

# THE SCOTTISH GENEALOGIST

**JUNE 2018**

**Robert Brown, Botanist**

**Edinburgh City Archives**

**A portrait of Anne Dunbar?**

**Alexander Henry, Rifle-maker**

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE SCOTTISH GENEALOGY SOCIETY

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Vol. LXV No. 2

# The Scottish Genealogy Society

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## *Front Cover:*

The Society's Coat of Arms

## *Back Cover:*

Unknown woman by an unknown artist (62 cm x 52 cm) c.1840-1860.  
York Castle Museum collection (Y ORCM: DA1289).

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

The Society is an academic and consultative body whose constitutional objects are to promote research into Scottish family history and to undertake the collection, exchange and publication of information and material relating to Scottish genealogy. Copies of our Constitution are available to members upon request. We assist members with modest enquiries, but do not carry out professional research. Private researchers are available, and we can also provide an ASGRA list upon request.

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# Robert Brown, Botanist

Margaret F. Brown

In the early June 1858 in a corner of Soho Square, London, an old man died in the house where he had lived and worked for nearly half a century. There had been some doubt how much longer he could stay there, and then illness intervened. His closest friend and doctor, Francis Boott, could have prolonged his life with drugs, but he chose to do without them. With a calmness and clearmindedness which had characterized his long life, Robert Brown faced the end, sustained by visits from Dr Boott and other close friends, though the physical comforts were, as always, rather low. A week after his death, Darwin received the famous letter from Wallace on the evolution of species.



Robert Brown

*Reproduced by kind permission of the Linnean Society of London.*

Robert Brown had always kept silent about his own religious views. This was part of his naturally reticent personality. Son of a clergyman, James Brown, in Angus, he grew up in an atmosphere of continuing religious turmoil, with memories of the “killing times” still fresh. His great great grandfather, John

Brown in Bolshan (pronounced Bo’shun and deriving from the French *beau champs*) died around 1700. Robert Brown’s grandfather, also John, elder of the Established Church, supported Charles Stewart in the Forty-five Rising, and, using Kinnell Kirkyard as a rendezvous, he recruited Jacobites, as a Captain in Lord Ogilvie’s regiment. He died at Culloden and his son, James, refused allegiance to the House of Hanover. After Prince Charles’s death, James was the only clergyman publicly to pray for the House of Stewart – a strange positions as Charles’ successor, Henry Stewart, was a Cardinal. James Brown’s cousin, James Brown of Cononsyth, great great great great grandfather of the writer, was a leading figure in the Scottish flax-spinning industry. This work was carried on and expanded by his four sons. The eldest, also James, became Provost of Dundee in 1844, some years after the visit of the eminent botanist. James championed liberal causes like workers’ education and parliamentary reform. He visited America and one of his sons eventually settled there.

Originally destined for a medical career, Robert Brown assumed the post of Assistant Surgeon with the Fife Fencibles in 1795 and in this capacity served in Ireland. It seems to have been a not particularly onerous post, leaving him

plenty of time for 'botanizing' and it soon became clear that this was his real interest. During a visit to London in 1798 he made the acquaintance of Joseph Banks and this probably altered the course of his life. He was particularly interested in Banks' herbarium and, because he had already acquired something of a reputation as a botanist, he was allowed free access. He was also nominated a member of the Linnean Society, a link maintained for the rest of his life.

He returned to Ireland the following year. At this time he kept a diary detailing his daily life, down to the amount of drink, quantity and type of food – even his bedclothes! Despite a French landing in Killala, Co. Mayo, his was a relaxed and leisurely life. Like Darwin, his pupil in microscopy before setting out on *The Beagle*, Brown seems to have had intermittent, though perhaps minor, illnesses most of his life. Not that this interrupted his frequent botanizing trips during his time in Ireland.

Rivalry between the major European powers in colonizing various parts of the globe was already strong. When the news reached London that a French expedition had set off for the Pacific, the Admiralty was keen to send off a similar venture and, inevitably, Banks was involved. At the end of 1800, Brown received a letter while in Ireland from Banks asking if he would serve as naturalist on the trip to survey New Holland. Not surprisingly he accepted with alacrity. After the humdrum routine of military life, such a voyage must have seemed like the proverbial 'dream come true' to a man of 28, offering not only adventure, but more importantly the opportunity to collect, observe and classify species new to the world of natural history.

The captain of the aptly named *Investigator* was Matthew Flinders, whose son was to become the Egyptologist Flinders Petrie. While awaiting the completion of all the preparations necessary for such an expedition, Brown worked at Soho Square. One wonders if he ever thought that after this momentous trip to the remotest part of the globe, much of the rest of his life would be spent in this same spot. During the delays in refitting the ship, he studied the specimens brought back by the previous expedition under Cook. In the middle of June 1801 he went down to Portsmouth and a month later, at 11 a.m. on 18 July, *The Investigator* set sail.

The routine of army life must helped him adjust to life at sea, though there were of course fewer opportunities for escaping on botanizing trips. There was ample time, on the other hand, for preparation and detailed diary entries. They called in at Madeira and he began his collecting, many specimens of which would be reproduced by Bauer. They went on to the Cape, where he botanized on Table Mountain. In early December they sighted the coast of New Holland.

In the course of many trips on land as they passes along the southern coast of Australia, Brown made an enormous collection of both plant and animal species. He and his companions met parties of aborigines and these encounters were for the most part peaceful though there was some violence.

This must have been a very strenuous time, physically, both the sea voyage itself and the trips inland, not to speak of the risks involved in exploring land about which little or nothing was known. The mental stimulus and challenge of all the wealth of new material would have left little time for apprehension, and one assumes explorers generally feel that they are superior culturally and technologically to any humans they are likely to meet. A risk of a different kind was posed by the presence of a French vessel, which Flinders boarded with Brown acting as interpreter, despite the fact that England and France were at war. He (Brown) was scathing about their botanical collections, but one imagines that natural history was perhaps lower down in the French list of priorities. They were, however, busy naming geographical features after various Gallic luminaries.

As the voyage continued, there was much illness on board and some deaths occurred, but Brown, despite his apparent infirmities, must have been constitutionally strong. While Flinders was detained by the French on Mauritius, *The Investigator*, with Brown on board, under the new captain, William Kent, made its way home, via Cape Horn. There was much for Brown to do, observing, classifying, preserving, but even so, some specimens were damaged, mainly by damp, to add to the losses sustained when the *Porpoise* was wrecked. The material which was finally unpacked must have been, however, a real triumph for him personally, and gratly pleased Banks and all associated with the endeavour.

The rest of his life was passed in studying all the items, drawing conclusions and generally enlarging the boundaries of botanical knowledge. Although he travelled frequently to the continent until he was in his seventies, in between these forays his life must have been one of concentration, routine and painstaking application, punctuated by the various controversies which characterize human affairs even in academic circles – perhaps one should say especially in academic circles?

Many friendships with fellow naturalists, both in Britain and abroad, were formed and maintained over the years, among the most interesting of which was that with the Scottish family, MacLeay. They were a large family group, associated also with the Linnean Society, and with Australia – in fact, finally settling there. As a bachelor, Brown may well have found with them the family warmth and liveliness which was lacking in his own life. One member, who died young a few years after she arrived in Australia, a talented artist and linguist, seems to have engaged his particular attention. There was an age gap of over 20 years between them, otherwise something more than friendship might have developed. His natural reticence might have made him reluctant to express his feelings. Most important, he was all his life financially insecure, managing with difficulty to support his widowed mother in Scotland. It is difficult to imagine his feelings on receiving a letter from the father of Fanny MacLeay, a few years after her death, recommending the bearer of the letter to Brown. He was no other than Fanny's widower. One can only assume that neither the writer of the letter nor the bearer

knew of Brown's attachment, though Fanny's mother seems to have.

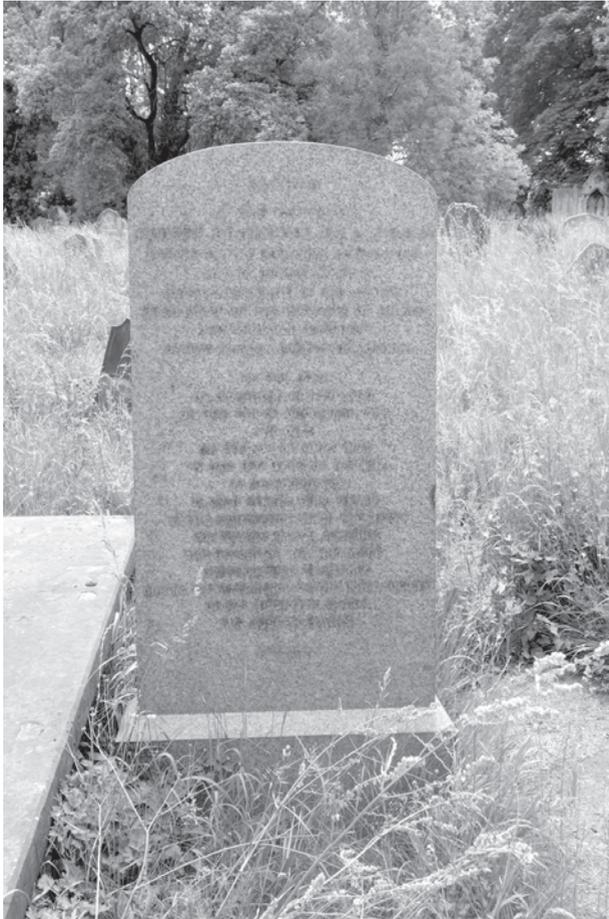
Brown's regard for the MacLeays and loyalty to them over the years is shown by his part in arranging a tribute to William MacLeay, first Speaker of the Australian Parliament, in the form of a silver candelabrum. The tribute followed his death some 20 years after the family had left for Australia, but there had of course been regular correspondence in the intervening years.

