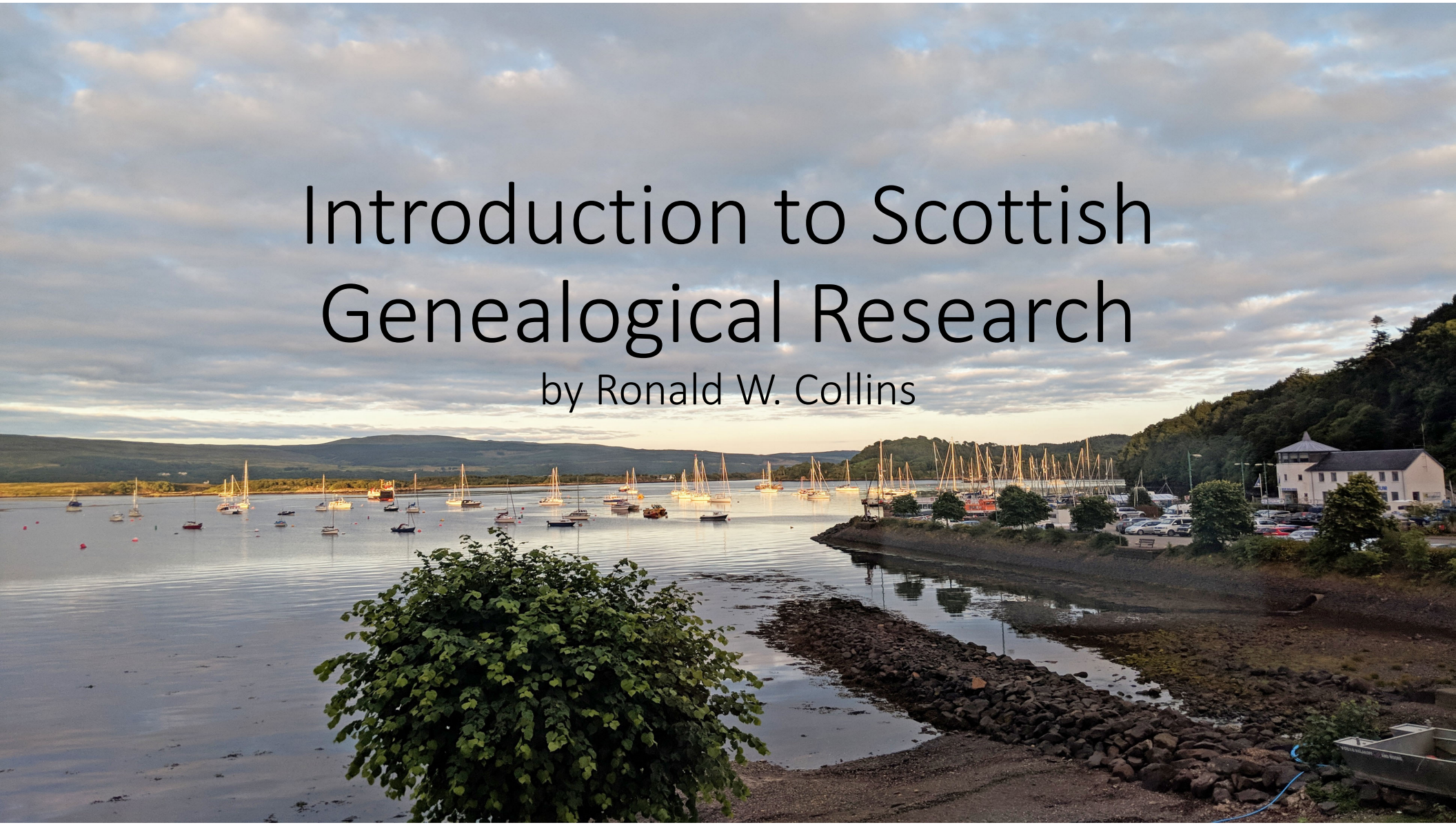
Introduction to Scottish Genealogical Research

by Ronald W. Collins



Scottish Genealogical Research

Hands-On Seminar

By Ronald W. Collins

SOURCES

Sources of Limited Use – Use with Care & Verify

Ancestry

Family Search (LDS)

Geni

Wikipedia

- are unvetted, i.e. the data is not verified
- use non-professional contributors
- rely on the integrity and thoroughness of the contributors

Chronology of record keeping in Scotland

- 1127 - Earliest written document (royal charter) in National Records of Scotland
- 1164 - Earliest state papers in National Records of Scotland
- 1293 - Earliest records of the Scottish parliament
- 1513 - Earliest registers of wills and testaments
- 1513 - Earliest maps and plans
- 1538 - Earliest Old Parish Registers of baptisms, marriages and burials
- 1560 - Reformation in Scotland
- 1672 - Public Register of All Arms and Bearings (coats of arms) in Scotland begins
- 1703 - Earliest Roman Catholic registers of baptisms, marriages, burials and other events
- 1707 - Union of Scottish and English parliaments
- 1733 - Earliest other church registers of baptisms, marriages, burials and other events

Chronology of record keeping in Scotland

- 1801 - First census in Scotland
- 1841 - Earliest surviving census returns for all households in Scotland
- 1850s - Earliest photographs in the ScotlandsPeople Image Library
- 1855 - Civil registration of births, marriages and deaths begins
- 1855 - Valuation rolls begin to be kept for counties and burghs
- 1857 - Earliest soldiers' wills registered (later soldiers' and airmen's wills)
- 1914-1918 - First World War, conscription introduced in 1916 and Military Service Appeals Tribunal Records survive for 1916-1918
- 1929 - Local Government (Scotland) Act makes major changes to the way burghs are included in valuation rolls
- 1940 - Registrars begin performing civil marriages
- 1975 - Counties and burghs abolished for local government purposes

Chronology of record keeping in Scotland

- 1984 - Register of divorces begins
- 2005 - Register of civil partnerships begins
- 2014 - Registration of same-sex marriages begins

Scotland's People – Your best place to start

- **Scotland's People Centre - Princes St at North Bridge, Edinburgh**
- **Scotland's People** is the on-line portal to records held by the **National Records of Scotland (NRS)** and the **National Registers of Scotland**. More on these as we go through the presentation.
- Birth, marriage & death records (1855-present), census returns (1841-1911), parish registers (1553-1854), wills and testaments (1513-1901), Coats of Arms (1627-1911), and other miscellaneous records
- On-line – fee based
- http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

Sources and How to Find and Use Them

- You can use **ScotlandsPeople** to access a wide range of records kept by the Scottish Government, churches and courts of law.
- Seven **categories** of records are indexed by personal name:
  - civil registers
  - church registers
  - census returns
  - valuation rolls
  - legal records
  - prison registers
  - poor relief and migration records
- They can be searched in different ways.
- You can search them free of charge and pay for copies using credits or vouchers.
- The exceptions to this are the Highlands and Islands Emigration records (within the 'Poor relief and migration records' category) and the 1881 LDS transcribed census records (within the 'Census returns' category). These can be searched and viewed for free.

Sources and How to Find and Use Them

Three special categories of records:

- image library
- maps and plans collection, and
- the records made available through the Virtual Volumes system which can be searched and viewed for free in different ways.

You have to pay to save images from the Image Library and from Virtual Volumes.

Sources and How to Find and Use Them

Categories of records indexed by personal name

Statutory registers

- Statutory registers are official records of births, marriages and deaths, which have been kept in Scotland from 1855 onwards.
- In the late twentieth century registers of divorces, dissolutions, civil partnerships were also kept.
- The registers can be searched by personal name but some modern records are closed.

Sources and How to Find and Use Them

Background Information

- The statutory registers date from 1 January 1855 when civil registration was introduced in Scotland to replace the system overseen by the Church of Scotland.

- Registration of births, deaths and marriages became compulsory from that date, regardless of religious denomination, and followed a standard format for each record type.

- Starting from 1 January 1855 more information was required to register an event.

Sources and How to Find and Use Them

Statutory registers is the default record category in advanced search.

It covers the following:

- Statutory registers of births, deaths and marriages (from 1855)
- Statutory registers of births, deaths and marriages overseas (from 1855) and civil partnerships (from 2008) - the Minor Records
- Statutory register of divorces (from 1 May 1984)
- Statutory register of civil partnerships (from 2005)
- Statutory register of dissolutions of a civil partnership (from 2007)
- Register of Corrected Entries (RCE)

If you do a quick people search with a year range including 1855 or later, your results will almost certainly include statutory register entries.

