

## DOCUMENT DISSECTED: TACK GUIDE

How to understand a Scottish tack (deed)

### PARTIES NAMED

The tack opens with the name of the place where the document was signed as well as the date, before it goes on to provide details of the landlord as the 'heritable proprietor' and the estate to which he is occupant. There's also information on the tenant, giving both his name, parish of residence and occupation. In this example he was a shoemaker.

### LEASED PROPERTY

An extensive description of the property being leased out by the landholder is recorded, describing the boundaries and nature of the land and buildings. In this case the tenant is already noted as being resident, with the document formally drawn up a few months after he has already taken up possession.

### DATE

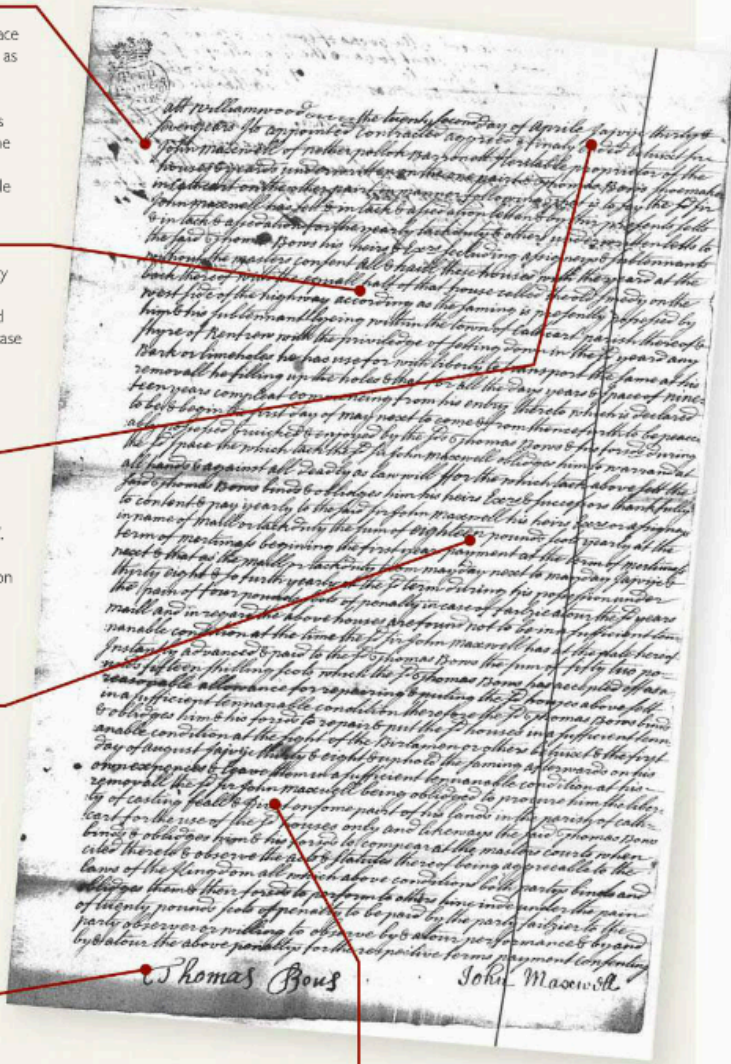
The date at the top of the document is recorded as 'Jajviic thirty & seven years'. This is a common Scots convention for recording years in Latin: 'jaj' is a mutation of the letters 'im' for a thousand, 'vii' means seven, and 'C' stands for 100. Therefore the year is 1737.

### RENT

The annual rent is noted as 'eighteen pounds Scots'. Although sterling was adopted after 1707, legal documents continued to reckon payments for some years in the old Scots currency, with a Scots pound worth a 12th of the English equivalent. Payment was due on Martinmas, one of the four legal term days of the year.

### SIGNATURES

This particular tack runs to two pages in length, both of which have been stamped. At the foot of the first page the signatures of both the proprietor and the tenant have been recorded to further authenticate it, while you can find their signatures, along with those of additional witnesses, at the end of the tack.



### SCOTS WORDS

The tenant's right to collect 'feall & divot' from the landlord's lands is noted, referring to 'fail and divot', two forms of turf used to build houses, with 'fail' being thick sods of turf and 'divot' the thinner sods. The Dictionary of the Scots Language ([www.dsl.ac.uk](http://www.dsl.ac.uk)) can help with old Scots words.



Going further

# SCOTTISH AND IRISH LAND RECORDS

Locating land records for Scottish and Irish ancestors can help transform your family history research

**Home** The above black and white photograph shows the interior of a typical Scottish farm located in Argyllshire1900

Until its eventual abolition on 28 November 2004, the main system of legal tenure used in Scotland was feudalism. In Ireland the systems of tenure were similar to those

in England but the records are especially significant considering how so few other genealogical records have survived.

Under the Scottish feudal system those holding land as 'vassals' had to pay a tribute known as a 'feu duty' annually or twice yearly to their 'superior'. This was only for the use of the land. Subject to agreement, the vassal could build heritable property on their holding, which they could then sell or bequeath to their eldest son through the Scottish inheritance system. In turn, the superior receiving the feu duty might in turn be the vassal of another superior above him who had broader control over a wider area and to whom he would have to pay a

feu duty. This middle man, with a superior above him and vassals beneath, was known as a 'subject superior'. The ultimate superior receiving cash trickling upwards through such a feudal chain was the Crown.