There are few other hints of a sentimental link, apart from references to 'L', probably his housekeeper, for whom he made provision in his will. Perhaps, as he could not support a wife, he saw no point in pursuing any possible relationships.

His friendships, on the other hand, were warm and despite his reserve, he seems to have been held not only in high esteem but also in genuine affection by a wide range of people. One of the most enthusiastic was Martius, whose correspondence is positively lyrical in parts. It is interesting to speculate on what a phlegmatic Scot made of extravagant language as the following description of a planned expedition in the Alps when Brown was about to visit Switzerland (the more so since the envelope was addressed to "Monsieur Robert Brown anglais"): "we will make our way through the Alps in high spirits and with coelestial happiness because you will find the scenery very beautiful and Endlicher and I will enjoy of your conversation like the Arabs in the Desert are enjoying the dew of heaven". This letter sent from Munich reached Brown in eight days.

The career of Robert Brown demonstrates several features which are fairly typical. Like many Scots, or people from any provincial centre for that matter, London proved to be the gateway to advancement. He did visit his homeland and was interested in trying to trace his family roots, deep in the religious and political conflicts of 17th and 18th century Scotland. But by far the largest part of his 85 years was spent in London, and he did not accept invitations to occupy two academic posts in Edinburgh and Glasgow. In coming to London he had not only moved into a freer, more liberal, environment, but also met Sir Joseph Banks, and without this connection his life might have taken as altogether different course. Personal recommendation was even more important in those days of less formal methods of promotion. His career came at an important stage in the development of science, when it was becoming more professional and less the pastime of dilettantes, however enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Scientific method, in particular, was advancing, as equipment such as microscopes improved. However, the financial arrangements seem to have been rather basic, and as Brown had no private means, his way of life was always modest.

Unassuming, shunning the limelight and preferring the company of people he knew well, he would have been easy to underestimate. His tendency to delay must have been exasperating to colleagues, but he showed himself helpful to younger men, in the way that Banks and others had been helpful to him. The photograph taken within a year of his death shows a kindly expression, and his



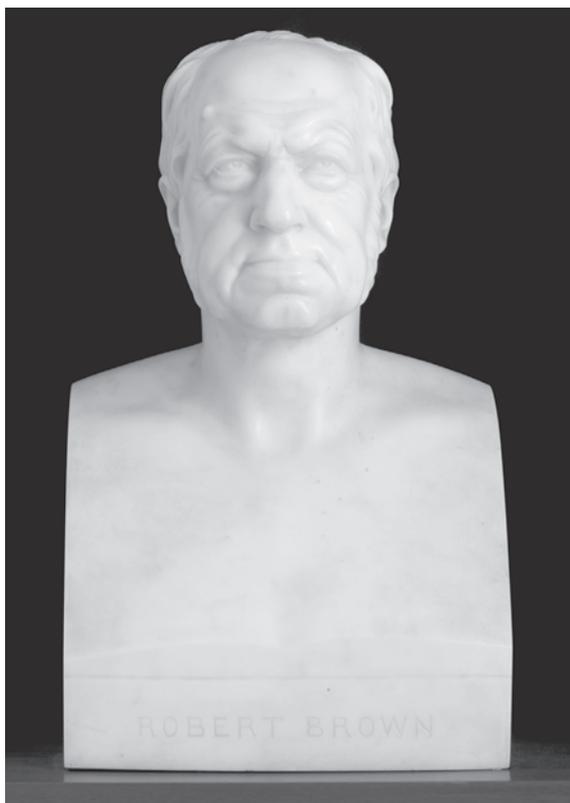
*Robert Brown's gravestone in Kensal Green Cemetery, London*

*Photograph by kind permission of Henry Vivian-Neal, Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery.*

#### Transcription

Sacred to the memory of Robert Brown, Esq., D.C.L, F.R.S., Keeper of the Botanical Collection in the British Museum, Foreign Associate of the Academy of Sciences of the Institute of France, former President of the Linnean Society of London.

He was born in Montrose, Scotland, on the 21st of December 1773 and died on the 10th of June 1858 in the 85th year of his age at his residence, 17 Dean Street, Soho Square, in the apartments which had been for nearly half a century the resort of all who were distinguished in science during the Presidency of the Royal Society of his friend and patron Sir Joseph Banks.



Robert Brown  
*Reproduced by kind permission of the  
Linnean Society of London.*

closest friend, Francis Boott, particularly emphasized this aspect of his personality. One imagines that he was not at all demonstrative, so this would probably have been expressed in oblique ways.

As a young man in Ireland, he chided himself in his diary for being indolent, yet his unremitting devotion to botany, his powers of observation and deduction – surely the fruit of intense and prolonged concentration – made an enormous contribution to the development of natural history. In this work he tended to hoard and amass, particularly specimens but also information – one writer describes him as being like a spider at the centre of a gigantic web. If so, he had none of its malevolence, but was a rather kindly, gentle spider, going to his own

pace, listening to a different ‘drummer’. The same writer asserts that nearly every group of flowering plants today bears the mark of his genius, and that Brown’s most important discoveries “were almost nonchalantly announced – in parenthesis as it were” such as the existence of the cell nucleus and the movement, which bears his name, of small particles suspended in liquid.

Jung has said that nature is not so liberal with her gifts as to endow in any one individual both head *and* heart, but in a few instances, such as Darwin, both qualities do come together. Perhaps, also in Robert Brown. Those who gathered in Soho Square on 15th June 1858 to accompany him on his last journey to Kensal Green Cemetery would, I think, have agreed.

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[www.linnean.org](http://www.linnean.org)

*The Scotsman* of 19 June 1858, quoting *The Times*, reported that Robert Brown was born at Montrose on 21 December 1773 and died at London on 10 June 1858. He had been educated at Marischal College, Aberdeen, then at the University of Edinburgh.

On his return from New Holland he brought back around 4,000 specimens, the large proportion of which was entirely new to known natural science. He was bequeathed the library and collection of Sir Joseph Banks, the latter later donated to the British Museum, where, for 30 years, Robert Brown was Keeper of Botany. During the administration of Sir Robert Peel, he had been awarded a pension of £200 p.a. In 1839 The Royal Society awarded him its highest honour, the Copley Medal. He was Librarian for many years for the Linnean Society, becoming President in 1849.

The Linnean Society of London has a portrait and a bust of Brown in its Meeting Room at Burlington House, and houses his restored microscope.

There is also another bust of Brown in Montrose Library, and a portrait by Stephen Pearce, commissioned by Lady Franklin, at Kew Gardens, London.

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## A mysterious photograph of Anne Dunbar: is this a portrait by Munro of Novar?

William Birch

There's no doubt that the art world has its share of frauds, false leads and fortune-hunters, all of which can make for great detective stories that grab the public's attention. Sleuthing almost always focuses on a particular artwork whose provenance is a mystery, so it's perhaps unusual to have a situation where the artwork itself is missing, and the only clue is a photograph of it.

This particular case involves a family link to a wealthy 19th century Scottish art collector and amateur artist, with the only piece of evidence being a photograph



The digitally restored portrait photograph of  
Anne Agnes Dunbar.

of a young woman, who belonged somewhere in my maternal family lineage. It's actually a sepia-toned photograph of a portrait, somewhat the worse for wear, mounted on a dark green card measuring 21.5 by 16.5 cm and bearing the lettering VICAR STREET FALKIRK (Figure 1). Clearly it had to be from either of my ancestral Scottish families, the Dunbars or Rattrays, but I could not find a connection to Falkirk in any of my investigations of both lines. Then a closer examination of the card mount under a microscope revealed very faint handwriting, with the only legible parts being 'Gran Pa ... mother..... Dunbar'. From my knowledge of the Dunbar

family, this strongly suggested that the young woman was Anne Agnes Dunbar, my great great great grandmother. She was born around 1818 in Elgin, Morayshire, Scotland, first daughter of James and Ann Jack, and grew up on the

Novar estate, north of Dingwall, in Ross and Cromarty County. The head of the estate at the time was Hugh Andrew Johnstone Munro (1797-1864), known to be a friend and mentor of J M W Turner - they toured the Alps together in 1836 - and by all accounts a benevolent landlord who looked after the education and welfare of his tenants (Anon. 1864, Gage 1980, Garlick 2004). Such benevolence was probably why Anne and her husband Colin Dunbar named their first son, born in December 1838, Hugh Andrew Johnston Munro. The particular act of kindness is not recorded, but may have been related to the change of fortune experienced

by Anne's father, James Jack, who in about 1820 was suddenly plucked from a lowly road-making job in Nairn, where Munro also had property, to joining his Novar estate as a grieve, or supervisor.

As well as assembling his own extensive collection, later in his life Hugh Munro took to painting, in both oils and watercolour, perhaps encouraged by Turner. He was regarded as a talented amateur, exhibiting in London, where he spent much of his time, with his style being compared to that of the French artist, Jean-Baptiste Greuze (Selby Whittingham, pers. comm.). After his death in 1864, a catalogue of his collection was published (Frost and Reeve 1865), which included five of his own works, all featuring young women in various poses (Figure 2). Munro had never married, although he fathered at least one son, his namesake, who became a celebrated Latin scholar. Munro

No. 17.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 MUNRO OF NOVAR.  
 GIRL WITH HER ARMS CROSSED ON HER BOSOM.  
 Size,—18 in. high by 15 wide, upright oval. (D.)

No. 139.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 MUNRO OF NOVAR.  
 GIRL'S HEAD.  
 Size,—15½ in. high by 12 wide. (D.)

No. 124.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 MUNRO OF NOVAR.  
 TWO GIRLS,  
 With Wreaths, looking into a Streamlet.  
 Size,—18 in. high by 14 wide. (D.)

