

Helping beginners get started with their Family History

ON AT
FIFE
ARCHIVES



1. Introduction: what, who, why, where?

Family History Research is a cross between a jig-saw puzzle and a whodunit. The search into any family's history may pick up some famous characters, but is more likely to produce a solid line of ordinary everyday folk, interspersed with the odd black sheep to add spice to the dish. What makes all this fascinating is that the people you turn up are all special to them. They are their ancestors, and their strengths and weaknesses went into making them.

Some people search in a straight line, usually the paternal line: the line of descent of the surname. Others broaden the search: two parents, four grandparents, eight great grandparents, and so on, forming the traditional family tree. A few, with unusual names to work with, go for a complete survey of the name and its parallel developments – what is known as a "One Name Study". Most people like to do some investigating into the way their various ancestors lived: where they lived, where they went to school, what jobs they had, were they rich or poor, what were the big issues of the day that would have concerned them, how did they fit in to the life of the town or village where they lived. This brings the dry facts of history to life in a way that is directly relevant to them. Whatever they choose to do, the extent of the research is up to them, and only they can say when they feel they have had enough.

Family History is a hobby currently enjoying considerable popularity among all ages. Four libraries in Fife, Dunfermline Carnegie Library and Galleries, Kirkcaldy Galleries, Methil Library and Cupar Library have machines and equipment specially designed to assist the Family History Researcher.

This guide is intended as an introduction to Family History Research: how to get started, where to find the relevant material and resources and what to do when you get there.

2. Step One - Family

Always start from the present and work back. Before embarking on hours of research, start by asking family members, particularly older generations, about the history of the family. Someone may have already done some work or may have made themselves the fount of knowledge on the family and its connections. Look for family papers, photographs, diaries or a family bible passed down through the generations.

Specific dates may be difficult to obtain, however try to narrow dates down placing them in order of events: "After a death", "During the General Strike?" or "Old enough to serve in the Second World War?" Sometimes relatives will remember birthdays and anniversaries, but not the year.

At this early stage it is important to build up a picture of the family with as many key elements as you can gather: dates and places of birth, marriage and death and any additional information about education, careers, addresses etc.

A Pedigree chart is essential to keep the actual or estimated dates safe. Complete what you can and when you have exhausted all avenues of where information may be held, it is time to start checking in detail and start working backwards.

3. Step Two - On-Line Searches

1. ScotlandsPeople and Ancestry websites

ScotlandsPeople Website www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/

ScotlandsPeople is one of the largest online resources of original genealogical information. With over 50 million records to access, the site includes records from the General register Office for Scotland, the National Records of Scotland and the Court of the Lord Lyon. Records on site include Statutory

Registers of births, marriages and deaths, Old Parish Registers, Census Returns, Catholic Registers and Wills.

What can be accessed

Indexes of Statutory Registers of births, marriages and deaths from 1855 to 1914

Images of Statutory Registers of births from 1855 to 1913

Images of Statutory Registers of marriages from 1855 to 1938

Images of Statutory Registers of deaths from 1855 to 1963

Indexes and images of Old Parish registers of births/baptisms, death/burials and marriage/proclamation of banns.

Census Returns for 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1901, and 1911

Catholic Parish registers from 1703 – 1855 (complete), 1855 -1908 (incomplete)

Wills and Testaments from 1513 – 1925

Coats of Arms from 1672 – 1913

Valuation Rolls for 1875, 1885, 1895, 1905, 1915, 1920, 1925.

How to access the site

This is a subscription website. The site operates by using a system of credits for various operations. Credits are used for searching and viewing information on births, marriages and deaths, and Census Returns. These credits remain valid for an extended period of time – 365 days.

To view one page of matches costs **1** credit. There will be up to a maximum of 25 matches/entries on each page.

To view an image of the record selected from the matches costs **5** credits. For the majority of records this will involve only a one-page image. Exceptions are the Census Returns which could have a household extended over two pages.

In that case **5** credits are charged for each page viewed.

However, searching the indexes to the Wills & Testaments costs **10** credits.

Credits can be acquired in 3 different ways:

1. Credit/Debit Card

- Log on to the ScotlandsPeople website at www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk and register. The price of 30 credits is £7.00 and most credit cards are accepted including Visa, Mastercard, Visa Debit, Switch, Solo, Delta and JCB.
- Select the number of credits you would like to purchase from the drop-down menu, then click on the PURCHASE button. You will be taken to the credit purchasing page.
- Follow the payment instructions. When you make payment please ensure that you allow enough time for the transaction to finalise. Once payment is authorised, your credits will be allocated and your one year session of access will begin.