Sources and How to Find and Use Them

Record types

The statutory registers category includes the following record types:

- Births - including the Minor Records and links to RCEs for births over 100 years
- Deaths - including the Minor Records and links to RCEs for deaths over 50 years
- Marriages - including the Minor Records and links to RCEs for marriages over 75 years
- Divorces
- Civil partnerships
- Dissolutions

The search forms include tips for each field with links to more detailed research guides where appropriate.

Sources and How to Find and Use Them

Digital images and certificates

- Search results include links to view the image or to order a copy of a certificate.
- The digital images, which are of the original register pages, are restricted as follows for internet research:
    - 100 years for births
    - 75 years for marriages
    - 50 years for deaths
- This is in accordance with the National Records of Scotland's policy of protecting the privacy of individuals. Please note the records are indexed on a yearly basis rather than exact dates and images of statutory records are added in January of the following year.
    - For example, the image of the birth record of someone born in June 1918 will be added to the website during January 2019.
- If you require an official copy of a birth entry less than 100 years old, marriage entry less than 75 years old or death entry less than 50 years, go to certificate search. Further information is provided in certificates and copies.

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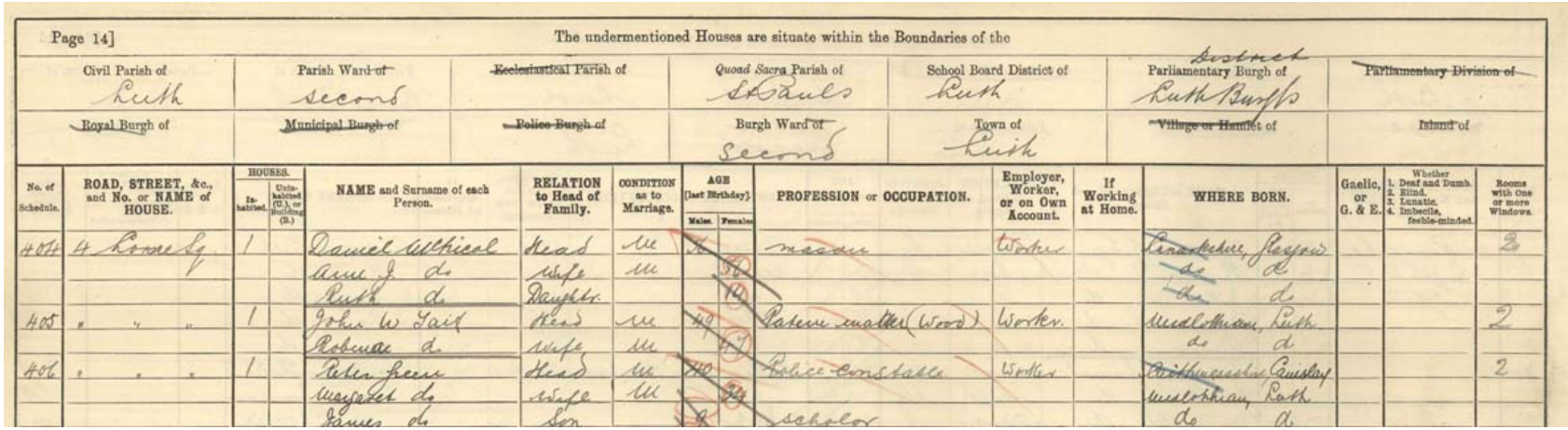
Sources and How to Find and Use Them

Census returns

- Census returns are lists of people living at each address, giving ages, places of birth and other information about them.
- Censuses have been taken every 10 years in Scotland and census returns survive from 1841 onwards.
- They have been indexed and can be searched by personal name.



Page 14] The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the

Civil Parish of	Parish Ward of	~~Ecclesiastical~~ Parish of	*Quoad Sacra* Parish of	School Board District of	Parliamentary Burgh of	~~Parliamentary Division of~~
Leith	second		St Pauls	Leith	Leith Burghs	
~~Royal Burgh of~~	~~Municipal Burgh of~~	~~Police Burgh of~~	Burgh Ward of	Town of	~~Village or Hamlet of~~	Island of
			second	Leith		

No. of Schedule.	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE.	HOUSES. Inhabited.	HOUSES. Uninhabited (U.), or Building (B.)	NAME and Surname of each Person.	RELATION to Head of Family.	CONDITION as to Marriage.	AGE [last Birthday] Males.	AGE [last Birthday] Females.	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION.	Employer, Worker, or on Own Account.	If Working at Home.	WHERE BORN.	Gaelic, or G. & E.	Whether 1. Deaf and Dumb. 2. Blind. 3. Lunatic. 4. Imbecile, feeble-minded.	Rooms with One or more Windows.
404	4 Lower Ly	1		Daniel Mitchell	Head	M	36		mason	Worker		Linlithgow, Slateford			2
				Ann J do	Wife	M		36				do do			
				Ruth do	Daughter			10				do do			
405	" " "	1		John W Tait	Head	M	49		Patent maker (Wood)	Worker		Midlothian, Leith			2
				Rebina do	Wife	M		47				do do			
406	" " "	1		Peter Green	Head	M	40		Police Constable	Worker		Perthshire, Dunkeld			2
				Margaret do	Wife	M		34				Midlothian, Leith			
				James do	Son		8		scholar			do do			

Using the Census

The census provides a snapshot of the people at a particular address on a given night. This information can be used to further your search for direct ancestors, to broaden your knowledge of the local community and to act as a bridge between the statutory registers and parish records.

- An official census of population has been taken every ten years since 1801 with the exception of 1941. Little information about individuals survives for 1801 to 1831. From 1841 to 1911 enumerators copied information from schedules completed by heads of households and of smaller institutions into enumeration books for each district.
- Larger institutions were districts in their own right and had separate books. The original schedules have been destroyed but the enumeration books are held in the custody of the Registrar General for Scotland in Edinburgh. The records are indexed by personal name and are available as digital images.
- Please note that some original 1841 census enumeration books have not survived.
- The censuses were taken at midnight on:

- 6 June 1841
- 30 March 1851
- 7 April 1861
- 2 April 1871
- 3 April 1881
- 5 April 1891
- 31 March 1901
- 2 April 1911

How to search census records

On Scotland's People go to advanced search - census returns, select a census year and search on some or all of the following:

- **Surname** - spellings can vary but there are several search options available as explained in the surnames guide
- **Forename** - you may find variations in names, for example, Margaret may be enumerated as Maggie
- **Second person forename** - add the name of another person you would expect to find in the household to narrow your search. Please note that this search looks for names on the same census page. As a result, it does sometimes find name matches for people who are not in the same household. It won't find a match if the household is recorded over two pages and the names are on separate pages.
- **Gender**
- **Age range** - in 1841 the ages of people over 15 years were rounded down to the nearest five, for example 29 was recorded as 25, although you will still find some exact ages; from 1851 exact age is recorded;
- **County** - includes shipping (from 1851)
- **District** - please note that not all districts are valid for all years. If a search returns no results for a specific district, try widening the search to 'All Districts' for the county.

Census street indexes

These indexes provide parish or registration district and enumeration book references for each road or street in urban areas. They also cover institutions, hotels, police stations and so on. They are published in PDF format on the census records pages of the National Records of Scotland website.

