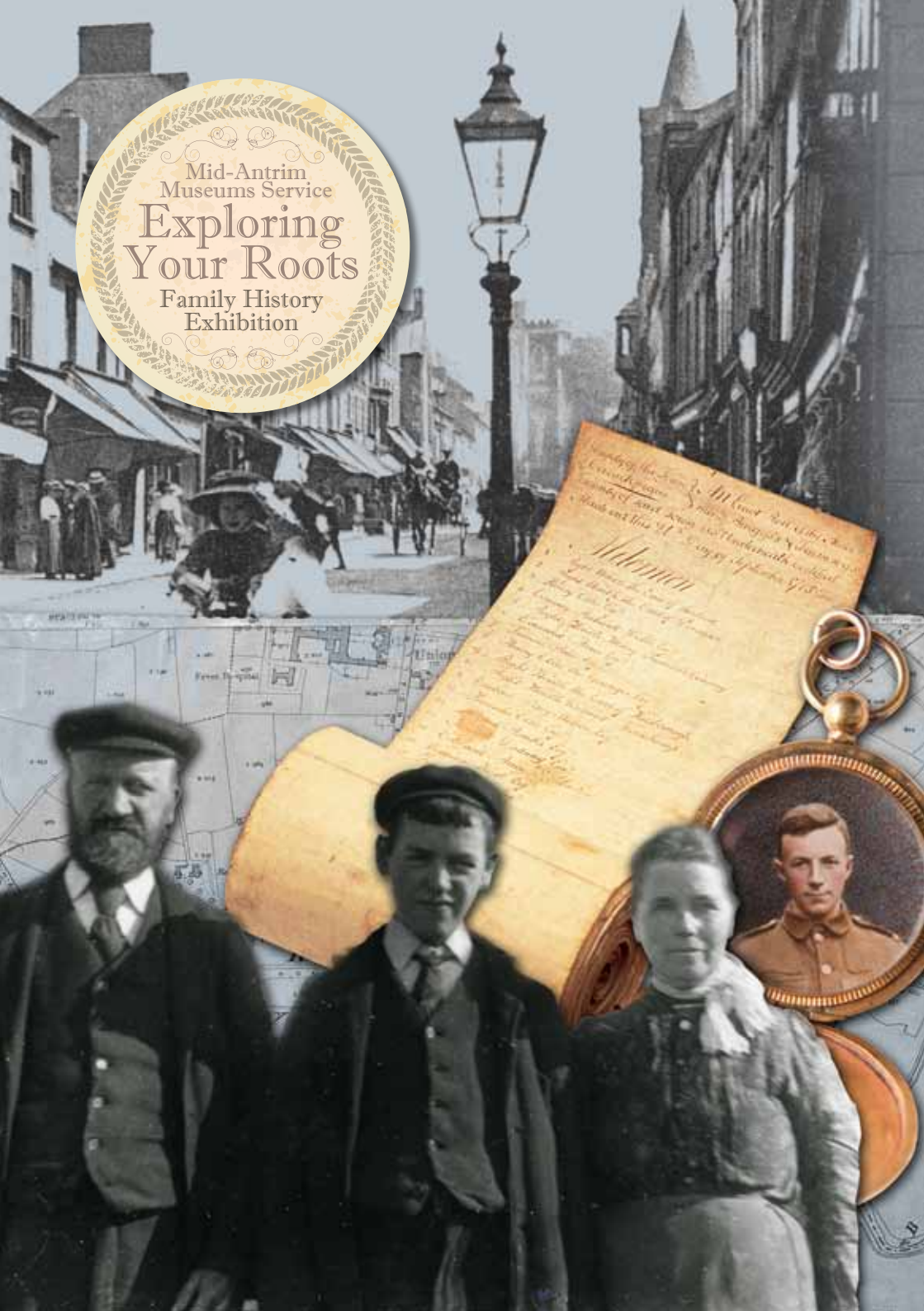


Mid-Antrim
Museums Service

Exploring Your Roots

Family History
Exhibition



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Introduction

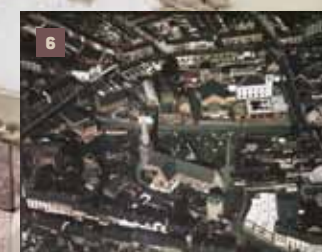
Exploring
Your Roots

Museums can be a treasure trove for people who are exploring their family history. Tracing ancestors is like taking a step back in time. Trying to discover details of lives from the past can often lead people into new and fascinating worlds. Museums are an excellent place to explore these past worlds.

This exploration can take many forms. Many museums hold records that can be of help to the researcher such as rate books, and business ledgers. These records usually relate to the local area and contain useful information such as the names of those who owned land or worked in a particular industry. While it is exciting to discover the name of an ancestor in museum records, it can be equally interesting just to explore the world in which people lived in the past. This can be done through photographs, drawings, maps and documents. Artefacts on display in museums are also invaluable in showing us objects that were familiar to people in earlier times.

This exhibition has been designed to offer a flavour of the diverse collections held within the Mid-Antrim Museums Service. The service contains: Mid-Antrim Museum, Ballymena; Larne Museum and Arts Centre; Carrickfergus Museum; The Museum at The Mill and Sentry Hill House, both in Newtownabbey Borough Council. The material held in these collections can offer a rich resource for researchers and much of the material highlighted here can be consulted by prior appointment.

There are a great many other institutions, groups and organisations that have very useful sources, some of which can be explored online. No matter where the researcher chooses to look, there is always more to discover about our ancestors and the lives that they lived.



1-2. The Dunlop family, Ahoghill.

