



e-Scotia

Newsletter of the Anglo-Scottish FHS

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Anglo Scottish Family History Society

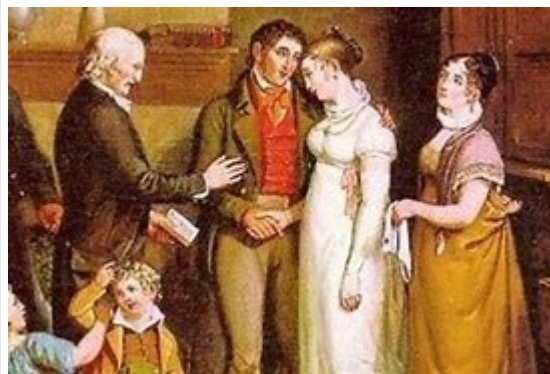
Welcome: to the September edition of the newsletter. We continue to make progress in the realm of Covid with our help desk at Manchester Central Library open again. However, caution remains the key word so for now our meetings continue to be via Zoom. Our main topic this month is a presentation by Chris Paton outlining marriage practice and custom in Scotland. Chris is a regular and popular presenter at our meetings and it was good to welcome him again. We again offer some suggestions to assist your research into Anglo Scottish family history. Please, whatever part of the world you are in, continue to take care. Enjoy. Editor.

Instantly Buckled for Life: Marriage Practice in Scotland

In presenting his talk, Chris was good enough to provide us with a handout. He was also generous enough to allow us to record his talk. In view of this I intend only to share with you here some of the highlights for me. By the way, given that some non-members were present at the talk both the handout and the recording of the talk are available on the public member site of the Society web site for one week. To access them simply log on to the Society web site; go to the Anglo Scots Branch site; scroll down to the box headed "Research" where you will see "Speakers' Notes/Videos". Two of the options there are for members only but there is one headed "Anglo Scottish Meeting Reports". This takes you to the handout and the recording. For members of the Society you can access these resources anytime via the same route once you have logged in.



So, what struck me about the talk? Well, I am a stickler for understanding the principle behind things on the basis that if you understand the principle then you can follow whatever comes next. So I was happy when Chris began by stressing that the principle behind marriage in Scotland, unlike elsewhere, is that of **consent** freely given. There was an age stipulation - 14yrs for boys and 12yrs for girls - but this means that by simply giving consent to one another to marry, a couple are by that fact, married. No official representation in the form of a priest, vicar or justice, or indeed venue such as a Church, is necessary to validate that union. This differed from the situation in England where, as a result of the Hardwicke Act of 1753 marriages were only valid if performed in a Church before an Anglican clergyman. It was because of this more "liberal" approach to marriage in Scotland that the Border area of Scotland (not just Gretna Green) became a magnet for clandestine marriages by couples from England and Ireland.



Another major difference with Scottish marriages was that anyone could be a formal witness to a marriage, hence the blacksmith figure at Gretna Green marriages. It could therefore be anyone from a neighbour, family member or anyone off the street. Unlike England however, these witnesses did not validate the marriage, they simply witnessed the act. Whilst perhaps initially convenient for the couple, having witnesses would of course be important, indeed necessary, in legitimising any children of the marriage or in dealing with any subsequent dispute within the marriage.

Of course The Kirk did not approve of this practice, not because of the principle, but partly because of the financial remuneration that they were deprived of and also because it was difficult to oversee such marriages. Notwithstanding the principle, two major forms of marriage developed, the Regular and the Irregular marriage. The Regular marriage took place in a Church building and was witnessed by a clergyman. Any other marriage outside of this was considered an Irregular marriage. The Irregular marriage took various forms and Chris developed these in his talk, including the consequences for couples engaging in “irregular marriages” who appeared before the Kirk Session, but the one that impressed me as the most liberal was the “marriage by habit and repute”.



Burns before the Kirk Session. Courtesy of the National Gallery, Scotland



The term itself conjures up the picture of a couple “shacking up” together and, eventually, the neighbours coming to accept them as married. Certainly doesn’t fit into the structured image commonly held about marriage, but in fact a practice based upon the Scottish understanding of marriage that is a precursor of the current trend to couples “living together”.