No. 125.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 MUNRO OF NOVAR.  
 GIRL AT HER TOILET.  
 Her Figure reflected in a Glass.  
 Size,—15½ in. circular. (A.)

\_\_\_\_\_

MUNRO OF NOVAR.  
 TWO NYMPHS BATHING.

\_\_\_\_\_

Munro of Novar's artworks listed on page 85 of the catalogue of his collection by Frost and Reeve (1865).

senior died intestate and his art collection was inherited by his sister Isabella, who had married the Honourable Henry Butler Johnstone in 1834. Eventually, the collection was auctioned in London by Christie, Manson and Woods, in seven lots, between May 1867 and March 1880. The auction catalogues reveal the incredible depth and scope, let alone value of the collection, which featured works by Gainsborough, Rembrandt, Reynolds, Rubens, Raffaele, Tiepolo, Titian and Vandyck, along with a selection by Turner. There was even a Leonardo da Vinci sketch, which fetched £640. Only in the very last lot, auctioned after the

death of their then owner Henry Butler Johnstone in March 1880, is there a hint that some of the works might have been by Munro. Amongst the paintings by an 'Unknown Artist' were studies of women, including 20A. 'A female at a well'; 21. 'A lady seated'; and 22. 'Portrait of a girl in a black dress'. This last work was described as an oval and could well be the oval painting listed in the 1865 catalogue as being by Munro. These three paintings were purchased by a Mr Lilly for £1.1.0.

Despite numerous enquiries of experts and galleries, I have not been able to trace any works that can be reliably attributed to Munro of Novar. This may be explained by his status as an amateur, perhaps also because he may not have signed his works, but this void is nevertheless surprising. My hopes were raised by the discovery online of an oval painting of a young woman in a black dress, artist unknown, in the York Museum, but advice from the curator showed it to be larger than the catalogued Munro work, although similar in style and from about the right period (c. 1840/1860).

Returning to the portrait of Anne Dunbar, an assessment of the clothing and hairstyling of the subject dated it between about 1838 and 1848, and the age of the young woman as from her 20s to early 30s (Jayne Shrimpton, pers. comm.). This was just before commercial photography developed, at a time where traditional hand-crafted likenesses were in demand. However, this method was only possible for wealthier people who could afford to commission a professional artist. This interpretation fits the time when Anne was marrying Colin Dunbar and turning 21 herself. She could not have afforded to engage an artist, so it's very likely the painting was done by Hugh Munro as a gift for either event. Anne may not have been the only young woman on his estate who posed for Munro, none of whom could afford to pay him, but would have been flattered to have been asked to be his subjects.

The original painting must have eventually been passed down to one of Anne and Colin's five children, but which one? Anne had been widowed six months after the birth of the fifth, a daughter, when husband Colin was killed in a terrible saw-mill accident in Inverness in October 1845. After coping for four years, she remarried, but shared the upbringing of the children with her parents, who were still residing at Novar. Young Hugh A.J.M. Dunbar joined the 92nd Regiment of the British army in 1856 when he was 18, and after transferring to the Commissariat and marrying, he spent several years on St Helena, before returning to Scotland early in 1868. He and his wife had added five more children to the family by the time he retired from the army around 1878, when they were living in Aberdeen. Then, sometime in 1887, for reasons unknown, Hugh made the decision to take the family to Australia, arriving in Sydney sometime early in 1888. He and his family then established themselves in rural New South Wales.

So it appears that Hugh's life does not explain the Falkirk link with the image of his mother, who had passed away in Alness in 1868. Attention must be turned

to another son, James Jack Dunbar, who, like his older brother, also joined the 92nd Regiment, around 1861. James was posted to India in 1868, four years after his marriage, and spent an unknown period serving with the regiment overseas before returning to Scotland. Where they lived initially is uncertain, but by 1891, James and his wife and three surviving children were residing in Bo'ness, a town on the south bank of the Firth of Forth, a few miles west of Edinburgh. Bo'ness also happens to be just seven miles west of the town of Falkirk, so here was the likely link to the photograph of Hugh and James's mother. The most plausible scenario is that James somehow had possession of the original painting, and on learning of his brother's decision to emigrate to Australia, had taken it to the photographic studio belonging to the Brown brothers, in Vicar Street, where it was photographed. Several copies were probably made, each mounted on dark green card, and one was given to Hugh to take with him as a memento of his late mother. Eventually, it has been passed down to me.

The upshot of this complicated chain of events is that the photograph of the painting of Anne Dunbar may represent the only known work of Hugh Munro of Novar. Attempts have been made to track descendants of James Dunbar, to see if the original painting survives, and although one of his great granddaughters has been traced, living in Scotland, she has no recollection of the painting. Hopefully, it remains in the possession of another Dunbar descendant, who is understandably unaware of its likely historical importance.

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# Bob's Bytes – Blogging Your Genealogy

Bob Dawes

<http://dawesroots.blogspot.ca>

## Why blog your family history?

- 1) You control the format and structure.
- 2) It's free (in most cases).
- 3) You get a unique URL (web address).
- 4) It gets indexed by search engines. Google ["Minnie Dawes" 1874] to see what I mean. (the 1st result is my Wikitree listing and the 9th is my blog)
- 5) It attracts people interested in the same family you are.
- 6) Friends and relatives can follow or subscribe to your narrative.
- 7) It provides a platform to hypothesize about family relationships.
- 8) It will last long after you do (provided the host does).

There are two primary platforms for blogging WordPress and Blogger. WordPress requires a paid hosting service although there are some free ones - but most have a catch while Blogger is supplied by Google and is completely free. There is a comparison of the two at WPbeginner.com and as usual all websites are listed and linked at the end of this article. Personally, I use Blogger, so I will concentrate on it.

Think of a blog as a scroll to which you add pages which get rolled into it. As you post articles they get added to the top and any followers are notified of the new material. Depending on your settings, they can also make comments, although this can be a mixed blessing unless you want to engage in discussions about your posts. You control the moderation so anything that isn't appropriate doesn't get added to the blog.

Before starting your genealogy blog there are few criteria that are worthwhile writing down so you remember them and I decided to put them up front on the home area of my blog.

- What is the purpose of your blog (why are you doing this?)
- What family groups or surnames are you studying?
- Should you have one big blog or individual ones for each family group or surname?
- What is your policy for privacy (eg. information about living individuals).
- What is your policy for the posting of photographs (eg. do subjects need to give permission?)
- What is your policy for crediting snipped images from other sources?
- What will you call your blog or blogs?
- Will you include photos, charts and diagrams?

There are a few tools that I have found useful and it is a good idea to be prepared

before opening the blog editor. I use the following, however feel free to substitute what you use.

- Charts – Charting Companion by Progeny. I like the way they colour and organize their descendant and fan charts. Some editions of Family Tree Maker included this program.
- Text – Microsoft Word allows me to work locally, before I post, and gives me a backup copy of my work plus does basic spell checking etc.
- Photos – Irfanview is a good image editor which I use to add captions to my photos and to reduce their size for easy uploading and smaller files load faster for viewers.
- Capture – Microsoft Snipping Tool which I use to crop and capture my charts, photos and images off of web sites. This is available in Windows 7 and up.

For the most part, you use the Blogger text editor to add material but I find it is better to write out my content in a word processor, then copy and paste it into the blog editor. The same goes for photos, web images and charts which I capture with the Snipping Tool and save to a special BLOG sub-folder in My Pictures so they are easy to find later. Again, these provide a local backup copy of everything I post to my blog.

Since a blog is such a personal thing, I encourage you to check it out, sign up for a free Blogger account (which you already have if you use G-mail), establish a Blog Name and get started. To reiterate, the biggest reason that you want to do this is to get your family names indexed by all the search engines so that others can find you. Your blog is raw text so it is easy to get indexed although if you have names included in images or photos, make sure you also repeat them in the text portion. We're not out to win a Pulitzer Prize, just getting our family history on the web.

As an example, and to encourage you, my blog includes the following:

- Outlines of each family group from my earliest progenitor
- Colour charts breaking out each group with all their children
- Stories I've written about interesting ancestors and weird ones.
- Photos of cousins I've met (with their permission).
- Photos of unidentified family groups to see if I can attract identification.
- Photos of ancestors that have been shared with me.
- Photos of family homes and other important buildings.
- Maps and Google Earth views of family villages.
- Transcripts of obscure lists that aren't likely to be published elsewhere.
- Copies of interesting certificates, census returns, and old parish registers.
- Articles I've published about my ancestors in society journals.
- Trip reports after a research trip and may include lists of what I found.
- Hypothetical musings about family relationships I can't figure out.
- DNA results and links to cousins who have tested (this is a good place for your GEDmatch #)

- Links to interesting websites and/or software I've found.
- Updates on previous articles with links back to the original.

As you can see, it's a real smorgasbord of different stuff which is the real advantage of blogging. You control the agenda. Finally, by using Labels you can organize your family groups or topics so they appear at the top of your blog making it easy for readers to find all of the related posts. It's like a Table of Contents. And, if you don't blog for a while it doesn't matter since it will be there when you find something new to talk about.

Have fun with your genealogy.

#### **Websites mentioned in this article:**

<http://www.wpbeginner.com/opinion/wordpress-vs-blogger-which-one-is-better-pros-and-cons/>

<https://www.blogger.com/>

<https://wordpress.com/> or <https://wordpress.org/download/>

<http://progenygenealogy.com>

<http://www.irfanview.com>

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-ca/help/13776/windows-use-snipping-tool-to-capture-screenshots>

<https://www.cyndislist.com/blogs/personal/>

[http://blogfinder.genealogue.com/personal\\_research.asp](http://blogfinder.genealogue.com/personal_research.asp)

Following the article *Bob's Bytes* in the March 2018 issue, Joyce Lockhart writes; All the sites shown except GEDmatch allow your data to be sold to other companies with commercial interests, probably in exploiting their research.

