Ireland xo
reaching out

Volunteer
Handbook
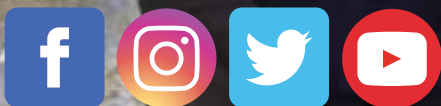
Contents
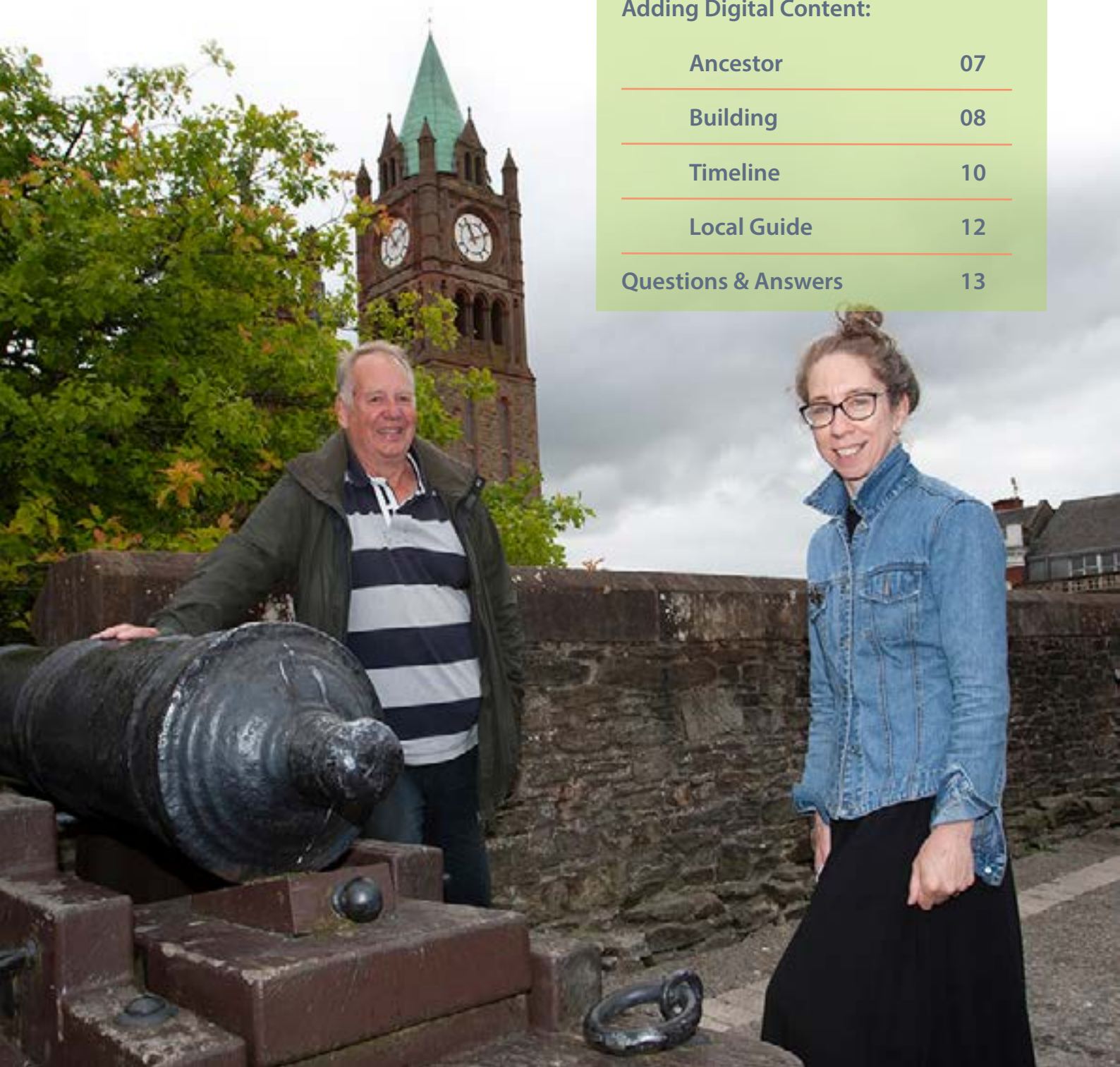
Mike Feerick
Chairperson & Founder
Ireland Reaching Out

Dear Volunteer,

Ireland has one of the most extraordinary legacies of any country with respect to its Global Diaspora. Whilst only 7 million people live on our beautiful island today, over 80 million people around the world share our heritage through a connections with blood and place. This represents 1% of the world's population, a community the size of Germany today. No other country has such a ratio between those living in a country of origin and its Diaspora abroad.

