



e-Scotia

Newsletter of the Anglo-Scottish FHS

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Welcome: to the October edition of the newsletter. Our main article this month focuses upon the talk given by Dr Laura Stewart on the subject of The National Covenant. The Branch committee recognises the value in members sharing their experience in researching ancestors. However in organising these talks it is the intention to help put the family research of members into the context of their ancestors lives. Enjoy. Editor.

The National Covenant and the Scottish People.



Dr Laura Stewart is a lecturer in Early Modern British History at the University of York. She completed her PhD at Edinburgh University in 2003 and taught at Birkbeck College, London before moving to York University in 2016. She has published many articles and her primary focus is the Anglo-Scottish relationship. She was therefor an ideal guest for our audience.

The National Covenant was established in 1638 in response to measures taken by Charles 1st to impose the common prayer book used in England. In 1637, King Charles I and Archbishop Laud tried to bring the separate churches of England and Scotland closer together, firstly by the introduction of a new Book of Canons to replace John Knox's Book of Discipline as the authority for the organisation of the Kirk, and secondly by the introduction of a modified form of the Book of Common Prayer into Scotland. However there were no consultations, either with the Scottish Parliament or an Assembly of the Kirk, and the proposals met with outrage from Scots anxious to preserve their national and religious identity. A movement



against the reforms gained momentum across Scotland headed by Presbyterian noblemen and radical clergymen. It was pointed out that whilst the Covenant itself was written by only two men, Alexander Henderson, a Fife minister, and Archibald Johnston, an Edinburgh lawyer, it was the first document to be open to being signed, and was indeed signed, by people of all stations of life. It remains one of the iconic documents of Scotland, albeit, rabidly anti-Catholic. Laura focused upon what influence and impact the Covenant had on "ordinary" Scots. Clearly it is difficult to judge this since what is written tends not to emerge from "ordinary" people, but from the various examples of copies of the Covenant, which were sent all over Scotland to be presented to the people through ministers, it is evident that the whole parish membership signed the document—including a few women—an unusual phenomenon in its own right. Hearing the content of the Covenant and knowing what to do about it, people were dependant upon their ministers and the Kirk sessions who also oversaw the response from Church members. It was therefor very difficult to escape the Covenant in the 1660's. It was seen as a testimony to faith; as a political as well as a religious act; as an opportunity to consent personally to the text and a contrast between the rulers and the ruled.

It was evident from the many questions to Laura afterwards that the importance of the Covenant was grasped by members. One member informed us that he recalled being told that his ancestors in Muirkirk, Ayrshire, were Covenanters and that the family had a large bible-sized book (now sadly missing) signed in blood by those Covenanters. It was not a bible, so was it a copy of the Covenant? Laura of course could not say but confirmed that copies of the Covenant took many forms, some of velum a meter square in size. Others in the form of books in various shapes and sizes that parishioners kept in their homes.

A very informative talk greatly appreciated by all who attended.

The Scottish Poor Law: one of our members who attended the WDYTIA Conference this year attended a talk given by Dr Patricia Whatley of Dundee University on the subject of the Scottish Poor Law. He obtained a copy of a hand-out that Dr Whatley produced and sent it to us for possible inclusion in the newsletter. I contacted Dr Whatley to seek her permission to reproduce the handout and she readily agreed. We attach the full handout in case others might find the content useful. It is largely in bullet-point format, but the content is clear. We hope you find it as useful as we did. It is entitled;

Five tips for using the Scottish Poor Law

Dr Patricia Whatley, University of Dundee, Scotland

1. **There are differences between the Old and New Scottish Poor Laws.**
2. **Be aware of the differences between the Scottish and English Poor Laws.**
3. **There are a number of types of Scottish Poor Law Records.**
4. **In Scotland there are Poorhouses, not workhouses, with distinctive records.**
5. **They are located throughout Scotland.**



