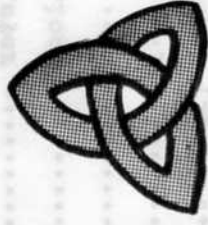


highland family history society



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CONTENTS

Editorial p 1
 Millions of Ancestors p 2-3
 News p 4-8
 Family History on Film p 9-10
 Inverness-shire Parishes (with map) p 11-13
 Bookshelf p 14-16
 Tongue Old Parochial Register p 17
 Highland FHS Library Catalogue p 18-20
 Projects p 21-22
 Queries p 23-24
 Notice to Intending Emigrants (1842) Back cover

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There is a theory that "coincidences" do not happen by chance at all, but are in some way pre-ordained. If this is so, then our ancestors must surely be taking a hand in the planning process, for the incidence of coincidence in family history research is remarkable. At least, this has been my own experience and I am sure many of us have made the kind of "chance" discovery which can often lead to a breakthrough in research.

Such discoveries are always made when we are least expecting them, and reaction can range from astonishment to delight and, sometimes, a curious tingling sensation in the spine.

Let me give you a recent example. A search through the 1842 files of the Inverness Advertiser at Inverness Public Library did not reveal what I was looking for. But it gave me the idea that some of the news items, notices and advertisements could be photocopied and reproduced in the Journal. I thought they would be visually attractive, might be of general interest, and could even prove of direct relevance to someone, somewhere.

I chose, at random, a "Notice to Intending Emigrants" (see back cover). You never know, I said to Peter Reynolds, someone in Canada might read this and make the chance discovery that his ancestor emigrated on this very ship.

And someone else might even find one of their ancestors in this list of local agents at the bottom of the notice, I said, running my finger through the list of names and absent-mindedly reading them aloud, until I found myself reciting "J. Ross, Innkeeper, Bonar Bridge".

I spluttered to a halt, in the instant realisation that this was none other than my paternal great-great-grandfather. In itself, this was hardly a major breakthrough since I knew already that John Ross was an innkeeper at Bonar Bridge at about this period, and was listed as such in the 1841 Census.

But now I also know why it was that my ancestors never joined the tide of emigration to the colonies - they were too busy helping others on their way!

Could it be that, from time to time, our ancestral spirits take pity on our painstaking efforts to track down their earthly progress, and arrange for a "coincidence" or two to help us along?

Perhaps not. But to my mind the cause is immaterial - so long as the coincidences keep on happening.

Millions of Ancestors

"Genealogy - How to Begin" was the title of a thought-provoking talk given to the society on February 1st, by the Rev. Donald Maclean of Dochgarroch - a most experienced amateur genealogist whose own family have roots in the Inverness area going back at least to the 15th century.

Defining genealogy as "the science of kinship", he said there were two types of pedigree (a word derived from the French for 'Crane's foot'). A descending pedigree traced down all the descendants of a known ancestor at the top, while an ascending pedigree operated in reverse from the person at the bottom of the "family tree".

By the latter process, the number of ancestors doubled with each generation, and Mr Maclean produced some daunting statistics - 10 generations results in 1024 ancestors, while 20 generations ago, shortly after the time of Robert the Bruce, we can each lay claim to more than a million ancestors, 1,048,576 to be precise, although this figure is cut at a stroke where there was a marriage between cousins.

Far from being a million times greater, the population in King Robert's day was but a fraction of what it is now - proof, if any were needed, that all our pedigrees overlap and that we are all of the same blood. "If you go back far enough", said Mr Maclean, "all human races are connected and descended from the same ancestors."

The two most important lines of ancestry are the paternal (father's father's father etc) and maternal (mother's mother's mother etc), since it is only from these ancestors that we inherit our X and Y chromosomes and our individual characteristics.

Mr Maclean went on to give sound advice to beginners about contacting elderly relatives; tracking down family papers and Bibles etc; use of census returns, parish registers and civil registration; and the information to be found in newspaper obituary notices and on gravestones.

One cardinal rule - always work from the known to the unknown, prove each step as you go, and never jump!

He also touched on other sources, such as sashes and testaments, and highlighted some of the differences between Scottish and English research. North of the Border, for example, a married woman never "loses" her maiden name, unlike the male-chauvenist South!

Occasionally, a family tree will link up with a known pedigree going back for many generations. These "gateways" - for example, a marriage with the daughter of an aristocrat - were just a question of luck, said Mr Maclean, and they were the only way in which Royal descents could be proved. Given such a "gateway", it might be possible to trace one's ancestry as far back as the 6th century, but there was no hope of reaching classical civilization, far less Biblical times. All such "pedigrees" were either bogus or unproved, although we must all be descended from everyone who lived in these times and who left any issue at all.

NEWS

NEW COMMITTEE - The society's AGM was held on March 23rd when the "interim" office-bearers and committee members were re-elected to serve for a full year's term. A welcome transfusion of "new blood" came with the election of Mr Gordon Richardson to the committee, and his experience is already proving to be an asset.