Land could be held of a superior in two ways.

One was simply to lease land or property for a fixed period. For example, if you were a tenant farmer you might have a farm held on a traditional lease or 'tack' for 19 years — you can find evidence for such arrangements in estate or burgh papers for the relevant landholder. To locate who this was, start with contemporary parish accounts from the 1790s and 1830s found on the Statistical Accounts of Scotland website (<http://edina.ac.uk/stat-acc-scot>). Once identified, look for landowner records at the National Records of Scotland, in private hands, or in one of the country's local archives. To locate such holdings visit the catalogues page on the

### SNAPSHOT RETURN

The 1874 Return of Scottish Landowners, found on The Genealogist ([www.thegenalogist.co.uk](http://www.thegenalogist.co.uk)) details every landowner holding more than one acre. It notes how much land was owned and its annual value. There's also an Irish equivalent (from 1876) on the site.

► NRS site ([www.nrscotland.gov.uk](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk)) where you'll find catalogues for the NRS archive, National Register of Archives for Scotland, and the Scottish Archive Network.

'Sasines' are documents recording changes of land ownership, whether through sale, inheritance or exchange. To find them prior to 1869, consult various abridgement or minute book records and then one of three types of register: a Particular Register, if land was in one county only; the General Register, if land was held across more than one county; or a specific Burgh Register, if land was held within one of the country's royal burghs. A detailed guide is available at <http://tinyurl.com/q9wqhb7>. For transactions after 1868 you can consult — for a fee — search sheets compiled by Registers of Scotland ([www.ros.gov.uk](http://www.ros.gov.uk)). They summarise a history of sales for a property from 1868 to present.

Before 1868 land couldn't be bequeathed through a will in Scotland as it could in England. Instead, a prospective heir, usually the eldest son, had to have his or her right to inherit first recognised through a separate court process called the



**Evaluation** A depiction of land commissioners inspecting an Irish farm near Limerick in 1881

Services of Heirs before officially taking possession. Indexes to these judgements are available at the NRS and in many libraries across the country, while those from 1530 to 1699 are available via Google Books (<http://tinyurl.com/6p6o5u6>).

**LIFERENT PROVISION**  
Scottish leaseholders could have a 'liferent' granted for the duration of their life, their spouse's and a child's. In Ireland a 'lease for lives' was a similar provision, granted in the name of three individuals, which could be renewed when a person died.

In Ireland the system of land tenure was similar to that in England, although prior to the late-1840s it was hampered by an absentee landlord class, a great many of whom lived in England and left their estates to be poorly managed by local appointees. Following the Great Famine, when the Irish population

was decimated, the old system all but collapsed with many landlords going bankrupt due to a drop in tenants. Their estates were carved up and auctioned off following the passing of the Encumbered Estates Acts of 1848 and 1849, allowing ordinary Irishmen the chance to own their property. You can consult the documents drawn up from this process through the Irish holdings on Findmypast ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)).

Estate papers containing rental rolls, maps, leases, records of manorial courts and more are held in the National Archives of Ireland ([www.nationalarchives.ie](http://www.nationalarchives.ie)), the National Library of Ireland ([www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie)) and on the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland website ([www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk)). The University of Galway's Landed Estates Database ([www.landedestates.ie](http://www.landedestates.ie)) contains useful information on estates in Connacht and Munster from the 1700s to 1914, rental rolls for northern estates are at [www.ancestryireland.com](http://www.ancestryireland.com) and [www.from-ireland.net](http://www.from-ireland.net).

Between 1847 and 1863 Sir Richard Griffiths was tasked with working out the rateable value of all land in Ireland. You can access the first published results of Griffith's Valuation at [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie). This lists tenants and landlords, with changes of ownership in subsequent years recorded in Valuation Revision Books.

## REGISTERS OF SASINES: THE SYMBOLIC ACT OF SASINE

The Particular and General Registers of Sasines, used to record land transactions in Scotland, formally came into existence in 1617 (the main burgh registers started some time after). Prior to this, details of sasines were recorded in a short-lived series of Secretary's Registers for a small number of counties from 1599-1609.

The word 'sasine' is derived from the act of sasine, a final symbolic act of conveyance for a property that involved the physical handing over of a sod of earth by the superior to the new vassal. Although the sasine registers are the documents most easily found for such transactions, they are in fact the last document generated in the legal process with all conveyances formally contracted through charters, which can occasionally be found within estate papers.

Those from the 1860s to the early 1930s, for what is now Northern Ireland, are available online via the PRONI website.

The equivalent records for the Republic of Ireland are located at the Valuation Office in Dublin ([www.valoffice.ie](http://www.valoffice.ie)). Earlier valuations from 1823-1838 are available in the form of Tithe Applotment Books — those for the Republic are at <http://tinyurl.com/cwfwldo>, while those for the North are on microfilm at PRONI and partially indexed on Ancestry ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)).

