

University of Strathclyde Centre for Lifelong Learning

Family History Research: an introduction



University of
Strathclyde
Humanities &
Social Sciences

Week 7: Accessing the Collections: Using Archives, Libraries and Family History Societies

Why use Archives, Libraries & Family History Societies?

They offer access to books, databases, collections of letters, official documents, photographs and much more.

- All of which may offer hard evidence in your genealogical search or...
- May add local colour, fill in the informational cracks and tell you what was happening in your ancestors' world.
- They may also give good advice for other places to search and experts to consult.

What are Archives?

Archives keep records of individuals or organisations with significant historical, cultural or administrative value. Often these are unique, i.e. the information was only recorded in one place.

Archives are created:

- for the specific purpose of maintaining and preserving important records,
- for reasons of historical scholarship or
- the accountability of the organisation creating the records.

Finding/Searching Archival Collections

Arrangement

Collections within archives are arranged using the related archival principles of *provenance* and *original order*. Both these principles aim to keep records with their original context intact and with evidence of their relationship to their original creators and users, and to other records.

The principle of **provenance** involves establishing the administrative context in which records were created and used. The principle of preserving the **original order** involves maintaining records in their active-use arrangement, so that the evidence of decisions and actions is preserved.

For these reasons, records held in an archive are not rearranged or described according to their subject matter, as in libraries. An example of this would be a baptism extract remaining filed with apprentice affidavits for a trade guild, rather than being re-filed with other baptism records.

Archival Finding Aids

Records can be tracked down using a range of guides, inventories, indexes, and other resources collectively called 'finding aids'.

Example from the National Records of Scotland online catalogue:

Title: Papers of the Graham Family of Coldoch, Perthshire
Inclusive Dates: 1868-1894
Archival History: Deposited by Dundas and Wilson CS
Call Number: GD1/1360; previous number TD85/119/Box24
Repository: National Records of Scotland, GB234.

National Archives

Each part of the United Kingdom has its own principal archive.

The National Archives at Kew covers UK-wide documents, and also holds much material for England and Wales.

We'll also look at the National Archives of Scotland, the National Library of Wales and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). The National Archives of Ireland are also important for UK genealogy.

National Records of Scotland (NRS)

www.nrscotland.gov.uk

The NRS exists to select, preserve, and make available the national archives of Scotland in whatever medium, to the highest standards.

The NRS holds historical records created by businesses, landed estates, families, churches and other corporate bodies.

The General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) merged with the National Archives of Scotland (NAS) to form the National Records of Scotland (NRS) in 2011.

The main entry for visitors to the National Records of Scotland is through the ScotlandsPeople Centre Reception. A reader's ticket is required for entry; check ID requirements on the website, usually photographs and proof of address.

Main Categories of Records Held at NRS

- **Government**
Records of pre-1707 Scottish crown, parliament and government; records of the Scottish Office and Scottish Government.
- **Legal registers**
Registers of deeds and sasines; services of heirs.
- **Courts**
Records of the Court of Session, the High Court of Justiciary, sheriff courts (including adoption records and divorce records) and commissary courts.
- **Churches**
Kirk session (which have been digitized!), presbytery and synod records for the Church of Scotland, Free Church, and various dissenting ('seceding') congregations; records of the Scottish Episcopal Church.
- **Nationalised industries and transport**
Records of the rail and canal systems, coal, gas, electricity, steel and shipbuilding industries.
- **Local authorities**
Valuation rolls for all Scottish counties and burghs 1855-1995 (many of which have been digitized); records of some burghs, county councils, justices of the peace and other local authorities.

- **Private and corporate bodies**
Family, legal and estate papers; records of businesses, societies and institutions.
- **Maps and plans**
Maps, plans, architectural and technical drawings from government departments, nationalised industries, transport systems, courts, churches, private and corporate bodies.

National Library of Wales

While the NLW is the legal deposit library for Wales, it also acts as an archive for Welsh material. <http://www.llgc.org.uk/>

It holds:

- Wills proved in the Welsh ecclesiastical courts before the introduction of Civil Probate on 11 January 1858.
- Welsh Parish Church registers
- Estate and personal records
- Welsh pedigree books
- Welsh newspapers (being digitised - free)

The National Archives

The National Archives is the UK government's official archive, a government department and an executive agency of the Secretary of State for Justice. It incorporates the Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO).

