



SCOTTISH
COUNCIL ON
ARCHIVES

ANCESTRAL TOURISM CASE STUDY

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GLASGOW CITY ARCHIVES



Introduction

Local authority archives are an essential component within the ancestral tourism industry. They house many of the records which help visitors make personal connections with the lives, places, and stories of often long-gone ancestors. Their archivists bring a deep knowledge of their own collections and a professional awareness of resources in other archives across Scotland and beyond.

Irene is the City Archivist for Glasgow, the largest authority in Scotland, where she has worked since the 1980s. During that time, she has provided advice to family historians, led workshops, and delivered lectures across Scotland and beyond. She was a member of the inaugural Board of Strathclyde University Post-Graduate Course in Genealogical Studies

Support offered to tourists

Irene and the team of four archivists provide advice to personal visitors in the searchroom, supporting them in their family history journey. They deliver workshops to visiting groups and the team regularly attends family history fairs in Scotland and Ireland. Over the last three years, Irene has delivered a pre-visit webinar with background notes to a Canadian Tourist group. We are pleased to be launching a new offer from 2020/21 which includes a personalised consultation with an archivist in advance of their visit; introduction to genealogical research; an opportunity to review personalised material;



“Came down from Aberdeen spent a relaxing two days tracing ancestors, staff are brilliant, found my grandparents from different generations, highly recommend a visit” - Joe

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and bespoke advice about continuing their family research.

Impact on the local economy and local tourism businesses

Glasgow's Visitor and Tourist Strategy has Cultural Tourism at its centre, with heritage a major driver. Glasgow has eight world-class Museums and the Mitchell Library, one of the largest in Europe, is home to the City Archives and Family History at the Mitchell.

These attracted more than four million visitors last year with an economic impact on the Region of 47.5 million. Thirty-eight per cent of these are in Glasgow's target markets which are rest of Scotland, UK and Ireland, and USA and Canada. Long haul tourists from Canada, USA and Australia are motivated by history and culture, family ties and their ancestral roots. In 2018 international tourism spend in the Glasgow exceeded overnight tourism spend for the first time ever. Glasgow Museums and Collections has produced a Cultural Products offer which includes Family History at the Mitchell alongside Glasgow's iconic Burrell, Kelvingrove and Riverside Museums.



"I was born in 1943 in Glasgow...we travelled to Australia in the 'Cameronia'. My parents died at the age of 96 but we were brought up on all the old Scottish songs and it still sits within my heart and in my blood" - Rachel

Rewards and Successes

Glasgow's Archives are rich with details of the lives of its citizen, particularly in our world-beating poor law archives. While we all love the unusual, Irene takes the greatest pleasure in helping to reveal the stories of often ordinary people and their often-extraordinary lives. Tourists have been able to discover the sad, occasionally bad, and sometimes funny stories of Glasgow's poor law applicants, with examples including the laziest man in Glasgow, or the woman making eyes at the poor law inspector. And nothing is more touching than helping tourists trace the grave of a family member, so they can pay their respects.

A great find was on behalf of an elderly man from USA who was on a mission to discover anything about his 18th century Glasgow ancestor. All he had was a name and a vague family story of some involvement in shipping. Not confident of success Irene brought out shipping registers and warned that it was a bit of a long shot as the registers were not indexed. After a short time, he found the name of his ancestor and the ship he owned. He was very emotional about his discovery and made a return visit a year later, with a gift of a book, explaining how much it had meant to him.

To find further details about how you can engage with ancestral tourism, please visit the Ancestral Tourism Resource Section on our website [here](#).

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