

Beginning Scottish Genealogy

Fàilte
Welcome
(in Scots Gaelic)



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Basic political terminology

- **Great Britain** includes Scotland, England, and Wales
- **The United Kingdom** has different meanings at different times. 1801-1920, U.K. included Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales. 1921 to present, U.K. includes Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- **British Isles** includes Scotland, England, Ireland, Wales, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man

Differences in Genealogy in the U.S. and in Scotland

- **U.S.** – Records at county courthouses
- **Scotland** – almost no records used early in genealogy were created by local governments – Scottish records created by national government and by the Church of Scotland in its parishes

Differences in Genealogy in the U.S. and in Scotland

- **U.S.** – State governments collect vital statistics and each state chose when this started.
- **Scotland** – National government began recording births, deaths, marriages in 1855. Called civil registration. There are national indexes to these records.

Differences in Genealogy in the U.S. and in Scotland

- **U.S.** – Decennial censuses began 1790 and most have some level of indexing
- **Scotland** - British government began taking national census in 1801 and has continued every 10 years but don't have as much indexing

Differences in Genealogy in the U.S. and in Scotland

- **U.S.** - Probate records by county
- **Scotland** – centralized probate system since 1876 that covers all of Scotland and is indexed

Differences in Genealogy in the U.S. and in Scotland

- **U.S.** – Church records are hard to find and use
- **Scotland** – Church records are one of the most important sources to be used.

Time in Scotland

- Scotland adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1600, but England did not begin using it until 1752.

Vital Records in Scotland



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Vital Records

- Since January 1, 1855 registrations were conducted by district registrars with a copy of the records held locally and another sent to GROS (General Register Office for Scotland) at New Register House. Birth, death and marriage records were recorded. These are indexed in **The statutory index** which contains entries from the indexes to the civil registers of births, deaths and marriages for all Scotland, from 1855 until 2006 (births), 1933(marriages) and 2006 (deaths). These indexes can be searched online at the Scotland's People Web site.

Vital Records

- Prior to 1855, records were recorded by churches in records now called the OPRs (Old Parish Registers). **The old parish register index** contains entries of births & baptisms, banns & marriages from the registers of some 900 parishes of the Established church (Church of Scotland) from 1553 until 1854. **There is no deaths & burials index at present.**

Vital Records

- Birth records less than 100 years old, marriage records less than 75 years old and death records less than 50 years old are deemed to be modern day records and images of these are not available online. For these records it is necessary to order an extract.
- An extract is an officially certified copy of a statutory register entry or copy of a parish register entry or census page from GROS. Extracts of births, marriages and deaths can be used for legal purposes or for formal applications such as passports.

Vital Records

- There is a series of records called Minor Records that recorded births, deaths and marriages of people who were born outside Scotland. Some of these are indexed and some have images on the ScotlandsPeople Web pages.

Vital Records - Marriages

- Mutual consent by males over 14 and females over twelve. But this was rare. In 1929 minimum age for marriage raised to 16. There is no parental consent required.
- GROs has indexes to marriages from 1855 up to 1933 and the images from 1855 to 1933 that can be found on ScotlandsPeople Web site.

Vital Records - Marriages

Regular Marriages

- Performed by a minister of religion (not necessarily Church of Scotland) in the presence of two witnesses. Between 1854 and 1879 required the Proclamation of Banns on two consecutive Sundays. Ministers in each church called out the details of the proposed marriage giving people in each church the opportunity to object. One Sunday this was done in the church of the bride; another in the church of the groom. Sometimes could be done with only one reading if the minister knew the couple well and the certificate to marry could be issued 2 days later and the minister could perform the marriage. The district registrar was to be present at all weddings in his district and he recorded the marriage in the marriage register once he got his recording fee and travel expenses. Some sources indicate that three readings of the banns were required.

Vital Records - Marriages

- Since 1 January 1879, a regular marriage requires the Proclamation of Banns or the Publication of Notice which could be posted in the office of the registrar. The Publication of Notice required filling out forms and a statement regarding perjury if false information was provided. Both parties must have resided in Scotland for at least fifteen days prior to the notice. Notice was posted for seven days to give people a chance to go and lodge a written and signed objection to the marriage.

Vital Records - Marriages

- A Marriage Schedule was issued by the registrar allowing the marriage and it was presented to the minister performing the ceremony. The minister was to insure its completion at the time of the ceremony and the Marriage Schedule had to be mailed or delivered to the registrar within three days or fines were imposed.
- The Marriage (Scotland) Act of 1938, which took effect 1 July 1939, allowed couples to have a civil ceremony.

