

“Name Forgot”

Armagh Church of Ireland Parish registers

by Marjorie Halligan

This may seem an odd, even, inappropriate title for an article on the Parish Registers for the Church of Ireland parish of Armagh. These records are housed in St. Mark's, Armagh, with copies in the Public Record Office, Northern Ireland (PRONI). At present they are being transcribed to a computer program by a team of three people under the leadership of Uel Douglas. The other members of the team are Elizabeth Jeffers and myself. The Select Vestry of St. Mark's authorised this transcription in 2001, to clarify Graveyard records. The project has the permission of Raymond Refaüssé, Archivist to the Church of Ireland. During the transcription it seemed worthwhile to give an impression of this valuable source of information. Hence this short article outlining the development of parish record keeping. The title comes from an entry in the Burial Book (1820-1828) for May 20, 1823 which reads, "Name forgot". Two similar entries appear in it for July, 1824. Entries for February, 1827 record "a murdered infant" and "a poor man". This book is held in PRONI. By the twentieth century record keeping had become much more informative for all rites. The records in the St. Mark's collection for births begin in 1750 and run until 1758. They resume again in 1775 and continue until 1805. Marriages are recorded from 1750 and follow almost the same pattern as births; the same pattern is evident in burial records. From the beginning of the nineteenth century records are unbroken, in fact there is some duplication of them. An interesting inclusion in them are the lists of those confirmed; for example in 1824, 318 were confirmed, 345 in 1828 and 188 in 1833. It is evidence of a change in emphasis from the eighteenth century, where confirmation had almost been abandoned in most Ulster dioceses (Acheson 74).

The registers in context

Omission of personal details, was not a prerogative of the Armagh Anglican parish. Frank McCorry gives examples of missing information from parish records in his book, *Parish Registers Historical Treasures in Manuscript*. He cites entries from Magheralin parish records of 1695-1712, where six grooms and two brides were left unnamed. He suggests that the actual recording of marriages took place some time after the events and details were forgotten (McCorry 36). McCorry's work examines the registers of the parishes: Shankill Church of Ireland and Catholic; Seagoe Church of Ireland and Catholic; Keady Church of Ireland and Catholic and the Presbyterian congregation; Magheralin Church of Ireland; Tynan Church of Ireland and Lurgan & District Quaker Society. The earliest register in his study is of Quaker records beginning in 1634. These registers predate the registers in St. Mark's collection by over a century, but they are by no means the earliest. McCorry quotes from Raymond Refaüssé, editor of *Register of the Church of St. Thomas, Lisnagarvey, Co. Antrim. 1637-1646*. Refaüssé stated that the earliest extant register belonged to St. John the Evangelist, Dublin, 1619 (McCorry 2).

The Anglican Parish of Armagh

Like the registers in McCorry's study, the parish of Armagh held to the tradition of keeping all records in one book, though not in chronological order irrespective of

rites. The 1750 register was segregated with births being recorded at the beginning of the book, marriages in the middle and deaths at the back of the book, with the book turned upside down. Here some samples from this register are paraphrased:

Robert McCann, child of Thomas McCann and his wife was christened on February 10, 1750 by the Reverend Richard May; George Taggart of Lurgaragh married Isabella Whaley of the same townland, married by the Rev. Jenney, by licence on January 24, 1750; Alice Brawley buried at Armagh, a child, on January 24, 1750.

For the christening no date of birth is given, nor the father's occupation. The townland which is a distinguishing feature in the marriage entry is absent from the baptismal entry. No marriage witnesses appear, nor godparents for the baptism. With the segregation into separate registers for burials which began in 1804, for marriages in 1826 and for births in 1829, there was scope for more information. The marriage register included entries for the groom's occupation and the names and occupations of the fathers of the bride and



Uel Douglas and the author transferring records to the database

groom. Burial registers recorded the date of burial and the age of the deceased. Baptism recorded the parent's address and the father's occupation.

For each entry a more complete profile began to emerge. Occasionally such progress was hampered by difficulties in reading the entry due to the condition of the register or the handwriting. Not unexpectedly there are variables in spelling. Surnames such as McDowell appeared as Madole. Of the townlands Edenaveys had many variables, one of which was Edenvese. These idiosyncrasies do not detract from the registers as an archive of immense value.

Topography of the Parish

Indeed, they record the continuity and change in the topography of the parish. Addresses in the late eighteenth century indicate the four churches with perpetual curates, which together with the deanery made up the parish of Armagh. They were Ballymoyer, Eglis, Grange and Lisnadill. In the nineteenth century, addresses focus on urban Armagh. This was due to the growth of Armagh and to Archbishop Stuart's (1800-1822) reforms in diocesan organisation (Acheson 81,117).

Street names such as Scotch Street, Dobbin Street, Linenhall Street and Barrack Hill appeared. As the nineteenth century progressed Callan Street appeared very frequently. Its predominance continued well into the twentieth century, whereas, Charter School Lane which had featured in the early nineteenth century disappeared from the registers. From 1907, it became known as Navan Street and as such barely features in them. After the second World War, Callan Street became less prominent in the registers. Then, the new housing estates of Alexander, The Folly and Orangefield featured strongly; by the late seventies Callan Street no

longer appeared. The registers provide proof of changes in diocesan organisation, growth and change in the urban district of Armagh, and the cohesion of the Church of Ireland community within it.