The National Archives' collection is one of the largest in the world, with 20 million records, from Domesday Book to modern government papers. Their main search rooms are at Kew in the London area and you can visit and do research here for free.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Discovery

Discovery is the online catalogue for the National Archives. This allows you online access to The National Archives' collection of digitised public records, including both academic and family history sources.

Access to some of the collections is free - however, you will have to pay for results from many of them. These include the WWI Campaign Medals, WWI POW Interviews and Wills sections.

How to search for records at The National Archives

- **The Discovery catalogue** - Search descriptions of 20 million documents from the UK central government, law courts and other national bodies.
- Specialist databases, eg **Trafalgar Ancestors database** - Search the records of everyone who served on the British side in the Battle of Trafalgar.
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/trafalgarancestors/>

Digital Microfilm

The National Archives have begun making large unindexed databases available for download. As it states on the TNA website:

“Digital microfilm allows you to search and download some of The National Archives' most popular records, which were previously available on microfilm. We have a large collection of microfilmed records, which we have now made more accessible by making them available online. This will eventually allow the microfilm readers used in The National Archives' reading rooms to be retired. Many of the records are indexes, which will be helpful in locating other relevant records.

These documents are free of charge to download and are delivered as large pdf files. Please be aware that each download contains a whole piece, which could be up to 800 pages long...”

Record Arrangement

The documents in The National Archives are arranged by the government department or court that created them, and each department's documents have their own reference code.

So, for example...

C 131/24/11

refers to a specific document within the section of records created, acquired, and inherited by Chancery [C].

Each department or court has an individual letter that refers to them. In this case, the Chancery's letter is 'C'.

National Archives of Ireland

As we saw in week 4, the National Archives of Ireland is an important repository for access to many of the most useful surviving resources for genealogists and family historians; these include surviving census records (1901 and 1911), Will calendars and some land records. <http://www.nationalarchives.ie>

General Register Office for Northern Ireland (GRO-NI) and Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

Lots of resources available here including BMDs, will calendars, land records and street directories. <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/archive-for-family-and-local-history> and <http://www.proni.gov.uk/>

Local/County Archives

Each county in the United Kingdom has an archive or record office.

To find out more about these, what they hold, opening hours, online catalogues, digitised records, and more, check out:

- Scottish Archive Network (SCAN)
- Local archive information available via TNA Discovery

Or just search for the archive's website directly – many of them have online catalogues and how-to research guides for that county.

Access to Archives (A2A): now incorporated in TNA Discovery

A2A formerly allowed searching and browsing for information about local record collections in England and Wales, dating from the eighth century to the present day. These archives are kept in local record offices and libraries, universities, museums and national and specialist institutions across England and Wales, where they are available to the public.

A2A contained about 30 per cent of catalogues of archival collections in England and Wales. The database was last updated in April 2008 and does not always contain all the catalogues available online for a particular archive. Therefore it is recommended that checks are also made for separate online catalogues of selected archives and record offices in the required geographical areas.

National Register of Archives: now incorporated in TNA Discovery

The NRA was a central point for information about the nature and location of manuscripts relating to British history. It consisted of over 44,000 unpublished lists and catalogues that describe archival holdings in the United Kingdom and overseas.

There are five online indexes to the NRA: the **business index**, the **organisations index**, the **personal index**, the **families and estates index** and the **diaries and papers index**. Over 90,000 pages of hard copy NRA lists are available online.