- **1841 census street indexes**
  (Edinburgh and Glasgow)
- **1851 census street indexes**
  (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Leith, Glasgow, Greenock, Inveresk, New Monkland, Old Aberdeen, Old Monkland, and Paisley)
- **1861 census street indexes**
  (Aberdeen; Airdrie; Arbroath; Ayr, St Quivox and Newton-on-Ayr; Brechin; Dumfries; Dundee; Edinburgh; Glasgow; Greenock; Kilmarnock; Kirkcaldy, Abbotshall and Dysart; Lanark; Old Monkland; Paisley and Abbey; and Perth)
- **1871 census street indexes**
  (Aberdeen; Arbroath; Ayr; Bothwell and Holytown; Brechin; Cadder (Western District) and Cadder (Eastern District); Calderhead; Cambusnethan; Campbeltown; Dalry; Dumfries; Dundee; Dunfermline; Edinburgh and Leith; Falkirk; Forfar; Glasgow; Greenock; Hamilton; Hawick; Inverness; Kilmarnock; Kirkcaldy; Lesmahagow; Montrose; New Monkland; Old Monkland; Paisley; Perth; Peterhead; Rothesay; Rutherglen; Shotts; Stirling; and Stornoway)

Census street indexes

- **1881 census street indexes**
  (Aberdeen; Arbroath; Ardnamurchan; Ayr; Bothwell; Cadder; Calderhead; Cambusnethan; Dalziel; Dundee; Dunfermline; Edinburgh; Glasgow; Greenock; Hamilton; Hawick; Holytown; Inverness; Kilmarnock; Kirkcaldy; Montrose; New Monkland; Old Monkland; Paisley; Perth; Peterhead; Rutherglen; Shotts; Stornoway)
- **1891 census street indexes**
  (Aberdeen; Ayr; Barvas, Carloway, Lochs, Stornoway and Uig; Bothwell and Holytown; Cambusnethan; Dalziel; Dundee; Dunfermline; Edinburgh; Glasgow; Greenock; Hamilton; Hawick and Wilton; Inverness; Kilmarnock; Kirkcaldy and Dysart; Montrose; New Monkland; Old Monkland; Paisley; Perth, Kinnoull and Scone; and Shotts, Calderhead and Cadder)
- **1901 census street indexes**
  (Aberdeen and Nigg; Ayr; Bonhill and Renton; Bothkennar, Grangemouth and Polmont; Bothwell, Holytown and Bellshill; Cadder East and West Districts; Calderhead; Cambuslang; Cambusnethan; Dalziel; Dumbarton ; Dumfries; Dundee; Dunfermline; Edinburgh; Falkirk ; Glasgow; Greenock, Gourock and Port Glasgow area; Hamilton; Hawick; Hebrides; Inverness; Inverness Insular; Kilmarnock; Kirkcaldy; Montrose; New Kilpatrick (or East Kilpatrick); New Monkland; Old Kilpatrick; Old Monkland; Paisley, Johnstone, etc; Perth (with Scone, etc); Shotts; St Ninians and Cambusnethan; Stirling; Stornoway)
- **1911 census street indexes**
  (Aberdeen; Ayr; Bonhill; Bothkennar, Grangemouth and Polmont; Bothwell, Holytown and Bellshill; Cambusnethan; Dalziel; Dumfries; Dunbarton; Dundee; Dunfermline; East and West Calder; Edinburgh; Falkirk; Glasgow; Greenock, Gourock and Port Glasgow; Hamilton; Hawick; Inverness; Kilmarnock; Kirkcaldy and Dysart; Lewis and Harris; Montrose; New Kilpatrick; New Monkland; Old Kilpatrick; Old Monkland - Western District, Coatbridge and Old Monkland - Eastern District; Paisley, Johnstone and Elderslie; Perth; Skye; St Ninians; and Stirling)

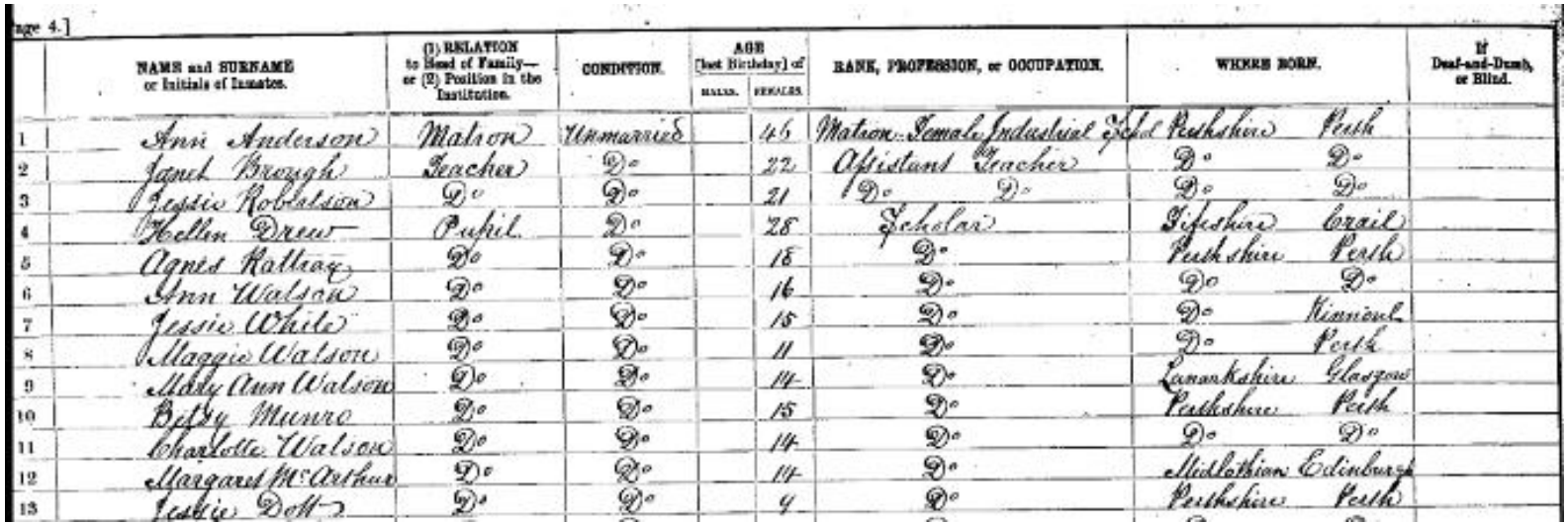
Most Census records include the following information

- Address of the house or institution
- Surname and forename of each person
- Relationship to head of household (except 1841) of family members, visitors, lodgers and servants
- Whether single, married or widowed
- Age - in 1841 this was rounded down for persons over 15 years although you will still find some exact ages
- Occupation - if you find an abbreviation or unknown term check the glossary or the index to occupations (1911 census report, volume II, pages 437-445) which is published on the Online Historical Population Reports (Histpop) website
- Birthplace – for 1841 this shows whether the person was born in the county (yes or no), in England, Ireland or elsewhere (foreign) but from 1851 gives the county and parish or country of birth
- Gaelic (from 1891) shows whether the person spoke G (Gaelic) or G and E (Gaelic and English)
- Rooms with one or more windows (from 1861) – this information was used to assess housing conditions.
- Disability - whether blind, deaf, dumb and so on.
- Fertility of marriage (1911)

Census – Other Types

Institutions

Enumeration books for larger institutions or establishments such as barracks, hospitals, prisons and schools are in a different format. Here's an example from the 1861 census for the Boys' and Girls' Schools of Industry in King James the Sixth's Hospital in Perth.



	NAME and SURNAME or Initials of Inmates.	(1) RELATION to Head of Family— or (2) Position in the Institution.	CONDITION.	AGE [last Birthday] of MALES.	AGE [last Birthday] of FEMALES.	RANK, PROFESSION, or OCCUPATION.	WHERE BORN.		If Deaf-and-Dumb, or Blind.
1	Ann Anderson	Matron	Unmarried		46	Matron Female Industrial Sch[ool]	Perthshire	Perth	
2	Janet Brough	Teacher	Do		22	Assistant Teacher	Do	Do	
3	Jessie Robertson	Do	Do		21	Do Do	Do	Do	
4	Helen Drew	Pupil	Do		28	Scholar	Fifeshire	Crail	
5	Agnes Kellaig	Do	Do		18	Do	Perthshire	Perth	
6	Ann Watson	Do	Do		16	Do	Do	Do	
7	Jessie White	Do	Do		15	Do	Do	Kinnoul	
8	Maggie Watson	Do	Do		11	Do	Do	Perth	
9	Mary Ann Watson	Do	Do		14	Do	Lanarkshire	Glasgow	
10	Betty Munro	Do	Do		15	Do	Perthshire	Perth	
11	Charlotte Watson	Do	Do		14	Do	Do	Do	
12	Margaret McArthur	Do	Do		14	Do	Midlothian	Edinburgh	
13	Jessie Doff	Do	Do		4	Do	Perthshire	Perth	

Census – Other Types

Ships

- People on board boats and barges on inland waterways were enumerated in the district where they were based on census night.
- Crews on board ships at sea or in Irish or English ports were enumerated separately.