Personal Names

On the more personal matter of names, patterns are discernible. Surnames such as Rice, Sling and Maxwell which appeared frequently in the early registers disappeared, whereas other early names such as Stewart and McCann continue to flourish. Unusual surnames tended to belong to families with army connections. Such connections reflect a garrison town. In 1756, Timothy Hinds of the Queen's Regiment of Foot was one of the three soldiers who married in the parish. In 1817 and 1850 respectively, again three soldiers married here. The highest proportion of soldiers marrying local girls in

in the registers. Sometimes they were repeated within a generation due to the high rate of infant mortality. A summary of the burial entries for 1756, illustrates this high infant mortality. Of the three hundred and twenty-eight entries, two hundred and thirty-seven were children.

Hardship in the community

As well as these individual tragedies, there are entries marking community tragedies. Outbreaks of disease such as typhus in 1817-1818 and cholera in 1832 made their mark on the community. The Burial Book 1821-1835, recorded the deaths of twenty-seven cholera victims between July 19, and September 26, 1832.

The impact of the opening of Armagh Workhouse on Tower Hill, in 1841, is clearly indicated in the registers. Burial entries for 1840, total twenty-four. Burial entries for 1842-1843, record one hundred and five residents

from the Workhouse. Proof of the underlying poverty endemic in the nineteenth century. Within a short time the history of this workhouse became inextricably linked to the mid-century tragedy of the Irish Famine. Between the Famine years 1846 - 1849, the deaths of thirty-five Workhouse residents were recorded. The total burials for these years was three hundred and ninety-five.

Given that five hundred and ninety-eight deaths were recorded in the Workhouse registers, from October 1846, until March 1847, this seems relatively low. (McCourt 70). An entry in the burial register for May 20, 1843, by the sexton, James Albin, may explain this. After the entry of a workhouse burial on that date he wrote, "after this date the (sic) bury in their own ground and has 101 deaths". Those with workhouse connections buried in St. Mark's graveyard during



Pages from the burial register for 1884

the nineteenth century was recorded in 1869, when there were twenty-three soldiers out of a total of thirty grooms. This upswing in the post-Famine marriage rate coincides with a rise in Armagh's population which rose to its pre-Famine level between 1870 and 1890. Thereafter there was a population decline which continued until 1964 (Duffy 3. PRONI Ed. 3).

At the most personal level of christian names William, John, Elizabeth, Ann and Margaret are perennial favourites

the Famine were the Rev. Robert Haig, Chaplain and curate of St. Mark's; Dr. Leslie, Medical Superintendent and John Call, Master. The burial register for 1889, records the last community tragedy of the nineteenth century. Of the eighty-eight victims of the Armagh Railway Disaster thirty-three are buried in St. Mark's. The register pinpoints the popularity of the Methodist Sunday School Excursion with all denominations and that many of the victims came from

oped. Letter carriers became postmen. Carters became lorry drivers. Coachmen were replaced by chauffeurs and drivers. All the different skills connected with transport by train and bus are represented. The lamp lighter vanished as electricity linesmen extended power across the parish. Machinists and factory employees replaced linen tradesmen. On the domestic front "In service" disappeared as a female occupation, as did the position of butler as a male occupation.

"Name Forgot", as an entry has no place in modern registers. As a title for this article it provides a useful benchmark to show the development in church record keeping. It has progressed from the minimal entries of the eighteenth century to the wealth of details of the twentieth century. Eighteenth century churches, particularly the established church, had the monopoly of record keeping. This monopoly was lost with the introduction of civil registration to Ireland in 1864. The state, however, still recognised church registers as legal evidence of marriage and authorised that they be kept in the custody of the rector. The Enactment of Marriage (N.I.) Order 2003, which came into operation in January 2004, has changed this. An entry in the marriage register will no longer meet the legal requirements of the state as proof of marriage, instead this rests in the marriage schedule issued by the Registrar General through the local Registrar. This change is recorded in St. Mark's register for 2004. The parish registers retain their original purpose, the affirmation of an individual's place in the parish, and the transcription should speed access to this.



Armagh Parish registers

Abbey Street and Railway Street.

Everyday Life

Major events like the wars and "Troubles" of the twentieth century all have their place in the registers. Perhaps, the real fascination of the registers is their recording of everyday life. The basis for this is found in the "Abode" column which recorded townlands, streets, street numbers, big houses and housing estates. In the nineteenth century, it tells the story of those who resisted the lures of emigration, who, in fact lived and married very close to home. Not only that, but father and son followed each other as farmers, labourers, shoe makers, joiners, plasterers, poultry dealers, hairdressers, merchants and the hacklers and tenters of the linen industry. Very few entries in the nineteenth century record female occupations.

The progression in occupations is very marked as the twentieth century devel-

Nursing and teaching remained as occupations for both men and women. The entry of social services, financial services, and IT specialists, again, for both men and women marked the close of the twentieth century.

Using the Registers

As noted in relation to the Famine, the registers both pose and answer questions. Here, are some others that came to mind. How good a living did the photographer, Frederick George Gould, married in 1885, make? To which travelling company did the acrobat Henry Moxon married in 1912, belong? Researchers in family history will be delighted with the inclusion of date of birth of the child and the names of godparents in twentieth century baptismal entries. Recent marriage entries are a researcher's delight with the inclusion of the maiden names and occupations of the mothers of the bridal couple.

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