1946. A partial index is available via <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~registryofdeeds>. In Northern Ireland, microfils of the records are accessible at PRONI. A modern Land Registry has also been in existence from 1892,

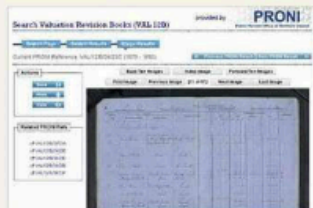
**FORM B**  
On the Irish 1901 and 1911 censuses, main household schedules are boxes marked 'No. on Form B'. These correspond with the line number on the subsequent Forms B and N, which give further information on the landlord and the property.

although both are still in use at the PRA. The northern equivalent of this is the Department of Finance and Personnel's Land and Property Services ([www.dfpni.gov.uk/lps/index.htm](http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/lps/index.htm)). This provides details on the Land Registry and entries from the earlier Registry of Deeds for properties in the north, as well as research services.

The 1901 and 1911 censuses in Ireland, unlike their British equivalents, include details about landlords, with the records digitised and made freely accessible via [www.census.nationalarchives.ie](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie) ■

## STEP-BY-STEP: LOCATE AN ANCESTOR WITHIN A LAND RECORD

How to find family using 19th century land records for estates in Northern Ireland



### ULSTER ANCESTORS

**1** To locate records for Ulster based ancestors, begin by trying to find an entry from Griffith's Valuation at [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie). If you are successful you will find the name of the landlord alongside that of your ancestor as tenant, and you can also view a contemporary map to locate the family holding.

### INITIAL STEPS

**2** You can find changes of ownership or occupation in the property after this valuation via the Valuation Revision Books on the PRONI website ([www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk)). The tenant or landlord's name will be crossed out with a coloured marker and in the right column the year of the change marked in the same colour.

### SEARCHING FOR CLUES

**3** Now that you have the landlord's name you can check the PRONI catalogue for any relevant surviving estate papers. These might contain copies of the original leases, maps of the town lands or parishes where your ancestor resided, and rental books detailing payments made each year. There may even be correspondence.

### ARCHIVE VISIT

**4** Most records at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) have not been digitised and, sadly, there's no online ordering service for records to be copied and posted out. This means you will have to visit the archive itself, or perhaps hire a genealogist to visit on your behalf if you cannot attend in person.

### ORDERING DOCUMENTS

**5** To order documents inside PRONI you will need a reader's ticket, details of which are available via the website. You can order up to five documents at a time in the main reading room and, for a small fee, you can save digital copies to a USB drive using their scanner. Please visit [www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk) for more information.

### CONTACTS

**National Archives of Ireland**  
Bishop Street, Dublin 8, Ireland  
w. [www.nationalarchives.ie](http://www.nationalarchives.ie)  
e. [mail@nationalarchives.ie](mailto:mail@nationalarchives.ie)  
t. 00353 (0)1 407 2300

**National Library of Ireland (Genealogy)**  
Genealogy/Family History, The National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2  
w. [www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie)  
e. [genealogy@nli.ie](mailto:genealogy@nli.ie)  
t. 00353 (0)1 603 0213

**National Records of Scotland**  
HM General Register House, 2 Princes Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3YJ  
w. [www.nrscotland.gov.uk](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk)  
t. 0131 535 1314

**Public Record Office of Northern Ireland**  
2 Titanic Boulevard, Titanic Quarter, Belfast, BT3 9HQ  
w. [www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk)  
e. [pronid@calni.gov.uk](mailto:pronid@calni.gov.uk)  
t. 028 90 534800

**Registers of Scotland**  
Meadowbank House, 153 London Road, Edinburgh, EH8 7AU  
w. [www.ros.gov.uk](http://www.ros.gov.uk)  
e. [customer.services@ros.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@ros.gov.uk)  
t. 0800 169 9391

**Valuation Office**  
Block 2, Irish Life Centre, Abbey Street Lower, Dublin 1, Republic of Ireland  
w. [www.valoffice.ie](http://www.valoffice.ie)  
e. [info@valoffice.ie](mailto:info@valoffice.ie)  
t. 00353 1 817 1000

### WEBSITES:

**Land and Property Services (NI)**  
w. [www.dfpni.gov.uk/lps/index.htm](http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/lps/index.htm)

**National Records of Scotland sasine index**  
w. [www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/sasines](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/sasines)

**Registry of Deeds**  
w. <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~registryofdeeds>

**Statistical Accounts of Scotland**  
w. <http://edina.ac.uk/stat-acc-scot>

**Tithe Applotment Books**  
w. <http://titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/search/tab/home.jsp>

### FURTHER READING:

**Discover Scottish Land Records**  
Chris Paton, Unlock the Past, 2012  
ISBN: 9781921956089

**Tracing Your Irish Family History on the Internet**  
Chris Paton, Pen and Sword, 2013  
ISBN: 9781781591840

**Tracing Your Northern Irish Ancestors**  
Ian Maxwell, Pen and Sword, 2010  
ISBN: 9781848841673

