

Although the Church of Ireland (Anglican/Protestant Episcopalian Church) is very much a minority faith in the Republic of Ireland today, accounting for 2.65% of the population on the 2016 census, numbers were higher in the past. Almost 12.5% of Leinster described themselves as Church of Ireland on the 1861 census and in fact 21% of Dublin was Church of Ireland at that time.

This means that many of us now, regardless of our modern day religion, may find that we have Church of Ireland ancestors.

Researching these Church of Ireland ancestors can be something of a roller coaster experience.

On the one hand, the records lost in the 1922 fire in the Public Records Office can have a devastating impact on your research. In particular, the loss of over half of pre-1870 parish registers will seriously impact most of us. On the other hand, there is a rich diversity of other records that can be of value in creating a picture of your ancestors' lives.

Firstly amongst these, The Representative Church Body (RCB) Library, based in Churchtown in Dublin has amassed a wonderful collection of surviving registers and other records for almost every parish in the 26 counties and have published a [comprehensive guide](#) to the holdings of all parishes, whether with the RCB or not. These records generally include vestry minutes which detail parish life and frequently mention parishioners. They often include records of parish societies and organisations which can add colour to your understanding of your ancestors' lives.

Land, estate, testamentary and legal deed records can also be of immense value to your research as so many Church of Ireland families were farmers and thus had a valuable asset - be it a freehold or leasehold land.

Members of the Church of Ireland would have accounted for a significant proportion of professional, business and upper classes and therefore much information can be found about their lives in occupation records, newspapers, trade directories and legal records, amongst many other.

Researching Church of Ireland families is my own particular genealogical interest and expertise and so I am ideally placed to help you with your research {Link: How to commission research} in this area. I can help you build a family tree; prepare a family report; break down a brick wall or simply access records for you in the RCB library if you cannot travel there.

Having given lectures in both the National Archives and National Library, I can also give a lecture or a work shop around researching Church of Ireland families for your group or organisation.

Sandra