3. Victorian photo album from Larne Museum collection.

4. Reconstruction of Mossley Mill c. 1840.

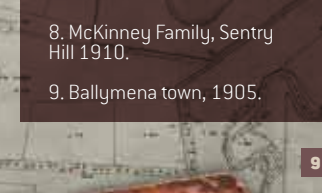
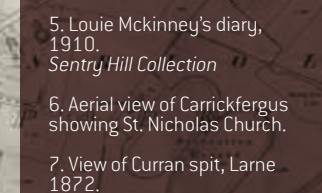
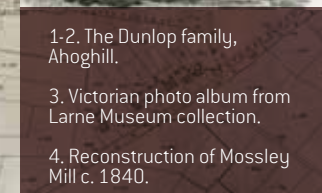
5. Louie McKinney's diary, 1910. Sentry Hill Collection

6. Aerial view of Carrickfergus showing St. Nicholas Church.

7. View of Curran spit, Larne 1872.

8. McKinney Family, Sentry Hill 1910.

9. Ballymena town, 1905.



A Sense of Place

Exploring Your
Roots

1

In exploring family history, sometimes an interesting place to start is by looking at the landscape. While documents can contain important details about our ancestors, much can be learned by examining the surroundings in which they lived. Landscapes are in a constant state

of change: old buildings are replaced by new structures, modern roads snake through the countryside, towns and villages expand into former fields and new industrial zones are constructed.

Despite all these changes, there is much to be seen that reveals fascinating views into the past. These glimpses help us to understand the world in which our ancestors lived. History is all around us. Sometimes it is very obvious, such as Carrickfergus Castle a fortress dating back over 800 years standing on the shores of Belfast Lough, while at other times history is more

subtle, such as in the names of streets or other locations. For example, Fairhill Shopping Centre in Ballymena stands on the site of a once busy fair or market, while Joymount in Carrickfergus recalls the fine mansion built by Arthur Chichester who was Lord Deputy of Ireland from 1605-1615.

Prominent buildings or other structures all have stories to tell. The tall chimney at Mossley Mill forms an important landmark as well as being a reminder of the important flax spinning mill that operated until 1995. In Larne the harbour was vital in the development of the town, something that can be traced through the years using maps and historic photographs.

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1-2 Mill Street, Ballymena. These photographs show a century of change in town.

3. Aerial view of Carrickfergus, before the construction of the Marine Highway began in the 1970s.

4. Aerial photograph of Mossley Mill site, a flax spinning factory in Newtownabbey, 1934.

5. Larne Harbour, 1970s.

Elsewhere in Larne the Museum and Arts Centre is housed in the attractive red brick building that opened in 1906 as the Carnegie Free Library. Its name shows its links to Scottish-born American millionaire and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie who funded over 2,500 libraries all over the world. So as well as being an important resource for the local community for over a century, the centre is part of a world-wide network of Carnegie buildings.

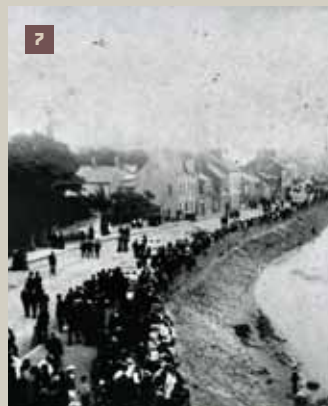
Links between the local and wider worlds can also be explored in historic visitor attractions. The Andrew Jackson Cottage near Carrickfergus shows the kind of household that would have been familiar to U.S. President Andrew Jackson's parents when they emigrated to America in 1765. Arthur Cottage at Dreen, near Cullybackey, commemorates the family of Chester Alan Arthur who was President of the United States from 1881 to 1884. The cottage also allows visitors to experience life in the nineteenth century by learning how day-to-day activities

were undertaken. The role of the hearth, the importance of the wooden dresser, settle bed, milk churn and tilley lamp can all be explored at the cottage. In Newtownabbey, the dwelling house and farm buildings at Sentry Hill, near Carnmoney, recall two centuries of farming life in east Antrim. The property was associated with the McKinney family for generations and their possessions allow visitors to follow their lives, interests, joys and sorrows over the years. These and other historic attractions are an ideal way to experience and explore life, culture and traditions in earlier times.

Maps, drawings, paintings and photographs are of great help when exploring historic landscapes and capture a scene in a moment in time. Examining them closely can show how today's landscape has changed over time and often can explain interesting features or buildings.



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6. Fairhill, Ballymena. Once a busy market, now the site of Fairhill Shopping Centre.

7-8. Scotch Quarter, Carrickfergus, once the site of Arthur Chichester's mansion, Joymount Palace.

9-10. Arthur Cottage at Dreen, near Cullybackey, Ballymena, commemorates the family of Chester Alan Arthur who was President of the United States from 1881 to 1884.

11. Larne Museum and Arts Centre, originally named Carnegie Free Library after Scottish-born American millionaire and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie who funded over 2,500 libraries all over the world.

12. Sentry Hill, Newtownabbey was home to the McKinney family for over two centuries.

13. Larne Main Street c. 1900.



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Emigration

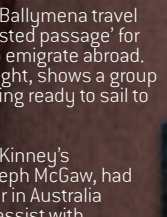
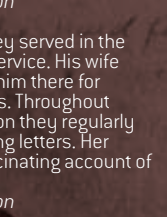
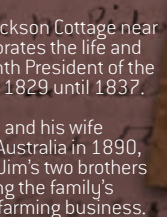
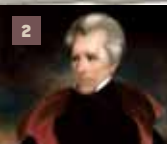
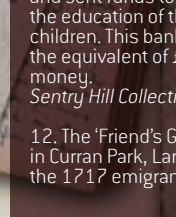
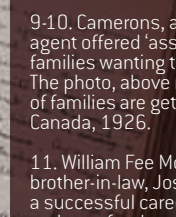
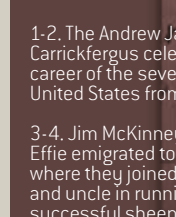
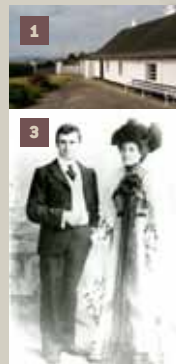
Exploring Your Roots

Travel is an integral part of life today, whether for work, for leisure or perhaps to emigrate to another land. Travel was also important in the past, although only the wealthy could afford to journey long distances for purely pleasure purposes. The long voyages made by many people were intended to be one-way, as they emigrated with the aim of settling down and raising their families in distant countries. The reasons behind emigration were complex and often were a combination of poor prospects at home and encouraging reports from earlier travellers.

