



e-Scotia

Newsletter of the Anglo-Scottish FHS

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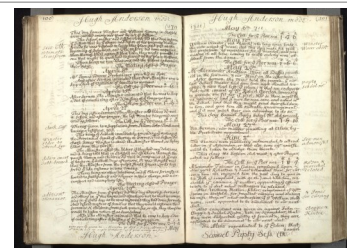


Anglo Scottish Family History Society

Welcome: to the November edition of the newsletter. We are pleased to be commencing a trinity of presentations focused on the Kirk Session Records. Whilst these have been digitised and made available by *ScotlandsPeople* for some time now it is clear from the expressions of interest and increased attendance at our meeting that it remains a topic of interest. A particular word of welcome to our attendees from Australia and Canada, one viewing in the middle of the night and the other early in the morning. I trust it was worth the effort. Our next presentation on the topic is in February with the third being in September 2022. Again we point you in the direction of some general information and sources that we think you might find helpful in your research. Enjoy! Editor.

Kirk Session Records - A Practical Guide:

We were fortunate to have leading our exploration of the Kirk Session Records, Robin Urquhart, who, although now retired, led the team that digitised the records in the National Library of Scotland, including, of course, the Kirk Session Records. Robin has also created a Scottish Handwriting web site building on his extensive knowledge of palaeography. This presentation was recorded and so, for members of the Society, it is available to view for 30 days on the Anglo Scottish web site. For non-members who attended the handout that Robin provided is available for the next 7 days on the public section of the Anglo Scots web site. Given the availability of these items I only summarise some of the points of Robin's talk that stuck out for me.



A Kirk Session Record Book

The historical background of the records gave a context that I was not fully aware of. I was aware that the Kirk Sessions were established as systems of local governance and oversight but did not appreciate that to that extent the Session Books are legal documents and remain the property of the Church of Scotland. For this reason, whilst the Church of Scotland permitted the books to be digitised by the National Records of Scotland, many of the books had then to be returned to the Parish from which they came. It is always therefore worth checking with the Parish area that your ancestors came from to see what records they have if you can't find them digitised.

Whilst the local Parish Session would deal with most local matters, including disciplinary cases, the more serious matters could be sent to the next level of authority, the Presbytery and ultimately to the highest level, the General Assembly. This is important to remember since in tracing events surrounding an individual, investigation of and access to the three levels of discipline might be required.

With the commencement of the 1854 Registration Act the recording of all births, marriages and deaths passed to the State and began in 1855. All Kirk Session records throughout the country were then supposed to be passed to the central body in Edinburgh but many local Parishes were reluctant to do so and some didn't which explains some gaps in what is available.

This particularly applied to the breakaway Churches who did not recognise the authority of the Church of Scotland. Whilst most reconnected with the Church of Scotland in the 1920's not all did. This situation has meant that many some Parish records are "missing" whilst others, forming another category, await transcription. If you cannot find your ancestor's Parish records then it may be that they fall into this category.

Also the issue of copyright raised its head and it is likely that the copyright of the records remained with the Session Clerk who wrote them. Certainly many Session Clerks considered the records their property and, consequently, when they moved on from the Parish they took the records with them. This often explains why some, searching around their lofts, have come across record books that had ostensibly belonged to their ancestor.

Finding information about individuals be that birth, marriage or discipline, is easier to discover in the records made after the middle of the 19th century. Earlier records, from the 17th and 18th centuries, tend to be an amalgam of issues and information. Paper was expensive and so

Parish clerks would use the one book to record all matters. This means that when searching in the earlier Kirk Session records you may have to plough your way through non-relevant material in the hope of coming across a reference to the item being sought. As time moved on and paper became more accessible then the various topics of the Kirk Session were separated out.

When searching the records it is best to begin with the index to records at the National Records of Scotland. There you can see what records are available and what they contain. Only then should you go to the Scotlands People site with the information gleaned which will narrow down the search - and save money!

