DISCOVER YOUR SCOTTISH ANCESTORS

Cover image: Dornhnall Sheoc and Mairi with family, North Sharbost, Lewis GD12, courtesy of CEATS Siabost, the West Side Society, Lewis and Tasglann nan Eilean.

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PRESERVE YOUR FAMILY BOOKS, PAPERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS. PROTECT THEM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF YOUR FAMILY AND HISTORICAL RESEARCHERS

Caring for your family papers can ensure their preservation for future family, local history and historical researchers. Everyday items can contain valuable information, clues about a particular time and place, as well as being a powerful emotional connection for future generations.

Here are some top tips for preserving your family papers from the Head of Conservation at the National Records of Scotland.

Storage: store in a cool, dry, ventilated area, somewhere you can easily access in order to check for changes in the conditions. Avoid attics, basements, sheds or places near radiators and windows. Remember that condensation and moisture are more likely to collect on external walls.

Boxing: archival boxes are ideal, but any box is better than none. Deep drawers or boxes are best. Be sure that the box fits the item - don't stuff oversized items into smaller boxes.

Folding: avoid folding documents. Be very careful if handling previously folded items.

Wrapping: consider secondary protection inside the box by wrapping items using acid-free material (avoid plastic and polythene).

Checking: check furniture for woodworm and other pests regularly. Ensure your stored papers, photographs and books are safe, dry and pest-free.

Binding: don't use sellotape, rubber bands, plastic non-archival sleeves and containers, sticky photo albums or any metallic fasteners that can corrode. Use acid free cotton tape if necessary.

Supplies: virtually nothing that you can buy over the counter is archival and specialist supply catalogues can be confusing. Consult your local archive for advice.

Handling: be careful and gentle. Make sure you have clean, dry hands. Gloves aren't necessary except, perhaps, for some photographs. Avoid touching the surface of photographs. Don't have food or drink around your documents. Use pencils, not pens, when near documents.

Displaying: displaying items is not recommended because light and inadequate framing can cause irreversible loss or damage. Display a copy of the item, or if you must display the original, obtain a conservation frame and keep the item away from light and heat.

Copying: try to only scan an item once. Scanning means you are subjecting the item to light and heat so be cautious doing this and limit the number of times that you do it.

Repairing: if book covers have come loose don't attempt to re-stick them, tie them up using cotton tape. Don't attempt any repairs yourself, always ask an expert.

Skin and seals: if you find parchment, shellac or wax seals, get specialist advice.

Get help: approach your local archive for advice or email us at contact@scottisharchives.org.uk and we will put you in touch with someone who can help.

Accretion and Torn Paper, 2011, National Records of Scotland - Conservation Department

DISCOVER ARCHIVES ACROSS SCOTLAND AND LEARN WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE FOR YOUR ANCESTORS. VISIT AND EXPLORE SCOTTISH ARCHIVES. BE CONFIDENT WITH RECORDS, TERMINOLOGY AND NAMING TRADITIONS.

Visit archives across Scotland, view original documents and research your family history in a very special way. Imagine seeing your ancestor's name in a school register, and then walking down the road to see the school itself! Many local archives have a wealth of information available to the family history researcher. Get the most from your visit by keeping a few things in mind.

Always check the website of the archive before you visit. If you are unable to find information on their website, look up the archivist and contact them, or get in touch with us at contact@scottisharchives.org.uk and we will help.

Always make sure you know the answers to the following questions before you visit:

Is the archive open to the public? Many smaller archives will welcome you if you have booked in advance. Be sure to get in contact before you visit.

How much of their catalogue is available to search online? The archive may have other holdings which aren't listed, and you will need to get in touch to find out more.

How far in advance do you need to request the items that you want to view? Documents are sometimes stored off-site and will need to be carefully transported to the reading room for you to view.

Are the items available to view? Sometimes very delicate documents may not be available to view. Instead, a digital or facsimile copy may be provided instead.

Are there rules for users? All archives have different rules that best protect their holdings. They may require readers to leave bags in lockers, only bring in pencils, and have special requirements around copying holdings. Contact the archive to check before you arrive.