Looking back, we can think of the reasons for the flight from Ireland. We could focus on the poverty and the persecucion that forced so many to flee, but we could also choose to look at the positive. Not least the opportunities for Irish immigrants, that such countries as the United States of America, Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand presented, to name just a few. Five million people literally left Ireland and went to America between the 18th and 20th Centuries. The figures are truly staggering.

Today, this Diaspora offers a unique and massive opportunity to the Irish people, whether living in Ireland or abroad. Its scale offers opportunities that others are not so lucky to enjoy. The truth is that if we engage with a small number of the 80 million abroad, the impact of their interest in Ireland can be transformative, socially, culturally, and economically.

As a volunteer, you can do your part in activating the Irish Diaspora for the benefit of all Irish people. Whether you have time to "Meet & Greet" Diaspora "Coming Home" to a place of origin for them near you, or whether you have time to share your local expertise and knowledge online, or you have the time to post ancestral information for yourself, your family or your community and county online, there is a way which you can help.

There is a phrase I heard most often in America about the Irish people. That there are really only two races of people in the world, those who are Irish, and those who wish they were.

By volunteering with Ireland Reaching Out, you can help us celebrate the best of our Irishness in Ireland and around the world.

Thank you for becoming a volunteer for the Irish Diaspora and Ireland Reaching Out.

Mike Feerick

Our Story

Every year, millions of people of Irish heritage research their family history, looking for a connection with their Irish place of origin. Ireland Reaching Out enables local communities to help Irish descendants identify and connect with their ancestral place of origin, from wherever they are in the world. Its website, **IrelandXO.com** is a meeting place of people of Irish descent and their ancestral place of origin.

This digital platform is unique in that all the content created is done so by **LOCAL** people with direct and trusted knowledge of their areas, many of whom have lived there for generations. IrelandXO.com has developed into a virtual haven for Irish diaspora seeking more information about their roots and for those who are planning journeys from far afield.

The programme has grown significantly over the years, and more than 100,000 people visit the website every month. **Members of IrelandXO can:**

- post and respond to family history questions on the message boards
- connect directly with living relatives anywhere in the world
- arrange meetings between local volunteers and visiting diaspora
- share information about ancestors, buildings and local Irish communities

PLAY OUR VIDEO & FIND OUT MORE ▶
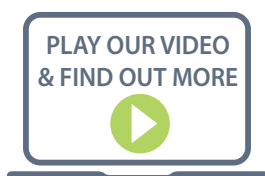
Why Volunteer?

We have a vibrant network of volunteers across the 32 counties on the island of Ireland. All share the goal of helping connect the global Irish diaspora with their ancestors' place of origin and the community living there today. This can provide long-term social, economic, and cultural benefits for every local Irish community. Volunteering with Ireland Reaching Out is a great way to meet new people at home and abroad, some of whom you may even be related to! (This happens more often than you might think!)

- Sharing your knowledge of your local community, which often isn't recorded or written down anywhere
- Recording details of your local community so that others can access it, for example, details of the local graveyard, the church, the parish contact details, local businesses in the area etc
- Free access to Irish genealogy and family history training. We host regular training and webinars
- Building long-lasting friendships with like-minded people
- Promoting your community to a global audience, driving local tourism for your community

Volunteer Roles

Message Board Advisor

Message Board Advisors give family history advice to those who are looking to discover more about their Irish ancestry. **They do this by:**

- Responding to queries posted on local message boards
- Offering tips on conducting family history
- Pointing members in the right direction as to where they could locate information eg parish email address/local Facebook group etc

Meet & Greeter

Volunteers who are available to Meet and Greet welcome visiting Diaspora to the local community. They spend between one and three hours with the visitors - helping them to understand more about the local community and its heritage.

On a typical Meet & Greet, the following may happen:

- A meeting in a local library, tourist office, post office, or heritage building
- A visit to a local Graveyard to find family headstones
- A visit to the local parish office to enquire after baptismal and/or marriage records.
- A meeting with any living relatives still in the community

Digital Content Contributor

Digital Content Contributors add information about their local community to the IrelandXO website. This can be information relating to family history, local heritage, built heritage, tourism, and media such as local publications or videos. They may also have an interest and general knowledge of the local archaeology, folklore, and geography of your area.