I did, however, enjoy the article and the author's businesslike approach to analysis of the data.

### **Treasurer required**

So far, John Ellis is proving to be irreplaceable! Due to his ill-health, the Society needs a new Hon.Treasurer to keep and maintain our accounts. Members with financial experience are encouraged to consider this role. The Society is run entirely on a voluntary basis and co-operation and help from our Council will be given at all times.

Please contact [chairman@scotsgenealogy.com](mailto:chairman@scotsgenealogy.com)

## Escape from Nairn Jail

At last Inverness Circuit Court, a notorious character, named Daniel Clerk, belonging to Nairn, was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude for sheep-stealing. His best friends rejoiced to see him placed under such control, for it is as impossible for "Danny" to keep out of mischief as it is for a fish to live out of its peculiar element. But he has given his keeper the slip, and is again at large. On his being locked up in Nairn jail on Thursday night, about eight o'clock, he commenced operations by turning up a flagstone in his cell; then by an incredible amount of manual labour, he dug down about eight feet to the foundation of the prison, under which he made a tunnel; then holing upwards for the same distance on the outside of the foundation, he at length effected a breach. The hole resembles a rabbit's burrow, nearly two cart-loads of sand and *débris* being deposited on the floor of his cell. His tools consisted of a small pewter saucer, the leg of his cell table, and his trousers, which were converted into a bag to convey the loosened material out of the way. The most surprising affair of the whole is his manner of exit. It would puzzle the head of many a wiser man to pass through a hold resembling the letter *U*, in some parts not a foot square. By the aid of the outside bars of the prison windows, he got upon the roof of the prison, which consists here of one storey, along which he passed, and at last landed in safety in the garden of the manse, which lies contiguous to the prison. By this time it was nearly three o'clock A.M., and "Danny" might have had a longer start but for a dog in the manse which sounded an alarm, and intelligence was immediately conveyed to the Governor of the prison. The officers were soon on the alert, but no authentic tidings of the fugitive have been heard.

*Inverness Advertiser*

*The Scotsman, 6 June 1860*

## Advertising in **'The Scottish Genealogist'**

Our journal now accepts advertising  
for things relevant to genealogy.

A full page (black and white) is £80,  
half page £40, and a quarter page is £20.

These are the only sizes accepted.

If you, or someone you know, would like to consider  
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**editor@scotsgenealogy.com**

# Alexander Henry, Rifle-maker

## Extraordinary Shooting and Troublesome Business

Richard Brown



Alexander Henry

The 4th of June 2018 was the 200th anniversary of the birth of one of Edinburgh's most illustrious sons, but many may not have heard of him. Alexander Henry was respected the world over as a manufacturer of top-class sporting rifles and shotguns in the second half of the nineteenth century, and all were made in Edinburgh. He also invented "Henry rifling" which at the time made rifles much more accurate, and he gave his name – and barrel - to the famous Martini Henry rifle, the iconic weapon of the British Empire.

As Henry's great-great grandson, I've always been fascinated by his life, as so little was known. In my collaboration with gunmaking historian Donald Dallas on his book "*Alexander Henry Rifle Maker*", I found out so much, about family tragedies and business issues,

alongside his inventiveness and successes. This was helped enormously by a book of letter copies passed down through the family, written by Henry during the 1870s, his time of "*troublesome business*".

Henry's father James died when he was just eleven months old. A year later, his mother Janet remarried, to a blacksmith called John Scott. John's own son is listed as a "journeyman blacksmith", and Alexander as a "journeyman gunmaker" aged 22, in the same house in Leith in 1841. Presumably this is where Henry's interest in working with metal came from.

When Alexander and his wife Isabella had their first son in 1848, they named him James after his late father. James frequently helped his father but in a tragic accident, Henry shot his twelve-year-old son dead in September 1860, at Henry's private shooting range off Easter Road in Edinburgh, very close to what is Hibernian F.C.'s stadium today.

*The Scotsman* reported:

### ***Distressing Accident – Boy Shot***

*A most sad and painful accident occurred on Tuesday afternoon, attended with fatal results, to a fine boy of between twelve and thirteen years of age, the son of Mr Henry, gunmaker, St Andrew Street. It appears that Mr Henry had been at his own shooting-ground at Easter Road, regulating the sights of a rifle, along with his son and a friend, the boy being at the target to point out where the bullets struck, a duty which he had very frequently performed before. Mr Henry had fired several shots, and had observed the boy each time safely return to behind the wall which was used as shelter; but when the last shot was fired, it is supposed that he had crept round to pick up the lead in a hollow part of the ground immediately in front of the target, which prevented his being observed by his father, and the bullet took effect in the upper part of his head, causing instantaneous death. The distressed state of mind in which his parents are left can only be imagined.*

### **Henry Rifling**

It says something about the man that he continued in the business at all, let alone ever picked up a rifle again. The effect on the family must have been devastating. However, Henry must have known he was on the verge of something, because only six weeks after the accident, he registered his famous patent no. 2802, of 15th November 1860, for what became known as “Henry Rifling”. It was then that his business really started to take off. Therefore, it is very likely that the first person killed by Henry rifling was his own son James.

A week later, *The Scotsman* reported:

### ***Extraordinary Rifle Shooting***

*A new rifle, the peculiar grooving of which has been patterned and patented by Mr Alexander Henry, gunmaker, St Andrew Street, has within the last week been tried at ranges from 200 yards to a mile, and the results have been certainly equal, if not superior to those of any rifle we have heard of.*

### **“Father” of the Volunteer movement**

Henry put a sign up in his shop and was the first to put his name to the new Queen’s Edinburgh Rifle Volunteers in 1859. He is known as the “Father” of the Volunteer movement in Edinburgh. The movement promoted rifle practice across Great Britain and in later years would become the Territorial Army.

### **The Martini Henry Rifle**

The War Department competition for the design of a new British Army rifle finally decided on the action submitted by Count von Martini, and Henry’s barrel, which became the Martini Henry rifle of Zulu wars fame. This always rankled with Henry as he’d won both the action and barrel prizes in the competition, but Martini’s action was chosen based on lesser cost and fewer parts.

## Henry v. Farquharson

John Farquharson was a Perthshire gamekeeper who shot with Henry, and for Henry, at national competitions over many years, but the two men fell out over Farquharson hanging around Henry's workshops and asking too many questions of his men. This came to a head in 1872 when a long-running patent dispute over improvements to breech-loading firearms went to court. Astonishingly the court found in favour of the gamekeeper, later literally turned poacher, Farquharson instead of Henry with his forty years of experience in the gun trade.

In March 1873, Henry wrote to gun maker Samuel Allport

*It seemed a very hard matter that anyone who may have spent the best part of their lifetime in communion with and in the improvement of any article, should be unscrupulously deprived of the advantages of their labour, by the dishonesty of any ungrateful cunning rascal, backed up by jealous and disingenuous rivals in business, to suit their own selfish ends.*

Almost immediately after the court case, Farquharson's patent was reassigned to John Farquharson, gunmakers George Gibbs and William Metford, and a Thomas Pitt. Henry clearly believed Farquharson was the *rascal* and they were the *jealous and disingenuous rivals*.

## Troublesome business

Henry was swindled out of £3000 (a huge sum in the 1870s) by a JD Wormald W.S., over a loan for a share of Craiglockhart estate, which the city was selling at the time for development. Henry wrote to John Moore in February 1875,

*I have been very much engaged in troublesome business which prevented my writing to you sooner.*

He also lost a lot of money through investment in the Highland Peat Fuel Company (Company Secretary – one JD Wormald). Wormald went to prison for other offences – the Henry fraud charge was dropped - and was only the second W.S. to be struck off.



## Connections with Royalty

Henry's rifles and shotguns were very popular with the British Royal family. The Prince of Wales was particularly enthusiastic, buying several Henry shotguns



Alexander Henry's gravestone in Warriston Cemetery, Edinburgh

and hunting rifles over the years. Queen Victoria commissioned a Henry double rifle as a present for ghillie John Brown for Christmas 1873. This sold recently at Bonham's for £35,000. Many Princes, Lords, Earls, Counts and Maharajas feature in his order books which still exist today.

### **After Henry's death**

Henry led a very full life outside his profession, having been a Justice of the Peace, Edinburgh town councillor, captain of Earlsferry and Elie Golf club, elder of his church, and Moderator of the High Constables of Edinburgh, one of the most prestigious roles in his home city. He died at 10 Bellevue Crescent, Edinburgh in 1894, a world class gunmaker, very well-respected citizen and loving father, and is buried in Warriston cemetery with his wife and son James.

In his will, he left the business to his surviving sons Alick and John (John, on condition that he was paid off if he just wasn't interested). Imagine if Henry knew

that they put the business up for sale within six weeks of his death! It took some time to sell, and from there Alexander Henry Ltd was born, but the business was never really the same without his direction and guardianship.

His son James, even at the age of 12 (Henry's own age when he started his gunmaking apprenticeship), was showing signs of great interest in his father's work, when he tragically died. It has been said that Alexander Henry was "never the same again".

Had it not been for that accident, we could have been talking to this day about Henry and Son, or Henry and Henry, just as we do famous gunmaking families such as James Purdey and Sons, or Holland and Holland.

An exhibition, *Alexander Henry – Rifling through a life*, is at the People's Story Museum, Canongate, Edinburgh, from 8th June to 9th September 2018. Admission free

*Alexander Henry Rifle Maker* by Donald Dallas is available from [www.donalddallas.com](http://www.donalddallas.com), price £60.

