



The Historical Search Room of the NRS is free for historical research, but you will need to obtain a reader's ticket. The Historical Search Room is open Monday to Friday **09:00 to 16:30**. For more information on NRS records for family history, visit <http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk> or telephone 0131 535 1314.

ScotlandsPeople is a partnership between the National Records of Scotland and the Court of the Lord Lyon. ScotlandsPeople has an internet website at <http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk> and also operates a family history centre in Edinburgh at the east end of Princes Street. The centre is less than 5 minutes from Waverley railway station and is directly opposite the Balmoral Hotel. Visit <http://www.scotlandspeoplehub.gov.uk> or telephone 0131 314 4300.



National
Records of
Scotland

Further Reading

Tracing Your Scottish Ancestors: a Guide to Ancestry Research in the National Records of Scotland and ScotlandsPeople, edited by Tristram Clarke (6th edition, Birlinn Ltd, Edinburgh, 2011), ISBN 978-1-78027-022-7 [e-book ISBN: 978-0-85790-077-7]. This official guide provides detailed information about all the resources described in this leaflet. RRP £12.99, available from the ScotlandsPeople Centre.

The ScotlandsPeople and National Records of Scotland websites also contain a wealth of information about our records.

Portrait images courtesy of Peter Stubbs at www.edinphoto.org.uk. 214905 (02/12)



ScotlandsPeople

Connecting Generations

**PRE-1855 SCOTTISH
FAMILY HISTORY
RECORDS**

**GUIDE TO THE
SOURCES**



OLD PARISH REGISTERS 1553-1854

The Old Parish Registers are the records maintained by the Church of Scotland prior to the introduction of statutory civil registration in Scotland on 1 January 1855. Kirk session clerks recorded births and baptisms, banns and marriages and deaths and burials of ordinary people within their parishes. Christine Hay's baptism on 27th December 1553 at Errol in Perthshire is the earliest surviving entry in an old parish register.

Only around 3,500 volumes have survived for the whole of Scotland, which are now held in the custody of the Registrar General for Scotland. Unfortunately before their transfer many other volumes were destroyed by fire, water or rodents. Others simply disappeared when they were borrowed and not returned to the Kirk, or were destroyed by accident or on purpose.

A list of the registers that have survived, with covering dates, is available on our website. Search for extant old parish registers.

The amount of information contained in the old parish register is variable because there were no standards for ministers or clerks to follow, and it was left to their discretion. As a result there are wide variations in the amount of information recorded. Early records contain the least information and some birth entries do not even give the mothers' names! There is much less information than in the statutory registers making it more difficult to verify whether the person registered is indeed your ancestor or a person with the same name.

Some of these records can be difficult to read, particularly the earlier volumes, due to poor handwriting, damage to the page or poor quality ink, and the use of Latin words or unfamiliar abbreviations or script.

The registers can be searched online at <http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/> or at the ScotlandsPeople Centre in Edinburgh where we can provide assistance with interpreting the records.

Note that some registers contain post-1854 entries.

REGISTER OF NEGLECTED ENTRIES

Following the introduction of civil registration, the Registrar General recorded events proven to have occurred between 1801 and 1854 that had been missed from the Old Parish Registers in a Register of Neglected Entries. These entries are included in the Old Parish Register index.

1841 AND 1851 CENSUSES OF SCOTLAND

These censuses took place prior to the introduction of civil registration in Scotland.

A small number of the 1841 volumes have perished, the worst area affected being Fife. Details of missing enumeration books are available on our website.

The 1841 census contains the least information. It doesn't record relationships within households, and for people over 15 years old, ages were rounded down to 15, 20, 25, etc.

The 1851 census records the relationships within the household, status, actual ages and place of birth.

1841 and 1851 census street indexes can be searched for free on our website.

PRE-1841 CENSUS RECORDS

If you are visiting the ScotlandsPeople Centre in Edinburgh we also have some transcripts of pre-1841 census and population lists in the Library.

PRE-1855 FAMILY HISTORY RECORDS AVAILABLE AT SCOTLANDSPEOPLE

Census Returns From 1841 (some survive for earlier years)

Old Parish Registers From 1553 to 1854 (some records exist for 1855 onwards)

Roman Catholic Records

Births and baptisms From 1703
Banns and marriages From 1736
Deaths and burials From 1782
Other events like communicants, confessions, confirmations, etc From 1742

Wills and Testaments From 1513

Coats of Arms – Entries in the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland From 1672

NATIONAL RECORDS OF SCOTLAND (NRS)

The Historical Search Room of the NRS holds a wide range of pre-1855 records. Not all of them are continuous from the starting dates shown here.

Kirk Session and other records of Church of Scotland, former Free and dissenting Presbyterian churches From 1562
Congregational, Episcopal, Methodist, Quaker and Unitarian churches From 16th century
Estate records From 16th century
Register of Deeds From 1554
Register of Sasines From 1617
Notary Public records From 1510
Court records From 1493
Great Seal, Retours etc From 1306
Tax records From 1264
Guild records From 1446
Muster rolls etc From 1641