2. ScotlandsPeople Voucher Scheme

30 credit vouchers can be ordered by post by using the on-line order form and paying by credit card or cheque. A ScotlandsPeople user account is necessary before purchasing any vouchers. When the voucher is received a scratch off panel at the back of the voucher will reveal the Voucher Code. The voucher code must be typed EXACTLY as it is printed on the panel into the Voucher Code box. Once this has been done click 'Use Voucher' and the 30 credits will be added to the account.

Registering

Registering on the site is free. All that is required is a valid e-mail address.

Restrictions

The restrictions to online searches are restricted as follows:

- Over 100 years old for births
- Over 75 years old for marriages
- Over 50 years old for deaths

This is in accordance with the General Register Office Scotland's policy to protect the privacy of individuals.

Viewed Images

Once images have been purchased, they can be viewed over and over and will remain permanently in the account, even although the credits have expired. The account always remains accessible, even if the credits are **0**. Simply click **Viewed Images on the menu bar** to retrieve them.

Previous Searches

Similarly, all searches made can be viewed over and over, and are stored in the account. Click **Previous Searches** on menu bar to retrieve them.

Deletion of Viewed Images/Previous Searches

If images are deleted from one part of the account they are automatically deleted from the whole account and cannot be recovered.

To delete on either screen, scroll to the bottom and under **Display and filter options**, tick **Allow Deletion**. A third column will appear offering the option to delete.

Be careful before choosing as once you click DELETE the particular image or search will go.

Timeline

This option is available when the image has been added and can be placed in the Timeline immediately.

Timeline lists images in chronological order, i.e. latest record first.

Alternatively an image can be added to the timeline at any time by accessing **Viewed Images**.

2. **Ancestry**

Ancestry.co.uk is the UK's favourite family history website, offering members access to 1 billion searchable UK family history records. Launched in 2002, Ancestry.co.uk's extensive collection enables members to explore their family history using censuses, the fully indexed birth, marriage and death records, passenger lists, the British phone books, military and parish records. Members can also explore names in other family trees and upload photographs of their own, and in doing so connect to millions of other members making their own discoveries.

Ancestryinstitution.com is the web address to use in all Fife Libraries to access this website. **Ancestry.com Inc.**, formerly **The Generations Network**, is a [privately held Internet company](#) based in [Provo, Utah](#), United States. The largest [for-profit genealogy](#) company in the world, it operates a network of genealogical and historical record websites focused on the United States and nine foreign countries, develops and markets genealogical software, and offers a wide array of genealogical related services. As of December 2013, the company provided access to approximately 12.7 billion records and had 2.14 million paying subscribers. User-generated content included 191 million uploaded photos and more than 16 million uploaded stories.

Fife Libraries receive free access due to a reciprocal arrangement. Ancestry digitised and uploaded some historical material from Fife Library Collections and in return we have free access. This arrangement is reviewed regularly.

What can be accessed

Ancestry holds a huge amount of material and users should be aware that in order to avoid large numbers of 'hits' searches should be as narrow as possible. Complete as many fields as possible and use the map to limit areas not required.

Ancestry offers "**select**" **Birth, Marriage** and **Death** searches.

[Scotland, Select Births and Baptisms, 1564-1950](#)

[Scotland, Select Marriages, 1561-1910](#)

[Great Britain, Select Deaths and Burials, 1778-1988](#)

[Great Britain, Select Births and Baptisms, 1571-1977](#)

[Great Britain, Select Marriages, 1797-1988](#)

Scotland Census & Voter Lists

[1901 Scotland Census](#)

[1891 Scotland Census](#)

[1881 Scotland Census](#)

[1871 Scotland Census](#)

[1861 Scotland Census](#)

[1851 Scotland Census](#)

[1841 Scotland Census](#)

All related to Scotland:

[UK, Poll Books and Electoral Registers, 1538-1893](#)

[1851 United Kingdom Census Sample](#)

[Fife, Scotland, Voters Lists, 1832-1894](#)

[Perth, Scotland, Survey of Inhabitants, 1766, 1773](#)

Scotland Military

[UK, De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, 1914-1919](#)

[The French and Indian War from Scottish Sources](#)

Other Military collections related to Scotland

Scotland Immigration & Travel

[Glasgow, Scotland, Crew Lists, 1863 - 1901](#)

[Later Scots-Irish Links, 1575-1725 Part Three](#)

[Emigrants from Scotland to America, 1774-1775](#)

[Later Scots-Irish Links, 1575-1725 Part Four](#)

[Later Scots-Irish Links, 1725-1825](#)

Other [Immigration & Travel collections related to Scotland. \(20\)](#)

Scotland Newspapers & Publications

[Penny Magazine, 1832-1844](#)

[Illustrated London News](#)

[Notes and Queries for Somerset and Dorset, 1888-1899, 1905-1906](#)

[The Tewkesbury Yearly Register and Magazine, 1830-1850](#)