ARCHON Directory: now incorporated in TNA Discovery

This directory includes contact details for record repositories in the United Kingdom and also for institutions elsewhere in the world. It's a great way of discovering small archives and libraries in out of the way corners of the world. You can browse by place or search by name and/or type of repository.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/>

SCAN - Scottish Archive Network

SCAN - <http://www.scan.org.uk/index.html> - provides:

- A searchable catalogue of 52 Scottish archives – also available from the NRS website
- A directory of Scottish archives, which includes hours and contact details
- Expertise and digitisation help to organisations in Scotland
- Online tuition in Scottish palaeography at <http://www.scottishhandwriting.com/>
- Research Tools – Scottish Glossary, Scots currency converter, Digital Archives and Virtual Vault
- 1852-1857 Highlands and Islands Emigration Society Passenger Lists. Contains almost 5,000 names of people from the Highlands who were assisted to emigrate to Australia - <http://www.scan.org.uk/researchrtools/emigration.htm>

Family History Centres

Many archives around the country are creating family history centres. These combine access to archival records of genealogical interest with specialist help, often on a one-to-one basis. Examples are the:

- Highland Council Family History Centre, Inverness:
<https://www.highlifehighland.com/archives-service/sample-page/family-history-centre/>
- Burns Monument Centre run by East Ayrshire Council:
<http://eastayrshireleisure.com/index.php?a=landing&id=8&sid=235&mid=267>
- John Gray Centre in Haddington run by East Lothian Council,
<http://www.johngraycentre.org/about/archives/>

National Register of Archives for Scotland (NRAS)

This has at least the titles, and in some cases the full catalogue, of over 4,000 **private archives and collections of papers**, including the records of estates, individuals, businesses etc held in local authority, university and other archives in Scotland.

<http://catalogue.nrscotland.gov.uk/nrasregister/welcome.aspx>

Privately Held Archives

Many archival collections are held privately. These include business archives, family archives and organization archives. Examples include:

- Scottish Catholic Archives
<http://www.scottishcatholicarchives.org.uk/FamilyHistory/tabid/70/Default.aspx>
- Bute Archive at Mount Stuart <http://www.mountstuart.com/history-and-heritage/bute-collection/library-and-archive>

Many private archives' details can be found on the NRAS, SCAN or Discovery.

Family History Societies (FHS)

FHS promote and encourage the study of local and family history in the area in which they are based.

They are usually volunteer organisations comprised of individuals who love genealogy and history. Some FHS have their own research centres where you can access resources and ask questions. Most sell publications on local family history including memorial inscriptions and record transcriptions.

Membership is usually fairly inexpensive.

Scottish Association of FHS

The Scottish Association of Family History Societies promotes and encourages the study of Scottish family history, and provides a forum for the exchange of information among members.

<http://www.safhs.org.uk/>

They include all established family history societies in Scotland, as well as several national and regional bodies throughout the world. You can browse a membership list or use a 'Surname Search' to find societies that have an interest in the same surname or topic.

Federation of FHS

The Federation of Family History Societies has over 160 member societies, all helping their own members to research their ancestors in England, Wales and Ireland. There is a list of members, you can subscribe to a genealogical 'news' service for free, view research tips on a variety of topics and more.

<http://www.ffhs.org.uk/>

Glasgow and West of Scotland FHS

The Glasgow & West of Scotland Family History Society was founded in 1977.

They promote the study of family history, particularly in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, covering Argyll & Bute, Ayrshire, Dunbartonshire, Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, and Stirlingshire (part). <http://www.gwsfhs.org.uk/>

GWSFHS Research Centre

The research centre and meeting place at Unit 13, 32 Mansfield Street, Partick in Glasgow, is situated just off Dumbarton Road and within easy reach of Kelvinhall Underground Station.

Their library has almost 1,500 titles. In addition they hold:

- The 1841, 1851 and 1861 census films for their area & the indexes for these.
- The 1881 census & indexes for the whole of Scotland, England & Wales.
- The 1891 census index for the whole of Scotland and the films for their area.
- The 1901 census index for the whole of Scotland and the films for their area.

Renfrewshire Family History Society

The RFHS was founded in March 1999 and has charitable status.