# Poor Registers of the Highlands: An Unutilised Resource

Stuart Farrell

“Send me anywhere but not the Poorhouse.” This was a phrase that was told to me by my Grandfather by his Grandfather of the universal horror held by many Scots that they could die as a pauper in the Poorhouse. But not all those who were classed as ‘Pauper’ in a Census Return ended up in the Poorhouse, many stayed at home and received financial relief. Being a ‘Pauper’ opens a wealth of material in the Highlands, much of which has been ignored by Family History Groups, largely due to the time required to process it, but it can provide in the author’s opinion distinct information and is so much undervalued.

In 1845 the Poor Law of Scotland Act was placed on the Statute Books, and the system of poor relief arose for a variety of reasons. Prior to 1845, relief was given by each Parish Church with money being collected weekly in the poor box, but by the 1840s this system of distribution was not suitable due to the rising movement of population to cities, clearances of people within and to other parishes, Irish emigration to Scotland following the potato famine, the disruption of the Free Church in 1843, industrialisation, etc: whatever the reasons, a new system of relief was required. The Act established a Parochial Board in the form of a Committee in each Parish, with an Inspector of Poor for each Parish to oversee relief. Each Parochial Board was overseen by a Board of Supervision, based in Edinburgh.

Initially relief was in two forms: either ‘casual relief’ where money was given by the Inspector on a casual basis, ie infrequently, or a person became a Pauper on the Roll and received weekly/ monthly payments until their circumstances changed. Some parishes augmented or supplemented payment of cash by help with distribution of oatmeal. Paupers were given relief in the Parish of their birth, or if married in their husband's place of birth, or having settlement of more than five years in a parish. Occasionally persons who were homeless, or orphaned/ abandoned children, were also admitted to the Roll at the discretion of the Committee, who in each case accessed the application of each person who required relief, with emphasis being given to widows/ widowers, single parents, particularly widows with young children, or those disabled by birth or accident or ill-health. Those persons being ‘able-bodied’ were very often rejected to receive relief or if they could get relief from other family members. Later years saw relief given also in the form of clothes, shoes, bedding and medical supplies.

In the early years most paupers stayed in the parish they claimed relief upon, but in the later 19th and early 20th Century the further movement of people to the cities could cause disputes between Parishes to whom ‘chargeability’ was

held by, and Minute Books give numerous indications of correspondence in many cases. Parishes also had the never-ending struggle of recovering rates from their own parishioners to pay out relief, as well as having responsibilities for water supply, burial grounds, etc. In 1865 new regulations were introduced to the Act in the need for more detailed registers to be kept for adults, and even separate registers for children, but also those paupers who were removed to a Poorhouse or to an Asylum.

The family historian has three options of gaining information from Parochial records: firstly Application Records, secondly Minute Books; and thirdly that of the Register of the Poor for each parish. In many cases the first can be quite brief, whilst the second often means a lot of reading for little information, whilst the third, in the opinion of the author, usually provides information that is contained in the two other resources. But what information can be contained in a Register?

Particular areas of information can be the details of the place of birth of a pauper, their former occupation, their own circumstances including a date of death, which can be especially noteworthy of those dying between 1845 and 1855. Changes of circumstances can be details of admission to a Poorhouse or entry and release from an Asylum, the latter can lead to additional areas of research. The latter is detailed in a case study below. Details can also include family members ie of their children, giving their occupations, ages, locations and their circumstances.

Registers can also reveal information about persons who received relief only for a short time, ie not recorded in a Census as a Pauper but who claimed relief due to ill health or only for a short time for a variety of reasons such as pregnancy or an absent parent. Parochial Relief by individual parishes ended in 1930 with responsibility being taken over by County Councils, in many instances Parochial records are still subject to a closure period of 100 years unless applied for by a direct family member. But many records are available for consultation in the archives in the Highlands.

For the purposes of this paper I have included four case studies of the variety of information that can be found in a Register:

### **Case Study 1 – Donald McIntosh**

Donald is recorded in the Register for the Parish of Eddrachillis with the following entry:

Present Residence: Scourie More; Status: Widower; Age: 75;

Place of Birth: Duardmore; Trade or Occupation: A Tenant;

If wholly or partially disabled: Partially; Description of Disablement: A Lunatic;

Means and resources of Pauper besides Parochial Relief: Lived with his son-in-law, who laboured a lot for his own & the old man's support;

Names and weekly earnings of Parents: Dead; Names, ages and earnings of children not living with Pauper: Christy McIntosh or Sutherland, 38, married, 5 children - 3 under 12 years;

Date when admitted on Roll: 25 Nov 1845; Amount of relief in money: 6d;  
Date and cause of removal from Roll: Emigrated on 25 May 1848.

He appears in the 1841 Census, as a Tenant aged 80 with family given as Donald Sutherland 35 Fisherman, Angusina Sutherland 35, Donald Sutherland, 5, Neil Sutherland 5 and Angus Sutherland 3.

Unfortunately Emigration records of the Highland Emigration Society only started in 1852; records prior to this are scarce. Four other paupers on the Roll are recorded to have emigrated on the same date and so there must have been a large group to leave the Parish at that time.

### **Case Study 2 – Isabella Mackenzie**

In later years especially a pauper who may have appeared in the 1901 census as a Pauper but is not named as such in the 1911 Census may indicate that they received an Old Age Pension (introduced 1 Jan 1911) and would no longer be eligible to receive Parochial Relief but could receive 'Medical Relief' in the form of money for attendance, or medicine or other expenses including funeral costs.

Isabella Mackenzie is recorded in 1901 Census as Pauper aged 60, living with her niece Ina Dawson, 14 Scholar. Stated as being in the Poor House at Kirkton, Assynt.

Recorded in the Assynt Poor Register:

Residence: Elphine; Age: 58;

Date of Minute of Parochial Board authorising relief: 12 Sep 1890;

Amount and Description of Relief: 1/6 per week;

Place of Birth: Elphine, Parish of Assynt; Religious Denomination: Protestant;

Condition: Single; Wholly or Partially Disabled: Wholly;

Description of Disablement: Blind; Wholly or Partially Destitute: Partially;

Earnings: Stays with her sister & nephew;

Nature of Settlement: Birth & Residence;

Register: 10 Oct 1901 – Allowance increased from 1/6 to 1/9 per week, 9 Oct

1902 – Allowance increased to 3/- per week, nd – Lives in Knockan Poorhouse totally blind, attended by her niece Ina Dawson, 31 Dec 1911 – Old Age Pensioner, off Roll, 22 Apr 1914 – Admitted with 3/- per week for attendance (medical), 8 Nov 1915 – Died.

Her Death Certificate indicates she died at Knockan on 6 Nov 1915, daughter of John Mackenzie, Crofter, and Flora Mackenzie (both deceased), with informant being her niece Hughina Dawson.

### **Case Study 3 – John Hunter**

In some cases those paupers who were infirm or from other parishes were sent to the Poorhouse, most Parishes paid annual fees for beds in a 'Combination Poorhouse' which included paupers from other Parishes in the County, hence Poorhouses were established in Caithness (Latheron and Thurso), Inverness-

shire (Inverness, Skye and Long Island (Western Isles), Nairn, Ross-shire (Black Isle at Fortrose, Easter Ross at Tain and Lewis) and Sutherland (Bonar Bridge), though individual 'poorhouses' also existed where a small number of paupers could also be housed. Records for some of the Poorhouses are lacking, what usually survives is an admission register, though other material does exist. These records again are subject to 100-year closure because many poorhouses continued to be used after 1930.

John Hunter is recorded in the Assynt Poor Register:

Residence: Broomielaw, Glasgow; Age: 47;

Date of Minute of Parochial Board authorising relief: 15 Oct 1880;

Amount and Description of Relief: Maintenance in the Combination Poorhouse;

Place of Birth: Ledbeg, Parish of Assynt; Religious Denomination: Protestant;

Condition: Married; Trade or Occupation: Hotel Keeper or Shepherd;

Wholly or Partially Disabled: Partially; Description of Disablement: Stricture;

Wholly or Partially Destitute: Wholly; Nature of Settlement: Birth;

Name, Age & Weekly Earnings of Husband, Wife, Children: Margaret Stevenson, wife, 52, Mary Hunter, dau, married in Stornoway; Register: 23 Oct 1883 – Removed to Bonar Bridge, nd – Died.

Recorded in the Sutherland Combination Poorhouse at Bonar Bridge in the 1891 Census as being aged 56, and born in Assynt. Death Certificate indicates he died in the Poorhouse on the 14 November 1900, noted as formerly Hotel Keeper, aged 60, son of John Hunter, Shepherd, and Elizabeth Thornburn (both deceased), informant was the Matron of the Poorhouse.

#### **Case Study 4 - William Mackenzie**

The last case is that of a 'Lunatic Pauper' to show what other information can be available with further research. Paupers who were 'Lunatics' were overseen by the Board of Lunacy and were often committed to an Asylum, though some could be 'boarded out' in the Parish. Parishes tried to board out lunatics as this was cheaper than sending them to an Asylum, as many parishes in the Highlands could not afford their own Asylum, so sent them elsewhere under annual agreements which cost more.

William Mackenzie was born in the Parish of Assynt, Sutherland, and has 2 entries in the Assynt Poor Register:

Residence: Raffin; Age: 40;

Date of Minute of Parochial Board authorising relief: 24 Apr 1889;

Amount and Description of Relief: Maintenance in the District Asylum Inverness;

Place of Birth: Raffin, Parish of Assynt; Religious Denomination: Protestant;

Condition: Single; Trade or Occupation: Fisherman;

Wholly or Partially Disabled: Wholly; Description of Disablement: Insanity;

Wholly or Partially Destitute: Wholly; Earnings: None;

Nature of Settlement: Birth & Residence;

Register: 22 Apr 1889 – Recovered and removed from the Asylum to his brother's

house at Raffin, 15 May 1889 – Removed to Asylum again, nd – Recovered & removed from Asylum to his brother's house at Raffin, nd – Recovered off Roll, 23 Jan 1907 – Removed to Asylum, 11 Aug 1907 – Escaped from Asylum committed Suicide by Drowning in Inverness Canal.