Many of those who emigrated settled down well in their new country, forming part of communities whether in towns or rural areas. Some made important contributions to their new land: in 1767, Andrew Jackson was born in South Carolina to Andrew and Elizabeth Jackson who had emigrated from Carrickfergus. Andrew Jackson was the seventh President of the United States from 1829 until 1837 and his life and career is celebrated in the Andrew Jackson Cottage near Carrickfergus.

Emigration had an impact on those who were left behind in Ireland. Many families kept letters and photographs sent by relatives who had moved to distant lands. Sometimes they received money from abroad, not only to help others to emigrate, but also to fund everyday life in Ireland such as rent and education. Such was the impact of emigration in Ireland that there were few families unaffected by it. William McKinney (1832-1917) of Sentry Hill saw four siblings and four of his own children emigrate. His brother-in-law, Joseph McGaw, had a successful sheep farming business in Australia. Three of McKinney's sons went to join him, including Jim who settled with his wife Effie at a family sheep station named Nangus. Much of the family's correspondence is still preserved at Sentry Hill house, thanks to William McKinney. William McKinney's youngest son also spent most of his life out of Ireland: Hugh qualified as a doctor and served in the Nigerian Medical Service for many years. Although he married his English wife Louie in 1907, she did not join him in Nigeria until 1915. Throughout their long separation, they regularly wrote touching letters to each other. When she did finally join him, she kept a journal which gives a fascinating insight into their lives in Africa.

Emigrant correspondence not only provides enormously valuable family information, but it also shows how emigrants viewed new lands and cultures. While some letters have been preserved in museums and other institutions, many remain in private hands. They are a wonderful source for tracing family emigrant stories and are well worth seeking out from other family members, in attics or amongst old correspondence. The world of the emigrant can also be explored in other ways such as in visits to museums and other exhibitions and viewing memorials such as that commemorating the 1717 emigrant ship Friends Goodwill in Curran Park, Larne.



1-2. The Andrew Jackson Cottage near Carrickfergus celebrates the life and career of the seventh President of the United States from 1829 until 1837.

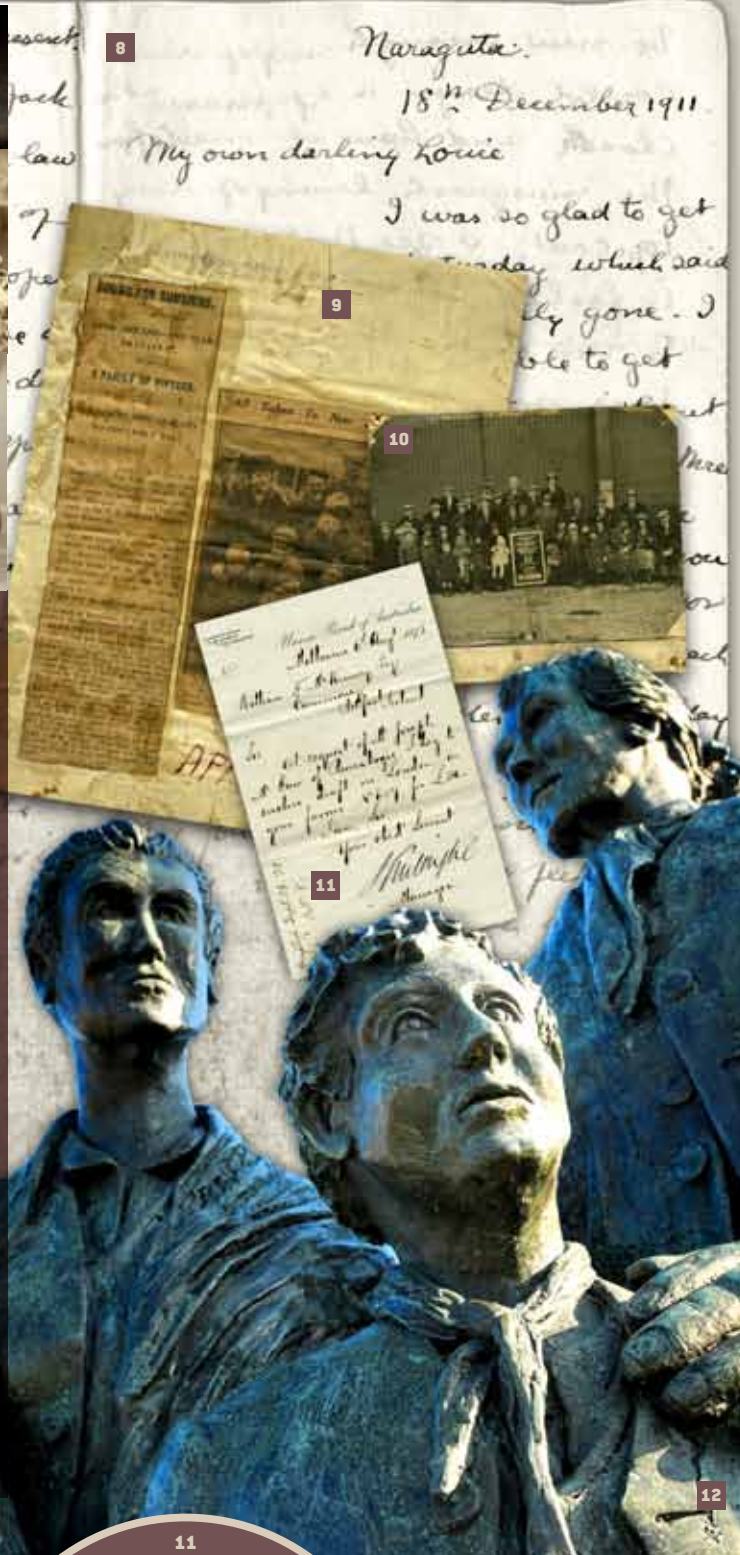
3-4. Jim McKinney and his wife Effie emigrated to Australia in 1890, where they joined Jim's two brothers and uncle in running the family's successful sheep farming business. Sentry Hill Collection

5-8. Hugh McKinney served in the Nigerian Medical Service. His wife Louie, did not join him there for another eight years. Throughout their long separation they regularly exchanged touching letters. Her journal gives a fascinating account of their lives in Africa. Sentry Hill Collection

9-10. Camerons, a Ballymena travel agent offered 'assisted passage' for families wanting to emigrate abroad. The photo, above right, shows a group of families are getting ready to sail to Canada, 1926.

