

# hìghland family history society



# comunn sloinntearachd na Gaidhealtachd

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Editorial ..... p 1  
 Source Material for the Highlands & Islands ..... p 2-6  
 News ..... p 7-9  
 MacDonald Family Centennial in Canada ..... p 10-12  
 Ross & Cromarty Parishes (with map) ..... p 13-15  
 Bookshelf ..... p 16-18  
 HFHS Library Accessions ..... p 19-20  
 Some Thoughts on Highland Pedigrees ..... p 21-23  
 Family History Conference & AGM ..... p 24-25  
 Queries ..... p 26-28

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All credit to An Comunn Gaidhealach - hard working but often criticised promoters of the Gaelic language and culture - for their bold and imaginative decision to stage the 1985 Mod in Nova Scotia.

This will be the first time Gaeldom's annual festival has been taken outwith Sootland, and surely it is not before time that Highland Gaels paid an official visit to their Canadian 'alter ego'.

It is astonishing, in many ways, that Gaelic refuses to die in the Highlands and Islands, given so many years of suppression, neglect and apathy. But if the main stem has survived with difficulty, how much more surprising that an off-shoot - transplanted by thousands of Highland emigrants in the first half of the 19th century - should have taken root across the Atlantic, and re-generated itself down to the present day.

There are between 20,000 and 30,000 Gaelic speakers in Canada today, about 5000 - 6000 of them in Nova Scotia, where one of the principal destinations of the Highland settlers was the island of Cape Breton. It is there that the Mod will be held in 1985 and, although Gaelic has been in decline over recent years, there are now signs, as in Scotland, of a renewed interest in the language.

But while most of Canada's Gaelic speakers, I'm told, are first generation immigrants who took the language with them, the Gaels of Nova Scotia are generally six or seven generations removed from their cultural 'rootstock'. Few of them have relatives they know of in Sootland and, consequently, there has been little contact between these two branches of Gaeldom until quite recently.

This international Mod will offer an opportunity, not only to give the language a boost, but for these "long lost cousins" to get together for a long overdue family reunion.

## Source Material for the Highlands & Islands

by Donald Whyte

The Old Parochial Registers of the Church of Scotland, in the custody of the Registrar General for Scotland, containing baptisms, proclamations, and burials, are disappointing insofar as they relate to some Highland parishes, and are notoriously deficient for the Western Islands. Of the 12 insular parishes of Inverness-shire, the earliest record is for Portree, in Skye, commencing in 1800. For Ross and Cromarty, the earliest register for an island parish is Stornoway, in Lewis, commencing in 1762 with an account of the family of the clergyman, but containing little about native events until 1800.

As a result of the lateness of the parochial registers, the genealogist has to look for other sources, and it should be remembered that the Highlands and Islands were part of a country ruled from Edinburgh until 1707. Consequently, reference should be made to M. Livingstone's 'Guide to the Public Records of Scotland' (Edinburgh 1905). Supplementary lists of accessions to the Scottish Record Office (S.R.O.) have been printed in the 'Scottish Historical Review', vol. XXVI (for 1945-46), and annually thereafter. Much pre-Union material has been printed, for which see H.M.S.O. Sectional List, No 24, 'Record Publications', and 'Handlist of Scottish and Welsh Publications' (British Records Association, 1954).

The main sources are Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland, the Register of the Privy Council, Justiciary and Court of Session records, Exchequer and Treasury records. Some early Crown rentals are included in the 'Exchequer Rolls' (printed 1264-1529). Moreover, material relating to forfeited estates has been partly printed, and the reader is referred to 'Scottish Forfeited Estates Papers, 1715, 1745', edited by A.H. Millar (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1909), and to the record publications, 'Statistics of the Annexed Estates, 1755-6', and 'Reports on the Annexed Estates, 1755-69', edited by V. Mills, and printed in 1973. The large collection of 'Register House Plans' contain estate maps, and details of some may be found in the record publication: 'Descriptive List of Plans in the Scottish Record Office', edited by I.H. Adams, of which three volumes have been published and others are in preparation.