Church registers

Some Church registers of births and baptisms, marriages and burials survive from 1560 onwards in Scotland. Many have been lost due to fires, wars and natural disasters.

BAPTISMAL REGISTER FOR

Charlotte Street Un. Assoc. Congn. Aberdeen

Sex. Male.	Sex. Female.	Names of Parents. Father.	Names of Parents. Mother.	Employment or Profession.	Date and Place of Birth—Parish, Town, or Street.	Date of Bapt and by whom Dis
Mak	"	James Cocker	Elizabeth Gadsy	Gardener	26 July 1845 Sunny Park, Old Machar	7th Dec. 1845 Mr. G.
Mak	"	Robert Downie	Christina Ross	Shoemaker	17 July 1845 42 Causeway end Aberdeen	7th Dec. 1845 Mr. S
Mak	"	Robert Brown	Elizabeth Mackie	Miller	6th Nov. 1845 10 John Street, Aberdeen	7th Dec. 1845 John
Mak	"	Alexander Hodge		Slater	4th Oct. 1845 Guest Row Mitchell Court	7th Dec. 1845 John
"	Female	James Jolly	Anne Lamont	Carpet-weaver	21st Oct. 1845 55 Shiprow Aberdeen	7th Dec. 1845 John
"	Female	William Balgarnie	Margaret Watt	Tailor	10th Nov. 1845 [illegible]	7th [illegible]

Church registers - Old Parish Registers (Church of Scotland)

- The Old Parish Registers (OPRs) comprise the records of births and baptisms, banns and marriages and deaths and burials kept by individual parishes of the Established Church (Church of Scotland) before the introduction of civil registration in 1855.
- The parish minister or the session clerk usually assumed responsibility for maintaining the registers, but since there was no standard format employed, record keeping varied enormously from parish to parish and also from year to year. As a result, the information may be sparse, unreliable and difficult to read.
- The oldest register dates from 1553 (baptisms and banns from Errol, Perthshire), but although there was a requirement from 1552 that parishes record baptisms and marriages, many did not commence until much later, and some more remote areas only have registers from the early 19th century.
- Some registers have been lost or destroyed and the condition of the surviving 3500 is variable. The **National Records of Scotland** holds the surviving original registers.

Church registers - Old Parish Registers (Church of Scotland)

- Registration in the Church of Scotland's registers was costly and unpopular, so many people did not bother to register events at all.
- Although details of some non-conformists can be found in Established Church registers, many members of other religious denominations chose to have events registered in their own churches.
- In addition, rapid urbanization during the 19th century contributed to the diminishing influence of the Church and a decrease in registration in these areas.
- It was estimated at the time that as few as 30% of events actually occurring were being recorded for some urban parishes.
- Civil registration started in 1855. However, in a small number of districts the local registrar was not in place at the very beginning and therefore there are a small number of events that are recorded in Old Parish Registers but are not featured in our statutory records.

Church registers - Roman Catholic

Roman Catholic parish registers comprise records of

- births and baptisms
- marriages
- confirmations
- deaths and burials
- communicants
- sick calls
- converts
- first confessions

- The records cover all Scottish parishes in existence by 1855 – before the introduction of civil registration; the records of Glasgow's Catholic cemetery; and the records of the RC Bishopric of the Forces, which records all sacramental events for British service men and women serving in the armed forces worldwide.

- Under the provisions of Church Law, all faithful are to have sacramental information recorded in the registers of the parish. Record format and content varied over time, with the responsibility for the information gathered being placed with the parish priest - since there was no standard format prescribed, record keeping varied enormously from parish to parish and also from year to year.

- As a result, the information may be sparse, unreliable and difficult to read. Approximately 700 registers have survived, the earliest dating from 1703, but most records only begin in the 30 years following the relaxation of legislation against Catholics in the 1790s up to the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 when it was permitted to be a member of a Catholic church.

Church registers - Other churches

As well as the Church of Scotland, other Presbyterian churches in Scotland kept registers of baptisms, marriages and burials from 1716 onwards. These other church registers are in the course of being added to the **ScotlandsPeople** site. The churches concerned were Presbyterian churches that were originally outside the Church of Scotland (or left the Church of Scotland) but joined (or re-joined) the Church of Scotland at various points. These churches were as follows:

- The Reformed Presbyterian Church
- The Original Secession (or First Secession) Church
- The Associate Synods (Burghers and Antiburghers, and the Auld Licht Burghers, New Licht Burghers, Auld Licht Antiburghers and New Licht Antiburghers)
- The Relief Church
- The United Secession Church
- The United Presbyterian Church
- The Free Church

Bear in mind that the other churches did not have the same parish structure as the Church of Scotland.

How to search church registers

The church register search allows you to search for baptisms, births, marriages, banns, burials, deaths and other events (like confirmations, sick calls and confessions in the Roman Catholic church).

- Choose which of the type of register you are searching from these, then select a church (from Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic Church and other churches).
- Each church had a different structure of parishes and congregations, so it is not possible to search across all three churches for one parish. When you select a church, the drop-down list of counties and parishes/congregations will load on the search page and if you choose another church, it will take a second or two for the list of parishes/congregations for that church to load on the search page.
- Once you have carried out a search for one church, you can select another church in the filter on the results page and repeat the search for that church.

How to search church registers

- As with other records, you might get the best results by doing a wide search first then narrowing down. So, for example, entering a forename and surname and county but not specifying a parish.
- Expect inconsistent record keeping, so please make use of the search options to vary your search and pick up inconsistent name spelling and cases where the clerk has left a surname or forename blank.
- If you are certain an event was recorded in a particular parish but none of the search options work, try leaving the forename or surname field blank and selecting the parish/congregation and the year. That way you should be able to view all the baptisms, marriages, burials or other events for that parish/congregation that year and can sort by forename and surname.
- Of all the events recorded in church registers, those of deaths and burials are acknowledged to be the most sparsely kept. Since there was no requirement to record these, a great many parishes simply did not bother and of those that did, many have not survived. Often the only record that a death has taken place will be implied in the payment of a fee to the parish for the hire of the mortcloth or pall which was draped over the coffin or the body itself for the funeral.

Banns and Marriages

The proclamation of banns was the notice of contract of marriage, read out in the church before the marriage took place. Couples or their 'cautioners' (sponsors) were often required to pay a 'caution' or security to prove the seriousness of their intentions. Forthcoming marriages were supposed to be proclaimed on three successive Sundays, however, in practice, all three proclamations could be made on the same day on payment of a fee. If the bride and groom lived in different parishes, the impending marriage was proclaimed in both parishes, although not necessarily on the same days, therefore the dates in each register may be different.

- Do not expect too much from banns and marriages records. The amount of information recorded can be variable and most entries contain very little detail. At best you might find: date(s) of the proclamation of intended marriage and/or date of marriage, names of bride and groom and their parish of residence, sometimes the occupation of the groom and occasionally the name of the bride's father.
- Registers of Neglected Entries compiled for each parish by the Registrar-General after statutory registration began in 1855, contain a small number of marriage entries proved to have occurred between 1801 and 1854, but not entered into the parish registers. These are indexed in a similar format to other OPR entries.
- Bear in mind that 'irregular' marriages, by exchange of promises before witnesses, by betrothal and consummation, or by cohabitation and repute, were forms of marriage recognized by Scots Law, yet may have taken place without any official record of the event.

Burials and Deaths

Parish registers of death and burial were very inconsistently kept.

- Surviving registers may record the date of death or the date of burial or date of payment for hire of the mortcloth, but only one of these will appear in the index. There is no indication given in the index as to whether the entry alludes to a death or a burial or the mortcloth payment.
- Some people were not buried in the parish in which they were living.
- Some people did not use the parish mortcloth for burial.
- Prosperous and important families may have had their own family mortcloth, some trades paid into charitable funds with their own mortcloth.
- In parishes where mortcloth dues are the only evidence of burial, such cases might have gone unrecorded. Sometimes there was no charge for use of the parish mortcloth, particularly if the family were poor.