2nd Entry – Residence: Raffin; Age: 50;  
Date of Minute of Parochial Board authorising relief: 29 Sep 1898;  
Amount and Description of Relief: Asylum Treatment;  
Place of Birth: Parish of Assynt; Religious Denomination: Protestant;  
Condition: Single; Trade or Occupation: Fisherman;  
Wholly or Partially Disabled: Wholly; Description of Disablement: Insane;  
Wholly or Partially Destitute: Wholly; Nature of Settlement: Birth & Residence;  
Register: - Dec 1898 – On Probation, nd – Recovered, Off Roll.

Further to the information provided in the Register, William Mackenzie was actually admitted to the Inverness District Asylum four times, and records formerly held by the Highland Health Board now held in Inverness Archives give distinct details of his time there. It should be noted that records of the Health Board are also subject to 100-year closures except to direct family members.

William was admitted on the following dates: 29 January 1889, discharged 22 April 1889; admitted 29 January 1889 discharged 2 May 1893; admitted 29 September 1898 discharged 16 December 1898; admitted 25 January 1907 died 27 June 1907. The Warrant for him being admitted in the first instance indicates that he suffered from 'delusions, he believes himself to be the King of Great Britain, the Agent of the Almighty', noted as violent, having suicidal tendencies as he believed he was in hell, the only release being to drown himself in a Loch. Later in 1907 he was also noted to be threatening to others including family members.

A review of his case notes indicates that the cause of illness was unknown but suggested as 'heredity for his father committed suicide and several of his relatives have been queer. He is not epileptic but is both suicidal and dangerous to others.' At times he is noted as lazy and dull, suffering from depression, refusing to speak and uncaring about his appearance and could not be induced to work. In his last two periods he seems to have suffered more from depression, but was able for light work.

He had also escaped from the Asylum on three occasions: the first on the 13 May 1889, he escaped during fieldwork and was arrested in Inverness on 10 June (no indication where he had been during that time in Inverness); second time was in November 1890 when he escaped by breaking a lavatory window in ward and was found at Dochfour a few days later; the third time was in 1907 which was recorded as follows: 'A convalescent male patient, who was working in the Medical Superintendent's garden, made his escape tonight just as the patients were returning to the House. Diligent search was kept for him, and on the 11th inst his body was found washed up on the shore of the Beaully Firth,

near Bunchrew. When found he had a large handkerchief filled with stones round his neck, and the pockets of his coat were also filled with stones.

His death was reported in *The Inverness Courier* of 13th August 1907 as follows: 'Man Drowned – On Sunday the dead body of a man was found in the Beaully Firth near Bunchrew. It was identified as that of a middle-aged patient who had disappeared from the District Lunatic Asylum. The man's name was Mackenzie, and he was a native of Assynt, in Sutherland.'

His case must be seen as being quite unique, the majority of Asylum patients were either cured or those who were not stayed in the Asylum until they died, and their stay was not as eventful as William Mackenzie's was.

### **Case 5 – James Campbell**

This is an example of a Pauper whose entry lies between Census entries, where status of family and date of death is also noted, the latter can also be helpful for those who died before 1855.

Entry in the Eddrachillis Poor Register:

Present Residence: Achreskill; Status: Married;

Name of each dependent living with Pauper: Wife Catherine McIntosh 69;

Age: 75; Place of Birth: Guibmore; Trade or Occupation: Tenant;

If wholly or partially disabled: Partially; Description of Disablement: Ruptured;

Means and resources of Pauper besides Parochial Relief: A small lot of land & a cow &c; Names and weekly earnings of Parents: Dead;

Names, ages and earnings of children not living with Pauper: John Campbell 34, earnings not known, married & has 3 children, William Campbell 30, earnings not known, married and has one child; Catherine Campbell 50, single, earnings not known; Date when admitted on Roll: 3 Feb 1852; Amount of relief in money: 9d; Date and cause of removal from Roll: Died 21 Apr 1860.

So the above provides some indication of the information that can be given in a Poor Register, but not every parish has complete records surviving. Currently the author is working on the transcription of a number of Poor Registers for the Highlands and which will be published by the Scottish Genealogy Society.

The Register for the Parish of Assynt 1865-1916 is now available and those for Eddrachillis for 1845-1916 both in the County of Sutherland should be available soon, while the author is currently working on the Register for the Parish of Applecross 1845-1917.

### **Sources**

Assynt Poor Register 1865-1916 – Highland Archives Inverness CS/6/1/4-5.

Eddrachillis Poor Register 1865-1916 – Highland Archives Inverness CS/6/6/16-20.

Highland Health Board Archives – Highland Archives Inverness HHB series.

# Edinburgh City Archives, who we are and what we hold (Part 1)

Ashleigh Thompson

ECA is the archive service for the City of Edinburgh Council, and for Edinburgh itself. Therefore, we hold the records of the council, and records relating to the Edinburgh area. These records can be created clubs, societies, individuals, businesses, and organisations, or by council employees and committees.

Our aim is to preserve and promote these records to ensure that they remain accessible to users whether they be internal council employees or members of the public. Our service is commonly used by internal staff, academics, students, family and local historians, and those who simply nip in for a general snoop to see what we hold.

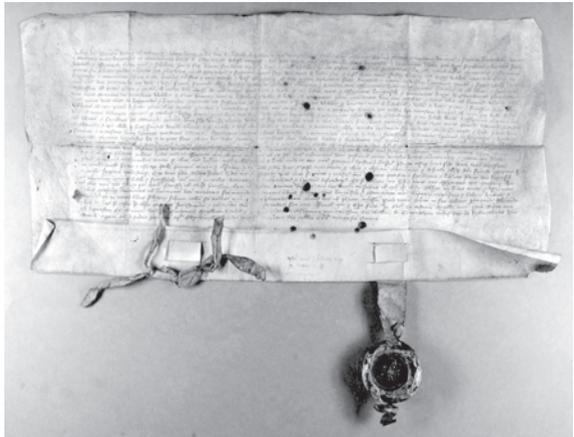
Our records span from 12th century right through to the present day. Our earliest record is the 1124 Charter of the Burgh.

Fun fact! Edinburgh has had a Keeper of Records since the 18th century and the first official Archivist was appointed in 1986.

## **A brief overview of the records we hold**

We hold many collections and some of our record categories include Municipal, Social Welfare, Commerce and trade, Education, Law and order, Defence, Religion, and Leisure.

The image here provides a taster of some of the fantastic historical sources that we hold. It is an extract from the 1398 Logan Family Charter. This charter is of interest because the Logan family were wealthy landowners who possessed the Barony of Restalrig from the 14th Century, and were involved in various chapters of Edinburgh's history.



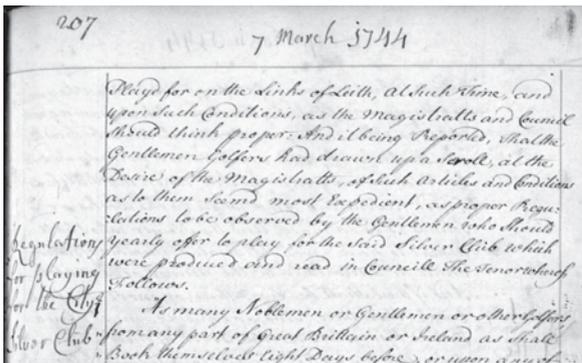
*Sir Robert Logan Charter, 1398*

Perhaps one of its most infamous members was Sir Robert Logan. Although he died in 1606, and was buried in his family tomb at South Leith Parish Church, history was not finished with him. Two years following his death, suspicions were raised that Logan had been involved in the 'Gowrie Conspiracy', a failed plot to assassinate King James VI in 1600. As a result of these suspicions, the deceased Logan was summoned

to appear in court, meaning that his body had to be exhumed and laid before the court. With Logan in no position to defend himself, he was found guilty and his estates were forfeit. Not only does this record provide us with insight into the format and content of a historical charter, it's also connected to much wider events that were still to unfold!

### Municipal records

Municipal records are those pertaining to local government, and these are some of our core records. ECA hold the official records of the Council, and all the predecessor bodies it has been known as over the years (including Edinburgh District Council and Lothian Regional Council).



Leith Parish Council, 1744

The Town Council Minutes run from 1456 right through to today. The minutes are a fantastic source of information as they let us see what was happening within the Burgh at any given time –and they record the activities of and the decisions being made by the Council. Within these you will find lists of councillors in attendance at each meeting and a wealth of history including early recorded rules for playing golf, details of the Porteous riots and the establishment of the Edinburgh Festival in 1947.

The image included is of an entry from the Leith Parish Minutes from 1744 discussing the playing of the silver club golf tournament on the links of Leith.

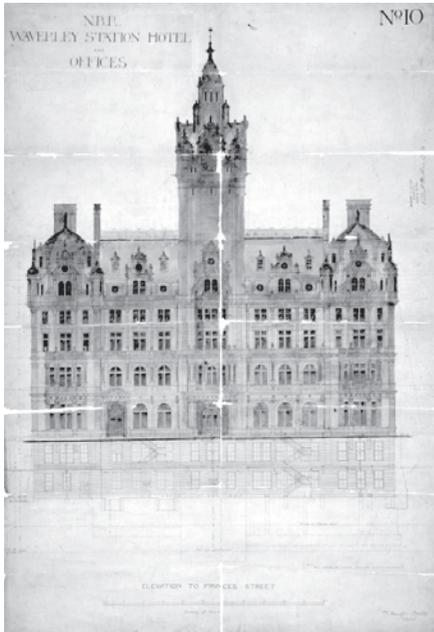
If you are interested in researching more specific subjects, we also hold various committee minutes and agendas – for example Lord Provost, public health, and planning committees – which can be useful when considering relatively modern decision making within the Burgh. They also shed light on historical issues such as sanitation conditions and war time measures.