The website and My IrelandXO Dashboard

The IrelandXO website is divided into 32 County groups and more than 2500 Civil Parish groups. As a volunteer, you will be asked to join the civil parishes in which you are living, or wish to volunteer for. In doing so, you will be alerted every time there is new content added to your parish. Check out the videos below to get an IrelandXO account and join your parish.

Everything on the website can be viewed and filtered by county and then civil parish.

Message Board	Ancestors	Buildings	Timelines	Local Guides

HOW TO SET UP AN ACCOUNT

HOW TO JOIN A GROUP

MY IRELANDXO DASHBOARD

Tip for answering queries on the Message Board

DO

✓ For a simple query as to a particular date of birth/baptism or marriage, do reply with the information and the source. Be sure to tell the poster whether or not the source used is free or from a subscription site that the volunteer has personal access to.

✓ If a poster continues to reply looking for further information, do give lists of free sources or direct them to our Genealogy News Item page

✓ For those queries that continue to look for information or appear to be looking to commission research, do direct them to the list of researchers available through the National Library of Ireland website:

DON'T

✗ Don't conduct extensive research for any single member. Ireland Reaching Out is a volunteer-driven programme that assists anyone with re-connecting with their local or ancestral parish. It is not a professional genealogy service. While some of our volunteers are professional and accredited genealogists, it is not a requirement to be so.

✗ Don't feel under pressure to conduct any research that you feel uncomfortable about or that requires you to make enquiries that you would rather not.

✗ Don't divulge personal information about anyone either alive or born within the last 100 years on the message board or onsite through any of the features. This is due to Data Protection and Privacy laws.

✗ Don't encourage a poster to phone potential relations for information. This is due to a large number of phone scams and the reluctance of many people to give information over the phone.

✗ Don't give false or inaccurate information. If you don't know, state that. Find someone or ask someone who may have more information to assist.

How to add an Ancestor

Adding an ancestor to IrelandXO increases what we know about the people who once lived in Ireland. It enables their descendants to find out more about their own family history and connection with Ireland. Check out our video above to see step-by-step instructions.

Some Ground Rules!

- Only ancestors with a date of birth MORE THAN 100 years ago may be included
- No information relating to persons living may be included in the ancestor profiles
- All content that is created will be moderated on the basis that it is truthful, created in good faith, non-defamatory, and respectful to those living and deceased

Minimum information

- Name
- Date of birth - this can be also an estimation or just the year

Additional information

- Image - this can be of the person, or any other symbol or item that might represent them
- Name of one parish they were associated with (Born, married, lived, descendent from etc). If you do not know the parish, you can still create the person but you will have to link them to "Ireland XO" when it asks you to link a parish.
- Any stories or general information can be included in the body
- Biographical details such as parents, siblings occupation etc
- Online sources that reference this person e.g. census, Griffith's Valuation, Passenger list

Some ideas to get you started

- Are there family names that are particular to the local area and whose descendants may be scattered around the world? If yes, list the family names and their associated communities
- Are there emigration hubs around the world where people from the parish may have gone? If yes, list the family names and destination hubs - including resources or archives
- Are there particular occupations or perhaps industry, unique to the local area and is there a way to find the family names of those associated with it? – Suppliers, employees, owners, If yes, list industry/occupations and possible sources of genealogical information

How to add a Building

IrelandXO members can share what they know about the places their ancestors lived and worked in and make that information available both to the local community and to other descendants around the world.

Ground Rules!

- Do not include any names or details of living persons that might have connections to these buildings
- All content that is created will be moderated on the basis that it is truthful, created in good faith, non-defamatory and respectful to those living and deceased

Minimum information

- Name and/or address of Building
- Parish where building is located
- Image - this can be of the Building, or any other symbol or item that might represent it

Additional information

- GPS Coordinates of exact location - the Geocode function will identify the location according to the address you insert. To indicate a more precise location, prepare the longitude and latitude coordinates using Google satelite maps. You can then insert them into the fields provided when creating your Building.
- Any stories or general information can be included in the body
- Online sources that reference this building e.g. census, Griffith's Valuation, Passenger list

Some ideas to get you started

- Are there buildings or homesteads that are now in ruins but would have been in habited in the past? If yes, list these buildings and their locations. Can you identify their ruins? Do pictures exist of the way they once were?