Burials and Deaths

- Do not expect too much from parish registers of death and burial.
- The amount of information recorded can be variable and most entries contain very little detail.
- More often than not you will find only the name of the person who has died, with a date, and sometimes even just the surname.
- Such paucity of information can make it extremely difficult to pinpoint the correct person.
- In the case of a mortcloth hire, there is usually a record of the payment made.
- Some parishes had several mortcloths for hire, of varying quality, including a child's one and the fee will vary accordingly.
- Sometimes you will find extra information. Besides the name of the person who has died, the date of death and/or date of burial, you may find the name of a relative (for example spouse, father), the place or parish of residence, and sometimes the occupation of the person/father/spouse.
- A few registers will give cause of death and some age at death.
- There may be more detail recorded on the death/burial of important and well-to-do members of the parish.

Burials and Deaths

Deaths/burials of married women can be referred to in various ways:

- by their married name, which is unusual in Scottish records outside the census
- by their maiden name, for example "Mary Murray, wife of Thos Low, Alyth"
- merely as Mrs with no first name given for example "Mrs Easton", or as Mrs using the husband's name for example "Mrs William Hackney"
- simply as someone's wife for example "James Murray's wife"
- as a widow with no first name given for example "Widow Graham", or "Relict of Samuel Thom, surgeon in Canongate" or with extra information for example "Isabel Reid, widow of the late James Wilkie, Alyth"

In the case of a stillborn child or one who has not lived long, there is usually no name given at all, for example "a male child", although there may be reference to a parent, for example "a child of David Murray". Occasionally other information is included, for example "a child of John Murray in Hilton, unbaptized"

Wills and Testaments

Property and inheritance

- Under Scots Law, an individual's property was divided into two types:
- Heritable property consisted of land, buildings, minerals and mining rights, and passed to the eldest son according to the law of primogeniture.
- Moveable property consisted of anything that could be moved, for example, household and personal effects, investments, tools, machinery.

All children had equal rights to the deceased’s moveable property. When the deceased’s moveable property was being distributed it had to be divided into a maximum of three parts:

- the widow's part - jus relictae
- the bairns' part - legitim
- the dead's part - deid's part

Wills and Testaments

Property and inheritance

- If the man had been pre-deceased by his wife the division was into two parts:
    - the bairns' part and
    - the died's part.
- If the man had no surviving wife or children the whole of his moveable estate (household furnishings, clothes, jewellery, books, papers, farm stock and crops, tools and machinery, money in cash, bank accounts and investments) was designated as the died's part. The deceased could only specify the disposition of the died's part.
- Heritable property, that is, land, buildings, minerals in the ground and mining rights, went by right to the eldest son, which automatically debarred him from receiving a share of the moveable estate, that is the share which formed part of the legitim (a third part of the estate if the mother was still alive, or a half if she had pre-deceased her husband). However, this son was still entitled to the heirship moveables so that he would not succeed to a house and land completely denuded. These heirship moveables consisted of the best of the deceased father's furniture, horses, cows, farming implements and so on.
- The moveable estate of a widow would be divided into two parts, the legitim and the died's part.

Wills and Testaments

Will

- A will is the document drawn up by an individual wishing to settle his or her affairs prior to death. It sets out instructions for the disposal of their possessions.

Testament

- A testament is the legal document drawn up after a person has died, to enable the court to confirm an executor who would be responsible for winding-up the deceased's affairs.
- Every testament includes an inventory of the dead person's property. This may be a brief summary valuation of the goods involved, or it can be a long list of individual items and valuations.

The Testament Testamentar

The testament testamentar applies when the deceased died testate (leaving a will). It comprises four parts:

- the introductory clause;
- an inventory of the deceased's possessions
- the confirmation clause
- and a copy of the will, stating the wishes of the deceased regarding the disposal of the estate and naming the executor (usually a family member) he or she had chosen to undertake this task. If a copy of the will is not included, reference will be made to its recording elsewhere, probably in the court's Registers of Deeds.

The Testament Dative

The testament dative is drawn up by the court if a person died intestate (without leaving a will), in order to appoint and confirm the executor on their behalf. It comprises three parts:

- the introductory clause;
- an inventory of the deceased's possessions;
- the confirmation clause.
- The testament dative might name a family member or a creditor as executor, but if the deceased died in debt, a creditor might be appointed as executor instead. In such cases, the testament includes a list of the deceased's debts.

Information in Wills and Testaments

- Family names may or may not be included in wills and testaments. If an ancestor owned heritable property, that is, land, buildings, minerals in the ground and mining rights, this would automatically be inherited by his eldest son, in accordance with the Scottish rules of succession. Therefore, unless he was also to receive a legacy under the terms of his father's will (a copy of which should be included in the testament) do not expect to find any reference to him.
- Even if an ancestor did not own any 'heritage', you may not find the names of all his offspring because his children were, by right, entitled to a third part of his estate if their mother was still alive, or a half if she had pre-deceased her husband, and there was no need to mention this share (termed the 'legitim') in the testament. The beneficiaries of the 'dead's part' will be named in the will, however, so if any children were to benefit over and above their 'legitim' share you will find them here.
- If an ancestor was poor, it is unlikely that he or she made a will. It is worth checking the index though, to see if a testament dative is recorded.
- When wills and testaments were recorded in the Commissary or Sheriff Court, the documents were copied by a clerk. Most wills therefore are not in the handwriting of the deceased. There are certain exceptions to this rule, for example soldiers' and airmen's wills, where the deceased's written will may have been preserved.

Information in Wills and Testaments

- The testament testamentar is more useful to family historians than the testament dative because of the inclusion of the will. Executors are usually family members and other family names might appear as beneficiaries, although not necessarily the spouse or children. Since they are already catered for under the 'widow's part' and the 'bairns' part' of the moveable estate, the spouse or children might only be named in the will if they are to benefit from the 'dead's part' in addition to their lawful share of the estate.
- A testament dative contains no will, but the court often named a close family member as executor. However, if the deceased died in debt, the court might appoint a creditor as executor instead. In the latter case, it is less likely that family names will be included.
- Almost every document in the wills and testaments index contains an inventory of some kind, except where there are separate registers for wills. The inventory lists the moveable property belonging to the deceased at the time of his or her death. It can include household furnishings, clothes, jewellery, books, papers, farm stock and crops, tools and machinery, money in cash, bank accounts and investments, as well as money owed to creditors and money due from debtors. Often the inventory consists only of a brief, overall valuation, but sometimes it is very detailed, with the value of every item listed. As such, it can supply a snapshot of the deceased's lifestyle and help to build up a picture of what social and economic conditions were like in a particular locality at a particular time.

Eiks

Before 1823 you may find that in addition to a testament there is an eik.

- This is a supplement to a testament, added some time later, to cover property not originally included. You will sometimes find several eiks relating to the original testament.
- In the registers of inventories there are sometimes also additional inventories, which are the equivalent of eiks.
- The information in each of these documents will be different.

Ultimus haeres estates

An ultimus haeres estate is one where a relative has died without a will or a known relative and whose estate has consequently fallen to be administered by the Crown.

- Further information can be obtained from the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer (QLTR) website.

Wills registered after 1925

Wills registered after 1925

- Wills registered between 1925 and 1997 have not been digitized and may only be consulted in the Historical Search Room at the National Records of Scotland.
- The printed Calendar of Confirmations is the yearly index to these wills. See the National Records of Scotland's guide on wills and testaments for further information.

Wills dating from 1997 have not yet been transferred to the National Records of Scotland.

- For further information you should contact the Commissary Department, Edinburgh Sheriff Court, 27 Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1LB.

Soldier’s and Airmen’s Wills

Soldiers' wills

- After the War Office had settled the estate of a soldier who died on active service, including entitlements to pay and pension, they sent the Scottish wills to the Commissary Office in Edinburgh. They were generally recorded in a special series of records (National Records of Scotland, SC70/8) among the records of the Edinburgh Commissary Office.
- Most of the wills are for rank and file soldiers, up to the rank of warrant officer, who were ordinarily resident in Scotland. The collection also includes a few wills for men who were promoted from the ranks.

Airmen's wills

- A small series of records (National Records of Scotland, SC70/10) contains the wills of 61 RAF officers and men, including aircrew and balloon operators, 1939-1950. Several complete pay books are preserved. These are not available online yet. For more information see the National Records of Scotland's online catalogue entry on the airmen's wills.