11. William Fee McKinney's brother-in-law, Joseph McGaw, had a successful career in Australia and sent funds to assist with the education of the McKinney children. This bank draft for £50 is the equivalent of £2400 in today's money. Sentry Hill Collection

12. The 'Friend's Goodwill' memorial in Curran Park, Larne commemorates the 1717 emigrant ship.





Finding work was as much a part of the lives of our ancestors as it is of modern society. The need to earn a living could change the course of a family's history by influencing whether a family remained

in a particular locality or moved elsewhere. Farmers and agricultural workers obviously stayed on the land, but others might move to towns and cities where employment was available in factories and shops.

Learning more about these places of work can help piece together details about the life and times of our ancestors.

In museums the display of items and images relating to industry and commerce reveal objects that were a familiar part of everyday life to those who worked in those places. They can also show how workers interacted with each other and how each played a role in producing particular products or services.

In County Antrim the textile industry was very important and as production increasingly moved to large-scale factory settings, so workers moved to be near their employment. In Ballymena, Braid Water Mill was established in 1865 and employed generations of workers in yarn spinning. The mill survived until 1999 and influenced the lives of thousands of workers' families.

As well as textiles, there were many other industries that provided employment for workers. For example, Kane's Foundry in Larne was a prominent factory in the town. It was a branch of a large Ballymena firm originally established by John Kane. His grandson, William Hugh Kane, founded the Larne factory in about 1887. Workers at the Foundry produced textile, farm and quarry machinery. Kane's Foundry was one of the key employers in Larne for nearly a century, before closing in 1986.



The Carrickfergus area also had textile producers. One of these was Barn Spinning Mills, a flax spinning operation established by James Taylor in 1852 in what had previously been a cotton mill. From 1947 it was operated by Jeremiah Ambler and became a wool and worsted yarn mill. The building now houses residential units. It and other former factory buildings stand as reminders of their central importance in the lives of so many families. Another former textile complex that has now found a new role is Mossley Mill in Newtownabbey which houses a Civic Centre and Council Offices. The historical exhibition there uses objects large and small, interviews with former employees and photography to tell the story of the flax spinning mill and its important role in the local community.



1. Kane's Foundry workers, Larne 1920.

2. Staff at Barn Spinning Mills, Carrickfergus. Established in 1852, the mill was later owned by John Weatherup who can be seen in the front row (4th from the left).

3. Employees of Braidwater Spinning Mill, Ballymena, 1939. Mid-Antrim Museum has a rich collection of images and records relating to the mill, available for consultation.

4. Polishing shop at Mossley Mill, 1930s. Waxing and polishing smoothed the thread to make sewing easier.

In Carrickfergus, Rodgers shipyard provided valuable employment for decades. Paul Rodgers took over the shipyard in 1870 and employed up to 150 people constructing and repairing ships. The skilled employees initially made wooden vessels, but later adapted to working with iron.

The industrial world is not the only workplace to be discovered through images and objects. Farm machinery,

agricultural tools and photographs of rural activities all help to show how our ancestors made their living from the land. Whether large threshing machines or simple horse shoes, objects can evoke an era of hard work which provided food and other products necessary for survival. Generations of men and women worked on farms, rearing their children and passing down

knowledge of the land, the seasons and the techniques for ensuring good crops and other agricultural products.

Exploring the world of work in the past is a way to discover our ancestors and their daily lives. Museums, through their displays and programmes, are an excellent way of investigating this aspect of past times.



5. Paul Rodgers' shipyard in Carrickfergus employed about 150 people in its heyday constructing and repairing ships. He is seated 3rd from the right, top row.

6. These children are thought to be employees of Larne Weaving Company, known locally as Brown's Factory. Even by the early 20thC, children as young as 11 were expected to work shifts in factories while still at school.

7-8. Paul and Martha Esler's farm 1960s. The Eslers owned a farm at Moorfields, Ballymena, following in the footsteps of their parents. Their rich photographic collection provides a glimpse into the lives of those who made their living from the land.

Education

Exploring Your Roots



Education plays a central part in the lives of young people today and this has been the situation for most children for nearly two centuries. The establishment of National Schools in 1831 brought primary education to children in Ireland. Schools were built, teachers were trained and an education structure was set in place to ensure that children learned reading, writing, arithmetic as well as other subjects. School then became an everyday part of life for generations of children.

When tracing family history, school records can be an important source of information. In particular, school registers are valuable as not only do they record the names of pupils but usually their dates of birth and sometimes details such as the occupation of the pupil's father, their address and religious denomination. In addition, registers show the years when a child attended a school, confirming their residence in an area at a particular time. Registers can also reveal the

presence of siblings at a school and perhaps other relations as well. As well as giving details of family history, school registers show the size of a school and thus indicate the number of pupils in each class and the strength, or otherwise, of a community.

School photographs provide a fascinating glimpse into the world of education. Some schools had regular group photographs taken and, if the names are known, these can reveal the faces of ancestors. Even if the photographs are not annotated, they show the type of world inhabited by our relations. So much can be learned from looking at photographs, including the type of clothing worn by the children, their shoes (sometimes the pupils were in bare feet), their hairstyles and their often stern-looking teachers. Even in black and white, they capture a moment from the past, including the expressions on the pupils' faces and perhaps a blur where a child moved just as the shutter was pressed.

School photographs, particularly early ones, were often taken out of doors. However, pupils spent most of their time inside a schoolroom where familiar objects included ink wells, primers or copybooks and text books. These objects show how children learned in the past. Of particular interest are copybooks that taught pupils how to write in attractive copperplate writing. Comparing these with modern school books and equipment shows how education has changed over the years. Learning about learning can be really interesting!

3

1-2. Toreagh National School, Larne in 1916 and in 1932.

3-4. Guy's School, Wellington Street, Ballymena 1912.

