

# The Use of Indexes in Irish Research

By Dwight A. Radford

This column will outline some of the more common indexes that I use almost daily. I have found that it's not whether or not you find your ancestor that's important; it's whether you have used the particular index to the fullest potential. I will go into some detail with what I consider three major indexes that we are all familiar with. Maybe my suggestions will open up a new avenue of logic or strategy that you have not previously thought of before.

## International Genealogical Index (IGI)

The IGI is so well known that you might wonder why I am even discussing it. This is because the Irish portion of the IGI is so misunderstood as to lead you into the wrong lineage if you're not careful. In review, the IGI is a computer database produced by the LDS Church. It is widely available and [online](#). It contains the following:

1. Extractions of original church baptismal/birth and marriage records (of all denominations) and extractions of government birth and marriage records. These extractions from original records have a cited source from which to go and check for accuracy. However, do not always assume that the entry is for your ancestor. The reason I stress this is because the Family History Library does not have a complete collection of Irish church records let alone extracted ones. This decreases the chances of finding your ancestor because coverages of extracted records are so poor.

I don't want to leave this point sounding negative. I have solved many research problems using the extractions from the IGI, but you can't use it in the same way you would for Scotland or England due to the lack of coverage for Ireland. Extracted entries are most commonly noted by a code "C" for christening/birth or "M" for marriage.

I should also mention that many entries from extracted records which have not yet been released on the IGI are being released to the public on CD by the LDS Church. The major release so far which has some Irish Civil Registration and many Catholic parish registers is the "British Isles Vital Records Index." This disk should always be used with the IGI especially for the first decade of Irish Civil Registration of births.

2. The IGI also contains genealogy submitted by individual LDS members and their sources can contain wills, censuses, published genealogies, family Bibles, hearsay, personal knowledge, guesswork or all the above. It used to be that the original submission form could be examined which would provide the name of the persons who submitted the entry and a source for the submission. Having access to the original submissions was nice because often decent sources would be listed. Presently, the submitter's name is not included nor are the sources.

Although there are problems with submissions not all is lost. I recently found where a client of mine had two different branches of his Irish Catholic immigrant ancestor's family submitted on the IGI by two separate people, one living in Utah and one living in California. One of the source sheets mentioned a family Bible. I was thrilled! So while I had more complete information than those submissions on the IGI, those entries lead me into other areas of research which are proving to be equally as valuable.

## Ancestral File

The Ancestral File is a computer-linked database created by the LDS Church and is open for all people to submit their pedigrees and family group charts on the [Internet](#). Sometimes the information is great and often it needs to be verified. Instead of looking for the easy answers here start looking for further clues.

An example of this hit home with me just this past December. I was consulting with a lady who was visiting the Family History Library and she pulled out a family group sheet which she had printed off the Ancestral File. This sheet had the lineage back into the 1700s with exact townlands. I, of course, was prepared to tell her to take it with a grain of salt

until I started looking at it more closely. The Ancestral File showed that someone had joined the LDS Church in the 1860s. This caught my eye because all of a sudden it dawned on me that this was the person giving the information which was preserved in LDS Church registers and then someone subsequently submitted onto the Ancestral File database. This early Mormon convert would have known many of the people mentioned.

In fact the client was doing all the right things. To find out where the ancestors were from in Ireland she was taking all the brothers and sisters of the immigrant and tracing them out. She had traced the branch that went to New York, the branch that went to Wisconsin, and now she found this strange entry on the Ancestral File and did not realize that it meant there was also a Utah branch of the family.

Use the Ancestral File without the attachment that you'll find the magic answers and start using it with the hope of a new clue here or there. Even if it's only the submitter's name that may lead into something new and exciting.

### **Griffith's Primary Valuation Index**

Broderbund has put an index to Griffith's Primary Valuation on CD for sale to the public. Yes, there are problems with the index; entire Poor Law Unions are missing, names are skipped and it can be a pain to use. However, having said this, I can't imagine doing my research without it.

In fact I seldom find the people I'm looking for on the Griffith's Index. What I do find are those valuable clues that lead me to something else which does solve my problem. For this reason alone, the Griffith's CD will always be part of my research at the Family History Library. This is what I've learned from almost daily use of the product:

1. The dates that Griffith's was originally published for a particular civil parish are not listed anywhere on the disk. The only dates given are 1848-1864 which can be a problem if you're looking for 1848 and the entries you need don't date until 1864. By the way Griffith's started in 1847 (in County Dublin) not 1848. So be aware of the date problem.
2. Make sure you are armed with all the information from the immigrant side of the waters. If you don't know where in Ireland or if you know a county, you can use the disk with some degree of success. For example, if your ancestor had children christened in a Catholic parish in Chicago, then take the names of the godparents and assume (it never hurts to assume even if you're wrong) that they all came from the same parish in Ireland. So plug in not only your ancestor's names, but the surnames of the godparents and see if a pattern emerges.
3. Don't be afraid to use the disk if your ancestors emigrated from Ireland before Griffith's began. Make the guess that some of your ancestor's brothers, sisters or a parent were living in the old family home place when Griffith's was taken. To find those who stayed behind would be to indirectly find your ancestor. Even if your ancestors came in the 1700s, you can use the same theory in two different ways. For an uncommon name, take my surname Radford for example, it's not a native Gaelic surname but a transplant from England. If you were to plug Radford into the CD Index, you would overwhelmingly come up with County Wexford as the place of settlement. The second way to use it would be to take the associations of your eighteenth century immigrant ancestor (the neighbors, those they went to church with, etc) and then plug all the names in to see in which county they are all concentrated. This statistical survey often works since some branches of the family never left the home parish.

### **Conclusions**

I hope this has been helpful. It is by no means exhaustive. However, these are three of the indexes that I use the most and can cause the most problems if not approached with care and often a sense of humor.

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