



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. Our workshop this month was a Palaeography Workshop with Alison Diamond. Alison is currently a tutor at the Centre for Archive and Information Studies at the University of Dundee and is the Archivist for the Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle.



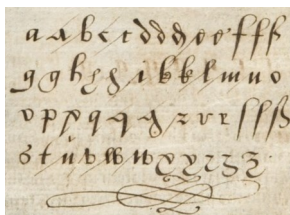
We had hoped to hold this workshop at the Central Library which would have allowed for a hands-on approach to the topic but, given that Alison was coming from Edinburgh, employment disputes on the railway system in Scotland put travel arrangements at risk and so it was safer to decide upon a Zoom meeting. This of course allowed for members not within striking distance of Manchester to join us, which is always a pleasure. In total 23 members attended but such numbers did not inhibit involvement.

Once again we include some information and news that we hope that you will find useful in your ongoing research.

Good Luck and Enjoy.

Editor.

Palaeography Workshop: this event concludes our tripartite consideration of the Kirk Session Records recently digitised and released by the Scottish Records Office. We began this process in November 2021 with a view to how to get the most out of the Kirk Session Records. The first two workshops focused on the history and content of the records. This of course is all very well provided you can read the records, not always an easy task, particularly with the earliest records. It was for this reason that we decided to invite an expert in palaeography to lead us in an exercise in how best to decipher these very useful records. I wasn't able to attend the session and so am indebted to a colleague for a summary of the meeting.



This image, taken from Browne's Secretary Hand, 1622, was used by Alison to open the presentation to illustrate the alphabet used in the records and referred to generally as "Secretary Hand". This script, commonly used from about 1500 onwards, was the standard for Kirk Session Records, Old Parish Registers, Wills and Testaments, Sasines and Deeds, Taxation Records, Family and Estate Papers, Court Records and other financial and legal documents. To add to the difficulty, this script allowed for individuality in style between

writers and locations, but a basic understanding of these different letter forms and contractions will assist in deciphering all these documents and also many English, Welsh and Irish documents of the same era which were written in much the same style.

Far from being an intellectual exercise, this event was planned as a "hands-on" event and so Alison invited attendees to attempt transcription, line by line of a sample document she presented of early italic hand from 1717. What quickly became relevant was the need to understand the context of the document in order to help in deciphering the script. Nevertheless, lessons had to be learned. A capital "F" was written as "ff" and capital letters were used randomly. The spelling of names and common words could vary several times within one small document suggesting that there was no commonly accepted spelling. The idiosyncratic approach to recording

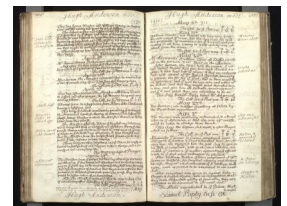


continued with some names being finished with an identifying mark, sometimes to be viewed as the flourish of the writer's own fancy, or a specific mark such as "Ck" that identified the writer as a clerk. Alison explained how the different characters were written and the context of their use. The letters R, S, H, E, U/V/W were given special attention to show how different forms of each letter. Scribes would frequently use contractions to shorten long or frequently used words, thereby, to speed up the recording process. These words were highlighted with bars crossing the letters, or ink loops, to show that "Abd", for example, was a common contraction for "Aberdeen". Ligatures were lines often used to join letters together to speed the writing process and to save lifting the pen off the paper - which might have caused an ink blot.

Alison had earlier provided worksheets and, after a short break, attendees were invited to try their hand at copying the letters and deciphering some script. All became engrossed in this and it was great fun and enjoyed by all. For our readers who were not able to attend the session but would like to have ago themselves at writing and transcribing, all of the worksheets can be found on the Society Branch web page. They are available for members and non-members alike. To view them, follow the usual route; log in to the Society web site: under "Branches" select "Anglo Scots" then "Research". In the orange band along the top click on "Speakers notes and videos". Two options there are for members only, but by clicking onto the "Anglo-Scottish Meeting Reports" you will reveal lots of sources including the worksheets referred to that can be accessed by non-members.

It is noted that this Palaeography Workshop was by far the longest meeting we have held, but it was also a different experience where we could all take part, even if we chose not to volunteer to transcribe aloud. Alison Diamond also referred us to www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography and to www.scottishrecordsassociation.org, for further information and for those who wish to pursue the topic, proposed the following reading list;

- Scottish Handwriting 1150-1650 by Grant G Simpson
- Formulary of Old Scots Legal Documents by Peter Gouldsbough (out of print)
- Understanding Documents for Genealogy and Local History by Bruce Durie
- Palaeography for Family and Local Historians by Hilary Marshall.