Anyway, a great session with Chris and I thoroughly recommend that you have a look at it and download his very informative handout for future reference.

Scottish Indexes Conference:

Hopefully many of you managed to tune into the 12th Scottish Indexes Conference held on the 4th September and, as usual, generously offered free by Emma and Graham Maxwell. The handout of the topics covered at the conference is available for download on the Scottish Indexes website ([here](#)) as is information about the **next conference** to be held on **Saturday, 23rd October**. A great menu of speakers promised including Chris Paton talking about Irish research, Eilir Ann Daniels talking about Welsh research and Lorna Steele of the Highland Archive Service. Now really, how international can you get!!!! Must admit my favourite will be Chris Fleet talking about maps, what else!

I managed to flit in and out of the conference on the 4th September but always like to come away with at least one thing that I did not know before. Here is what I learned this time and it came in the talk by Emma Maxwell on “Locating Scottish Burial Records” and it was this;

“Between 1855 and 1860 death certificates also gave where people were buried.” Now I didn’t know that!!!

So far I don’t know of any ancestor of mine who died during this period but I shall certainly be keeping an extra eye out for this. Worth investigating.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Appeal: a reader of this newsletter sent me this information wondering if any other readers might be able to respond to the appeal.

The appeal is a search for relatives of next of kin for a list of soldiers who fell in the 1st World War. The following web site ([here](#)) gives details of the appeal and lists the soldiers for whom they are seeking relatives. It seems that what they are referring to as “a change of circumstances”, meaning probably that another fallen soldier has been identified, and is allowing for a headstone to be erected to mark the grave. A very worthwhile appeal. Please have a look.



Pictish Art Society: on a completely different note, and depending upon how far back you have managed to get in your Scottish family history research!! you might be interested in this snippet of information sent by a reader. It is the Pictish Art Society Annual Conference ([details here](#)) to be held on the 2nd and 3rd October. They will be exploring the content of the Pictish standing stone, an example of which I managed to take whilst on a visit to Dundee and the standing stones at Aberlemno just north of the city.

National Library and National Records of Scotland Information: for those of our readers who do not get the NLS newsletter we pass on the following information associated with the Coronavirus restrictions just in case you plan to visit Edinburgh or Glasgow and hope to do some research.

You now no longer have to book to visit {the National Library} reading rooms and exhibitions at the George IV Bridge building in Edinburgh. The maximum number of people who can be in those spaces at any one time is also increased. The Library shop has reopened but the café remains closed, but hopefully will reopen soon. Booking to visit the Maps Reading Room continues as normal. Visitors and staff still need to be kept safe, which means the wearing of a face covering is mandatory when you are inside the Library, in line with Scottish Government guidelines, unless you are exempt. Hygiene and physical distancing measures will also continue. In Glasgow, the Library at Kelvin Hall is open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, 10–4pm with no need to book in advance. Outside those hours you can [ask a question](#) and enjoy [more than 2,000 full-length films](#) to watch at home at any time.

As for the Scotlands' People search rooms, our SAFHS representative, Ken Nesbitt, sent the following;

Coronavirus Update - Limited Phased Restart of Select Search Room Services

As a result of changes to Coronavirus restrictions by the Scottish Government, NRS has re-opened the Historical and Scotlands People search rooms in Edinburgh with a reduced number of seats to all customer groups from 21st September. The Legal search room remains closed until further notice. The Historical and Scotlands' People search rooms have strict COVID-19 safety measures in place and face coverings must be worn (exemptions available) - see our "[Safe Visit Agreement](#)" for more information. Any customer wishing to visit the Scotlands' People search room must [contact us](#) and select the category 'Seat Booking ScotlandsPeople Centre'. We will email you to confirm whether a seat is available. We are working to release an online seat booking system. We are open strictly by appointment only.

This means all your members can now make bookings if they wish to visit Edinburgh, but must request bookings through the website contact form.

What you don't know about the Jacobites and other news from The National Archives.

On the subject of what is on offer in the archives I pass this on as a contribution from the National Archives in their latest newsletter. ([click here](#)) It is a very fulsome and interesting look into Jacobitism from the records held at the National Archives. Worth a look on a wet afternoon.