3  
A large collection of records relating to the Church of Scotland have been transmitted from the General Assembly Library at Tolbooth (St. John's, Highland) Church, Edinburgh, to the S.R.O. These fall into three groups: the older records of the General Assembly; records of synods, presbyteries and kirk-sessions and records of former Free, United Free, United Presbyterian, and other Presbyterian churches which have been re-united with the Church of Scotland. In addition, the Established Church has enjoined that individual churches should transmit their old registers, and many have done so. Records deposited up to 1966 have been listed in 'Records of the Church of Scotland', printed as vol. 94 of works issued by the Scottish Record Society (Edinburgh, 1967). Some of these records relate to Highland areas. The reference is CH2. In another repertory (CH3) there is similar material for the Free Church, which was strong in many parts of the Highlands and Islands.

Previous to 1823-30, testaments and inventories were confirmed by the old Commissary Courts, which were ecclesiastical in origin, and commenced long before the Reformation. None of the Highland divisions have records of an early date, except Dunblane (commencing 1539), only part of which may be thought of as being north of the Highland Line. The other commissariots were Caithness, Ross, Inverness, Moray, Dunkeld, The Isles, and Argyll (see map in 'Wills and Where to Find Them' by J.S.W. Gibson). Indices to these have been printed by the Scottish Record Society.

In the 1820's the work of confirming testaments was transferred to the Sheriff Courts, and those which cover the Highland area are Campbeltown, Dunoon, Inverary, Oban, Tobermory, Fort William, Inverness, Portree, Dunblane, Dunkeld, Ross and Cromarty, Dingwall, Stornoway and Tain, all of which records are in the S.R.O. The Sheriff Court records of Caithness and Sutherland are still in local custody. In practice, the testamentary material for Argyllshire is found mainly in the Dunoon registers; that for Inverness-shire mainly in the Inverness registers; and Cromarty and Tain generally in the Dingwall records. There is no national index, except for a 'Register of Defuncts' which covers some areas around 1840, but a 'Register of Confirmations' commenced after the Sheriff Courts Act of 1876. This gives name of deceased, value of the estate, the names of the executors, and the name of the sheriffdom.

Other court books held at the S.R.O. include those of the Justice of the Peace Courts for Argyll, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Perthshire, Sutherland, and Ross and Cromarty.

Court books of the old regalities of Argyll, Atholl and Breadalbane are held, as well as a chamberlain court book for the Earldom of Caithness.

By far the most interesting records for the Highlands and Islands will be found among the great 'Gifts and Deposits' series at the S.R.O. Family muniments are grouped together according to pre-175 counties, which are incorporated in the new regions brought about by the reorganisation of local government. The collections often contain title deeds, rent-rolls, legal papers and correspondence. There is a 'Summary Catalogue', and with most collections an inventory. Collections not yet fully catalogued generally have a provisional handlist to give the researcher some idea of the contents of the muniments. The record publication 'Lists of Gifts and Deposits', Vols. 1-2, includes summaries of some fully catalogued collections, and the Highlands is represented. Moreover, the record publication 'List of American Documents' and an unpublished list of Canadian material, contain records of links between North America and the Scottish Highlands.

For Argyllshire, the main collections include the 'Airlie Muniments', 'Campbell of Balcardine Papers', 'Lemont of Ardlamont Muniments', 'MacDonald of ClanRanald Manuscripts', 'MacLaine of Lochbuie Papers', 'McNeill of Colonsay Correspondence', and numerous collections relating to branches of Clan Campbell. Among collections relating to Inverness-shire may be mentioned 'Cameron of Fassifern Papers', 'Tarlogie Titles', 'Lord MacDonald Papers' (containing material relating to the Island of Skye and to North Uist), 'Macdonald of Glenaladale Manuscripts', 'Mackintosh of Balnespieck Papers', and 'St. Kilda Photographs'. For Caithness there are several collections which contain legal papers, such as 'Dunbeath Papers', and 'Sinclair of Mey Muniments'.

The largest Sutherland estate was of course that of the Duke of Sutherland, and the estate papers \* are at Dunrobin Castle but two volumes titled 'Sutherland Estate Management, 1802-16' edited by R.J. Adam, and issued by the Scottish History Society in 1972, are invaluable. The G.D. series, however, contains the 'Norman Kemp Papers', which have miscellaneous data relating to the county. There are also papers relating to the families of Mackay and Bighouse and Mackay of Reay. For Ross and Cromarty, the 'Munro of Foulis Papers', 'Earl of Cromartie Papers' and 'Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth Muniments' are helpful. Among Perthshire collections may be noted the voluminous 'Breadalbane Muniments' (including the court books), the 'Fergusson of Dumfallyandy Titles', 'Murray of Ochtertyre Papers', and 'Robertson of Ochtertyre Papers'.