### Dean of Guild

From the running of the city, to how it developed architecturally, a set of records used regularly are those of The Dean of Guild Court. This court originally headed up the merchant community and regulated weights and measures used by the burgh traders; but from the 17th century onwards their role became the supervision of building development within the City. We hold the minutes of the DoG Court, which date back to 1527, and detail the petitions that were heard, as well as any disputes over buildings or alterations which needed to be resolved.

The series most used, however, are the petitions and architectural drawings

submitted to this Court for approval. We have these for Edinburgh, Leith, and Midlothian, starting in 1762. The drawings for areas which lay within Midlothian, and later became part of Edinburgh, are not as plentiful as the drawings for Edinburgh and Leith, though. These drawings are a brilliant visual record of what was being built and adapted over time. The image here is from an early petition for the Waverley Station Hotel and offices, a site which is now known as the Balmoral Hotel. It demonstrates how beautifully detailed these drawings can be. It is worth noting that plans did not always have to be submitted before a building was erected and there was no obligation to submit these drawings to the Court until the latter half of the 19th century, so plans don't necessarily exist for every building. The Dean of Guild Court was eventually abolished in 1975 and the building control departments took over this role.



*Waverley Station Hotel / Offices*

Anyone who is interested in looking for plans should do so through the Plan Store which is also a Council department. The Plan Store manages and process all plan requests. Please be aware that unless you're undertaking academic research there are fees attached to plan retrievals.

### **Social welfare**

There are also collections that capture the social welfare of Edinburgh residents. There was a basic principle, dating back to the 15th century, that parishes should be responsible for their poor. However, this principle applied only to the right type of poor – for example, if you were elderly or sick you would benefit, but you wouldn't if you were deemed idle or simply a beggar. Society was tough on the unfortunate.

Pre-1845, the responsibility of administering poor relief lay with the heritors and the kirk session of a parish, and these records can be found at the NRS. The level of detail within these records greatly varies and can often be scant as record-keeping was at mercy of administrators who had no real obligation to record this information. However, following the 1845 Poor Law Scotland Act, Parochial Boards took over the responsibility of looking after the poor, and they were obliged to record their undertakings. As a result we see increased detail within these records. These boards could provide out-door relief in the form of

money or clothes. They also had control of the poorhouses where struggling individuals with nowhere else to turn were often admitted. In 1895, Parish Councils took over from the Parochial Boards and continued to oversee this function until 1930, when local authorities finally took control under what is now known as Social Work departments.

Although the Poor Relief records for Edinburgh are somewhat scant, we do hold some fantastic collections. For example, we hold collections from the Parochial Boards and Parish Councils. The records within these collections tend to be minutes, which are usually administrative in nature, however, they do occasionally refer to individual people and cases which allows us a rare glimpse into individual experiences, and the hardships faced by people in need at the time. We also have some surviving records from the poorhouses and charity workhouses including the Craiglockhart Poorhouse 1859-1963, which includes records regarding finances, rules and regulations, visitor books, admissions, deaths, and staffing. These provide an inclusive view of how the institution was run and those who relied upon it.

Some other examples of poor relief collections that have survived include St Cuthbert's Paupers Claims 1850-1852, applications for relief received by the Canongate Parochial Board from 1835-1853, and the lists of inmates and out pensioners of the Edinburgh Charity Workhouse covering the 1830s – 1840s. Although our poor relief collections are not vast, it's always worth getting in touch with us to find out if we hold anything that might assist your research, even if it's simply to provide some contextual information of life at the time.

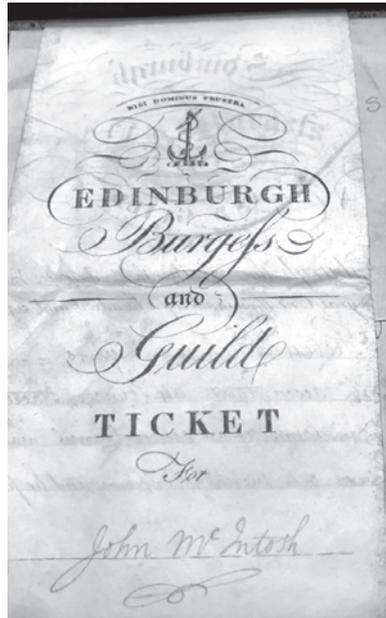
With regards to provision for children, prior to 1930, adoptions were arranged privately, either by individuals or by charitable adoption agencies. The details of these arrangements were often captured in Children's Separate Registers and we are lucky enough to hold a surviving collection of these beginning in 1913. The Children's Separate Registers detail children who were in foster care (or what was then known as boarded out). These registers record the fate of the children – for example, did they return to their families, or did they get a job when they reached employable age. From 1930 onwards, The Adoption of Children (Scotland) Act introduced the concept of legal adoption and The National Records of Scotland hold the records that were created following this Act.

From state help to the records of Friendly Societies, where the impetus was on self-help. A Friendly Society is usually composed of a body of people who have joined together for a common financial or social purpose. Before modern insurance and the welfare state, Friendly Societies provided financial and social services to individuals, often according to their religious, political, or trade affiliations. We hold the records for the Indigent Old Men's Society 1832-1966 and the Edinburgh Brewers' Friendly Supporting Society 1820-1837. These collections contain records such as membership lists and widows' funds, and provide us with a slightly different angle on welfare provision.

## Commerce and Trade

It would be difficult to discuss our archival collections without highlighting commerce and trade, given the abundant and diverse nature of it within this city, and our Burgess and Incorporated Trade records emphasise exactly that.

If you wanted to trade or conduct business within the Burgh you had to become a burghess, which required swearing an oath of loyalty to the Crown and the Town Council, and paying a fee. This came with certain privileges, including free education for their children, reduced tolls at ports, as well as the legitimate right to trade within the city boundary. This image shows a standard burghess ticket from 1884 for a John McIntosh who was an accountant. Burgess-ships could be passed to sons and sons-in-law for a reduced fee too. We hold Registers and claim books from 1487, giving the details of burghesses (ie how / why they became one).



*Burgess Ticket, 1884*

There are also occasional transcripts of the oaths and prayers that were read when a burghess was sworn in, and these really do provide amazing contextual and cultural insight into this process. We also hold the register of those granted honorary burghesses, and Freedom of the City, such as Nelson Mandela and Sir Chris Hoy who were honoured by the city through such acclamations.

If you are interested in trade in the city then you should also consider the Incorporated Trades and Guilds. These Trades and Guilds were given protection to trade in return for ensuring the standards of work carried out was of good enough quality, and by making sure that no-one was trading without having paid the relevant fee or being a member of the associated trade.

These trades and guilds provided charitable help by giving funds to widows and orphans of its brethren, or when members were sick or injured and subsequently unable to work. This kind of aid was financed by subscription of its members. At ECA we hold several records of various Incorporations within Edinburgh, Canongate, and Leith. These include Coopers (barrels and casks etc), Cordiners (shoemakers), Hammermen, Tailors, Wrights and Masons, and Weavers. The records include minutes, financial records, apprentice registers, widows' funds, and members rolls. These records hold a wealth of information allowing us to gain a fairly comprehensive understanding of the lives and activities of the incorporated trades and guilds.

## Business Collections

We hold lots of records for individual businesses in and around Edinburgh. Part of our collecting policy includes preserving records which document the local area, and business records do exactly that. They also provide a fascinating insight into the economy over time.



*Melrose's Tea Advertisement*



*Bovril Advertisement*

Some of our oldest business records belong to a bookseller called Bell and Bradfute which operated in Parliament Close – which is now part of the City Chambers. These records were discovered in cellars beneath offices in the Chambers and date from 1788. They show how the business was run alongside information about its customers. We also have records relating to a laundrette business, confectioners, saddlers, corn merchants, shoe makers, iron mongers - the list goes on.

As well as small private businesses, we also hold several collections relating to larger commercial outfits – for example we have records for Jenners, Bovril, Lyon and Turnbull, and Melrose's Tea. The image here is from a Bovril advertising campaign.

## Business record types

These records provide a real insight into business through the ages, and individual businesses through record types such as minutes, financial records, advertising, and legal papers. They allow us to build up a vivid picture of which businesses were thriving in the area, shopping trends, and how industries changed over time.

This image is one of my personal favourites and shows a badge that was given to children whilst



*Jenner's Badge, 1970s*

visiting Santa in Jenners some 40 years ago at Christmastime. It also gives us a little look into their commercial strategy all those years ago!

We can also learn about the lives of workers through surviving personnel records, photographs, and staff magazines. These give us an idea of wages and life style, alongside how individuals were treated by, and interacted with, their employers.

We actively encourage local businesses to deposit their records with us so that this information can be preserved. Deposited collections are safeguarded for the future, meaning that they can be used by individuals whether that be academics, students, or local and family historians. Unfortunately, a lot of business records do not survive, but part of our job is to appeal to businesses and make them aware that the records they create have historical significance and if preserved could be used in various ways in the future. Fortunately, we do continue to receive fantastic business collections, which serve to expand the invaluable snapshot of Edinburgh business over the years.

### **Access to archives**

If any of the collections discussed have sparked your interest and you'd like to visit us or make an enquiry, here's what you need to know:

We are based on Level 1 of the City Chambers on the High Street, Edinburgh EH1 1YJ

We ask for some notice before you visit as some records are stored off site and must be ordered in.

We are open Tuesday to Thursday from 9am to 1pm and from 2pm to 4.30pm.

You can find our searchroom regulations and handling guidelines on our website

Our telephone number and email address are also noted here and can be found on our website too.