Commonwealth War Graves Commission: it is open to all our readers to share with the rest of us items of



interest arising from their research and/or their involvement in other areas of research. I have mentioned previously the active interest that one of our committee members, Ina Penneyston, has in volunteering to carry out research for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Whilst on holiday in Scotland Ina came across an opportunity of attending a CWGC organised visit to various war graves contained within municipal graveyards in the area. She sent us this summary of her experience:

"Whilst on holiday up in Dunbar I thought I would look to see if there were any CWGC cemetery tours nearby. I had previously gone on a tour of Southern Cemetery in Manchester which I had found very interesting. Luckily I found three tours available on various dates;

Piershill Cemetery, Edinburgh: *the leader of this tour turned out to be my friend, and well-known Scottish family history speaker, Ken Nisbet and he gave some very interesting information about the soldiers buried there.*

Rosebank Cemetery, Edinburgh: *this is the site of the large memorial to the Royal Scots Regiment soldiers who died in the Quintinshill rail disaster on the 22nd May 1915. See [Quintinshill Train Crash | The Royal Scots](#). I was particularly interested in this tour as I had a relative, John Carter, who died in this incident which remains the largest rail disaster in Britain. A memorial to the tragedy and the men who died is held every year at the cemetery.*



St Martin's Cemetery, Haddington: *only two soldiers buried here, both very young. We were informed that they were on active duty on the home front and so did not qualify for any medals.*

Altogether a moving and interesting tour of three very different venues and people. The CWGC organise similar tours throughout the country so do try and get to one in your area"

Thanks to Ina for this article. Remember, if you have any snippets of news/events/ trips that you could share with us, please do. As with Ina's article, what might seem be unimportant to you could reveal sources that many of us know nothing about.

Society Branches and Help Desk: please remember that as members of the M&LFH Society you are also members of the various Branches of the Society and can join in their events and contact them directly if you have connections with the area and want to tap into their expertise. Their web sites are:

Anglo-Scottish Branch: – <http://www.mlfhs.uk/anglo-scots>

Bolton Branch: - <http://www.mlfhs.uk/bolton>

Oldham Branch: - <https://www.mlfhs.uk/oldham>

Manchester Branch: - <https://www.mlfhs.uk/manchester>



Forthcoming Branch Events: details of which can be viewed on the relevant web site.

Bolton: “Exploring Family History - a beginners guide.” Wednesday 5th October 1930 hrs via Zoom

Oldham: “Not just the 3 R's - life in a Lancashire school” Saturday, 8th October 1400 hrs.

Manchester: “The history of carnival - celebrating Black History month” Wednesday 12th October 1900 hrs.

Help Desk: Manchester Central Library Monday - Friday, 10.30 - 3.30.

During the pandemic of course our help desk facility was suspended. However, glad to say, we are up and running again and, more importantly, family history researchers are beginning to return which is great news. The summer period is normally the time that we welcome researchers from the Americas and Antipodes. Again this number has been affected by the pandemic but is beginning to revive. Wherever you are from, you are welcome.

Virtual Help Desk: this was set up during the pandemic but remains available now for members. So if you have a query why not access the virtual help desk at [Virtual Help Desk: Landing \(mlfhs.uk\)](http://www.mlfhs.uk/virtual-help-desk).

Book shop: this can be accessed here [MLFHS Online Shop](http://www.mlfhs.uk/book-shop) and gives you access to all of the books and other items that are for sale. There are a number of items reduced and a “download” of some publications makes the purchase even cheaper. So do have a look.

Anglo Scottish Branch Meeting

Saturday, 1st October - Online - 1400 hours GMT

The Fromelles Genealogy Project - with Michelle Leonard

The attack on Fromelles on 19 July 1916 was the first major battle fought by Australian troops on the Western Front. It was a feint designed to prevent the Germans reinforcing their troops on the Somme, where the Allies had launched a major offensive on 1 July. The ruse, however, was unsuccessful. Towards the evening of 19 July 1916, the Australian 5th and British 61st Divisions attempted to seize 4000 yards of front line centred on the 'Sugar Loaf'. However, the British bombardment, which commenced on 16 July, had warned the Germans that an attack was likely. As the troops moved into position on 19 July, they were unaware that they were being watched by German observers a mile away. The Germans heavily shelled the assembly area and communications trenches, causing hundreds of Australian and British casualties before the attack even started.



In May 2008 250 WWI soldiers were uncovered in a mass grave in France and this led to the instigation of a ground-breaking project to uncover their identities via DNA testing, anthropological data and genealogical research. This presentation will tell the story of the Fromelles Project with a specific focus on how genealogical detective work has so far helped to identify 166 of the Fromelles soldiers and give them named graves in the first military cemetery to be built in France since WWII. It will also tell the stories of some of the fallen soldiers, introduce the "Commemorating The Missing" Project and give a brief explanation of how to research WW1 soldiers and trace DNA appropriate relatives.

Michelle Leonard is a Scottish professional genealogist, DNA detective, freelance researcher, speaker, author and historian. She runs her own genealogy and DNA consultancy business, Genes & Genealogy, and specialises in DNA Detective work part

This will prove to be a popular subject and particularly so to our Australian members although, given the time difference their attendance at the live meeting will be difficult. Consequently we have arranged to record Michelle's talk and it will be available on the Branch web site for 30 days.

If you are able to attend please reserve your place via [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk). [\(Click here\)](#)