CONSTITUTION - A draft constitution was presented for discussion at the AGM, along with a number of amendments, most of which were accepted. There were one or two "sticking points", however, - in particular the dates from which the subscription year and the financial year should run, and the time of year at which AGMs should be held. These points were referred back to the committee, and the matter was deferred to the next meeting on April 20. At the subsequent meeting, the committee stuck to their original recommendations, ie the subscription year and financial year to run from September to August, with an AGM towards the end of each winter session (probably in March or April). Because of the time lag between the end of the financial year and the AGM, the audited accounts will be published in the October or January Journal, and when eventually presenting the accounts to the AGM the Treasurer will also give an interim financial report to cover the intervening period. Together with two other small changes, these proposals were put to the meeting and unanimously endorsed. The constitution was then formally moved, seconded and adopted - to sighs of relief from the executive committee. A copy of the constitution, as finally approved, is enclosed with this Journal.

GUEST speaker at the AGM was a well known Gael, Mr Rory MacKay, who entitled his talk "Some Thoughts on Highland Pedigrees". A report will appear in the next Journal.

5

VENUE - Highland Region's leisure & recreation committee have given the society permission to use the reference room of Inverness Public Library, on a regular basis, for our meetings. This will be free of charge, provided no additional staff costs result for the council, and detailed arrangements are at the discretion of the Library Service. The director of leisure and recreation, Mr Harold Wilkinson, told us: "The approval reflects the recognition of the committee that the objects and work of the society are particularly relevant to the library, and to the source material which is in the library collections, and for this reason the committee has made an exception to its normal practice in outside use of library facilities". We are most grateful to the committee and to Mr Wilkinson for their support, and pleased to have the regular use of such suitable premises.

LIBRARY - Our reference collection continues to grow, thanks to a number of generous donations, and a list of material so far catalogued appears on pages 18-20 of this issue. Bad news on the microfilm front, however. The 1861 census for Inverness-shire has been on order from Edinburgh since January, but the Registrar General's Office now tell us that HMSO have stopped providing a copying service. The RG's Office hope to acquire the equipment from HMSO to enable them to do this work themselves but, meantime, no copies are available. There is also every possibility that, once they are available, the price will have gone up. The Mormon's international genealogical index for Scotland is also on order but we are awaiting the issue of an up-dated version, and the microfiche have not arrived so far. We will continue to do everything possible to secure these orders as soon as we can.

MONEY - The financial report presented to the AGM by our Treasurer, Mrs Dorothy Booth, covered the period from the society's inauguration in September 1981 to March 22nd 1982. This showed income of £374.13, chiefly from subscriptions, donations, and proceeds from the sale of Donald Whyte's booklet "Introducing Scottish Genealogical Research". Expenditure totalled £214.60, the main outlays being photocopying, postage, advertising and Journal expenses. This leaves us with an excess of income over expenditure of £159.53. Full audited accounts for the year 1981/82 will be published in the Journal later this year.

MEMBERSHIP - The Treasurer has also produced an interesting geographical break-down of our membership as at March 22nd, which at that date stood at 99: Scotland - 82 (of whom 66 live within a 50-mile radius of Inverness); England - 12; Canada - 1; USA - 2; Australia - 1; New Zealand - 1. There is thus ample scope for overseas recruitment, but at the same time we have a solid base of local support on which to build. Ordinary members totalled 55, family members 27, pensioners or students 25, and institution-al members 2. We continue to attract encouraging attendances at our meetings, averaging about 50 or 60, some of whom are obviously not yet members. At time of writing, membership totals 120.

FEDERATION - In early April, Mrs Booth attended the AGM of the Federation of Family History Societies, which this year was hosted by the Lincoln society, of which she is also a member. A report of her visit will appear in the next issue.

POSTAGE - As noted above, postage is a major item of expenditure. Many correspondents have been good enough to enclose stamps or international reply coupons when expecting a reply, but it would assist our finances greatly if this practice was more widespread.

SOURCES - According to the first newsletter of the Association of Scottish Genealogists and Record Agents (ASGRA), the following OPR indexes are now available on microfiche at the Library, New Register House:- marriages and baptisms for Aberdeen and Old Machar, plus all the parishes of Nairn, Sutherland and Caithness. The same source also notes the following accessions by the National Library of Scotland:-

The Sutherland Papers, donated by the Countess of Sutherland. Dating from the 13th century, the documents include items relating to the Clearances.

A manuscript history (present century) of the Mackenzies of Soatwell, by Evelyn Mackenzie.

Transcriptions of charters, 1671-98, granted by Archibald, 9th Earl of Argyll, and his son Archibald, 1st Duke, to dependents; and letters, 1752-81, relating to the family of Hume Campbell, 3rd Earl of Marchmont.

Photocopy of a Genealogical Account of the Family of MacLean, by Hector Maclean of Gruline, Jr., c. 1734; and of a Memorial Regarding the Chieftaincy of Clan Chattan, c. 1828.

Sixteen Gaelic Manuscripts, 16th-18th century, including the Book of the Dean of Lismore.

