

Celtic Connections Conference 2020

Saturday, August 29th, 2020

Question & Answer Log: Chat with Fiona Fitzsimons: Irish

QUESTION: My step great-grandmother Ellen Hallinan, nee Donovan: Cork civil birth registration for her last child, Annie Hallinan, born 3 Feb 1880, shows mother's name as "Ellen Donovan Halloran." I found civil death records for two women, "Ellen Donovan" and "Ellen Halloran," who both died of tuberculosis in the Cork workhouse later in 1880. Might the death record surname have been erroneously recorded? Was it common in 1880 for TB cases to be sent to the workhouse? I can't find her burial, or her children's baptisms, or great-grandfather's burial in 1895.

ANSWER:

A civil death record would always be registered in a woman's married name – it's an official document operating and the evidence it contains is defined by statute. I often find it useful to look up the original legislation, to better understand what evidence was required to be set down, and why.

We sometimes see married women recorded in Catholic church records, by their maiden names, especially in burial records. Records of the Catholic Church were the records of a private institution. They had the latitude to reflect social practices.

The county infirmary shared the same campus as the workhouse, so yes, common for TB cases to be sent to the workhouse.

Baptisms should be in the parish, in which the workhouse is situated, usually with a marginal note to the effect that the priest visited the workhouse.

If Catholic, did the parish maintain burial registers?

QUESTION: I found a newspaper report of the death of a man in County Galway near Clifden during the Famine with a last name in my family tree. No first name given. An inquest was held. Determination was death by starvation. I want to find the inquest report if one exists. The local coroner's office didn't have old records and couldn't offer any suggestions of where to look. Any ideas?

ANSWER:

Between the 1890s and 1922, records of inquests were gathered into the Public Records Office, as part of the Crown and Peace Collection.

Unfortunately, almost the entire set of inquest records were destroyed in 1922.

Search the NAI catalogue to see if any records survive. There are fragments only.

QUESTION: Is there any prospect of adding death records later than 1870, i.e., is anyone negotiating with the appropriate parties to see if scanning can be resumed in the future?

ANSWER:

Scanning was complete before the lockdown, but the next state of work, verifying the records was delayed.

Work resumed in July. The records should be posted later this year, along with other registers including the Consular register; the Marine Register; etc.

QUESTION: Before and after the Rebellion of 1798 was there a baby boom, which could have been caused by an increased number of births of consensual out of wedlock or non-consensual situations or children born of a different father that was on record? Were Orphans un-officially adopted into survivor families or by non-related Neighbors? Looking for some reason I have DNA 4th cousins which are from an unexpected surname family line.

ANSWER:

There were many consequences to the 1798 Rebellion, but a baby-boom was not one of them.

I would suggest this is an old fashioned paternity incident.

QUESTION: If I have the registration number for a civil record, can I use that number to look up the record?

ANSWER:

At the time the civil records were digitized, indexing was by forename and family-name, registration district, year/ Quarter.

So you can't search for a record by the original registration number, nor should you want to. Irish research is difficult enough, don't make it harder on yourself.

QUESTION: Between 1820 and 1839 in the Carlow Town area of County Carlow:

- Eight specific births - 1 father, a gentleman farmer, and 3 mothers.
- 6 baptisms found - All have notations of being illegitimate births.
- Indirect evidence points to these women being maids in the gentleman's house.