

Griffith's Valuation

AGI Resource - Land Records

Carried out in the mid-19th century, the Primary Valuation of Ireland, also known as Griffith's Valuation, was the first full-scale property valuation to assess the rate of tax levied on land and buildings in Ireland. The loss of almost all 19th century Irish census returns has made Griffith's Valuation an important census substitute for Irish genealogists.

The eponymous Richard Griffith began his work as a civil servant in the early 1820s and was appointed Boundary Commissioner in 1825. Griffith and his team of surveyors, draftsmen and spademen established the boundaries of townlands, civil parishes, baronies and counties for the Ordnance Survey of Ireland. Griffith then became instrumental in the work of the Valuation Office, which surveyed land and buildings to ascertain their value for taxation purposes. The result of his work, the Primary Valuation of Ireland, was published for the entire island of Ireland between 1847 and 1864.

Griffith and his team placed a rateable valuation on every piece of property in Ireland, which became the basis of a property tax called rates, which was used to fund the local Poor Law Union, including the Workhouse.

Crucially, about 70% of the Heads of Household (Occupier) in rural areas were named. Interestingly, shepherds were rarely named in Griffith's Valuation, as they resided in a house and on land provided by their employer (others in similar type employment also were not named). Neither was the Valuation comprehensive for city dwellers, with only about 20% of Occupiers being named. This is because numerous families may have resided in one tenement building, but only one individual was responsible for paying the rates for that building.

All land was measured in statute acres, and the Valuation was calculated in pounds sterling. The Valuation recorded the name of the Head of Household liable for paying the rates and the name of their immediate lessor (landlord). It also describes the property and the amount of land, with separate valuations for each, giving a total rateable value for the entire property.

The Valuation only recorded the Head of the Household. This was usually the husband and father, but could also be the widow, grandfather or uncle. If your ancestor was born in the 1840s or 1850s, they are unlikely to be a Head of Household. Their father, widowed mother or another older family member may have been the recorded ratepayer for the property.

Here is an example of the Valuation for the townland of Drummeen, Civil Parish of Cloone, Co Leitrim. Drummeen is close to the town of Mohill.

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VALUATION OF TENEMENTS.

PARISH OF CLOONE.

No. and Letters of Reference to Map.	Names.		Description of Tenement.	Area.	Rateable Annual Valuation.		Total Annual Valuation of Rateable Property.	
	Townlands and Occupiers.	Immediate Lessors.			Land.	Buildings.		
DRUMMEEN—								
<i>continued.</i>								
18	<i>α</i>	Terence Curran,	William White, .	House, offices, and land,	14 3 8	£ 6 10 0	£ 1 0 0	£ 7 10 0
19	<i>α</i>	John Gannon, .	Same, .	House, offices, and land,	86 3 26	45 10 0	5 0 0	} 55 15 0
20			Land,	6 1 30	5 5 0			
--	<i>α</i>	James Gannon, .	John Gannon, .	House,	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
--	<i>β</i>	Andrew Carr, .	Same,	House,	—	—	0 5 0	0 5 0
--	<i>c</i>	Edward Reynolds,	Same,	House,	—	—	0 5 0	0 5 0
--	<i>d</i>	Commissioners of National Education,	Same,	National school-house. (See Exemptions.)	—	—	0 5 0	0 5 0

Image source: Griffith's Primary Valuation (1847-1864), Drummeen, Cloone, Co. Leitrim, National Archives of Ireland/Valuation Office. Accessed via askaboutireland.com: Griffith's Valuation Viewer

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The information published is always presented in exactly the same format. Starting from the left, the holding is identified as Lot 18, which should also appear on the Griffith's maps, where the boundaries of each Lot were inscribed over a 6" Ordnance Survey of Ireland map. These black and white maps are available at www.askaboutireland.ie and www.findmypast.ie. The colour maps that can be found at askaboutireland.ie are based on later revisions in the 1880s and 1890s and may not match the details recorded in Griffith's Valuation. Lot numbers can change over time, with properties being amalgamated or townlands reorganised. It is possible to toggle from the colour map to the earlier black and white Griffith's maps.

The lower case letter recorded with the Lot number indicates the presence of a building on the Lot.

In the next column is the name of the Townland, followed by the names of the Occupier or Head of Household responsible for paying the rates. The following column recorded the name of the Immediate Lessor (landlord). If the landlord can be identified as someone with a landed estate in Ireland, estate papers for the family may include rent rolls and tenant agreements. However, many Immediate Lessors were simply 'middlemen', who leased the property from the owner and sublet it to tenants.

Adjacent to the Immediate Lessor is a Description of Tenement (the holding). At Lot 18a, tenant Terence Curran leased a dwelling house, farm buildings or outhouses (offices) and land from William White. This is followed by the area of the farm given in Acres, Roods and Perches (A.R.P). Terence Curran had a small farm of 14 acres, 3 roods and 8 perches, where 1 acre equals 4 roods and 1 rood is 40 perches.

Finally, the various valuations for the land and buildings were published. This is called Rateable Annual Valuation, given in sterling, where £1 equals 20 shillings and 1 shilling equals 12 pence. The 14 acres, 3 roods and 8 perches of land occupied by Terence Curran at Lot 18a were valued at £6.10s.0d. and the buildings, which included a house and farm building[s] were valued at £1.0s.0d.

The last column is the Total Annual Valuation of Rateable Property, £7.10s.0d. this being the sum of the valuation placed on the land and buildings. This was the basis of the rates payable in the Republic of Ireland until 1977, when rates ceased to be charged on residential property.

Griffith's Valuation for the entire island of Ireland is freely available online at www.askaboutireland.ie and can also be found via subscription sites at www.findmypast.ie and www.ancestry.com. There are also microfiche copies available in the National Library of Ireland and libraries around the country.

Griffith's Valuation can be used to ascertain a townland and civil parish address for a family in mid-19th century Ireland, if the Head of Household for that period is known. The size and value of the property can be used to establish the socio-economic standing of a family. At www.johngrenham.com the surname search illustrates the spread of a particular surname across the country in mid-19th century Ireland, using the surnames extracted from this Valuation.

***Poor Law Unions (PLU)** in Ireland were administrative districts created by the 1838 Poor Law Act, each centred on a workhouse to provide relief for the destitute. They expanded their responsibilities over the 19th century, especially during the Great Famine, when workhouse populations dramatically increased. These unions have now formed the basis of civil registration districts in Ireland.*

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