The “Old” Poor Law in Scotland 1579 – 1845

- 1579, Scottish Poor Law Act, passed by the Parliament of Scotland, replaced previous Acts of Legislation, designed for “the punishment of the strong and idle beggars and the relief of the poore and impotent”.
- Parishes were each responsible, through the Kirk Session, for enumerating and managing their poor.
- The poor in Scotland had no automatic right to receive poor relief and their circumstances were investigated by the kirk session to determine whether they were “deserving” or “undeserving” poor.
- Poor relief was funded by
 - Church door and house collections
 - Voluntary “assessment” by the heritors (landowners)
 - Mortcloth fees
 - Pew rentals
 - Baptisms
 - Fees for the proclamation of wedding banns
- Pressure on the “poors” funds was under increasing pressure during the later 18th and 19th centuries.
- The 1843 Poor Law enquiry investigated the “practical operation” of the poor law and how it might be amended.
- Gathered wide-ranging data on many aspects of working-class life, including unemployment, prices, wages, prudence and indigence, diet, and medical relief.
- The report and evidence revealed the extent of poverty and destitution evident throughout Scotland, and the paucity of medical assistance for the poor sick.
- The enquiry gathered detailed data on the sources of parish poor law income.
- The report, published in 1844, stated, “there is scarcely any provision made for medical relief to the poor out of the poors funds in Scotland. This seems to be left systematically to private charity”.
- Prior to 1845 the poor were largely reliant on the charity of those doctors that existed, both for medicines and attendance. Parishes, supported by landowners and other random local sources of funding, provided relief to the poor in the form of food, clothing, or money – much of it below the level of subsistence – and offered limited medical or surgical expenses.

The “New” Poor Law in Scotland 1845 – 1929

- The Poor Law (Scotland) Act 1845 brought in tow major developments which changed the public face of the Poor Law in Scotland:
 - The establishment of a central Board of Supervision which was given the power to raise local taxed for the relief of the poor.
 - The transfer of responsibility for the registered poor from the Church of Scotland to Parochial Boards, which came under the authority of the newly established Board.
 - The Board of Supervision had centralised control. At a local level considerable power was vested in the parochial boards which had the power to raise poor funds by assessment, which then became an annual charge.
 - In Scotland, outdoor relief was more common and poorhouses less so than in England.

Record Types.

Parish records are held by local authority archives and some by the National Records of Scotland:

Midlothian (CO2/77-91); Wigtownshire (CO 4/30-47)); East Lothian (CO7/7, DC 5/4-5 and DC 7/4) Survival of the other parish records is patchy.

The Scottish Poor Law (cont.)

Other Poor Law records include;

- Kirk session minutes
- Heritors minutes
- Parochial Board records
- Poor rolls
- Registers
- Accounts
- Parliamentary papers.



Scottish Poor Law web site by professional genealogist Kirsty Wilkinson

http://www.myainfolk.com/Resources_files/Records_of_the_Scottish_Poor.pdf

For those who might be interested, Dr Whatley tells me that Dundee University offer online courses in Family and Local History which cover Scottish and English sources. More information about these can be found at:

<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/cais/programmes/familylocalhistory/>

ScotlandsPeople: have announce that the Valuation Rolls for 1935 have now been digitised and added to the web site. This means that there are now valuation rolls covering the period 1855 -1935. Therefor total of indexed entries available to researchers on the ScotlandsPeople site is now over 118 million. These latest valuation rolls include more that 2.7 million indexed names and addressed for owners, tenants and occupiers of properties throughout Scotland, including a record of its annual valued rent. ([Click here for further information](#))

Chasing Scots! By co-incidence we have been approached in the past couple of months by a couple of organisations keen to make contact with Scots. And who wouldn't. One, which appears relatively new, is attempting to set up a social media site open to those who are Scots-born, (or presumably linked with those who were Scots-born) so that they can share their family tree information and presumably discover inter-relationships. It is called "bornScot.com" ([Click here](#))



The other organisation seems to have been going for some time since they have put together a "Scottish Diaspora Tapestry" that remains in the making and to which you can subscribe. ([Click here for access](#)) It describes itself as:

"A project to involve communities around the world in celebration of Scottish heritage and culture, the people and places which connect Scotland to its global diaspora."

We include the information here just in case you want to respond.

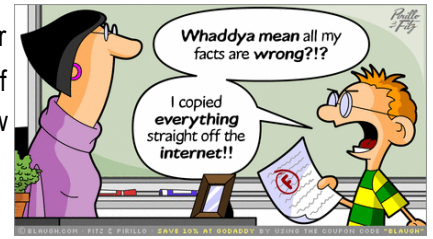
Scottish Records Association: ([click here](#)) just in case you are in the Edinburgh area in the near future we have received information from the SRA of the Annual Conference and AGM to be held on Friday 10th November at New Register House in Edinburgh.