5. Ballymena Model School, Ballymoney Road c.1925.

6. Pupils of Mossley National School.

7. Selection of copybooks from Mid-Antrim Museum Collection.

8. Galgorm National School, Ballymena.



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World Wars

Exploring Your Roots

Wars make an impact on the history of families, usually through active service by individuals. The two world wars of the twentieth century were enormously significant and most County Antrim communities were affected by them to some degree. Exploring the lives of those who were caught up in these conflicts can tell much about those periods in history and how war changed families, sometimes permanently.

Military service could be carried out near home or could mean travel to distant lands. During World War One the local impact can be seen by looking at the Carrickfergus and Whitehead area. Troops trained at army camps at Sunnylands, a coastal defence battery at Kilroot kept regular watch on shipping while an airship sub-station at Bentra, near Whitehead, used dirigibles to help counter attacks from enemy submarines. Troops from all parts of Ireland and Britain were stationed nearby, making their own impact on the area whether on duty or during leisure times.

The main fighting took place far from Carrickfergus, in France, Belgium and the Dardanelles, but many households were devastated when telegrams arrived announcing the death of a family member. Many of those who died left widows and young children behind and these bereaved families were a permanent legacy of the war. Such deaths could have an impact well beyond the 1914-1918 period. For example, at Sentry Hill, near Carnmoney, Tom McKinney was raised on the family farm and spent a year at agricultural college in preparation for ultimately taking over the property. His death during the Battle of the Somme in 1916 meant a different future for the farm which eventually passed to his cousin, Joe Dundee.

World War Two again made an impact on communities. Larne, for example, became a vital transport hub with over four million service personnel and 92,000 vehicles passing through the port. Bases for Air Sea Rescue and anti-submarine training were also at Larne where local people were active in services such as the Home Guard, Air Raid Precautions, British Red Cross and St. John Ambulance Brigade. Similar organisations were busy in Ballymena where local people volunteered their services.

Factories, such as the shell factory in Cullybackey, provided employment as they adapted to war demands. However, most of those who joined the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy or the army spent the war far from Ireland. As in World War One, news of injuries and deaths to those in active service, brought grief and long-lasting changes to local families.



1. Local members of the Ballymena 2/6 Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Artillery, taken in the Castle Demesne, on the hill now known as 'Corlea Gardens'.

2-4. Tom McKinney's stands with his family at Sentry Hill. His death at the Battle of the Somme in 1916 meant a different future for the family farm.

5. Greeting card from the Great War. Mid-Antrim Museum collection.



There are many ways to discover more about the world wars and their impact on families. Organisations such as the Commonwealth War Grave Commission provide information on casualties of the two wars and have a searchable website. Visiting significant sites help to understand the wars. For example, in Carrickfergus the United States Rangers Centre is dedicated to the men of the First Battalion of this elite American Army Unit which was activated in the town in 1942. Led by Major William O. Darby, the battalion played an important role in the conflict. War memorials, gravestones, photographs, contemporary film footage and publications all reveal much about the war. In addition, objects such as war medals and Next-of-Kin Memorial Plaques provide a tangible link with the past. Some war-related items may be found in the home. Poignant photographs of men and women in uniform were usually kept by families for generations. One of the most important wartime records is the personal account: written descriptions and recorded interviews reveal the impact of war on individuals. Talking to those who remember the war can provide significant information for family research, as well as gaining insights into life during times of world conflict.



6. Members of the Women's Royal Naval Service who worked at Larne Naval Base and billeted in the Towers Hotel.

10. Shell factory at Cullybackey, Ballymena.

7. Members of Larne Home Guard.

11-12. Major Darby at the Normandy Landings and meeting President Roosevelt.

8. Discharging military vehicles at Larne Harbour during World War Two by permission of The Imperial War Museum, neg no. A8896

13. Bessie Cherry and her brother Alex, from Craigwarren. Alex served in the 1st World War. Bessie worked in Margaret Kenny's shop 'The Dairy' in Bridge Street. It was directly across from Morrow's Shop, now the entrance to The Braid Museum and Arts Centre.

9. Distribution of Gas masks at Carrickfergus Town Hall.



Taxes are never popular, but all sorts of taxes and charges have been levied on people for centuries. In order to collect this money, records need to be kept to ensure that names, addresses and other details are recorded accurately. This sort of activity is just one aspect of the role of local authorities and other public bodies over the centuries.

The composition and duties of public bodies have changed over time, with new functions and structures replacing earlier operations. However, the need to maintain records in some form has not greatly altered and these records can be valuable sources for those exploring family history. For example, rate books and similar records can show details of a person, a residence or business at a particular period of time. They can also reveal much about the general state of the local economy.

Minutes of meetings are an important part of record keeping by local authorities. Most details are routine, but can be very specific in relation to a person, an event or a location. Sometimes this sort of detail is not available elsewhere and so minute books can be a useful source of information. The minutes of corporations, councils and similar authorities over the centuries deal with a wide range of subjects. Together these influence the shape of a landscape, the emergence of a town or village and how people interact with each others.

Public authority records can be very varied, as outlined above, or can focus on a specific organisation. For example, workhouses were established all over Ireland from 1838 and by 1841 about 130 Poor Law Unions were in existence. Each union covered a specific geographical area and a workhouse was built to house the poor and destitute, including children and the elderly. Workhouses were constructed in both Ballymena and Larne and were operated by Boards of Guardians, funded by a taxes on landlords and others, with staff employed to manage the day-to-day activities. Workhouse records such as minute books, registers of admissions and registers of births and deaths can be a valuable source for family research. Not only do they generally list those who spent time in the workhouse, but they can provide details of staff and those who supplied food and other goods to the institution. The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland holds records relating to both Ballymena and Larne workhouses.

Whether general records, or those relating to specific organisations, municipal records have a role in unravelling the history of a family or in exploring the world in which an ancestor lived.



1. Extract from Larne Petty Sessions Register 1847 – 1877.

2. Extract from Ballymena workhouse register.

3. Extract from Larne Town Commissioners minute book 1854.

4. Electoral roll of Carrickfergus freeholders who had certain rights and privileges. Freeman could vote in parliamentary and local elections 1785-1850. The Freeman certificates are available for consultation at Carrickfergus Museum.

