



An initial assessment of the weather data from the 1851 Census of Ireland

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As a direct result of the impact of the Great Famine in Ireland 1845-1848 or arguably even 1852, the Census of Ireland for 1851 but published in 1852 includes a unique and unknown appendix. This appendix is entitled 'Tables of Deaths' and consists of some 250 pages of double columned small print information predominantly relating to the long history of famines and epidemic diseases in Ireland starting with the records from the Monastic Irish Annals and including information right up to 1851.

Included in this Tables of Death are numerous weather entries for Ireland covering this entire period and in addition in a separate column in summary format are reference to the same weather events and other weather events from throughout Europe and beyond. There is also a relatively short analysis section to these weather events at the end organised by type/section and arranged chronologically. The sections are entitled

1. Earthquakes and other Terrestrial Phenomena
2. Storms, Hail, Thunder and Lightning,
3. Frost and Snowfalls
4. Excessive Rains and Floods
5. Droughts and Heats, Hot Summers and Mild Winters
6. Peculiar Natural Phenomenon
7. Epizootics
8. Invasion of Insects and Noxious Animals
9. Years of Plenty and Good Harvests
10. Failure of Crops, Years of Scarcity and Famines

There is no detailed analysis of the information or what we would recognise as a analysis today but this section does also include some late 18th and early 19th century instrumental weather data from Ireland in summary format.

This paper will present an initial assessment of the temporal and spatial coverage of the information by type and indicate that the potential importance of this weather chronology not just in an Irish context but also in a European context.

As an example of the information available a brief analysis the climate of Ireland in the 18th century will be given showing the variability that was experience in Ireland during this time period.