



# e-Scotia

## Newsletter of the Anglo-Scottish FHS

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**Welcome:** to our May edition of the Newsletter. Our main feature is the talk by Andrew Lowes on The Border Reivers. A summary of this very interesting talk is given below. Andrew did give out a reading list on the topic and if anyone would like a copy, please get in touch and we will e-mail it to you. The newsletter also contains information about improvements that ScotlandsPeople have made to their site as well as other tips that you may find helpful in your research. There is also some information about fairs and exhibitions to attend if you happen to be in Scotland during the summer period. Please enjoy.

The Editor

### The Border Reivers: 1286-1610



Our speaker on the subject, Andrew Lowes, a civil engineer by profession, acknowledged that he approached this subject, not as a professional historian but as a very keen hobbyist who has spent many years pursuing his interest in the subject. By way of summary of a very interesting talk I offer the following. The term "Reiver" was an old English term for a thief or robber and from this we get our word "bereaved" to refer to having suffered some kind of loss. The border reivers covered a forty-mile wide span of territory on both sides of the Scottish/English border and running the whole length of west to east and known as "The Marches". They were composed of a number of families and these "ruled" at their height during the dates cited, 1286-1610. Unlike the highland clans who identified with an area of land, the focus of the reiver families was the family itself and the "family" or "**The Grayne**" was paramount. There were various families in the area with the most notorious of these being the Armstrongs, the Grahams, the Maxwells, the Douglas's, the Scotts. The question was posed as to why these families resorted to the outlaw life. One of the primary reasons was that they did not exercise the rule of *primogeniture* (the eldest male inheriting the family estate) but that of **gavelkind**, by which the family estate was divided equally amongst all of the children in the family. Clearly this meant that any "family" estate grew increasingly smaller after each generation. The "families" then found that they could not support themselves and so resorted to theft and robbery, particularly of their neighbours. Inter-family fighting was therefore rife and the area being so far from any seat of government, Scottish or English, meant that the authorities had little influence. Indeed on occasion a family head was appointed by the Crown as a Lord Warden of the Marches in an attempt to exercise some control but these very Wardens would engage in reiving with their family. The most active period for the reivers was after the battle of Flodden (1513) and up to the Union of the Crowns (1603). This was a period of increased unrest in the relations between Scotland and England, a situation taken advantage of by the reivers. For them however, the border between Scotland and England was always a fiction since they considered that whole territory as theirs. Their fights were not about nationhood but about business and survival. On occasions the border families would fight on the side of one or other or both Scotland and England, but then just as quickly change sides or decide not to fight at all. Andrew gave many examples and told many fascinating stories of some of the feuds that took place between the families, some indeed very gruesome, and arising on occasions as a result of some small slight. The "reign" of the reivers was brought to a close by King James VI (of Scotland: the 1st of England) who ascended the throne on the union of the Crowns in 1603 following the death of Elizabeth 1st of England. With this Union the border between Scotland and England became less rigid and authorities on both sides were able to work together to reduce the influence of the "families". Some of the families were exiled or chose to move, to Ireland for example, or further north into Scotland, nevertheless, it took James VI seven years to eventually deal with the force that was "**The Border Reivers**". Many thanks Andrew, a very interesting talk appreciated by the large group who attended.

**Bug fixes in ScotlandsPeople:** the following article appeared in the 20th April copy of *"Old Scottish"*. For those who may have missed it we thought you might be interested. ([Click here](#)) to enter the *"Old Scottish"* website

"The [Scotland's People](#) website was down for a couple of hours this morning, to allow the team to update the site. They've made a number of improvements, or rather fixes, to the search engine. Arguably these should have been in place when the site was relaunched in September last year, but after having regular meetings with the team behind the site over the last 6 months, we're a little more understanding of the difficulties they faced than perhaps we were at the time.

The [announcement](#) of the fixes reveals that two of the biggest grips Scottish genealogists have had with the new website have at least been fixed:

- **Marriage searches:** finally it's now possible once again to search for a marriage using two surnames (one for the bride and one for the groom). This is a major improvement on the initial version of the revamped site, and one which genealogists will warmly welcome.
- **Marriage results:** related to the marriage-search fix, marriage searches now show both parties' names on the results page. This is another big improvement on what went before, when you had to click on a link to get a pop-up showing the spouse's name. That was fine if there were only a few results of your search, but quickly became tedious if there were more than a few results.
- **Death searches:** You can now search death records using an approximate birth year. This is another important change, making it far easier and a lot less hassle to find the death you're looking for. We understand from our discussions with the National Records of Scotland that this was a particularly tricky problem to resolve, as the searches were behaving in unpredictable ways. This problem now appears to have been resolved successfully.
- **Search forms:** The labels and column headings have been improved.
- **Return to image view:** After reporting a problem with an image, you are returned to the image you were viewing at the time. A minor change, but any improvement in the page flow should be welcomed.
- **Divorce and dissolutions:** A gender field has been added.

