

Kennedy Study technical report, October 2014

Iain Kennedy

Introduction: how it all started

The seeds for the Kennedy study were first sowed back in 2001 with the publicity surrounding Dr. Bryan Sykes and his 'Seven Daughters of Eve'. This brilliant tag, heralding the possibility of working out with a simple mitochondrial DNA test which one of just seven founding mothers of modern Europeans you descend from, instantly had me hooked on exploring personal DNA testing.

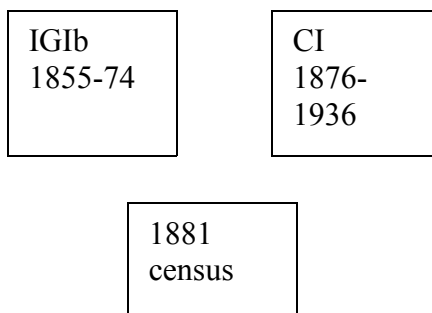
Not long after taking my first DNA test in 2004 I attended a talk at the Society of Genealogists in London given by Chris Pomery. Chris has been a great advocate of combining the power of personal DNA testing with a fully comprehensive traditional document based study of a surname. Essentially as well as collecting all records relating to the name, you identify and test each branch of it with male line (Y chromosome) DNA testing too. Chris has also written a series of excellent progress reports about his project which I will return to later on when I discuss my own progress (or lack of it).

One day in the Mitchell library I was browsing the beautiful bound volumes of the Confirmations and Inventories and thought how handy it would be to have them all transcribed on my computer, since the abstracts are sufficiently detailed to act as surrogate and free death certificates. And so the study was born, although the registrar at the Guild of One-Name Studies was highly sceptical about allowing such a potentially large project covering all the Irish and Scottish Kennedys to be registered. I still have record I000001 in the project database, the confirmation of the estate of Adam Kennedy of Gapsmill, Glencairn in the county of Dumfries who died there in 1876.

Although my project isn't currently registered with the Guild, the pledges I made on joining have been kept: to study all references to the surname Kennedy around the world and answer all queries to the best of my ability.

The core datasets

In view of the size of the project, it was essential to concentrate on free or near free data sources to get it going.



Of the three core datasets, two were totally free. 'IGIb' is the extracted civil birth records for Scotland which the LDS indexed and made available at their FamilySearch website.

'CI' denotes the printed abstracts from the Confirmations and Inventories. The Glasgow version runs from 1876 to 1936 although some libraries continue on to 1959. Not all people appear, typically about 10% only of the population (in fact my own Kennedy ancestors don't appear once in the Glasgow collection, although that is partly due to poverty and partly due to the great longevity of my great grandfather).

The third source selected was the 1881 census, again as indexed by the LDS and made available on CD for a token fee. The idea was that the census should help fit all the IGIb records into families and pick up any families built after 1874, and the CI dataset should track at least some of the families estates and beneficiaries. IGIb as defined above contains some 5000+ records complete with mothers' maiden name and these were all entered directly under the parents so were fully reconstructed from the start. The census of 1881, with 9543 Scottish entries, has since been augmented by all the other censuses from 1841-1911 but remains the best studied census year and is still the most progressed dataset. However, as we shall see, the continual arrival of Irish families into Scotland with members born before Irish civil registration started, and no county or parish birth information, present one of the key stumbling blocks to a full completion of the 1881 census families; particularly so if Scotland was only a staging post in a migration to the New World. As of September 2014 about half the counties are 80% complete or more, but one or two key ones including Lanarkshire are only at 60% completion. In this context completion means I know the parentage and/or spouse of the head of household.

Since this core design, the above data sources diagram has been greatly expanded and equivalents for Ireland and England have been produced. Each is quite different. These diagrams only show the most important data sources and cover the three countries nearest to me, in two of which the Kennedy name is native and in the third, England, it is an immigrant name. The expanded version of the core datasets is shown below.

The Scottish data sources expanded.