As a member of the AngloScots Branch you are of course a member of the SRA and entitled to attend as such. The day begins at 9.15 and concludes at 4.45 with the AGM at 1.00. The content of the conference looks interesting ([click here](#)) and there is an application form to complete and, of course, slight costs.

Scottish Association of Family History Societies (SAFHS) have announced details of their conferences for 2018 and 2019—just in case you plan that far ahead! The 2018 Conference is to be held in Glenrothes, Fife, on the 21st April. The 2019 Conference is to be held in Wick, Caithness, on the weekend of the 26th April. Given that the venue on this occasion is so far away, the Conference is to cover two days rather than one and to include a trip to the local archives. Diaries out!!!

Some General information:

Scottish Indexes: (scottishindexes.co.uk) another great source brought to our attention that you must have a look at is the “**Scottish Genealogy Blog**” site of “**Scottish Indexes**” ([Click here](#)) It lists a whole series of links that you can follow through to help you with your Scottish research.



Again, from “**Scottish Indexes**” the following announcement on the “Blog”:

“Glasgow, Scotland – Today Scottish genealogy website www.scottishindexes.com move another step closer to their goal of indexing all historical Scottish mental health records from 1858 to 1915. This release means the index now has 40,000 entries from across Scotland and includes people from every walk of life. “

ScotlandsPeople: our representative at the recent Scottish Association of Family History Societies (SAFHS) meeting in Glasgow informs us that some changes have been made to the booking process if you are intending to visit the ScotlandsPeople Centre in Edinburgh. Previously you were able to reserve a place at the centre online with the option of paying for it when you arrived. However it appears that so many people were reserving places and not turning up that now you have to pay the full amount (£15) when you reserve a place online. Seems fair to me. You can of course still turn up on the day and pay for a day or half day, but then of course you are taking the chance that there may not be any vacancy—a pain if you are travelling a distance.

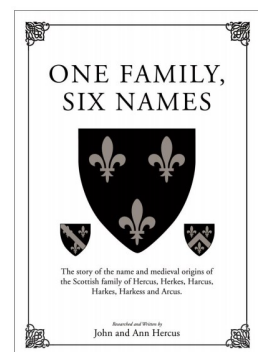
National Archives: some time ago we were passed information about the following YouTube video produced by the National Archives of Scotland using their “Discovery” resource to highlight what they have to assist family history research. We may have told you about this before, but if we did, no harm in a reminder given its value. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=GRFW1uOam-Y> The video last about an hour but is worth the watch, and can of course be stopped and restarted.

Is your name Hercus, Herkes, Harcus, Harkes, Harkess or Arcus?

Or do you know anyone with the name? We received an e-mail from a couple in New Zealand, John and Ann Hercus, essentially informing us about a book that they have written entitled “One Family Six Names”. They describe it as;

“the story of the name and of medieval origins of the Scottish family of Hercus, Herkes, Harcus, Harkes, Harkess, and Arcus”

It costs £14 plus £10 postage and packing from New Zealand. We mention it in case the name has meaning for any members. If you are interested you can contact John and Ann at ann.johnhercus@hotmail.com

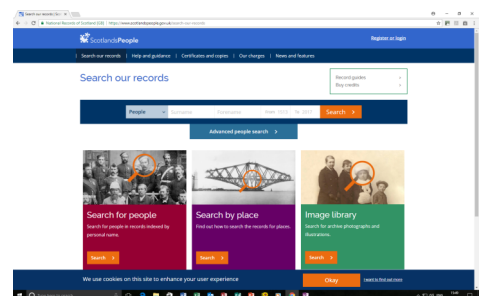


November Branch Meeting: Saturday 18th November 2017. 2.00 p.m.

Ina Penneyston will be giving a workshop on the new and revised version of **ScotlandsPeople**. We will receive information about all the new content and tips as how best to research using the site.

Perhaps you too have some tips or experiences of the site that you can pass on to us. Come along and lets have a go at all this together.

Remember and reserve your place through **Eventbrite** on the MLFHS site.



Don't forget too about the helpdesk that we have prior to the Branch meeting on the third Saturday of each month. We begin at 10.30 a.m. and go on to 1.00 p.m. We have reserved computers so you are always assured of a place. We look forward to seeing you.