Highland and Island Emigration Society records

- The Highland and Island Emigration Society was a voluntary organization set up in 1852 by private subscription with the aim of alleviating destitution in the Highlands by promoting and assisting emigration.
- Between 1852 and 1857, the Society assisted 4919 men, women and children to leave western Scotland for Australia. Their details were recorded in the Society's passenger lists. These lists are one of the few sources for emigration held by the National Records of Scotland (NRS reference, HD4/5).
- The Society laid down specific criteria for assistance with emigration in their 'Rules of the Society'.
- Preference was given to assisting entire families over single men, couples and small families.
- Landlords were expected to contribute towards the payment disbursed by the Society for the emigrants' passage to Australia.
- The emigrants were subsequently required to repay the Society the funds they had been granted so the sum could be re-invested to help further emigrants.

Highland and Island Emigration Society records

- Skye was selected for the Society's first operations owing to the impoverished conditions on the island and in 1852 2569 people emigrated to Australia on twelve ships.
- Australia was chosen as the destination for the emigrants as it was felt that the Highlanders' experience as shepherds and cattle drovers was well suited for the Australian colonies.
- The scheme was then extended to other islands and the western mainland, though there were fewer passengers in later years. In 1857, the last year of the scheme, there were 201 passengers onboard the *Persian*, which sailed from Liverpool to Hobart Town on 25 July.
- During the five years of the scheme, 4919 people were supported by the Society to emigrate to Australia.
- In 1858 the Society was dissolved and the remaining funds transferred to the Board of Supervision for the new Poor Law of Scotland.

Highland and Island Emigration Society records

- The emigrants assisted by the Society travelled on passenger ships.
- The size of the groups varied: the largest comprised of 758 passengers who sailed from Campbeltown to Victoria in south-eastern Australia, while the smallest group comprised of just four passengers who sailed from Liverpool to Melbourne, Victoria.
- The passengers travelled on 26 different ships (on 31 sailings).
- The majority of them sailed from the port of Liverpool (approximately 3605 on 28 different sailings), and smaller numbers sailed from Campbeltown (758 on one ship), Glasgow (372) and Plymouth (184).
- The most common arrival ports were Portland Bay, off the coast of Victoria (1208); Victoria (781); and Geelong, Victoria's second biggest city (503).

Highland and Island Emigration Society records

How to search the Highland and Island Emigration Society's passenger lists

You can search on some or all of the following index fields:

The search form includes tips for each field with links to more detailed research guides where appropriate.

- Surname
- Forename
- Ship Name (a drop-down list of all ships that sailed under the Society's emigration scheme.)
- Departure Port (results can be filtered by departure port after the initial search)
- Arrival Port (a drop-down list of all arrival ports in Australia.)
- Residence/Estate
- Age/Year of birth
- County/City
- Parish (results can be filtered by parish after the initial search.)

National Records of Scotland (NRS) Records

Prison registers

- Prison registers were maintained by each Scottish prison and record details of prisoners who were in custody, both tried and untried. They recorded daily admissions to prisons.
- National Records of Scotland (NRS) holds prison records from the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and its predecessor bodies (in particular the Scottish Home and Health Department Prisons Division) which had responsibility for the construction and running of Scotland's prisons. Included in this collection are registers of prisoners (NRS, HH21), images of which are made available online for the first time, beginning with the registers of Perth Prison.
- Prison registers were maintained by each Scottish prison and record details of prisoners who were in custody, both tried and untried. They recorded daily admissions to prisons and are a valuable source of information for both family and social historians.
- For each prisoner the registers generally include name, date of admission to the prison, particulars of the trial or offence and sentence, if convicted, and the date liberated or removed from the prison. They can also contain significant personal details such as age, place of birth, nationality, occupation, height, general health and religious persuasion.
- This initial record release on ScotlandsPeople consists of 2,175 images from Perth Prison registers that were created between 1867 and 1879, and 1888 to 1921 (with gaps, This equates to over 50,000 indexed entries for Perth Prison over this period and includes details of both male and female prisoners.

What prison registers are available on ScotlandsPeople?

Select prison registers with dates of admission up to and including 1921 are available to search and view on ScotlandsPeople.

At present, registers for Perth Prison are available. These registers consist of the following:

- Convict journals (male), 1867 to 1879
- Prison registers (male), 1888 to 1897, 1902 to 1909, 1913 to 1921
- Prison registers (female), 1901 to 1916

- Those Perth Prison registers dated between 1867 and 1879 (NRS, HH21/47/1-4) are described as 'convict journals'. These four registers record the details of convicts who were sentenced to penal servitude in convict prisons located in the south of England. The Penal Servitude Act 1857 abolished the sentence of transportation in all cases and provided that a person who would otherwise have been liable to transportation would be liable to penal servitude instead. **As such, these 1867 to 1879 registers do not record all admissions to Perth Prison; they merely record those convicts sentenced to long periods of penal servitude.** These registers contain similar prisoner information to the regular prison registers which survive (with gaps) from 1888 (males) and 1901 (females) and which record all admissions to the prison.

National Records of Scotland Prison Records

Accessing other prison registers held by NRS

- The NRS guide to Scottish crime and criminals lists all prison registers held by NRS.
- Note that the dates given are covering dates; there may be some gaps in the records. Few of these registers are indexed.
- Those records not available online on ScotlandsPeople will need to be viewed, by prior appointment, in the NRS Historical Search Room at General Register House, Edinburgh.
- Information in later prison registers will not be available for public consultation until 84 years have passed since the date of admission to the prison.
- These records are exempt under Section 38(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002: Personal Information.

High Court of Justiciary Records

- More serious criminal cases were heard at the High Court of Justiciary (NRS, JC), which included murder, rape, treason, counterfeiting and crimes of a sexual nature.
- The court sat in Edinburgh and travelled to other principal towns on circuit. Individual High Court cases, the records of which are at least 100 years old, can be searched using the name of the prisoner on the NRS online catalogue.
- Case papers and minute book entries will be of particular interest.
- If you wish to locate these records, you should search the catalogue using the reference JC, then provide a name in the ‘Search for’ field. Any entries returned with a reference beginning JC26 will be case papers.

Sheriff Court Records

- The local sheriff courts (NRS, SC) deal with both civil and criminal cases. Sheriff court criminal trials are for lesser crimes, commonly theft and assault. There are different types of sheriff court trials. More serious cases are heard before a sheriff and jury, and are known as ‘solemn’ trials; depending on the court, records can be called a number of different things, including:
    - Criminal court books
    - Criminal records
    - Criminal registers
    - Jury trials
    - Libels
    - Indictments
- Less serious cases are heard before the sheriff alone and are called ‘summary’ trials. Records of these are normally catalogued as ‘criminal and quasi-criminal roll books’ or ‘records of summary trials’. For most of the 20th century, there were also separate trials for juveniles. Usually, surviving records of summary trials will be limited to a one-line register entry under the hearing date.
- In order to view sheriff court trial records, you firstly need to know the NRS catalogue reference. **Please note that the sheriff court criminal trial records have not been catalogued by name and so researchers will need to identify the volume in which the trial is recorded and will need to search that volume in person to locate an individual of interest.**

Justices of the Peace court records

- Justices of the Peace (NRS, JP) had civil court powers and administrative functions as well as criminal authority.
- Criminal cases before the JPs include minor assault, breach of peace, irregular marriages, prostitution, riot, theft and the violation of laws relating to excise cases, liquor licensing, poaching, roads and (since 1932) juvenile court cases.
- As JPs were usually more concerned to reduce local expenditure than to incur it, they tended to fine rather than to imprison and the records of their criminal hearings are usually brief.
- Records of the Justices of the Peace courts are not catalogued by name and researchers will need to search the reference JP on the NRS catalogue to identify the volume in which the trial is recorded, and then search that volume in person to locate an individual of interest.
- Many surviving records of the Justices of the Peace courts are held by local authority archives. You should consult the NRS catalogue for further details.

Restricted access to court records held by National Records of Scotland

- Information contained in most criminal trial records of the High Court of Justiciary and the sheriff courts is exempt under Section 38 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002: Personal Information.
- As such, these records will not be available for public consultation for **100 years from the date of the record**.

Related records not held by NRS

The following court records are **not** held by NRS. You should contact the relevant local authority archive to enquire as to the survival and availability of these records. Contact details for United Kingdom local authority archives can be located on The National Archives website.

