors, businesses, politicians, churches and the landed aristocracy.

The nineteenth-century census records are by far the most conspicuous absence in the collections of both PRONI and the National Archives of



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Attributed to Private Depositor

Ireland, with only a few fragments having survived. This has resulted in additional obstacles for those who are researching family history using Irish records. However, the gaps have, to an extent, been mitigated by the collecting of name-rich census substitutes.

The most important of these is church records particularly the registers of births, marriages and deaths. If the researcher is fortunate, some of the Church of Ireland records date back to the seventeenth century. However, most other church records date from the early nineteenth century onwards.

School registers are another crucial census substitute, dating from the establishment of national schools in 1831 onwards. Valuation records and their later revisions provide details such as the name of the occupier, the person from whom the property was leased, and a description of the property. Board of Guardians records provide essential information on poorer members of society. Printed street directories list the names of individuals and or businesses. Most directories have details for Belfast and for the principal towns and villages in Ulster. Tithe applotment books list the names of those who

paid tax to the established Church (Church of Ireland) and are a great substitute for early nineteenth-century censuses. Other name-rich resources include PRONI's wills, court records, hospital records and lease-books amongst the private estates. Many of these such as Valuation Revision Books, Ordnance Survey Maps, wills and tithe applotment have been digitised and are available on the PRONI website. Details can be found at [Search the archives online | nidirect](#)

PRONI is a core partner in the consortium project led by Trinity College, Dublin—the *Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland*—along with the National Archives (Ireland), The National Archives (UK) and the Irish Manuscripts Commission. The project re-imagines and reconstructs through digital technologies the Public Record Office of Ireland, destroyed on 30th June 1922 in the opening engagement of the Civil War. From 2017 onwards, PRONI and other archival institutions have been making available digital surrogates of records in the fire of 1922. PRONI collections can be accessed at [Browse - Virtual Treasury](#)

PRONI is based in a purpose-built building at 2 Titanic Boulevard in Belfast's historical Titanic Quarter. It is easy to access by public transport and is free to access, however, proof of ID must be provided, eg passport, driver's licence, electoral ID card etc. Opening hours can be found at [Getting to PRONI and opening hours | nidirect](#)

Stephen Scarth
Head of Public Services





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Community Archives and Heritage Group

The UK and Ireland Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG) is a free membership body established in 2004 to advocate for and provide a peer network for community archives across the UK and Ireland. We work very closely with our colleagues in the Irish Community Archive Network

and Community Archives and Heritage Group (Scotland) and since 2011 we have been a special interest group of the Archives and Records Association.

Community archives are bodies which collect and hold collections about the history of a community, collections that are usually held in the community and managed (often on a voluntary basis) by members of the community. Some community archives work closely with a local museum, library or archive but many operate entirely independently, sustaining themselves on their own resources and often with project funding from bodies like the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Most community collections relate to place, both urban and rural, but can also focus on the histories of different occupations and workplaces, shared interests and sporting passions, or different ethnicities and faiths. Sometimes the focus of the collections will be a combination of place and another shared interest (sporting club or workplace). Some of the collections are predominantly physical, others only digital, but most community archives have physical collections (often stored in individual houses or centres of community life) as well as web and social media sites on which they share images and details of their collections and engage with their communities around the histories and memories these collections tell.

The types of materials held in community-held collections can vary enormously and often include the kinds of materials more commonly associated with museums and libraries – indeed there is a lot of similarities with small community-run museums.



Community Archives and Heritage Group

Supporting and promoting
community archives in the UK
and Ireland

Alongside more traditional historical documentation and photographs (often digitised) of places and people, community archives will frequently collect and hold oral histories, books, clothing, objects, art works, historical research publications, film and video. At the heart of community archiving is the desire

to share the often unheard histories of their community and the people in those communities and so they often put on exhibitions, publish research on local or community history, work with schools and other local groups, and use their websites and social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram to share and engage other visitors with their memories of people and places.

Community collecting and community heritage projects are not new, and in some cases local groups have been going for fifty years or more, whilst more have only been set up recently. However, in recent years, particularly with developments in digital technologies enabling the easy digitisation and sharing of community content, they have become more recognised and visible. There is no exact number of how many community archives there are at any one moment, but the CAHG website (<https://www.communityarchives.org.uk>) in addition to offering guidance and support on, for instance, how to set up and catalogue your archive, has a searchable map and directory, with details of, at present, 954 community archives across the two countries. While probably only a fraction of all the community archives and heritage groups active at the current time, the website and the directory is an excellent way of first exploring groups and collections that might be of interest to family history researchers.

Andrew Flinn,

Chair, Community Archives and Heritage Group



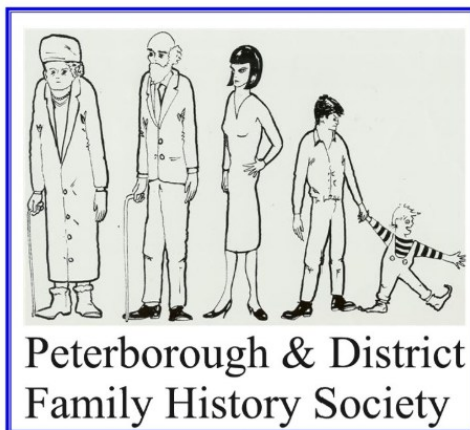
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Kent Archives and Local History

Did your ancestor appear before the West Kent County Quarter Sessions, mainly in Maidstone, in the 1840s and 1850s? If they did, then please head to Kent's Archives. Volunteer Richard Ashton has spent sixty Tuesday afternoons transcribing these records and they can be found on the Kent Archives' Online Catalogue.

Without dedicated volunteers like Richard, 'name rich' sources would be remain hidden from view - there would be no catalogues or indexes.

If you would like to help in this vital work, please speak to your local archives or family history society.



Registered Charity No: 298897

Volunteers at the Peterborough and District Family History Society have also been hard at work transcribing nonconformist baptism records for the Methodist Chapel in Crowland, Lincolnshire.

Without this team of dedicated volunteers, the records would not have been able to be made available to family historians.

How Can I Help?

Volunteers Needed

To ensure that family historians everywhere are kept up to date with recent record releases, I need a small team of volunteers.

These volunteers will make contact with their local archives and repositories on a monthly basis and gather information about any new record releases.

The volunteers will then feed this information through to be included in the next newsletter.

This vital volunteering role should only take two or three hours a month.

I hope you will consider volunteering, and if you need more information, please get in touch with me.

What can the Federation do for us?

If you are an archive or repository, community or heritage group, then the Family History Federation is here to help and support you to make your records accessible to family historians everywhere.

Please contact me to discuss your needs and to find out more.

Sadie McMullon

Archives Liaison Officer

archives.liaison@familyhistoryfederation.com

Next Newsletter

If you would like information about your archives or record release included in the next newsletter please contact me.

archives.liaison@familyhistoryfederation.com

www.familyhistoryfederation.com