Of general interest for several areas of the Highlands are the 'British Fisheries Society Papers', and it is interesting to note that a volume titled 'The British Fisheries Society, 1786-1893', by Jean Munro (Mrs R.W. Munro) was recently published at Edinburgh. Other collections of a general nature which contain genealogical material include the 'John McGregor Collection', 'Charles Fraser Mackintosh Papers', 'York Building Society Papers', and the MSS. of D. Murray Rose and J. Maitland Thomson. Other collections have been inventoried by the National Register of Archives. The papers of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries contain much of interest relating to the island of St. Kilda, including the evacuation and re-settlement of the islanders on the mainland.

There is of course much in print about the Highlands and Islands, and the volumes of the Scottish History Society - containing original material - are especially valuable. These include 'The Lyon in Mourning', edited by Henry Paton (3 vols. 1895-6, and recently reprinted by the Scottish Academic Press), 'The Itinerary of Prince Charles Edward Stuart' edited by Walter B. Laikie (1897 and also reprinted recently), 'The Origins of the Forty-Five' by the same author (1916 and reprinted), 'A Selection of the Forfeited Estates Papers' edited by A.H. Millar (1909) already mentioned, 'Highland Papers' edited by J.R.R. MacPhail (1914-20, in 3 vols.), and 'The Prisoners of the '45' by Sir Bruce Seton and Mrs Jean Gordon Arnot (3 vols. 1928-29). 'Argyll Estate Instructions' edited by Erio R. Cregeen (1964), contains material relating to Mull, Morvern and Tiree.

A remarkable work, 'Report on the Hebrides, 1764' by Rev. Dr. John Walker, edited by Margaret M. McKay, has recently been published by the Edinburgh publishing firm of John Donald (Publishers) Ltd. This contains valuable references to estates in the Western Isles. A recent publication, 'The Middle Ages in the Highlands', published by the Inverness Field Club at £5.50p including postage, is obtainable from Mrs Loraine MacLean of Doohgarroch, at Hazelbrae House, Glenurquhart, Inverness. It contains a number of learned articles, including 'The Sources for the History of the Highlands in the Middle Ages' by Professor G.W.S. Barrow, of the University of Edinburgh, and 'Highland Family Origins' by David Sellar, also of Edinburgh University. Many interesting notices of Highland families have found their way into periodicals, especially the 'Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness', commencing in 1871.

A valuable guide to much of this material is 'Highland Genealogy in Local Publications' by R.W. Munro and Jean Munro, in 'The Scottish Genealogist' vol. xi, No. 1 (May 1964). More recently - since 1972 - 'Notes & Queries' of the Society of West Highland and Island Historical Research has contained useful genealogical data.

\* Footnote - Since writing the above, the Sutherland Papers have been deposited in the National Library of Scotland. - D.W.

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## NEWS

TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTIONS - A start has been made on the "monumental" task of recording tombstone inscriptions in the society's area. Some work has been done already by others (see FHFS Library catalogue), but it appeared that nothing at all had been tackled in the County of Nairn. For our first venture into the field, therefore, we chose the ancient burial ground of Geddes, near Cawdor. This picturesque churchyard contains many old stones - it is the burial place of the Roses of Killravock - yet it was not too large for our first attempt. A small but enthusiastic band, under the direction of committee member John Gradon, assembled at Geddes on June 26th (commiserations to the member who lost her way and had to return home to eat her picnic lunch - we'll give you better directions next time!). John had previously surveyed the site, and after each transcriber had been allocated a section, they set to work. After lunch among the tombstones, the group adjourned to nearby Geddes House, the 18th century home of the Mackintosh-Walke family, who extended a most hospitable welcome and kindly showed everyone round. This visit was arranged by Nairn member Janie Macintyre, who was meticulous in her attention to the details of other local arrangements, from getting the necessary permissions to arranging toilet facilities at a nearby cottage! In the afternoon coincidence struck again! While members were huddled round a 1667 memorial to the Roses of Bellivat, a direct descendant of this family surprised himself, and the group, when he arrived to record that very inscription - a new member was instantly recruited. John has already produced an excellent map of the churchyard, showing the position of each stone, and a return trip is planned to double check the earlier work and to move on to some of the more illegible inscriptions.