Family Search through their "RootsTech" show have recently produced another "Introduction to Scottish Family History Research", this time subtitled "Beyond the basics". It is a three-part series hosted by FindMyPast's Myko Clelland. You can access the programme ([here](#)) which also has other research shows available. Worth a look. Myko is familiar to many of us and is always clear and helpful.

MLFH Society Update: one of the Society's intrepid web-site workers, Hilary, (who also happens to be a member of the our Anglo Scottish Branch) has been busy working on the Anglo Scottish Branch site making it more interesting to look at but, more importantly, easier to find things you might be interested in. Have a look at it [here](#). Just a little bit of chatty news, whilst we refer to the Society as a whole as the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society, we are slowly coming to refer to the Society web site by our more recently adopted nom de guerre if you will, "**Manchester Ancestors**". All that said, don't forget to have a look at forthcoming events in the Society; **Manchester:** on the 2nd October, Hilary is giving a presentation on getting the most out of your DNA tests and then on the 20th October there is a look at some famous folk from Manchester.

Bolton: promise an interesting look at what is often an overlooked resource, the use of Educational Records in our family history research. This is on the 6th October.

Oldham: offer us a consideration of the little-known social reformer, Mary Higgs who lived and worked in Oldham.

As with our own Branch, all of these offerings are booked through **Eventbrite**.

Bookshop: always available for you to access all your family history needs.

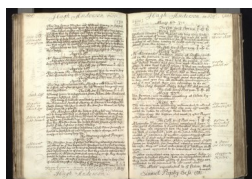
Announcement!!!

We are changing our Branch meeting day.

You will all be aware that up until now our Anglo Scottish Branch meetings have been held on the 3rd Saturday of the month. For a variety of reasons, not least the availability of appropriate space at Manchester Central Library, we have decided to hold our Branch meetings on the 1st Saturday of the month starting from February 2022. So please see this as an early alert that we shall be mentioning every month until February.



Spoiler alert for forthcoming Branch meetings



With the recent release of the digitised Kirk Session Records by Scotlands' People, an ongoing project by them, the importance of these records, particularly for family historians, is becoming increasingly obvious. Recognising this the Branch committee has decided to hold a triathlon of talks/workshops focusing on the Kirk Session Records.

The first of these will be our November Branch meeting when we will have Robin Urquhart of the Scottish Records Office in Edinburgh who will be speaking about the background to the Kirk Sessions and how to understand their content. More about this in next month's newsletter. Then in February we will have a presentation by Emma Maxwell on how to get the most out of the Kirk Session Records. Then, finally, in September we shall have a talk by Alison Diamond on Palaeography and its importance in interpreting the content of the Kirk Session Records.

So, some great content ahead and we really do hope that by the middle of next year we will be able to meet once again in person at Central Library. However, whilst looking forward to in-person meetings we remain conscious of the fact that as a Branch many of our members do not live within striking distance of Manchester, indeed many live abroad, so we have not lost sight of the value of Zoom as a means of reaching out to all our members and we are looking into how to continue to offer this service.

Exchange Journal Archive: ([click here](#)) we have had further Journals sent to us by our fellow family history groups in Scotland. This includes the "Sib Folk News" from Orkney FHS, and "The Journal" from the Glasgow and West of Scotland FHS. We mentioned previously that the G&WSFHS were going through a period of transition. This now seems to have passed and, in case we missed out during this time, they have forwarded all the back issues of their Journal which is generous. Please have a look at them. Lots of relevant stuff about local issues of interest

Anglo Scottish Branch Meeting

Saturday, 16th October, 1400 hours, via Zoom

Ancestral Breakthroughs

★ This is a feature that we arrange once every year. Whilst often our focus in family history research is on the difficulties that we encounter in finding our ancestors, or something about them, we do, all, have the occasional breakthrough, that eureka moment, when a little nugget of information falls into our lap that shines a light on a dark corner of our research.

★ It is good to share these findings with one another as a practical opportunity to share findings and resources.

★ Please join us and reserve your place through [Eventbrite](#). Given that we are still "Zooming" along, this enables us to send you the necessary links.