Find out more about archives, view and search a map of archives across Scotland, on our website at scottisharchives.org.uk/familyhistory

Pictures, from top:
Stones of Stenness Orkney, 1906, Historic Environment Scotland
Scottish School of Physical Education students up a lamp post, Jordanhill College of Education, Glasgow, 1944, University of Strathclyde Archives
Jacobson Family from Vilkomir, Lithuania, c1898, Scottish Jewish Archives Centre
Members of the Scottish Women's Hospitals about to embark from Liverpool. 1905, Library & Archive, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
Skye Crofters Planting Potatoes, 1853-1908, University of Aberdeen - Special Libraries and Archives
Background image:
Matheson Letter, 1862, Tasglann nan Eilean Siar (Hebridean Archives)

Useful sources for researchers looking in Scottish archives:

Getting Started:
- Census Returns 1841-1911
- Statutory Registers (births, deaths, divorces, marriages, corrections, civil partnerships) from 1855
- Old Parish Registers - registers of the Church of Scotland (births, christenings, banns, marriages, deaths and burials) 1553-1854

Sources for Further Exploration:
- Burial, lair (grave), and cremation records
- Coats of Arms (public register of arms) 1672-1910
- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries records (crofters mostly in the Highlands & Islands)
- Electoral registers and voters rolls
- Exchequer records (various taxes) 1690-1812
- Inland Revenue in Scotland (death duties) from 1804
- Kirk Session records (church court minutes, poor funds, communicants, mortcloth, and trials for illegitimate birth or adultery). Records also exist for established and other Presbyterian churches, non-Presbyterian denominations, such as Episcopal, Roman Catholic parish registers and Jewish archives
- Local trade and professional directories and local and national newspapers
- Poll Tax and Hearth Tax Records (taxation on movable property or hearths) mainly 17th century
- Poor Relief Records (the administration of financial support for poor people), Old Poor Law 1574-1845 may be in kirk sessions, New Poor Law parochial board records from 1845
- Post Office directories from 1774-1911
- Register of Sasines and Burgh Registers of Sasines (records of heritable property changing hands) from 1599
- Retours (services of Heirs) from 1530
- School records from around 1873
- Sheriff court and court of sessions records
- University matriculation and graduation rolls, staff records and governance
- Valuation rolls (property ownership and occupation taxation records) from around 1855-1956
- Wills and Testaments 1513-1925 (commissary court records for testaments before 1824)

Discover more about available sources and find them in local archives on our website at scottisharchives.org.uk/familyhistory

Some Scottish Research Tips:
- The **Banns** is a proclamation made in church announcing the intention to marry.
- **County** and **registration district** borders have changed, you might need to search adjacent counties and districts too.
- The **Disruption of 1843** saw the formation of the Free Church from the established Church of Scotland.
- Different churches kept records separately. It will help to know the denomination of your ancestors.
- **Divorce** has been possible in Scotland since 1560.
- Until 1964 primogeniture applied to inheritance (the eldest son inherited. If there were only daughters, all inherited equally).
- **Irregular marriages** (a declaration made before witnesses and not clergy) were legal until 1940.
- **Parish boundaries** changed significantly in 1891.
- **RCE** refers to the Register of Corrected Entries or Register of Corrections, where changes are recorded.
- Official documents may be in Latin, Scots or English.
- **Tenant** or **farming** ancestors? Find out who owned the land and research those family papers or look for rentals in public records.

Naming traditions:
- It was common practice to name children after relatives. The eldest son after his paternal grandfather, second after his maternal grandfather, third after his own father. The eldest daughter after her maternal grandmother, second after her paternal grandmother, third after her mother. Younger children were named after aunts and uncles or older siblings who had died.
- In people's surnames of the Highlands and Islands 'Mac' or 'Mc' means 'son of'. In Shetland '-son' at the end of a surname also means 'son of'. This means that surnames change down the paternal line and the same person's surname may be recorded in several different ways in official documents.
- In Scotland a woman does not in a legal sense 'change her name' on marriage. So you will often find women in documentation with their maiden name.

Remember, when searching Scottish names:
- Always look under all spelling variants (e.g. Mac and Mc). Names were not always recorded consistently.
- Middle names were particularly subject to misspellings and variance.
- Some names were very common, it helps to know an approximate date and/or county or district.