SOPRb
1563-1854

GROsb
1855-1874

GROsb
1875-
present

Testaments
1548-1875

CONFINV
1876-1936

CONFINV
1937-1959

CENSCO1841-71

CENSCO1881

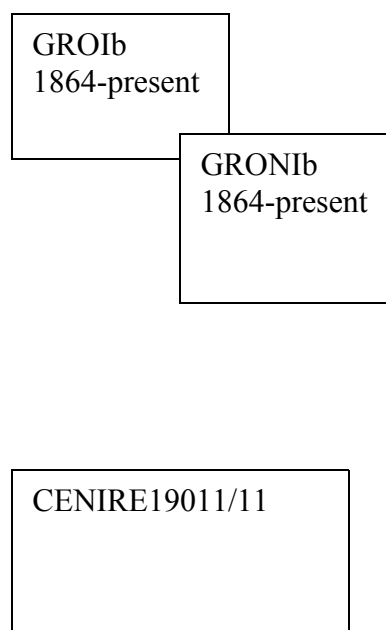
CENSCO1891-
1911

In the above diagram the new adopted source names are shown as they appear in the Sources database table. All the 12477 Kennedy entries in the OPR were extracted to form the backdrop to the 'IGI' civil registration dataset, now renamed and incorporated into GROSb. This dataset is fully digitised up to the present. The 'CI' dataset was expanded backwards to 1548 and forwards to 1959, the final year of the printed volumes (the abstracts are on microfiche from 1960). All censuses were extracted from 1841 up to 1911. Importantly though, for all census years except 1881 and 1841 the analysis is done at the family ie head of household level only, to make it easier to manage. We will see later on that no national dataset can exist on its own, for example the 1881 census has 805 Irish born Kennedys in it so all nations have to be studied together; anyone wanting to do an Irish only or Scottish only Kennedy study would soon run into difficulties.

In the next installment I will describe the core Irish and English datasets I am using and then go on to describe in detail how I am tracking progress.

Irish core datasets

When the project started, accessing Irish sources for non-residents was a big stumbling block and I did a number of personal visits to GRO Dublin and the National Library of Ireland. The release of the digitised 1911 census was a huge advance, to be followed by the 1901 edition, making both the fully remaining censuses available to all. Slowly indexes to the BMD records (GROIb) became available although poor quality, and recently a very good index to the 'Northern Ireland' counties (GRONIb) has gone online. Other sources are also consulted but are not always helpful in reconstructing pedigrees; however Griffiths Valuation and the Tithe Applotment Books do at least give a picture of Famine and pre-Famine Ireland.



The GROIB and GRONIB datasets overlap since GRONI extended their index back to before partition. The combination of the advanced GRONI index with mother's maiden name and exact date of birth, coupled especially with the 1911 census with data on years married and issue is very beneficial for bulk family tree reconstruction. It needs to be: the 1911 census has 3590 Kennedy heads of household.

Progress towards centralised parish registers is patchy and at the time of writing doesn't look set to ever reach the advanced state of Scotland. For this reason they have been left off the above diagram although some use is made of the large collections at <http://rootsireland.ie> and <http://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/> - the latter being free.

Studying Kennedys, especially Irish ones, is often tantamount to a study in migration. Very few Kennedys are shown as incoming, around 80 or so each from Scotland and England in 1911. The Irish censuses are generally too late to be much use in identifying incoming Irish Kennedy families into Scotland or England since most arrived decades earlier. For Scotland the GRONI index is very useful since the majority of Irish Kennedys entering Scotland came from the coastal Ulster counties - Donegal is the key missing county in this respect. Emigration destinations where death certificates list parents, eg Scotland, Australia and New Zealand, have a better chance of identifying Irish emigrant Kennedys.

English core datasets

The English civil birth index ('GROEb'), predating the earliest surname-bearing census and including mothers maiden name from 1911, has empowered one-namers focussed on the country to achieve relatively speedy family tree reconstruction compared with Scotland or Ireland. Parish registers are held locally but a good collection of London baptisms has been added to the main database. The English half of the Britain 1881 census CDs ('CENENG1881') forms the key census return augmented by the remaining 1841-1911 returns. Although local, the LancashireBMD website has been very useful in tying up index marriage partners and mothers maiden names not supplied by the national birth index in what is not surprisingly the top English county for Kennedys (ditto the Lancs OPC website, not shown in the diagram). The national death index ('GROEd') includes exact date of birth from 1970 which is particularly useful for linking to births from Scotland and Ireland.