5. Corporation record held by Carrickfergus Borough Council.

6. A petition signed by local men requesting a Free Library and Newsroom for the town of Larne.



Those researching family history are likely to find themselves looking at graveyard inscriptions at some stage in their investigations. Graveyards come in many shapes and sizes and vary greatly in age, but all can have great value in providing information about those interred.

Many official burial records are held by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, local authorities or by local museums. Inscriptions on headstones not

only provide key information about those interred, but can also be attractive and artistic in themselves. The style of engraving and other details on headstones can show craft skills which were often carried out by local people. Memorial plaques and inscriptions placed inside churches and other buildings can be another useful source of information about individuals and their achievements.

In Ballymena, one of the most historic graveyards is the Old Churchyard in Church Street. It originally surrounded an eighteenth century Church of Ireland church which was replaced in the 1850s by a new building, St. Patrick's, on Castle Street. Only the tower survives of the earlier church and the site contains many graves of relevance to those undertaking family research.

The graveyard in Ballynure, like that in Ballymena, contains the remains of the old parish church. Built in 1602, its rector from 1695-96 was the famous cleric and writer Jonathan Swift. A new church, Christ Church, was built nearby and consecrated in 1856. The old graveyard not only contains many interesting graves, but also has a corpse house which was used as an initial resting place to thwart graverobbers.

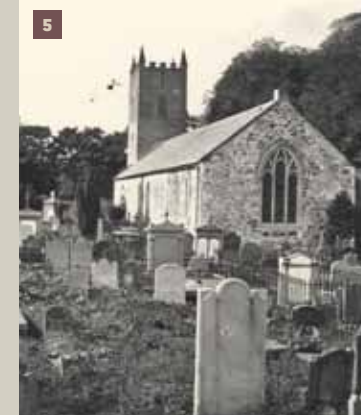
An earlier churchyard can be found surrounding St. Nicholas' Church in Carrickfergus. This site of worship dates to the late twelfth century when John de Courcy established both the church and the nearby castle. Burials took place over the centuries, as can be seen by the many gravestones and memorials in the graveyard and church. The most striking monument is inside the church:

the Chichester Monument commemorates Arthur Chichester (1563-1625) and his family. Chichester was Lord Deputy of Ireland from 1605-1615.

Another early graveyard is the medieval St. Cedma's in Larne. Catering for the combined parishes of Larne and Inver, the graveyard has headstones dating from 1628. Many of these stones have been removed from their original locations and are now arranged around the outer wall. The graveyard surrounds St. Cedma's Church which dates from about 1350.

The headstones in the above graveyards have all been inscribed and this material is available to researchers. The Ulster Historical Foundation has made many of these inscriptions available, see page 32 for further details. Some museums have facilitated this type of research: Mid-Antrim Museum has details of headstone inscriptions from almost all the graveyards in the Ballymena Borough, as well as some interment records freely available on its website. A publication on Ballymena Old Churchyard containing headstone inscriptions is available at Mid-Antrim Museum, a number of burial records from other local churches can also be consulted here.

Exploring graveyards can provide vital information for family research and can also be an interesting day out. Even if the headstone of a particular ancestor is not found, it can be fascinating to view other inscriptions and learn more about those who were associated with an area in earlier centuries.



1. Heritage and walking trail leaflets such as those produced by Newtownabbey Borough Council can help to locate graveyards and understand their role in a local community.

2-3. St. Nicholas Church, Carrickfergus.

4. Ballymena Old Churchyard.

5. St Cedma's Church, Inver, Larne.

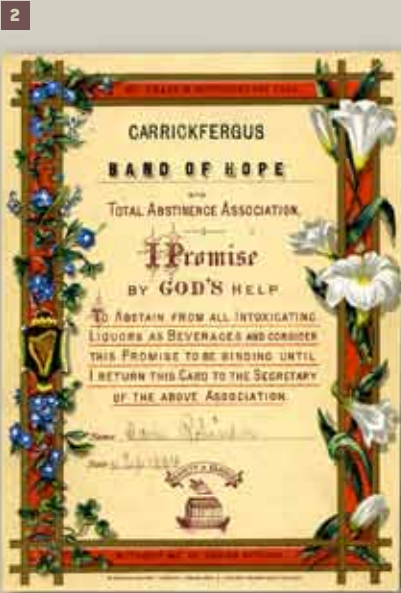
6. Corpse House at Ballynure graveyard, Newtownabbey.



Treasures At Home

Exploring Your Roots

When researching family history it is amazing what can be found in our own homes. People often collect mementoes from important family occasions and these can be passed down from generation to generation.



1. Holy Communion certificate, Carrickfergus Museum Collection
2. Band of Hope certificates declared total abstinence from alcohol.
3. Brooches belonging to Margaret (Meg) McKinney, daughter of William Fee McKinney.
4. McKinney family tree,
5. William Fee McKinney's diary,
6. McKinney funeral card.

Sentry Hill Collection

William Fee McKinney, born in 1832 at Sentry Hill, built up a remarkable collection of diaries, family letters and an extensive library of books and pamphlets. Along with souvenirs from family travels abroad, William collected natural history specimens and items of local historical interest.

Her remains will be removed for interment in Carnmoney Burying-Ground, on Tuesday, the 16th instant, at Twelve o'clock noon.

FEBRUARY 15, 1886,

Look again at old photographs, letters, copies of wills, certificates, family Bibles and other documents found at home or perhaps in the possession of a relative. These can provide all sorts of clues about the history of a family. Photographs not only show family members, but in capturing their dress and

surroundings, give details about where they lived and their background. Studying photographs carefully can give fascinating information, for example, in looking closely at the jewellery of a lady it might be possible to spot a brooch or ring that is still owned by the family.



Old letters not only contain useful information about the lives of the writers, but the quality of paper used, the style of writing and the signature help us to connect with an ancestor. Wills and legal documents can show family relationships and might also provide information about where people lived and what property or land was associated with a family. Certificates of birth, marriage

and death obviously are very important, but other certificates can also show other details. For example, a certificate awarding a prize to a child in a school or youth organisation helps to capture an important moment in the life of that individual. Family Bibles often were used to record key information such as the births, marriages and deaths of family members and can be very informative.