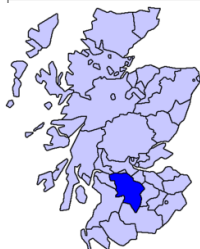
There are a couple of quirks arising from the changes. Marriage searches may produce duplicate entries - at first glance this seems to happen where one of the parties has alternative versions of her/his name. It's a fairly minor inconvenience, greatly outweighed by the new display of both parties' names. Perhaps of some concern is the [National Records of Scotland's](#) statement that "for the majority of searches this will have a successful result" - presumably this means that some searches may produce a false-negative (in other words, the system might tell you there isn't a match when there is one). A little more clarity on this statement would be welcome.

Another consequence of the multiple results for the same marriage is that sorting the search results by "spouse surname" doesn't quite behave as you might expect. We've not done enough testing on the new interface to be sure, but the new system appears to group all results for the same marriage together.

These are however minor quibbles. The changes introduced are a major improvement to search functionality, and we'd like to thank the team at NRS for their hard work in fixing bugs. "

## **YORK FAMILY HISTORY FAIR: Saturday, 24th June 2017.**

Just to alert you to this if you are in the area, or close enough at hand to plan a trip. The Society will be represented at the Fair so go up and have a chat. However, for those of us interested in matters Scottish, exhibitors will include representation from Aberdeen and North East Scotland Family History Society and Scottish Monumental Inscriptions. For more information see [www.yorkfamilyhistoryfair.com](http://www.yorkfamilyhistoryfair.com)



## **Lanarkshire Family History Fair: Saturday, 2nd September 2017.**

Given that the holiday season is fast approaching, and just in case you intend to spend some time in Scotland, the **Lanarkshire Family History Society** have let us know that they will be holding their Family History Show at the Motherwell Concert Hall, Windmillhill Street, Motherwell from 9.45 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. They refer to it as "Scotland's largest Family History event" and entry is a mere £2. Bargainous!!!! So, if you intend to be in the area, why not make a note of it and treat yourself? ([Click here](#)) for more information.

**ScotlandsPeople Vouchers:** a little reminder about the availability of ScotlandsPeople Vouchers. If you have used the ScotlandsPeople site since the various changes you will know that the price of vouchers online has risen to £7 for 30 credits. However at the Branch we still have a number of vouchers for the previous price of £6. Again Bargainous!! But be quick because when they have gone Branches and Societies are not being issued with any more by the new ScotlandsPeople management. You can pick them up at the helpdesk at Manchester library.

## Scottish Records Association

To continue with what is available if you intend to holiday in Scotland this year. The Scottish Records Association inform us of two summer visits that they have organised and which are open to members. Remember, as members of the MLFHS and so members of the Anglo Scots Branch, you are also members of the Scottish Records Association. However if, and when, you present yourself, declare that you are members of the Anglo Scots Branch. The MLFHS itself is not recognised.



The first visit is to **Inveraray Castle**, seat of the Chief of Clan Campbell. (Afraid dropping my name will not get you any advantage!!!) The event is on **Friday 23rd June 2017**. Regarding the visit the Scottish Records Association write;

*"The Scottish Records Association is delighted to offer members and their guests the opportunity to visit Inveraray Castle Archives, which holds the papers of the Campbell Family, Dukes of Argyll. This rich and extensive collection spans the 13th to the 21st centuries and is regarded by historians as one of the most important private archive collections in Britain."*

The second of the summer visits takes place on **Monday, 11th September 2017** and is to two Edinburgh based repositories, **The Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland Library and Archive** and **The Scottish Life Archive**. Of these venues the SRA writes;

*"The Royal Highland and Agricultural Society supports the advancement of farming and rural industry in Scotland, and can trace its origins back to 1784. The visit will include a display of material from the Society's Library and Archive, which holds Gaelic material and older periodicals and pamphlets as well as the Society's own publications"*

*"The Scottish Life Archive was set up in 1959 for the purpose of collecting and preserving documentary and illustrative evidence of Scotland's material culture and social history. Its diverse collection includes photographs, manuscripts and oral recordings relating to topics such as housing, work, warfare, leisure, customs and religion."*

More information about the visits and application forms including costs can be accessed here. ([SRA Summer Visits](#))

**Exchange Journals:** can we remind you of the library of journals exchanged between ourselves and various Family History Societies both here and abroad. There are 20 different journals to look at. There is **"The Genealogist"** which is the official magazine of the Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies. Some of the back numbers are there together with the latest version sent to us. Staying in the antipodes there is the Central Queensland Family History Society magazine and the *New Zealand Family History Society* contribution entitled **"Family Tree"**. Great if you had any ancestors who emigrated to those areas of the world. Closer to home though there are journals from various parts of Scotland and England. Several carry hints and tips about local research and all have interesting articles related to the area. Well worth a look. ([Click here](#))

### EDINBURGH TOUR Behind-the-scenes tour of the Library Saturday 24 June, 10 am

Enjoy a guided tour of the building and introduction to the National Library's collections and history. Our Library is the largest in Scotland and a treasure trove. If you have ever been interested in anything ever, there will be something for you here!