It exists to promote the study of Family History, based on the County of Renfrewshire encompassing Abbey Parish, Cathcart, Eaglesham, Erskine, Eastwood, Greenock, Houston & Killellan, Inchinnan, Inverkip, Kilbarchan, Kilmacolm, Lochwinnoch, Mearns, Neilston, Paisley, Port Glasgow and Renfrew.
<http://www.renfrewshirefhs.co.uk/>

Lanarkshire Family History Society

The Lanarkshire Family History Society (LFHS) was formed in 1991. There is a Resource Centre available and monthly meetings are held, which feature a speaker. They sell many publications including Monumental Inscriptions, Death Records, and various CDs covering all of Lanarkshire's Parishes.
<http://www.lanarkshirefhs.org.uk/>

Families in British India Society

FIBIS is "a self-help organisation devoted to members researching their ancestors and the background against which they led their lives in 'British India'." Their website includes many free to use databases with information on the army in India, monumental inscriptions in Indian cemeteries, street directories and more. They also have online research guides, publish books and run classes on British India topics.
<http://www.new.fibis.org/>

What about libraries?

Libraries keep a range of different materials and resources, including published works, which are not necessarily unique. They allow public access to published works and other resources. Unlike archives, libraries often use the same arrangement system for their resources. These include the Dewey Decimal and the Library of Congress systems.

National Library of Scotland (NLS)

The NLS is:

- One of Europe's major research libraries, with around 14 million printed items in our collections.
- Scotland's legal deposit library.
- A reference library – they do not lend their items, although copies of some books are available through Scottish local libraries.

By registering with them you can get access to many journal and article databases for free!

They hold books, manuscripts, maps, music (print and recordings), photographs, posters, postcards, newspapers, magazines, electronic journals, CD-ROMS – and more!
<http://www.nls.uk/>

Resources available at NLS

Publications by historical clubs and societies

The publications of Scottish historical clubs and societies contain a wealth of information which could be of use to family history research.

Examples of publications:

- *Genealogical collections concerning the families in Scotland, made by Walter Mcfarlane, 1750-51*, by J T Clark. Scottish History Society, vols. 33, 34, 1900.
- *List of inhabitants upon the Duke of Argyle's property in Kintyre in 1792*, by A B Stewart. Scottish Record Society, N.S. vol. 17, 1991

Maps at NLS

The National Library of Scotland's map collection is one of the largest in the world. They have around 2 million maps, covering most parts of the globe. Local maps can tell you about the area of Scotland that your ancestors came from. They can also confirm specific information about your ancestors – land tenure or ownership, for example.

Many of their early Scottish maps are available online including:

- Maps of Scotland, 1560-1928
- Military maps
- Ordnance Survey town plans, 1847-1895

<http://www.nls.uk/maps/>

Search the NLS catalogue

You can search the catalogue for many types of resources such as:

- Family histories
- Biographies
- Trade and professional directories
- University graduates lists
- Street directories
- Published accounts of immigration stories

Street Directories at NLS

Over 700 digitised directories covering most of Scotland and dating from 1773 to 1911 are freely available.

<http://digital.nls.uk/directories/>

In each directory you can:

- Browse and search by place, year and resident's name
- View page by page
- View a PDF of the complete book
- Search the full PDF text
- Download files for free for non-commercial use only.

Licensed Digital Collections

Register online with NLS to gain access to the licensed digital collections, including 17th-19th century newspapers, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, full-text e-books and journals, etc.

Glasgow Public Library Service

The Mitchell Library's Family History Centre and the Archives and Special Collections service have many useful resources:

- Poor Law Archives
- Records of land ownership
- Post Office directories
- OPRs and Census records on microfilm
- Voters' rolls
- WWI Evening Times' Roll of Honour
- And more...plus the free access to Ancestry from any Glasgow public library!

<http://www.glasgowfamilyhistory.org.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>

<http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/libraries/the-mitchell-library/Pages/home.aspx>

Virtual Mitchell

This is a selection of photographs and other images of the city, which have been digitised. The selected material is of local and historical interest, featuring Glasgow's buildings and streets as well as showing Glasgow's people going about their daily lives.

Photographs form the basis of the collection, but older prints and lithographs from the Glasgow Collection are included. Some modern photographs, particularly of areas which have greatly changed in recent decades, provide interesting reference points.

<http://www.mitchelllibrary.org/virtualmitchell/>

The British Library

Receives a copy of every publication produced in the UK. The collection includes well over 150 million items, in most known languages. 3 million new items are added every year. They have manuscripts, maps, newspapers, magazines, prints and drawings, music scores, and patents.