Paper documents are not the only source of family information found in homes. Sometimes Christening robes or wedding dresses are carefully preserved over many years. Usually handmade, these garments frequently show wonderful craftsmanship and a high level of decoration. The care taken to make and preserve such garments shows their

importance at key times in the history of families and indeed photographs often recorded such occasions. Christening robes and wedding dresses are also items that can be admired for their own sake, as fine examples of skilled needlework and as an indication of what was fashionable at the time that they were made.

Exploring the home for clues about family history can be very rewarding and can yield all sorts of interesting information. Building on this knowledge, the researcher can then look to other sources, including museums where objects and information can help to understand the background to the lives of ancestors.



8. Jane & Charles Ross.
Larne Museum Collection

9. Sadie Morrow was christened in 1919. She would later own Morrow's shop, the original home of Ballymena Museum.

10-11. The Dunlop family were originally from The Flush (Old Portglenone Road, Ahoghill). Around 1914, they moved to the Ballymena Road, in a house beside Ahoghill Orange Hall, where they opened a garage. The photo above shows Jack Dunlop, on a motorcycle, in the garage, 1923.

12. Sampler by Sarah Wray 1854. Proven needlework skills were once a must for young girls.
Larne Museum collection

13. Tom McKinney's christening cup. Tom was later killed at the Battle of the Somme, 1916. (See Page 18)



Where to go next?

Exploring Your Roots

Individual sites within the Mid-Antrim Service offer some publicly accessible archives of interest to researchers.

- Larne Museum's community multi-media archive contains digital images, video and sound files for public use.
- Carrickfergus Museum's community archive room contains a wealth of information relating to World War Two.

- Sentry Hill offers researches access to its rich archive. A Sentry Hill CD containing a variety of archival material is also available for purchase.
- Mid-Antrim Museum's website contains headstone inscriptions and some interment records. An online Picture Library contains images from the museum's rich photographic collections, which are available for purchase.

Researching family history is like being a detective. Clues and information need to be gathered from many sources, assessed and then put into a format where a family tree and related information can be built up. This can take many hours of work, but it is often very rewarding and provides a wonderful insight into the worlds of our ancestors.

Having exhausted the resources at your immediate disposal, having asked all the pertinent questions of an elderly relative, and having copied the birth, marriage and death entries from the family Bible, what next? Avid genealogists will leave no stone unturned in the search for ancestors and will pursue every avenue of research until all have been exhausted.

The internet

The internet has transformed genealogy around the world and Ireland is no exception. There are hundreds of websites that can help you find out more about your ancestors. Some websites focus on a particular county or district and contain extensive lists of digitised sources, while others concentrate on a particular family. Two important Irish genealogical sources that are now available online are early twentieth-century census returns and Griffith's Valuation.

Census records

Many people have become interested in their family history for the first time through finding an ancestor in the 1901 and 1911 census, both of which are now available online thanks to a joint initiative between the National Archives of Ireland and Library and Archives Canada (www.census.nationalarchives.ie).

Although the first true census was held in Ireland in 1821 and thereafter every ten years until 1911, unfortunately, the earliest census that survives in its entirety for the whole of Ireland is the 1901 census. Census returns 1821-51 were almost entirely lost in 1922 in the destruction of the Public Record Office in Dublin. Census returns 1861-91 were completely destroyed by government order, many during the First World War as scrap paper.

The 1901 census was taken on 31 March. The information in the census is listed under the following headings: name; relationship to the head of the household; religion; literacy; occupation; age; marital status; county of birth (or country if born outside Ireland); and ability to speak English or Irish. The 1911

census was taken on 1 April of that year and contains additional information including the number of years a wife was married, the number of children born and the number still living.

Griffith's Valuation, c.1860

This Primary Valuation of Ireland, better known as Griffith's Valuation, is the earliest comprehensive listing of property in Ireland. It is particularly useful if you are trying to locate where in Ireland your ancestor was living in the mid-nineteenth century. It includes the most palatial of mansions as well as the humblest of labourers' cottages. The printed version of Griffith's Valuation for County Antrim was issued around 1860.

In the recent years a number of free indexes to the information contained in Griffith's Valuation have been made available online. The most useful of these websites is www.askaboutireland.ie which provides a free search facility. Not only does the website include scanned images of the original printed version of Griffith's Valuation, it also includes the annotated valuation maps which allow you to pinpoint the precise location of every property in Ireland at that time.

Libraries

Local libraries are frequently overlooked as sources of information on family history, but it is their very 'localness' that makes them such important places to carry out research. The Local Studies Collection of the North-Eastern Education and Library Board is now housed in Ballymena Central Library. It is well worth a visit for its collections of printed volumes, newspapers, school records, maps and directories.

The Ulster Historical Foundation is now based at 49 Malone Road in Belfast where it has its library and research centre. Among the Foundation's electronic resources is a large database of civil and church records. For County Antrim these are principally civil marriage records, 1845-1921, and pre-1900 Catholic registers. The Foundation has also published several volumes of gravestone inscriptions for east Antrim and has recordings from other burial grounds from across County Antrim. Most of these records are available via its website (www.ancestryireland.com) either on a pay-per-view basis or for members only.

Among PRONI's online databases is an online index to entries in the will calendars relating to the three district registries of Armagh, Belfast and Londonderry covering the period 1858-1919. Other resources that can be consulted on the website of PRONI include the databases of registers of freeholders (naming those qualified to vote), nineteenth-century street directories (particularly useful if looking for a Belfast

Until the early part of the twentieth century, most of the land in Ireland was possessed by landowners whose estates ranged in size from 1,000 acres or less to, in some cases, over 100,000. Nearly all of the farmers in Ireland were tenants on such estates. The records generated by the management of landed estates are a major source of genealogical information. The best collection of Irish estate papers is housed in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. These records include leases, lease-books, rentals, maps.