Vital Records - Marriages

Irregular Marriages

- This was a marriage of consent NOT performed by a minister of religion. Consent could be oral or written. Documentary evidence was a written declaration that the couple accepted each other as husband and wife. If it was oral, two witnesses were required.
- These were not “socially” accepted and were outlawed in England in 1754 in Lord Hardwicke’s Marriage Act. That is when English couples began eloping to Scotland (Gretna Green) to get a quick and easy marriage.

Vital Records - Marriages

- Couples could make a joint application to the sheriff or sheriff substitute within three months and a warrant was issued if the marriage was recognized. The registrar then recorded the marriage once fees were paid.
- In 1856, Lord Brougham's Marriage Act required at least one of the marriage partners to reside in Scotland for twenty-one days. Made it more difficult for English and Irish couples to elope to the various Scottish-border marriage sites.

Vital Records - Marriages

Other ways to register a marriage :

- Get an Extract of Conviction from a Justice of the Peace or other magistrate
- Extract of a Decree of Declarator from a court
- Either of these documents could be used to register the marriage with the registrar.
- After the law which took effect 1 July 1939 – no irregular marriages are valid.

Vital Records - Marriages

But couples can obtain a license from the sheriff which is valid for 10 days. Requirements for the license include:

1. parties have to apply in person
2. One party has to have lived in Scotland for 15 days immediately preceding the application or have a regular place of residence in Scotland
3. No legal impediment to marriage exists
4. Proclamation of Banns or Publication of Notice is not possible prior to the marriage and some other situation keeps the couple from following regular procedures.

Source for most of above information on marriages is Jonas, Linda and Paul Milner, *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your Scottish Ancestors*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books, 2002

Vital Records - Birth Records/Baptismal Records

- Births were recorded beginning in January 1855 as part of the Civil Registrations.
- Images from the Statutory Registers are available online from 1855 to 1908, and an index from 1855 to 2006 at ScotlandsPeople.

Vital Records - Birth Records/Baptismal Records

- Old Parish Registers (OPR) record either birth or baptism dates from 1553 -1854. Images for these are online at ScotlandsPeople

Vital Records - Birth Records/Baptismal Records

- **Registers of Neglected Entries** were compiled for each parish by the Registrar-General after statutory registration began in 1855. These contain a small number of birth 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.
- Sometimes people baptized more than one child on the same day so do not assume they are twins.

Vital Records - Death Records

- Prior to 1855, the OPRs are the first place to check. But, many parishes did not record deaths and when they did there is often little detail. If a fee was involved for renting a mortcloth or pall (the cloth placed over a coffin at the funeral), then it may have been recorded. Really poor people and the landed families who donated the mortcloths did not have to pay so they would not be recorded. Also, mortcloths were not always used for children under the age of ten. In some parishes, privately owned mortcloths could be rented cheaper than from the parish so they were not recorded in the parish register.

Church Records in Scotland



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Church Records

- For pre-1855 records relating to members of other churches, the [National Archives of Scotland](#) or individual church headquarters may be of some help.
- Old Parish registers available at ScotlandsPeople Web site

Church Records

- The National Archives of Scotland has a number of lists from Church of Scotland and other churches from the nineteenth century, Lists include: members lists, communion rolls, lists of communicants, visitation rolls, catechismal rolls, examination rolls and account books which may have listed who rented seats in the church.

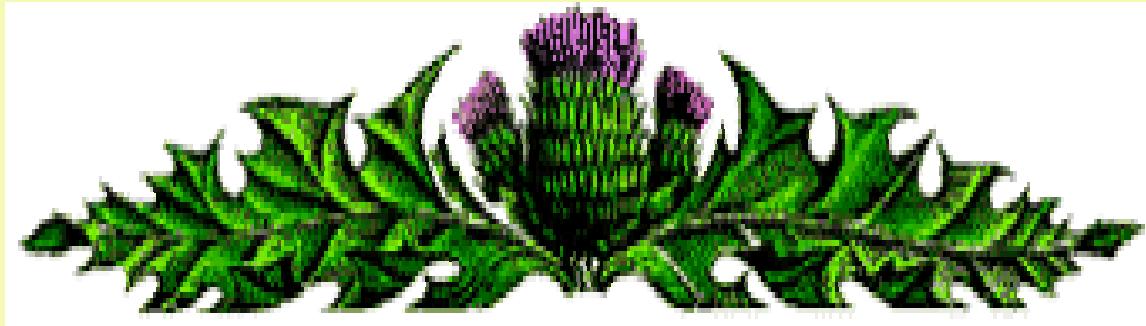
Church Records

- Kirk session minutes can also be useful. Sometimes list people transferring from one parish to another. Kirk Session records give records of relief to the poor, especially prior to Poor Law Act of 1845, and disciplining of wrongdoers

Church Records

- Nonconformist church records can be at local churches, in local archives or at National Archives of Scotland. Most Episcopal records are at local churches. Roman Catholic registers of births, deaths, marriages pre-1855 have been photocopied and are at National Archives of Scotland.