Police and magistrates' court records

- Prison registers often record that local police or magistrates' courts dealt with the criminal charges and sentencing of many of the prisoners listed. Police courts largely dealt with minor misdemeanors including drunkenness, minor assault and breach of the peace. These records, if they have survived, should be held in local authority archives and **do not** form part of NRS collections.

English court records

- Often, prison registers will state that a prisoner was tried at a court in England. This will usually be one of three types of court: assizes (courts held in the main county towns and presided over by visiting judges from the higher courts), quarter sessions (local county courts held four times per year), and petty sessions (also known as magistrates' courts) who dealt with minor offences. Records of trials heard at these courts will be held by local authority archives in England.

Records not indexed by person but searchable by place

You can also search some records by place, notably maps and plans/

Kirk session and other church court records

- Records of Church of Scotland kirk sessions, presbyteries and synods can be viewed via the Virtual Volumes system.
- You can search for records relating to a place, records created by a specific record creator (such as a named kirk session or presbytery), records created between certain dates, or for a specific record by its NRS catalogue reference.

Valuation rolls

Valuation rolls were local tax records, listing properties and people in each Scottish county and burgh between 1855 and 1996.

- Local taxes based on the rental value of property had been used in Scotland since the seventeenth century but valuation rolls in the modern sense were first compiled in 1855 when the Lands Valuation (Scotland) Act, 1854 established a uniform valuation of landed property throughout Scotland, with an assessor in each of Scotland's 35 counties and 83 royal and parliamentary burghs; there were 90 burghs eventually.

- The assessor in each county or parliamentary burgh compiled annual valuation rolls, listing most buildings and other property in their areas, along with the names and designations of the proprietor (owner), tenant and occupier, and the annual rateable value. The rateable value was based on the annual rental value of each property (real, in the case of properties which were actually rented, or notional, in the case of an owner-occupied or otherwise un-let property).

Valuation rolls

- The assessor had to draw up a valuation roll by 15 August each year, to allow appeals by any owners and occupiers who disputed the rateable values by 15 September following. Once the appeal process had ended, the resulting roll was authenticated and was made available for public inspection. The roll was in force from Whitsunday in the year of collection to the Whitsunday following. In Scotland the legal quarter day of Whitsunday (or Whitsun) was fixed at 15 May.

- An example of this process in the case of a 1915 valuation roll, the staff of the Assessor for the Burgh of Edinburgh would have carried out a survey of properties between autumn 1914 and summer 1915 and compiled the roll by 15 August 1915. It would purport to show the property owners, tenants and occupiers of each property in Edinburgh at 15 May 1915. After appeals had been dealt with and corrections made, the roll would be made available for public inspection on or before 15 September 1915.

- Every six years all counties and burghs had to send copies of the six preceding valuation rolls to Register House in Edinburgh to become part of the national series of valuation rolls and it is this series which is held by the National Records of Scotland. This periodic transmission also explains why some valuation rolls (especially for some small burghs) are bound up in six year volumes.

What can I learn from valuation rolls?

Valuation rolls can be used to research people, places and buildings.

- Initially you may want to search the valuation rolls if you are trying to find someone between census years. If that person is the head of household you should be able to trace how long he or she lived or occupied a property after the census was taken. The valuation roll should tell you whether someone owned or rented the property he or she lived in. It can show whether someone owned or rented other property, such as shops or garages, for example a shopkeeper might own his house but rent a shop.
- If you are interested in the history of a house, you can use the valuation rolls to see who owned and lived in the property in a particular year or years.
- You can also use valuation rolls to research the history of buildings, communities, shops and businesses and occupations.
- Indexes and images of valuation rolls for 1855, 1865, 1875, 1885, 1895, 1905, 1915, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935 and 1940 are available to search.

Further reading

- For further information about the content of valuation roll records see the National Records of Scotland's guide on valuation rolls available on-line.
- Some valuation rolls are difficult to read. Look at the guides on reading older handwriting, unfamiliar words and phrases and search the glossary, for assistance with abbreviations, legal terminology, occupations and other unfamiliar words.

Other tax records

- The ScotlandsPlaces website offers access to images of valuation rolls for land-tax, and a variety of other types of Scottish tax records, including horse tax, window tax and servants' tax rolls. The years covered vary for each type of tax and in total cover the period 1645 to 1831. These tax records generally list names of individuals and the amounts paid.

Special categories of records

Photographs and illustrations

- For archive photographs, illustrations from historical records and images of important documents, visit the Image Library.

Maps and plans

- National Records of Scotland holds more than 170,000 maps, plans, architectural and engineering drawings, and digital copies of a selection of several thousand of these can be viewed on this site.

Scottish Cabinet records

- Historic records of the Scottish Cabinet dating from 2005-2006 may be viewed via the Virtual Volumes system.

Coats of Arms

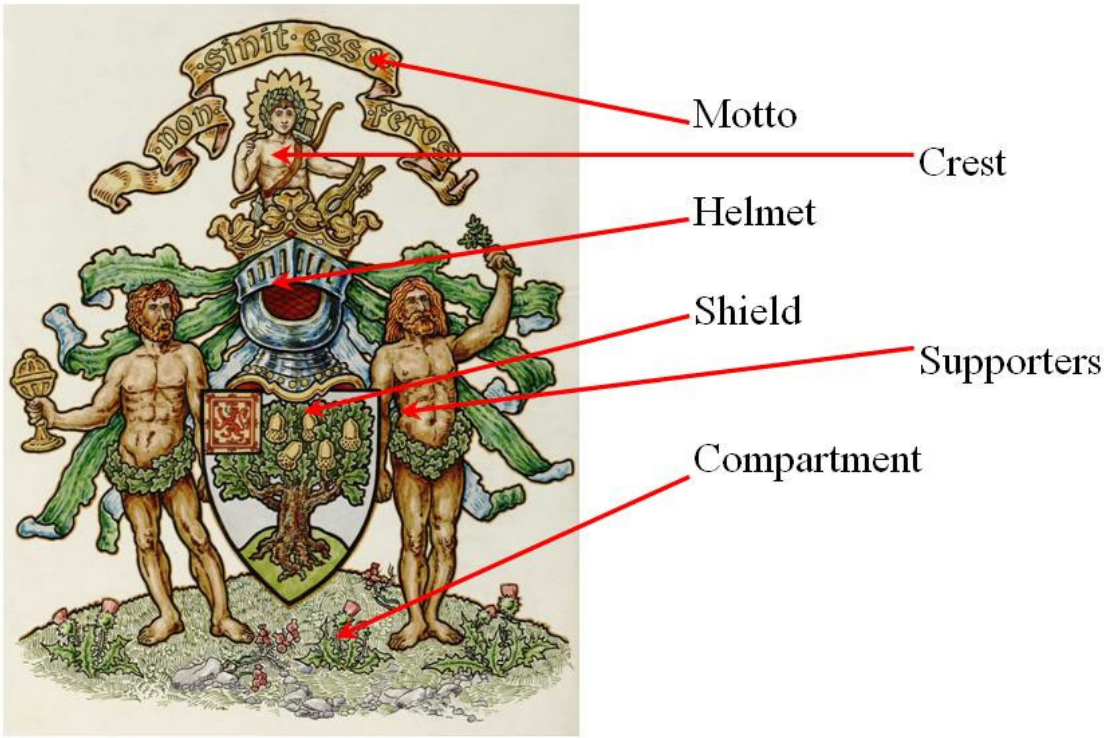
What is a Coat of Arms?

- Coats of Arms were originally used for military purposes and consisted of an actual coat bearing a distinctive design which was worn over a suit of armor. This enabled the knight to be recognized. The design was also displayed on his shield. On his head he wore a helmet and in time this was surmounted by a crest which identified the wearer from a distance and was used particularly during tournaments.
- As the military use of coats of arms declined they were adopted for civilian purposes on seals and to identify property.
- Most personal coats of arms consist of a shield, helmet, crest and motto. Supporters, the figures or beasts standing on either side of the shield, are only granted to particular groups of people, including clan chiefs, peers, and senior knights in orders of chivalry.
- Companies and other corporate organizations such as civic councils, schools, universities, sporting clubs and charities can also have a coat of arms and while some may have shields, crests and mottoes many only have a shield.