This is a summary of the highlights for me of this presentation. Robin's talk was more fulsome and well worth watching if you can. Whilst acknowledging that we have arranged a specific talk on Scottish palaeography he did give a brief introduction to the topic to illustrate the importance of some knowledge, in particular, to be able to understand some of the earlier Parish records. Whilst most of us may not be interested/able to touch very early records, Robin suggested that even for mid-range records the skills required include a passing knowledge of palaeography, a preparedness to explore the Scots language in which many of the early records were written, and, most of all, much patience. Having made some attempt to search the Kirk Session Records I can certainly endorse the latter!!



A "How to" reminder: a question asked at the Branch meeting was how do I access the recording of the talk (for members) and the handout provided by Robin. Our web guru Hilary gave a demonstration of how to go about it but just as a reminder;

For the handout:

- Log on to the Society web site at <https://mlfhs.uk>
- Along the top line click on "Branches" then "Anglo Scots".
- Scroll down to the box headed "Research"
- Click on "Speaker's notes/videos".
- There are three boxes, two marked members only.
- Click on the orange button on the box headed "Anglo Scottish Meeting Reports"
- There you will have access to all the speakers notes available including Robin's talk

For Members accessing the recorded talk;

- Log on to the Society web site at <https://mlfhs.uk>
- Log in with your membership
- Go to "Branches" then "Anglo Scots"
- Scroll down to "Research"
- Click on "Speaker's notes/videos."
- There are two boxes for members only, one for handouts and one for videos.

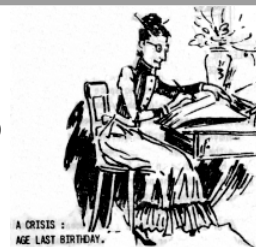
N.B. I have just been notified by those who know about these things that there is a gremlin in the works that is hindering the uploading of the recording of the presentation for members. This should be sorted in the next few days so if you are wondering why you cannot find the presentation this is the reason. But don't despair, it will be there.

Exchange Journals: a short reminder again to encourage you to take a look at the Exchange Journal section of the web site. To find it, log in to the member area of the web site. From the "Welcome" page just scroll down this page and the "Exchange Journal" section is there. Click on the "Exchange Archive" button to gain access to all the journals.



There are Journals there from many of the family history societies in Scotland, England and Ireland as well as from some of the areas in Canada and Australia. If you have any family links with some of these areas the Journals are a great source of information as well as contact details for any help you may want. I have always found the local history societies to be very generous in their offerings of information and assistance. Recent additions have been Lothian FHS, The Scottish Records Assoc. Journal, Retour and the SAFHS newsletter.

Census Information: as we get closer to the release of the 1921 census by *Find My Past* in January 2022 a reminder of what is around to help you get prepared. *Find My Past* of course have a lot of material on their own site to whet our appetite ([click here](#)). Please also don't forget to have a look at the material that has been put together and made available on the Society web site (<https://mlfhs.uk>) for all visitors that includes a podcast and a play centred on family life in 1921. Particularly useful on the site is a video explaining Electoral Registers and how to use them. Whilst this video of course refers to Manchester Electoral Registers the same process applies nationally. These registers are very useful for tracing ancestors in-between the decennial census'.



On the subject of the Census one of our members brought to our attention information about the 1931 Census in Scotland. It is well known that the 1931 Census for England and Wales was destroyed in a fire in 1942. The story surrounding this can be [read here](#) from an article in the National Archive. Not a result of bomb damage it appears. **However the 1931 Census for Scotland is intact** having been stored in Edinburgh. Since no Census was taken in Northern Ireland in 1931 Scotland will be the only UK country to release a Census detailing life in 1931. Whilst investigating this I came across a very interesting web site about the history of the Census in Scotland. ([click here](#)) It gives a short summary of all the census' from 1801 to 2011. I particularly enjoyed that Government Information film for the 1951 Census with the somewhat patronising BBC accented presenter that we all know and grew up with. Do have a look at it. Lots of interesting little titbits.