Wills and Testaments



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Wills and Testaments

Last Will & testament – Will is used to designate how a person wants his/her real property (land and buildings) to be distributed. Testament describes who gets the personal or moveable property.

Until 1868, no choice as to who got real, or heritable, property. Real property automatically went to nearest legal heir which meant people could not write a will until 1868.

Wills and Testaments

- **Testament** – recorded person's wishes about personal or moveable property.
- Two types of testaments:
 - Testamentamentar – written by person before death
 - Testament dative – written by court when person did not leave a written testament

Wills and Testaments

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 e.g. household and personal effects, investments, tools, machinery. It was divided into a maximum of three parts: the widow's part, the bairns part (all children had a right to an equal share) and the dead's part.

Wills and Testaments

- **The Wills & Testaments Index**

The wills & testaments index contains over 611,000 index entries to Scottish wills and testaments dating from 1513 to 1901. Each index entry lists the surname, forename, title, occupation and place of residence (where these are given) of the deceased person, the court in which the testament was recorded, with the date. Index entries do not include names of executors, trustees or heirs to the estate. They also do not include the deceased's date of death, or the value of the estate.

Names and Naming in Scotland



Names

- Permanent surnames began to be used in the 12th century by the wealthy and influential in Scottish society.
- Some Highland areas did not commonly adopt surnames until 18th century
- Northern Isles surnames not common until 19th century

Names

- A number of foreign influences on Scottish names – French, Norman, Norse, Pict, Anglian, Gaelic, Irish ...

Names

- Standardized spelling was not begun until mid- to late 19th century
- Four main types of surname:
 - Local names
 - Relationship names
 - Occupational names
 - Nicknames

Local names

- Refer to place of origin or residence and often changed over time
- Example from Holton and Winch's book
Origin – de Bruce, originally from Brius (now Brix) in Normandy

Residence – Wood or Marsh

Relationship Names

- Patronymics – comes from the Christian or personal name of the father used as a surname. Mac or Mc means son of. Irish names are preceded by O', like O'Connor, Welsh names preceded by ab or ap. Thus we get the name Bowen from ab Owen, son of Owen.
- Son of Donald = Donaldson

Relationship Names, continued

- Examples – Alexander Donaldson is the son of Donald Johnson who is the son of John Robertson. Surnames within families change with each generation. **Donaldson is the English form.**
- Alexander Donaldson may also be recorded as Alexander MacDonald (or Mc or M') **Scottish form**
- If recorded in **Gaelic** this same Alexander Donaldson would be recorded as Alisdair MacDhomhnuill mhic Iain (Alexander son of Donald son of John).

Relationship Names, continued

- John Donaldson's son might be Peter Johnson, whose son might be Magnus Peterson, and so on.
- Practice faded in Lowlands first (15th century)
- Continued in the Highlands and Islands into 18th century;
- Northern Islands until 19th century

Relationship names, continued

“The system was applied to daughters’ names too, with the girl adopting the father’s forename with “daughter” applied to the end of the name. The “daughter” suffix was habitually abbreviated in the records, e.g. Janet Adamsdaughter becomes Janet Adamsdaur, or Adamsdr or Adamsd.

Relationship names, continued

An entry from the Lerwick OPR in 1734, neatly illustrates the effect of patronymics with the birth/baptism of William Laurenceson to Laur. Erasmuson and Katharine Nicollsd.

Source:

<http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/content/help/index.aspx?r=551&560> copied and pasted 28 December 2008 from Scotland's People web site

Relationship names, continued

- “Daughter of” in Scotland is indicated by dr not Mac or Mc nor by using “son” on the end.
- N’ , Nc, Nac are the feminine of M’ , Mac, or Mc and is an abbreviation of “nighean mhic”
- “examples in the old parish registers, particularly in the 17th and 18th centuries, e.g. Ncfarlane, Ncdonald, Ncdearmit, Ncfee, but there are only isolated examples by the early 19th century”

Source:

<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/content/help/index.aspx?r=551&560> copied and pasted 28 December 2008 from Scotland’s people web site

Relationship names, continued

Mhic can be written as Vc or V', as in Alexander MacDonald Vclain

“**Vc**, meaning grandson or granddaughter, for example, in 1673 Dugall Mcdugall Vcean (Dugall, son of Dugall, grandson of Ean) married Marie Camron or NcNdonochie Vcewn”

Source: <http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/content/help/index.aspx?r=551&560> copied and pasted 28 December 2008 from Scotland's People web site

Relationship names, continued

- Girls names can also be made by adding “ina” to the male name. Andrewina, Jamesina, etc. They are sometimes indexed under “ina”. Pronounced Eye na.