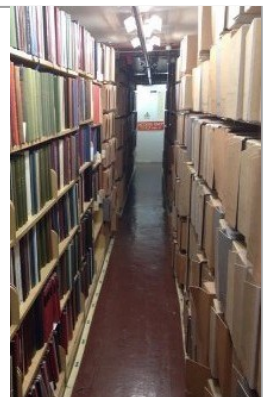
The tour will last approximately 45 minutes. Numbers are limited, so booking is essential. Please let us know if you have special access requirements.

#### Venue:

George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EW

Admission free | Booking essential

**BOOK NOW**



If you are intending to attend any of the programmes or talks at the Anglo Scots Branch Meetings, would you please register your attendance via the MLFHS website through **Eventbrite**. This is important because it alerts us as to the numbers to expect and ensures that we are able to book a venue large enough at the Central Library. Thank you.



## SAFHS 28th Annual Conference and Family History Fair— Saturday 22nd April 2017:



Picture shows l-r David Muil, Michael Couper, Ina Penneyston and Yvonne Gill-Martin

A team of officers from the Anglo-Scottish branch, led by Chairman Michael Couper, attended this annual event staged this year at the Bay Hotel, Kinghorn in the Kingdom of Fife. The remaining members of the team were David Muil, Ina Penneyston and Yvonne Gill Martin. Together they managed a stall in the Family History Fair throughout the day as well as attending six of the ten presentations on offer in the Conference Halls. A report of the contacts made with visitors from all over Scotland and the rest of the world as well as summarised accounts of the presentations attended, will be featured in future editions of *The Manchester Genealogist*.

### Opening

The Conference was opened by the Lord Lyon King of Arms, Dr Joseph Morrow before about seventy delegates. Conference lectures of about 45 minutes' duration followed at regular intervals.

### Presentations

The theme of this year's conference was **"Building Bridges—Making Connections"**, inspired by the building of the new road bridge across the Firth of Forth. Topics ranged from the earliest means of crossing the Firth of Forth before the first great bridge was built to the vast collection of maps held by the National Library of Scotland, including the connections offered by death certificates and the digitised records published by Findmypast.

This year the family history fair featured several additional lectures including a case study from a 19<sup>th</sup> century asylum for the mentally ill, reports of genealogical research published by students of the University of Strathclyde, the use of both English and Irish records in your research and the origins of the expression Gordon Bennett!

### The Family History Fair



At the stall we greeted 131 visitors, a handful of which were members, and sold £40 worth of books and CDs. As is often the case in Scotland we were unable to enrol any new members. However, contact was made with many local societies, enabling us to promote the exchange of journals electronically and the SMI database.

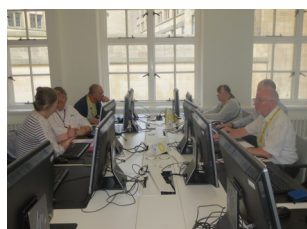
A feature this year was a free draw ticket offered to each visitor to the stall with the prize of a new book about family history research. The winning ticket, drawn by Paul Nixon of Findmypast, was held by a visitor from Livingston in West Lothian.

### Forthcoming Events:

Our **June Branch Meeting** (Saturday 17th June) is an **Ancestry Workshop**. We will take you through the *Ancestry* site and hopefully give some pointers as to how best to use the resources. We won't only focus on Scottish resources, but we will give some pointers in that direction since there is quite a bit of Scottish archive on *Ancestry*.

In **July** (Saturday 15th July) we are organising a trip to the Portico Library in Manchester. Opened in 1806 the "Portico" is a subscription library open to all. Reading about it on its website indicates a very interesting place, so the visit should be enlightening. More about this visit in our next Newsletter.

There is **no** Branch meeting in **August**. To do with holidays I think!!!!



**Remember!** There is the **helpdesk facility** open to all from 10.30 am until 12.30 pm prior to the Anglo Scots Branch meeting on the third Saturday of each month. Experienced members will be there to help you with your research and perhaps we can help break down some of those brick walls or point you in the right direction at least. We can also help you with ScotlandsPeople or any of the family history providers. You will find us on the 3rd Floor of Manchester Library. Come along. We would love to see you.