Other Newspapers & Publications collections

Scotland Schools, Directories & Church Histories

[UK, Railway Employment Records, 1833-1956](#)

[British Postal Service Appointment Books, 1737-1969](#)

[U.K., City and County Directories, 1600s-1900s](#)

[UK, Civil Engineer Lists, 1818-1930](#)

[UK, Electrical Engineer Lists, 1871-1930](#)

View all Scotland Schools, Directories & Church Histories

Scotland Tax, Criminal, Land & Wills

[Perthshire, Scotland, Cess, Stent and Valuation Rolls, 1650-1899](#)

[UK, Register of Duties Paid for Apprentices' Indentures, 1710-1811](#)

[UK Royal Navy Medical Journals, 1817-1857](#)

[Perth, Scotland, Register of Deeds, 1566-1811](#)

[Web: Scotland, Prison Records Index, 1828-1878](#)

View all Scotland Tax, Criminal, Land & Wills

Scotland Reference, Dictionaries & Almanacs

[The General Armory of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales](#)

[Topographical Dictionary of Scotland \(2 vols\)](#)

[Oliver & Boyd's New Edinburgh Almanac for 1847](#)

[A General Description of the East Coast of Scotland from Edinburgh to Cullen](#)

[The commissariat record of Hamilton and Campsie](#)

View all Scotland Reference, Dictionaries & Almanacs

Scotland Maps, Atlases & Gazetteers

[Great Britain, Atlas and Index of Parish Registers](#)

[The Imperial Gazetteer of Scotland](#)

[Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland](#)

[Gazetteer of Scotland](#)

Other Maps, Atlases & Gazetteers collections related to Scotland

Scotland Stories, Memories & Histories

[Scots-Irish: The Scot in North Britain, North Ireland and North America, Vol. 2](#)

[Pennsylvania Genealogies: Chiefly Scotch-Irish and German](#)

[Scots-Irish in Virginia, Vol. 3](#) Scots-Irish in Virginia, Vol 2

[Scots-Irish in Virginia, Vol. 2](#)

[Scots-Irish](#)

View all Scotland Stories, Memories & Histories

Scotland Pictures

There are no Pictures collections *unique* to Scotland

View other Pictures collections related to Scotland.

4. Step Two - New Register House

New Register House in Edinburgh (behind the Scottish Record Office at the Waverley end of Princes Street) is the repository for all the modern registers of **births**, **marriages** and **deaths** and a lot more besides.

Fees and charges:

A day pass costs £15.00

A three month search pass costs £490.00

An annual search pass costs £1450.00

Assisted searches are £20.00 per hour plus the day search fee of £15.00

Helpers for disabled customers do not pay.

Group evening visits

Eight to 20 people per group costs £200.00

Twenty one to 40 people per group costs £250.00

Seats can be booked in advance and during spring and summer months this might be advisable.

A free starter search is available.

All indexes are by year of registration (which is usually **but not always** the same as the year of the event). Within this there are Male and Female indexes, be aware of this. In every case the index gives the registration district name and number, and the entry number, which together with the year will allow the entry to be checked.

Compulsory registration of births, marriages and deaths in Scotland was introduced in 1855. It is possible to purchase official copies of original entries, but there is a charge (see attached rates).

For research purposes copying can suffice. Copy everything from the entry to ensure that all the information is recorded and not just useful elements.

Sometime in the future other information may prove vital.

The **BIRTH** index is the most straightforward. Names are listed alphabetically.

The **MARRIAGE** index is similar, but there are now two names to search.

The woman's name will be listed under both her maiden and married surname, so cross checking can be done.

The **DEATH** index also lists a woman under both maiden and married surname. From 1868 the death indexes include the age of the deceased, which helps to eliminate all those of a widely differing age.

The detail in the entries is as supplied to the Registrar. Dates and ages are not always accurate, sometimes there are blanks where the information is not known, particularly when the information has not been given by a relative. Spelling of names may vary, and middle names may be added or dropped throughout a lifetime. The exact details given in the registers varied slightly over the years. The first one, 1855, had some extra bonuses. Unfortunately it proved too difficult to maintain this standard and from 1856 onwards the general pattern was set. In every case a first column at the beginning of the entry is usually blank, but if there is anything entered there it could be a vital clue, as it will refer to an amendment or extra information. Ask the staff at New Register House to help you find these extra details.

The book, "Tracing Your Scottish Ancestors: a guide to ancestry research in the National Records of Scotland and ScotlandsPeople" edited by Tristram Clarke is available in the Family History section in Kirkcaldy Galleries and Dunfermline Carnegie, Cupar and Methil libraries.

There are also numerous other publications on Family History and Genealogy worth looking at.

5. Step Three - The Local History Collection

The Local History Departments in Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy and Cupar and the Family History Room in Methil hold large numbers of sources that will be of use to family historians.