The website allows searching of their catalogue (14 million items), images (30,000), journal articles (9 million), BL webpages (10,000).

www.bl.uk

British Newspapers: 1800-1900

Explore two million pages of 19th century newspapers and search 49 local and national titles using keywords. (Aberdeen Journal, Glasgow Herald, Caledonian Mercury – Edinburgh). Register with the National Library of Scotland and receive free access to these online newspaper archives! <https://auth.nls.uk/registration/>

British Newspaper Archive

This is a major project which will digitise all the newspapers at the British Library. Currently (Feb 2016) over 13 million pages have been digitised. You do need a subscription to view the articles found, however, if you have a subscription to FindMyPast, access is included in this.

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

Your local FHS may have a FindMyPast subscription that you can access for free, for example at the GWSFHS premises in Partick, see above.

Free archive collections on Google Newspapers. <http://news.google.com/newspapers>

Also check free digitised newspapers available on the website of the National Library of Wales (see above).

India Office Family History Database

Use this website to search for information on 300,000 births, baptisms, marriages, deaths and burials in the India Office Records. It contains biographical notes from a variety of sources for mainly British and European people in India c.1600-1949, and for people in other countries connected with the history of the British in India.

<http://indiafamily.bl.uk/UI/Home.aspx>. Many of the records are digitised on Find My Past.

SALSER

The union (combined) catalogue of the periodical holdings of Scottish universities, the municipal research libraries of Edinburgh and Glasgow (The Mitchell), numerous smaller Scottish research libraries and the National Library of Scotland.

<http://edina.ac.uk/salser/>

COPAC

The Copac® library catalogue gives *free access* to the merged online catalogues of many major University, Specialist, and National Libraries in the UK and Ireland, including the British Library

<http://copac.ac.uk/>

Resources at Universities

Both the University of Strathclyde and the University of Glasgow have online documents and databases of interest to family historians.

They both have physical archives as well, which you may find useful.

University of Strathclyde

The Archives hold the University's records including:

- Papers of former staff and students (1796-present)
- Departmental records (1882-present)
- Jordanhill College records (1902-2012)

They also hold collections such as the:

- Archives of William Baird & Co. of Gartsherrie, ironmasters (these include staff time books, etc.)
- Records of the Gem Line Shipping Co. (including employment records)

<http://www.strath.ac.uk/archives/>

Glasgow Digital Library

The University of Strathclyde also hosts the Glasgow Digital Library, which holds several collections of digitised materials and provides organised access to others.

- Electronic copies of the books
 - 'Memoirs and portraits of 100 Glasgow men'
 - 'Old country houses of the old Glasgow gentry'.

- ‘Who’s who in Glasgow, 1909’ (a dictionary of 500 Glaswegians)
- ‘The origin and history of Glasgow streets’
- Victorian Times: information on social, political, and economic conditions 1837-1901
- Red Clydeside: a history of the labour movement in Glasgow 1910-1932
- Voyage of the Scotia: photographs and materials from the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, 1902-04.

<http://gdl.cdfr.strath.ac.uk/>

University of Glasgow

Glasgow University Archives Services holds the historical records of the University, created and accumulated since its foundation in 1451 as well as one of the biggest collections of records of business in Europe. In total, Glasgow University Archive Services holds over 1000 collections, spanning more than seven centuries.

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/archives/>

Scottish Business Archive

The Scottish Business Archive covers almost all types of business and industrial activity in Scotland and the UK with over 400 collections from banking, confectioners and distillers to retail, solicitors and undertakers.

The holdings are particularly strong in relation to industrial concerns in the west of Scotland such as shipbuilding, railway locomotive manufacture, textiles and mining. Many of these collections include staff records!

The Glasgow Story

The Glasgow Story website tells the story of Glasgow in words and pictures. You can search for images from a specific neighbourhood from a wide choice of Glasgow place names, or search for images of famous Glasgow personalities.

Also contains essays on the history of Glasgow through the ages, information on the trades in Glasgow, architecture and much more.

<http://www.theglasgowstory.com/index.php>

That’s just the beginning...

There are many more archives, libraries and family history societies around the world just waiting for you to walk through the door.

They exist to help you with your research, so do go and use them!