What's On: it is here that we take the chance to remind you what is being offered by the other Branches of the Society so that you can join in if you wish. Remember also that each Branch also produces a newsletter so have a look around for this to keep you up to date with local issues.

Bolton: "Christmas food and drink through the ages" 19.30 hours, Wednesday, 1st December. The Branch invites us to "Join us as we find out what the men, women and children of Bolton and Manchester would have eaten and drank over the Christmas period." Well, there's an invitation not to be missed and to get us into a festive mindset.



Manchester: for the next couple of talks Manchester Branch are continuing a focus on Irish genealogy and this is their next offering, "Old Ireland in Colour" on Thursday, 2nd December at 19.30 hours. "A talk based on the authors' books of colourised black and white photographs documenting the rich history of Ireland." So if your focus of interest includes Ireland, this seems an entertaining option, and perhaps even a suggestion of a Christmas present!!!!



Oldham: the Branch don't have any talks on offer in December but do have a look at the site where you will find the very extensive list of talks beginning in January 2022.

MLFHS Shop: lots to have a look at in the shop with several bargain offers. So why not treat yourself, or someone else with a gift from the selection. For those of us who have grown into reading on a tablet there are options of downloading books at a much cheaper rate. Our own John Marsden's book, "Forgotten Fields" is there. A brilliant book researching all the old burial grounds of Manchester and you can download it for a mere £4.17. Chris Paton's latest book on tracing Scottish ancestors is also there on offer for £11.99. It is £14.99 in the bookshops. Bargainous!!

National Library of Scotland Digital Gallery: I don't apologise for reminding you of this fantastic resource offered by the NLS. I normally go on about their map collection, but there is just so much more. There is a massive section directly relevant to Family History research including Post Office directories, military records and photographs as well as a Scottish film archive. Now that the dark nights have drawn in and it gets colder, (apologies to our readers in the antipodes who are moving into summer!!) I assure you that you can spend many a happy few hours on this site.





Anglo Scottish Branch

Future Events



As we approach the close of 2021 - and what a year this has been - it is appropriate for us to look ahead to what is going to be an interesting year for us and, hopefully, a year that allows us to start thinking about coming together again at Central Library. Firstly a couple of things to draw to your attention then an outline of what we have planned in terms of presentations in 2022.

Please remember that there is no Branch meeting in December.

We will of course produce this newsletter with some information and tips to continue to help you in your research. However, why not use the month of December to bring yourself up to date with the Branch website. Our intrepid web manager Hilary has been busy updating and re-designing some of the content of the Branch website to make it easier to find the hundreds of resources and articles that are available.



Change of Meeting Day



We have announced previously our decision to change the day of our Branch monthly meeting to the 1st Saturday of each month beginning in February 2022. You will note this from the calendar of events listed below. Please be aware of this when recording these events in your schedule.. The exception is our Christmas get-together. You will note also that we also plan to hold meetings every month except August



Programme for 2022



- Jan 15th Quiz and Social
- Feb 5th Exploring Kirk Sessions Content with Emma Maxwell
- Mar 5th Banking Records in Scotland with Sian Yates
- Apr 2nd AGM and Brick walls
- May 7th Tracing Scottish Ancestors at The National Archives with Audrey Collins
- Jun 4th Finding your Scottish Ancestors in Canada with Christine Woodcock
- July 2nd Visit (To be confirmed)
- Aug 6th No Meeting
- Sept 3rd Palaeography Workshop with Alison Diamond
- Oct 1st The Fromelles Genealogy Project with Michelle Leonard
- Nov 5th Anniversary Event: 40 years of the Anglo-Scots Branch
- Dec 3rd Quiz and Social



You will notice that in November we are planning a celebration event to mark the 40th anniversary of the Anglo Scottish Branch. The first meeting of the Branch was held on the 28th November 1982. More about this in the coming months.