SEARCH FEES GO UP - With effect from April 1st, the fees charged by the General Register Office and by local registrars have been increased "to take account of the general rise in costs". This also affects the charges made for extracts of certificates, but of particular interest to members will be the increases in search fees, which are as follows:

- Particular search in the parochial registers where specified entry untraced (for each 5 year period or part thereof): up from £2 to £2.40.

- General search in the parochial registers: up from £3 to £3.50.
- Inclusive general search in the parochial registers and the indexes to the statutory registers:
 - Per day - from £5.75 to £6.50.
 - Per week - from £13.50 to £15.
 - Per Month - from £40 to £45.
 - Per quarter - from £78.50 to £90.
- Particular search in the indexes to the statutory registers where specified entry untraced (for each 5 year period or part thereof): from £1.30 to £1.50.
- General search in the indexes to the statutory registers:
 - Per day, or part thereof - from £4.50 to £5.

STOP PRESS

EDITOR'S GENEALOGICAL BREAKTHROUGH ! - Preparation of this issue of the Journal has been somewhat delayed as the result of a recent addition to the Editor's family tree. His descending pedigree, formerly comprising two daughters, Kirsty and Eilidh, was extended on April 12th with the birth of a son, Alasdair. Journalistic deadlines may come and go, but are as naught compared with the imperatives of four-hourly feeds.

Advertisement

SCOTTISH ANCESTORS Research carried out on all aspects of Scottish genealogy and family history in statutory and Old Parish Registers, legal, land and church records. Transcriptions and translations of older records.

A.R. Bigwood, MA, M.Litt., ASGRA., 38 Primrose Bank Road,
Edinburgh EH5 3JF.

Family History on Film

The importance of family photograph albums is well recognised, as a source from which to "illustrate" at least part of a family history. But what about old cine film, through which the subjects really "come to life" ?

I came across a good example recently - a jerky, black and white home movie shot by a friend of the family in 1936. It shows various members of my family - including grandparents I never met - on holiday with relatives in Wester Ross; aspects of crofting life such as shearing, harvesting and salmon fishing; steam drifters returning to Fraserburgh harbour with their catch; and a nostalgic shot of the old suspension bridge, and Bridge Street, Inverness, before the developers knocked it all down. Not a "genealogical source", perhaps, but certainly "family history".

My problem was that the film gauge was 9.5mm, and consequently useless in my projector. Local "experts" shook their heads and muttered depressingly about 9.5 mm being a dead duck nowadays.

The day was saved, however, by the Scottish Film Council, whose archivist, Janet McBain, could not have been more helpful. She put me in touch with a film lab near London - one of only two in the country which will still make copies from 9.5mm.

I now have my Super 8 copy of the 1936 original - and it offers a fascinating glimpse of my family nearly half a century ago.

Is there not a danger, I wonder, that in concentrating too much on our most distant ancestors, and on pushing back the pedigree just one more generation, we overlook much valuable

material of more recent vintage ? This is certainly an omission of which I have been guilty, at times. As family "historians", surely we are also family "archivists" to a certain extent, and should be preserving for future generations as much relevant material as possible - of all kinds, and however recent to our own time.

The original 1936 film is now in the archives of the Scottish Film Council, who are trying to build up a comprehensive collection of early films, including the work of amateurs. The cost of obtaining a modern-gauge copy is not prohibitive, and anyone in possession of old cine films should seriously consider contacting the Council's archivist, if only for advice. You will not be put under any pressure to part with a film you wish to retain. The address is 74 Victoria Crescent Road, Glasgow. Tel. 041-334-9314.

Duncan Ross

GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH DIRECTORY

The Library of Australian History are shortly to publish an international edition of their Genealogical Research Directory. They have asked us, as a member of the Federation of FHSs, to circulate our members with a subscription form, and you will find one enclosed with this Journal. A £5.50 subscription would entitle you to 15 entries in the Directory, plus one copy of the completed publication. It is, of course, entirely up to members whether they wish to subscribe, but there is no doubt that directories of this kind can be a useful research tool, putting people who are researching the same name in touch with each other throughout the world. If you decide to subscribe, please do so without delay, since the closing date is May 30th.

Inverness-shire Parishes

The accompanying map depicts the parish boundaries of mainland Inverness-shire, as shown in "Phillips' Handy Atlas and Gazetteer of the British Isles", published about the turn of the last century.

It is hoped this will serve as a useful guide to researchers, but it should be borne in mind that some boundaries or parish names may have changed over the years, and may not correspond exactly with the pre-1855 situation. Arisaig and Moidart, for example, were formerly part of the parish of Ardnamurchan, the bulk of which lies in Argyllshire.

Similar maps of the other Highland counties will appear in subsequent issues of the Journal (the Isle of Skye will be included with the Western Isles).'

The dates after each parish name indicate the earliest entries in the Old Parish Registers for births/baptisms, marriages/proclamations, and deaths/burials. This information is taken from the "Detailed List of the Old Parochial Registers of Scotland", published in 1872.

It should not be assumed, however, that entries are continuous after these dates - some years are incomplete and there are many gaps, often of decades or more.

Fuller information about the dates covered by the OPRs can be obtained by consulting the "Detailed List", a copy of which is in the society's library.