Coats of arms

- The Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland contains all recordings of coats of arms in Scotland from 1672 to the present day and it is added to daily. Coats of arms cannot be used legally in Scotland unless they are recorded in that Register. The Register is maintained by the Court of the Lord Lyon, the office responsible for heraldic matters in Scotland.
- These entries can include a considerable amount of genealogical information although the older entries usually have less detail. By the mid 19th recordings often contain details of an individual's descent from his grandfather or earlier even when the individual is being granted a new coat of arms.
- When a person is re-recording arms borne by ancestor, often several generations earlier, an account of that person's ancestry back to the forebear will be included. It is usual for people to have some knowledge of whether an ancestor had a coat of arms. The Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland is not a register of genealogical account. There is a Public Register of Genealogies and Birthbrieves in Scotland which is held in the Court of the Lord Lyon which office also has a large collection of family trees, family histories and other genealogical material.

Coats of arms



Sources and How to Find and Use Them

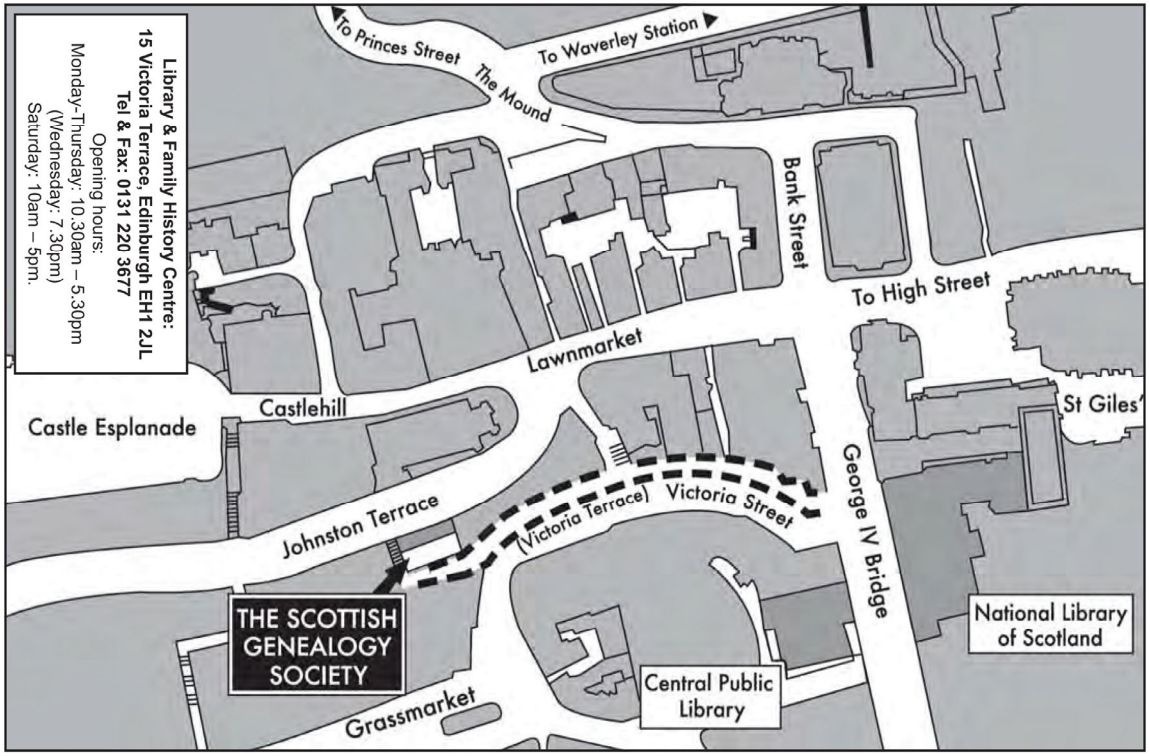
Scottish Genealogical Society

Scottish Genealogy Society Library - Victoria St, Edinburgh EH1 2JL

- Books, journals and manuscripts relating to Scottish family history and the Scots worldwide. Includes indexes and publications produced by family history societies throughout Scotland and monumental (gravestone) inscriptions (largest in Scotland), many of which are unpublished and not available elsewhere.
- Closed Fridays and Sundays.
- http://www.scotsgenealogy.com/

Sources and How to Find and Use Them

Scottish Genealogical Society – how to find it



Sources and How to Find and Use Them

Libraries

National Library of Scotland (NLS) - George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EW

- Legal deposit library and one of the major research libraries in Europe. Contains over 15 million printed items, including Scottish newspapers, magazines, manuscripts, maps, millions of rare and out-of-print books, family and estate papers, trade and craft records, and over 2 million maps dating back to 1300s.
- Open all days except Sunday.
- http://www.nls.uk/

Sources and How to Find and Use Them

Libraries

Glasgow City Archives and the Mitchell Library - 201 North Street Glasgow Scotland G3 7DN

- Poor law, school, police, church, family, council, business and shipbuilding records covering Glasgow and the West of Scotland. Includes historical Glasgow newspapers, voters rolls and directories.
- Open all days except Sunday.
- http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/libraries/the-mitchell-library/Pages/home.aspx

Sources and How to Find and Use Them

National Records of Scotland

National Records of Scotland (NRS) – Princes St at North Bridge, Edinburgh

- National and local government records, church records (both Kirk Session records of the Established Church and records and registers of various other churches), wills & testaments (1513-2001), court and criminal records, valuation rolls and tax records, records of property transactions (sasines), landed estates, family histories, businesses documents
- Open Monday through Friday.
- http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/

Sources and How to Find and Use Them

Registers of Scotland

Registers of Scotland - Princes St at North Bridge, Edinburgh

- Compiles and maintains Scotland property records and other legal documents
- Open Monday through Friday.
- https://www.ros.gov.uk/

Military Service Appeals Tribunal records

The Military Tribunal system was established under the Military Service Act 1916, which lay down terms for mandatory military service.

- The new Military Service Act required all single adult males, aged between 18 and 41, to register for military service unless they possessed a certificate of exemption. By April 1918 the age range was extended, so that men aged from 17 to 51 could be called up, and exemptions were further restricted.
- From 1916, men seeking exemption from military service could apply to local tribunals, appeal tribunals and a central tribunal based in London.
- Local tribunals were appointed by the local registration authorities designated under the National Registration Act 1915 (in most cases these were burgh and city councils). They dealt with attested (voluntary servicemen) and non-attested (conscripted) applications. Recruiting officers or other military representatives were also entitled to attend any hearing and to question applicants.
- An applicant refused exemption by the local tribunal, or dissatisfied with the type of exemption granted, had a right of appeal to the appeal tribunal. These were appointed by the Crown, and in Scotland were held within sheriffdoms. Military representatives or recruiting officers could also appeal to the tribunal against the exemption granted to an applicant.
- The central tribunal at Westminster in London was the final court of appeal. It dealt with difficult cases that would stand as precedent for local tribunals. Any person dissatisfied with a decision of an appeal tribunal could appeal to it, provided they were given leave to do so by the appeal tribunal.
- The central tribunal frequently took over cases involving conscientious objection by men who had already been called up. Some of these records survive in The National Archives in London (The National Archives, MH47).
- Men or employers could claim exemption on the grounds that it was in the national interest to continue their current work. Exemptions were also considered on personal grounds, for example hardship, ill-health or conscientious objection.
- Exemptions granted by tribunals could be permanent, conditional or temporary, and all could be revoked.

Military Service Appeals Tribunal records

What Military Service Appeals Tribunal records survive?

- Due to the sensitive issues that surrounded compulsory military service during and after the First World War, only a small minority of the tribunal papers survive.
- After the war, the Government issued instructions that all tribunal material should be destroyed, except for two samples - the appeal records for Middlesex in England, and the Lothian and Peebles records in Scotland. These were to be retained as a benchmark for possible future use.
- The records of the Lothian and Peebles appeal tribunal are deposited in the National Records of Scotland (National Records of Scotland, HH30) and cover Edinburgh, the Lothians and the Borders.
- Other chance survivals for Scotland exist, including papers from the Ross, Cromarty and Sutherland (Lewis Section) appeal tribunal, which are preserved as part of Stornoway Sheriff Court records (National Records of Scotland, SC33/62).