The three main sources that will be the next port of call are:

- 1. The Index to the Old Parish registers** for Fife and the **International Genealogical Index (IGI)** also known as the "Mormon Index", as it is produced by the Mormon Church (Church of the Latter Day Saints) for all the counties of Scotland.

These indexes are on microfiche and list births, christenings and marriages.

Within each county, names are listed alphabetically and chronologically within each name.

For a **marriage**, the information given is :

the name of the husband/wife

the date of the event

the parish where it took place

For a **Birth or Christening** the indexes give:

the name of both parents (if available)

the date of the event

the parish where it took place

In both cases there are sometimes added marks to indicate that the original record contains additional information, however these indexes should **always** be checked against the original full entry. Mistakes can and are made and you should never assume that the indexes are correct, or that if an entry does not appear in the index that it does not exist. The 1988 edition and the 1992 edition both contain information not in the other, so both should be checked.

- 2. The Old Parish Registers (OPRs).** The four locations hold the OPRs for all the parishes in Fife and Kinross, and for Culross and Tulliallan which originally formed part of Perth-shire. Before 1855 the only official records of births and marriages and to a lesser extent, deaths were the parish registers of the Church of Scotland. Unfortunately not everyone took the trouble to register every event, especially when it sometimes cost them money to do so. Add to this the fact that the registers were kept with considerable variety of care, depending largely on the interest and education of the clerk, and it will be seen that they are in no way as reliable as the post 1855 registers. The details clerks noted varies considerably, some giving trades, witnesses or some idea of addresses, and some giving just the bare minimum of

facts. Most did give a mother's maiden name. It is important to remember that these registers are from the Established Church of Scotland and often do not contain details of events relating to other denominations ie. Quakers, Methodists, Roman Catholics and after 1733, the myriad of different sections that split from the Established Church.

The age, the handwriting and state of repair of some of the registers can be challenging. At times difficult to read, sometimes impossible. Over the years some volumes of registers have been lost or destroyed so the result is gaps in the records. Different parishes have records surviving from different dates. However, OPRs are the main source of information for pre-1855 events. It should also be noted here that some of the parish registers are considerably more than just a list of birth, marriages and deaths. Several of the earlier ones are also the Kirk Session Records.

- 3. The Census Records.** The 'big four' once again hold the census records for all the parishes in Fife and Kinross and for Culross and Tulliallan, which originally formed part of Perth-shire. A census has been taken in Britain every ten years since 1801, with the exception of 1941, when the Second World War was being fought. Unfortunately with a few isolated exceptions only statistics were kept from the first 4 censuses, so, in general, the first meaningful available census is the one from 1841. Census records are not released until 100 years after the date of the census. This is to protect the privacy of the individual during his or her lifetime. Most parishes have 6 censuses available to the researcher. The 1841 lists the names of the inhabitants of the parish, their age (for those over the age of 20, their age has been rounded up to the nearest 5 years. It also gives their occupations and lastly indicates if born in Scotland and gives the county or otherwise. If not born in Scotland F is for foreigner, E for England and I for Ireland. A single slash / refers to a new **household** and a double slash // denotes a new **house** or **building**.

From 1851 onwards details given are of more specific use to ancestor hunters. The Head of the household is indicated, and all the members of the household have their relationship to the head given. The census also asks for Married/Unmarried/Widowed and a more exact age is given. The most useful change is that the details of **Where Born**, now lists the county and parish if in Scotland, but only asks for the country if outside Scotland. Some enumerators, so used to detailing more, continued to give extra information.

4. Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy, Cupar and Methil Local History Library departments will all hold material relating to their specific areas. The list of what they hold will be too long to detail, but some of the following material will be available in each of the four areas:

Monumental Inscriptions – The transcribed and indexed records of inscriptions from pre 1855 and some later gravestones. Kinross-shire, Clackmannan, West Lothian, East and west Stirling and south Perthshire are available in some locations.

Fife Deaths 1822-1854 – This index of death notices and obituaries has been compiled from Fife newspapers by Andrew J Campbell, and is arranged alphabetically within each parish. It gives information on date of death, place and relatives and details the newspaper in which the announcement was made.

Fife Deaths Abroad 1855-1900 - An index produced by Andrew J Campbell and listed by parish. This list is taken from newspaper notices, gives details of people originally from Fife, who died overseas and who would usually not be listed at New Register House.

Directories,

Almanacs,

Registers,
Voters Rolls,
Valuation Rolls,
Fife Shop Keepers and Traders 1820-1870,
Burgh records,
Town Council Records,
Church records,
Trade and Work Records,
Military Records,
Clubs, Societies and other Social Groups,
Poor Relief Records,
Newspapers,
Maps,
General Local History Material