- Are there buildings that are noteworthy in the Parish – churches, stately homes, railway stations? If yes, list these buildings and any previous publications regarding their architecture or history. Were there particular events or family names associated with them?

- What schools existed in the past in your Parish? If yes, list the schools and their locations and any possible archives that might exist that show pictures and events from that school

- Were there any factories or industries in the area? Did they supply any housing for their workers and their families? If yes, list any housing schemes or possible archives where more information about tenants and the buildings they lived in might exist.

How to Add to the Timeline

Adding an Ireland XO Timeline entry to the website is a great way of reflecting on the happenings of a parish as well as gathering and preserving the events in history that shaped the lives of the people who lived there.

Ground Rules!

- Do not include any names or details of living persons that might have connections to these buildings
- All content that is created will be moderated on the basis that it is truthful, created in good faith, non-defamatory and respectful to those living and deceased

Minimum information

- Name of Timeline entry
- Date (approximation of when this entry happened)
- Parish where event/new/story is linked to
- Image - any image that might represent the event or the people mentioned in it. If not image is available, a picture of the local community today can be used.

Additional information

- Any stories or general information can be included in the body
- Online sources that reference this Timeline entry e.g. Newspaper article, Census

Some ideas to get you started

- Are there significant historical events associated with this Parish?

- Were larger historical events, such as the 1916 Rising reflected at a local level?

- If yes, list these events and the years/dates that they took place.

- Are there local resources – publications or websites regarding these historical events?

- Are there cultural events that took place on a regular basis – such as a fair or festival?

- An example of this would be the Ballinasloe Horse fair.

- These might still be ongoing today.

- If yes, List these events- including start and end date.

- What are the resources available that could bring the timeline entries to life?

- Can pictures be included for subsequent years?

- Were there any standout years?

- Are there significant news items from a Parish's history – such as the opening or closing of an industry – a visit from an important person or delegation? If yes, list the event and years/dates when these took place and possible resources to help create the timeline entries.

- Were there any big weather incidents in the Parish's past? For example, how was it affected by the snow in the Spring of '47 (Black '47). If yes, record the events the years they are associated with and any possible local resources for the creation of the
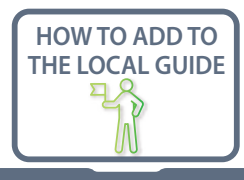
How to Add to the Local Guide

Every day, visitors are travelling through rural Ireland, unable to access key information that can engage them further in the heritage and activities of the area. The IrelandXO Local Guide is a personalised list of resources, business, services and visitor information that is managed directly by the local Parish.

Benefits to the local community

- Global visibility of local Parish goods, services, organizations and other resources
- Tailor-made targeting directly to the Parish's global diaspora
- Convenient and Free way of listing Parish amenities, including contact details and other important information
- Networking opportunities amongst groups in the area

What kind of information can be included in the Local Guide?

Show your Parish Diaspora, both national and international, what your local area has to offer by making Parish information easy to find in the Local Guide:

- Local businesses and organisations
- Tourist Attractions
- Historical places of interest
- Local crafts, speciality foods and other local services
- Tour Guide contact details and other personlised tourism services
- Listing of places to eat and local accommodation
- Church locations and service times
- List useful information such as the local Post Office, Libraries, tourist office, internet access points etc.

Start Volunteering!

- Register as a volunteer here

- Join IrelandXO - membership is completely free!

- Log-in to your account on **IrelandXO.com**

- Find your Civil Parish and join that group. Remember you can join as many groups as you are interested in!

- Look at the messages that have been posted in your groups to see if you can help anyone out

- Add your own ancestors to their Civil Parish of origin (this helps others who may be descended from the same place)

- Browse the other ancestors that have been added to your groups - can you add any information to them?

- Add a building from your community - this may be a church, a school, a courthouse or even your own ancestral home!

- Add some information about your community that you think the diaspora would be interested in learning about. This might be a place to stay, a business, or a local family history resource.

- Browse what our other volunteers have added to their community's Local Guide.

- Write and tell us about a diaspora connection that was been made with your local community. This inspires more diaspora to connect and also more volunteers to get involved

- Have fun!

Listen to our prerecorded Questions and Answers Session by clicking on the link below

LISTEN TO OUR
Q&A
▶

Follow us on Social Media