Relationship Names, continued

- Qu is the Scottish spelling of W and can be interchanged with wh and w.
- White might be recorded as Quhit, Quhytt, Quhyitt, Quhetit, Quheyte, Quhyte, etc.

These examples came from *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your Scottish Ancestors* by Linda Jonas and Paul Milner, 2002, and <http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/content/help/index.aspx?r=551&560> accessed 28 December 2008 from Scotland's People web site

Relationship Names, continued

- Clan and Sept names also create problems
- Sometimes people would adopt the name of the clan chief, but were not related/descended from.
- Example from the Jonas and Milner book
–Agnes McLeod and Nancy MacCuaig are the same person.

Relationship Names, continued

- Death record indicated maiden name was Agnes McLeod
- Marriage record of her daughter gave the name as Ann McLeod. Woman's own marriage record said that her maiden name was Nancy MacCuaig.

Relationship Names, continued

- Finally discovered in an index to cemetery inscriptions of the area where she lived, they found that “The MacCuaigs have changed their name to McLeod.” In a book about clans they found that MacCuaig is a sept of McLeod.

Occupational Names

- Smith, Baker (Baxter), Butcher, Dyer (Litster), Mason, Tailor, etc.
- Other problems – Gaelic, English and Latin all used

Example: Surname Gow is occupational name from the Gaelic word gobha which means smith. Faber is the Latin version, so you may find it listed in different records in different ways (Jonas & Milner,2002)

Occupational, continued

- Many records written in Latin – souter is the Scots word for shoemaker. Greusaich (Grassick) Gaelic, Sutor is Latin word so you will find same person listed under Shoemaker, Sutor, Souter, or Grassick and variant spellings of each depending on what language the records were in. (Jonas and Milner, 2002)

Nicknames, Diminutives, etc.

- Nicknames – from appearance, characteristics, or qualities like Short, Good, Savage, Long

Also common in Scotland they have what they call to-names, t-names, or other names.

To-names or t-names are the norm in some areas of Scotland

To-names or t-names

- Especially common in northeast coast of Scotland, the border with England and in the Western Highlands.
- These developed because there were too few surnames in these areas and many people with the same Christian names. This was a way of distinguishing among them.

To-names or t-names, cont.

- Often a family added the name of the fishing boat as the to-name and sometimes that is what has come down through the decades.
- In registers, these to-names, t-names are often in parentheses to help distinguish from a middle name.

Nicknames, Diminutives, Etc., cont.

- Elizabeth could be Beth, Bess, Betty,
- Agnes, Nancy, and Ann are all variations of the same name
- John – Ian
- Fred or Freddy could be short for Alfred or Frederick

More name idiosyncracies

- Name variations make Scottish research difficult.
- Use books listed in “Resources for ...” and purchase **at least** one good name book
- Sometimes an inheritor would take surname of the person from whom they inherited

More name idiosyncracies

- Some male names appear feminine to us:
Ann, Primrose and other surnames used as Christian names
- Some female names we think of as masculine: Nicholas, Bruce, John, Graham. These commonly used in north of Scotland for females and males

More name idiosyncracies

- Some names interchangeable – Donald and Daniel and Patrick and Peter
- Gaelic influence has people listed under a variety of names –
 - Morag = Sarah
 - Callum = Malcolm
 - Hamish = James
- Women often continued to use their maiden names, so check indexes and records under both married and maiden names

Naming Patterns in Scotland

- First son named after paternal grandfather
- Second son named after maternal grandfather
- Third son named after father
- Fourth son named after father's brother

Naming patterns, cont.

- Eldest daughter named after maternal grandmother
- Second daughter named after paternal grandmother
- Third daughter named after mother
- Fourth daughter named after mother's sister

Naming patterns, cont.

- People might also name their children for the minister or midwife. However, they might call them the original name they planned at home and if person grew up with the original name, finding them in the records could be difficult.

Naming Patterns, Cont.

There are variations on this and good information can be found in the book by Hamilton-Edwards listed in “Resources for ...” list.