### **Online and Resources**

As well as our public searchroom, we also have a presence online. All of our key details and some information about our collections can be found on our webpage. In particular, we have a selection of handy subject guides available, which can help individuals to navigate our collections. These cover family history, business history, and house and building history. We also have collection catalogues available to download, and several name indexes including Edinburgh Poll Tax returns 1694-1699 and Register of Inmates at Edinburgh Charity Workhouse 1835-1841.

We also have a popular Facebook page, as mentioned before, upon which we post all sorts of information about upcoming projects and snippets from our collections. So please check out our page if you're interested in what we're getting up to.

[www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cityarchives](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cityarchives)

# RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

Compiled by Joan Keen & Eileen Elder

- Researching Adoption Karen Bali  
Forfar Free Church Baptisms 1843-1854 & Marriages 1843-1854 Stuart Farrell  
Deaths as Reported in the Inverness Journal  
and Northern Advertiser Newspaper 1829-1833, Vol 6 Stuart Farrell  
The Ellsworth Story Fred Ellsworth  
Addresses Against Incorporating Union 1706-1707 Karin Bowie (Ed)  
Eddrachillis Poor Register 1845-1916 Stuart Farrell (Comp)  
Scone Free Church Baptisms 1843-1876  
& St Leonards's Free Church Perth Baptisms 1850-1877 Stuart Farrell (Comp)  
Rothsay Free Church Births & Baptisms 1844-1918 Stuart Farrell  
Innerwick East Lothian MIs Joy Dodd, Sally Metcalf, Sheila Petrie (Comp)  
Gorgie and Beyond III Home and Away Companion to  
Nominal Index, WWI, Service Men and Women of Gorgie,  
Dundee St, Slateford Road and Shandon Area, Edinburgh Edward S Flint  
Deaths as reported in the Inverness Journal and  
Northern Advertiser Newspaper 1835-1836 & 1840-1842 Stuart Farrell (Comp)  
The Incorporated Trades of Edinburgh Charles Kinder Bradbury  
& Henry Steuart Fotheringham  
Carolyn Smith-Pelletier  
The MacLeod and MacRitchie Genealogies  
A Gift of Ancestry, the Family History of  
James Dewar and Susannah Rattray Charles Dewar Waterston  
The Lorraines in Dumfries-shire,  
Scotland and their descendants, vol I, II (CD) A G Lorraine  
The Lorraines in Berwickshire, vol I, II, III (CD) A G Lorraine  
The Lorraines in Roxburghshire,  
Scotland and their descendants, vol I, II (CD) A G Lorraine  
Lindsay and McLay Families: ascendant and descendant  
families of Christina (nee Lindsay) and William McLay (CD) Heather McLay  
Ascendant Families of Martha McCaffrey (nee Comrie):  
supplement to the Campbell and McCaffrey Families,  
descendant families of Martha Comrie (CD) Heather McLay  
Gorgie and Beyond III Home and Away Companion to  
Nominal Index, WWI, Service Men and Women of Gorgie,  
Dundee St, Slateford Road and Shandon Area, Edinburgh (CD) Edward S Flint  
The Parishes of Moray Boharm Free Church Baptisms 1844-1856  
& Boharm War Memorial and Boharm Roll of Honour &  
Poor Register for the Parish of Boharm 1845-1880 Stuart Farrell (Comp)  
The Stalwart Brydons from Scotland to Galt,  
to Portage La Prairie, A Family History  
of a Hundred Years in Canada James Emerson Brydon & Dianne Brydon  
Irish Family History, A Beginners' Guide Stuart A Raymond  
Forres Free Church Baptisms 1870-1914 Diane Macrae & Stuart Farrell (Comp)

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - 2018**

All SGS ordinary meetings take place at 7.30pm in the Augustine United Church, 41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL (unless otherwise stated). Admission free to all.

- 24 September "A Family Life Revealed" The Stuarts at Traquair, 1491-1875 by Margaret Fox and Catherine Maxwell Stuart
- 22 October "The Second Boer War, 1899-1902" by Ken Nisbet
- 19 November "The Goldsmithing Families of Edinburgh" by Elspeth Morrison, Archivist at Edinburgh Assay Office

SGS meetings are open to all – bring your friends!  
(Small donations from non-members will be appreciated.)

### **New Register House Research Evenings 2018**

(in conjunction with Standard Life FHS)

Please telephone the Library (0131-220 3677) for dates and to reserve your place.

### **Around Scotland**

To discover programmes of our sister societies, log onto [www.safhs.org.uk](http://www.safhs.org.uk), to access the list of members and follow their links.

### **Anglo-Scots**

#### **(a branch of the Manchester & Lancashire FHS)**

Anglo-Scots meet on Saturdays Manchester Central Library, firstly for a workshop at 10.30am on the 3rd floor at the computer block, at 2pm on the ground floor in Performance Space 1 or 2 for a Talk either by a Speaker or by a member.

### **Scotslot Meetings 2018**

Scotslot is a group of family historians with Scottish ancestry, who meet in Hertfordshire to talk about topics of mutual interest.

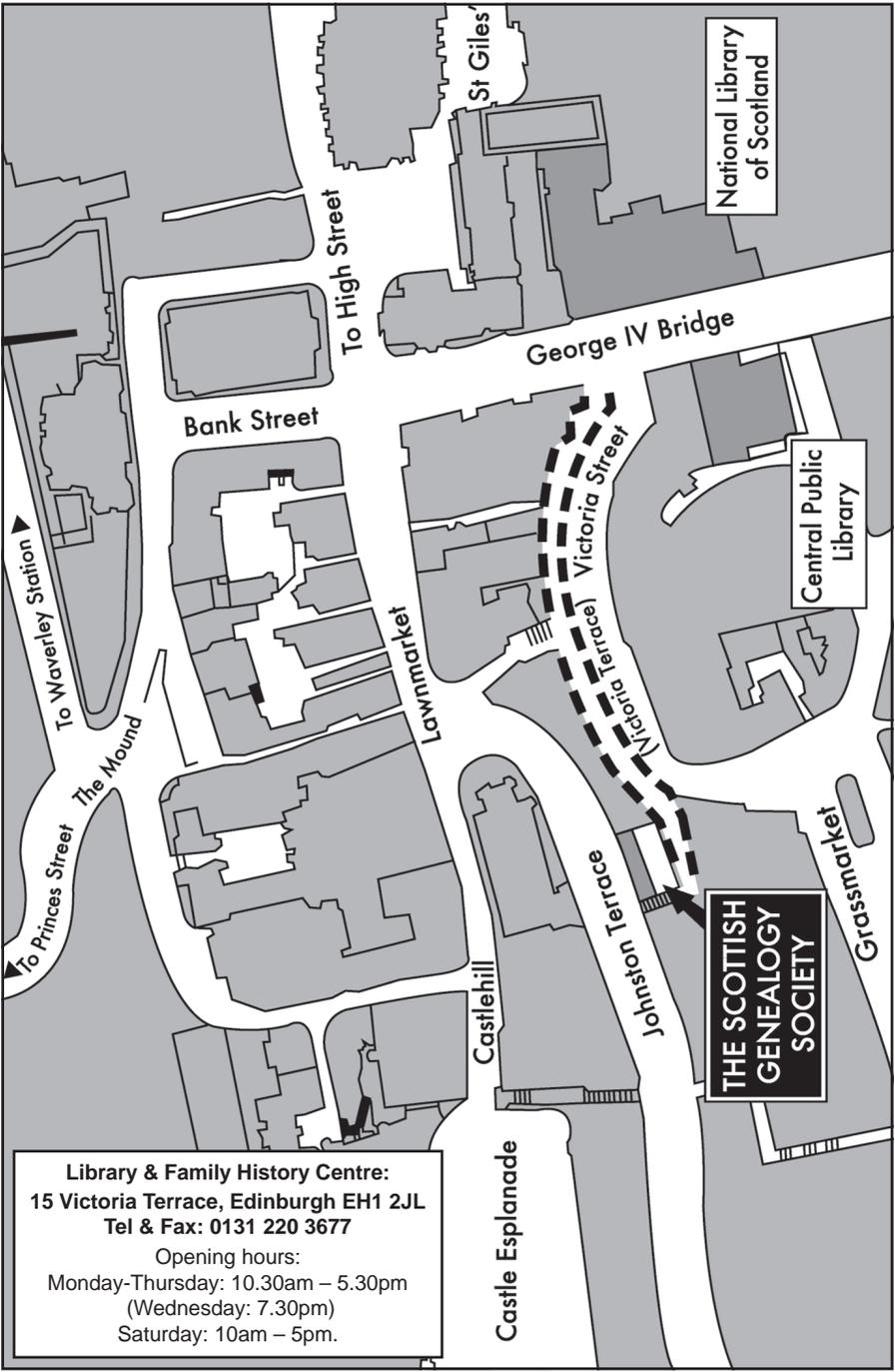
Scotslot meets in Southdown Methodist Church Hall, Southdown, Harpenden, Herts, at 2pm. Venue, dates and topics are subject to change and visitors, who are very welcome to come along, should check in advance either by post to: Scotslot, 16 Bloomfield Road, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 4DB or by email to [stuart.laing@virgin.net](mailto:stuart.laing@virgin.net)

### **Doors Open Days**

For venues open throughout Scotland in September 2018, visit [www.doorsopendays.org.uk](http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk) although final programmes may not be available until later this summer.

### ***Previously...* Scotland's History Festival**

This won't be taking place in 2018 – but stay tuned for 2019!



National Library  
of Scotland

Central Public  
Library

**THE SCOTTISH  
GENEALOGY  
SOCIETY**

**Library & Family History Centre:**  
**15 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL**  
**Tel & Fax: 0131 220 3677**  
Opening hours:  
Monday-Thursday: 10.30am – 5.30pm  
(Wednesday: 7.30pm)  
Saturday: 10am – 5pm.