Wills and testamentary papers
Prior to 1858 the Church of Ireland was responsible for administering all testamentary affairs. Unfortunately, nearly all original wills probated before 1858 were destroyed in Dublin in 1922. However, indexes to these destroyed wills do exist and are available at PRONI. In 1858 testamentary matters were brought under civil jurisdiction and exercised through District Probate Registries and a Principal Registry in Dublin. PRONI holds the transcripts of wills created by the district registries from 1858 to 1900, and then from 1900 on has original copies of wills.

The official keeping of all births, deaths and marriages began in Ireland in 1864. Prior to this non-Catholic marriages had been officially recorded, but only since 1 April 1845. The General Register Office of Northern Ireland (GRONI) is located in Chichester Street in Belfast and has records of births, marriages and deaths for the six counties that now make up Northern Ireland.

Civil registration indexes for Ireland are available online via the website FamilySearch.org (www.familysearch.org). Rather than searching the indexes in Belfast or Dublin genealogists can now search a single name index of births, deaths and marriages for the period 1845-1921 with additional indexes for the Republic of Ireland after 1922.

10140700 0000000

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CENSUS REGISTER.

Larne School Attendance Committee.

No.	Parent or Guardian		Address	Christian Name of Child	Date of Birth	Sex	Name of National School which Child attends	When admitted	When left	Name of other master in which child receives religious elementary instruction
	Surname	Christian Name								
802	<i>McAlister</i>	<i>Alexander</i>	<i>Pound Street</i>	<i>Samuel</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1886</i>	<i>St John's Rec</i>			
803	"	"	"	<i>Louise</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>"</i>			
804	"	"	"	<i>John</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>"</i>			
805	<i>Ogilby</i>	<i>William</i>	"	<i>Horah</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1887 Larne Rec</i>			
806	"	"	"	<i>Alexander</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>1887 St John's Rec</i>			
807	<i>Kell</i>	<i>William</i>	"	<i>Magpie</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>1901 Larne Rec</i>			
				<i>Joseph</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>"</i>			

VALUATION OF TENEMENTS.

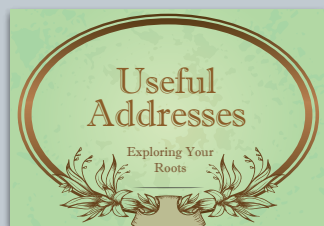
PARISH OF BALLYCLUG.

Name.	Description of Tenement.	Area.	Rateable Land	
			A.	S.
Townlands and Occupiers.	Immediate Lessors.			
BALLYKEEL—continued				
TOWN OF BALLYMENA				
HARRYSTOWN—continued				
HENRY STREET—con.				
Henry	Hugh Ballantine,	Forge (in rear).		
	Same,	Ho. off. yd., & sm. gar.		
	Same,	Ho. off. yd., & sm. gar.		
	Same,	Ho. off. yd., & sm. gar.		
	Same,	Ho. off. yd., & sm. gar.		
	Same,	Ho. off. yard, & sm. gar.		
	Same,	Ho. off. yard, & sm. gar.		

MARRIAGE.

Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
<i>Ann Fee</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
<i>Kimmy</i>	
<i>Ann Fee</i>	<i>Farmer</i>

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**MID-ANTRIM MUSEUM
AT THE BRAID**
1-29 Bridge Street
Ballymena Borough Council
BT 43 5EJ

Tel: 028 2565 7161
Web: www.thebraid.com

**CARRICKFERGUS MUSEUM
AND CIVIC CENTRE**
11 Antrim Street
Carrickfergus, BT38 7DG

Tel: 028 9335 8000
Email: info@carrickfergus.org

**LARNE MUSEUM
AND ARTS CENTRE**
2 Victoria Road
Larne, BT40 1RN

Tel: 02828279482
Email: Caldwellj@larne.gov.uk

MUSEUM AT THE MILL
Newtownabbey Borough
Council, Newtownabbey,
Co. Antrim, BT36 5QA

Tel: 02890340129
Email: scurry@newtownabbey.gov.uk

**SENTRY HILL HISTORIC
HOUSE AND VISITOR CENTRE**
40 Ballycraig Road
Newtownabbey, BT36 4SX

Tel: 028 9083 2363
Email: sentry.hill@btconnect.com

**ULSTER HISTORICAL
FOUNDATION**
49 Malone Road
Belfast, BT9 6RY

Tel: (028) 90661988
Email: enquiry@uhf.org.uk
Web: www.ancestryireland.com

**GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE
OF NORTHERN IRELAND**
Oxford House
49/55 Chichester Street
Belfast, BT1 4HL

Tel: (028) 9025 2000
Email: gro.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk
(Birth, Death and Marriage
Certificate Enquiries)
Web: www.groni.gov.uk

**GENERAL REGISTER
OFFICE OF IRELAND**
(administrative headquarters)
Convent Road,
Roscommon

Tel: +353 (0)90 6632900
Web: www.groireland.ie

(public research room)
Irish Life Centre,
Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1.

LINEN HALL LIBRARY
17 Donegall Square North
Belfast, BT1 5GD

Tel: (028) 9032 1707
Email: info@linenhall.com
Web: www.linenhall.com/Home/home.html

**PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE OF
NORTHERN IRELAND**
Titanic Boulevard
Belfast, BT

Email: proni@gov.uk
Web: www.proni.gov.uk

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES
OF IRELAND**
Bishop Street, Dublin 8

Tel: (01) 407 2300
Email: mail@nationalarchives.ie
Web: www.nationalarchives.ie

**NATIONAL LIBRARY
OF IRELAND**
Kildare Street, Dublin 2

Tel: (01) 603 0200
Email: info@nli.ie
Web: www.nli.ie

**BALLYMENA
CENTRAL LIBRARY**
5 Pat's Brae, Ballymena
County Antrim, BT43 5AX

Tel: 028 2563 3964/
2563 3960
Fax: 028 2563 2038
Email: localstudies.neelb@librariesni.org.uk

DIPPAM

Dippam is an on-line virtual
archive of documents and
sources relating to Ireland
and its migration experience
from the 18th to the late 20th
centuries.
Website: www.dippam.ac.uk

**COMMONWEALTH WAR
GRAVES COMMISSION**
Website: www.cwgc.org