Also sometimes more than one child in the same family would have the same name. This was often because the older children of the same name had died.

Vocabulary

Coats of Arms

Coats of Arms in Scotland can only belong to one person at a time. There is no single Coat of Arms which all people of the same name can use – often miscalled a “family Coat of Arms”. As Coats of Arms originated in order to identify a person it is clear that it would not be practical if more than one person could use exactly the same design. Arms descend to the heir in each generation of the person to whom they were originally granted and other descendants who bear the same surname may apply for a slightly different version of the Arms to be recorded in the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland. In Scotland the shields of unrelated people with the same surname may bear similarities as the design will be based on the shield of the clan chief, the head of the family.

<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/content/help/index.aspx?r=554&1283>, accessed January 27, 2009.

Vocabulary

- **The Court of the Lord Lyon**

http://www.lyon-court.com/lordlyon/CCC_FirstPage.jsp

The official heraldry office for Scotland. "The Court of the Lord Lyon is the heraldic authority for Scotland and deals with all matters relating to Scottish Heraldry and Coats of Arms and maintains the Scottish Public Registers of Arms and Genealogies." Website accessed February 01, 2009. There are links to more information about clans, tartans and coats of arms.

Vocabulary

Deeds, Registers of

These registers were used to record a wide range of legal transactions including marriage contracts (which were registered in deeds after the death of one or both spouses), wills and testaments, dispositions and settlements of trusts, bonds detailing loans of money, arrangements for apprenticeships, and most any kind of agreement between people. Prior to 1809 these could be registered in any court. Many are in the National Archives of Scotland, others are in local archives. These were often recorded many years after the activity in question.

Vocabulary

General Register Office of Scotland (GROS)

<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/index.html>

The government office that handles the census and vital records registrations for Scotland.

Vocabulary

Heritors

Heritors were the landowners and records were kept in the parishes

Kirk Session Records –

Records of Church of Scotland created at the parish level by the body that conducted the church's business for that parish

Vocabulary

National Register of Archives for Scotland (NRAS)

<http://www.nas.gov.uk/onlineRegister/>

This listing was set up in 1946 to compile a record of collections of private papers in Scotland, to encourage their care, and to make information about them available to researchers and others. It is under the National Archives of Scotland.

The Register is a listing of valuable or useful papers held by private individuals and families, landed estates, clubs and societies, businesses and law firms. This Register also includes surveys (lists) of similar papers which have been deposited in the archives and libraries of local authorities, universities, institutions and companies.

Paper copies are available at certain repositories and some can be searched online. They are working on getting all the listings online at the above site.

Vocabulary

Mortcloth -

The funeral pall or cloth used to cover the coffin.

These could be rented from the parish or private companies for use at the funeral. The parishes kept records of the rentals which can sometime be the way to find death information about a person. The landed families who donated the cloths to the parish and the very poor did not have to rent these and usually they were not used for children under age ten. Those categories of people would not be entered in the parish's mortcloth dues registers.

Vocabulary

RCEs or Register of Corrected Entries

Registers of corrections to various records. When looking at records will sometimes find a note in the left margin 'RCE' or 'Reg. Cor. Ent.' followed by a volume number, page number and date. RCE stands for Register of Corrected Entries, or, after 1965, Register of Corrections, Etc. If, after an entry in a register had been completed, an error was discovered or some other amendment was required as a result of new information, the original entry could not be altered. Instead, each registrar kept a Register of Corrected Entries in which such amendments were written, originally after they had been approved by a sheriff. Corrections might be to name, residence, identity, or as a result of a precognition from a procurator fiscal giving additional or amended information on cause or circumstances of death. When an extract certificate is issued of an entry to which an RCE relates, the extract must reflect the amendments recorded in the RCE. From Web page

Vocabulary

Retours, or services of heirs

Records of heritable property recording the name of the heir and the relative whose property is being transferred. Retours began in 1530, were written in Latin until 1847, except for years 1652-1659. There are print indexes in English in major research libraries. Original records are housed in the National Archives of Scotland. Often retours were not recorded until decades after the transfer took place.

Vocabulary

Sasines – (Pronounced saysins)

Record of transfer of land and houses recorded in Registers of Sasines. Scottish form of the English word *seizin*. containing the transfer of ownership of land and houses beginning in 1617. At the very least, they provide information about the property – location and boundaries. Even the smallest land/property transfers are recorded here. These records often mention past ownership and uses



Thank You

Tapadh Leibh (tap-uh leev)

See You Soon

Chi mi dh'aithghearr sibh
(Chee mee ghie-yar sheev)