

highland family
history society



comunn
sloimntearachd
na
gaidhealtachd

JOURNAL

Number 5

January 1983

ISSN 0262-6652

Published by

The Highland Family History Society

Comunn Sloimntearachd na Gaidhealtachd

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With this issue, the Journal celebrates its first anniversary - albeit rather belatedly - and this is perhaps an appropriate time to take a look at how it is shaping up.

But first, just let me slip into something a bit less comfortable, like sackcloth, and do public penance for the delayed appearance of this issue and the last. All I can say, in mitigation, is that the production of each Journal is a fairly time-consuming business, and my spare time suffers other demands upon it. (Temperamental photocopiers don't help, either). But if you'll bear with me, I'll do my best to improve time-keeping.

One way in which you can help me to do that, is by sending me material to put in the Journal. It is much quicker and easier to edit and type what other people have written, than to write it all myself. In particular, I'd appreciate reviews for "Bookshelf". Not only would that save me some time - it would give our readers the benefit of opinions other than my own! The books (or other published material) chosen for review need not be brand new, but should still be fairly recent.

The Queries section has proved quite popular - but please keep them coming in and, even more importantly, please consider whether there is anything you can do to help provide an Answer for someone else.

I am happy to say that, in general, the Journal appears to have been well received, and I would like to thank those of you who have said nice things about it in your letters.

My thanks also to those who have sent me articles, queries or answers for publication - if they have not yet appeared they will do so soon. After that, what appears in the Journal is in the lap, not of the gods, but of you the members.

Sources in New Register House

Dr. Ian Grant, departmental records officer at the General Register Office for Scotland, gave us a talk in October on "Sources for Family Historians at New Register House". This article is based on his notes.

On 26 January 1551/2, at Edinburgh, a General Provincial Council of the prelates and clergy of Scotland enacted:

"That forasmuch as it is full well known by daily experience and pleas and debates on births and clandestine marriages, (that people), even although they have been legitimately born, are brought into the greatest risk of losing inheritances from their fathers or forebears, and all their fortunes, and this chiefly through lack of legal documents bearing upon births and dates of birth and proclamations of the banns;

"therefore it is statute the henceforth the curates of each parish shall have a register wherein shall be inscribed the names of infants baptized, together with the names of persons who by common report are held and reputed to be the parents of such baptized children, as well as of their godfathers and godmothers, with the day, month, and year, attested by the signatures also of two witnesses;

"and this rule shall be observed also in proclamations of the banns, which the present convention orders to be made in the parish churches both of the man and the woman respectively, if they reside in different parishes, which registers, indeed, it wills and ordains to be treasured amongst the most precious jewels of the church." (Patrick, Statutes of the Scottish Church,
pp 142-3).

It would have made Scotland a genealogist's paradise if that enactment had been thoroughly carried through, and such records had survived the intervening four centuries, but unfortunately this is not what happened.

Our earliest list of baptisms, for the Perthshire parish of Erroll, begins on 27th December 1553, but the entries are very brief and make no reference to godparents or witnesses. Indeed, they appear to have been copied at a later date, from an original register which became dilapidated.

Scotland had about 900 parishes, and from more than 30% of them no registers of deaths or burials prior to compulsory registration were ever transmitted to the Registrar General. This makes the recording and publication of tombstone inscriptions of considerable value, although only a small minority of the population could aspire to such expense.

Registers of baptisms and marriages were received, however, from almost every parish when compulsory registration was established in 1855, and in about 50% of them the records date back prior to 1700.

The commencement of a register, however, was no guarantee that all appropriate events had been recorded, due either to accident or deliberate neglect.

There was often a reluctance to register among religious dissenters from the Established Church - Covenanters, Quakers, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Congregationalists, or members of the Secession Church, Relief Church, or Free Church of Scotland. There is also evidence of dissent from another cause - that of cost. At times, the Session Clerk made an entry and, having found he was not to receive his dues, erased or blotted it out again.

Scotland's troubled religious history also led to frequent and lengthy vacancies in office of parish minister and parochial schoolmaster, with resultant gaps in registers. In addition, an entry which - to us - may seem woefully inadequate probably appeared to be amply sufficient at the time. It was also not uncommon to find illegitimate children were registered only after the marriage of their parents - or in some cases not at all. Omissions were also caused through clerks forgetting to transfer entries into the register from their rough notebooks - or because the notebooks were lost or destroyed.

In the year 1783, the Government was unwise enough to put a small tax upon the registration of every entry, unless it related to paupers. In some parishes this led only to a drop in the number of registrations, while in others such as Inveravon, Banff-shire, and Cummertrees, Dumfries-shire, the burial register ceased to be kept altogether. In Tyrone, Dumfries-shire, both the burial and the marriage registers ceased. Although the tax was repealed in 1794, the damage continued since, by then, the habit of registration, such as it was, had been broken.

The Act accidentally did some good, however. Many parishes which had kept no burial register prior to that date, started to do so because the ministers or session clerks misunderstood the wording of the Act and thought it placed an obligation upon them to keep registers.

The growth of interest in genealogy, and resultant wear and tear on the Old Parochial Registers (OPRs), became such a serious concern that some years ago the Registrar General entered an agreement with the Genealogical Society of Utah whereby the OPRs were to be removed from their Victorian bindings and remicrofilmed - they had been microfilmed somewhat unsatisfactorily in the early 1950s.

Thereafter, the microfilm was to be the normal means of consulting the registers, with the originals looked at only in cases of difficulty.

That Society has also been undertaking the indexing of the baptismal and marriage registers, and are to produce an alphabetical, county-by-county index on microfiche. So far, the indexes for the counties of Shetland, Orkney, Caithness, Sutherland, Ross & Cromarty, Inverness, Nairn, Moray, Banff, and for the cities of Aberdeen and Dundee, have appeared. Sales of this index within the UK are handled by the General Register Office (Scotland).

The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act of 1854, which took effect on 1st January 1855, provided for the establishment of "The General Registry Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages", in Edinburgh. It also provided for the Depute Lord Clerk Register of Scotland - then William Pitt Dundas advocate - to become also Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages in Scotland. In the parishes, the session clerk in office at 7th August 1854 was to become Registrar, and when a vacancy arose it was to be filled by the Parochial Board - a function now performed by Scottish local authorities. Entries were made in duplicate, one copy remaining in local custody and the other being transmitted to the General Registry Office. From the latter, the Registrar General's annual report on birth-rates etc, was drawn up, and annual indexes of births deaths and marriages were compiled. Since 1965 only one register is kept, and this is sent to Edinburgh, a xerographic copy being returned for local use. Extracts of entries prior to 1965 are usually supplied by an xerographic process nowadays, and those after that date have been placed on jacketed microfilm which is used to provide copies.

Sophisticated camera equipment has been purchased to permit microfilming of earlier statutory registers, without requiring them to be disbound, and it is hoped thereby to significantly reduce handling and consequent wear and tear.

As well as having the duties of Registrar General thrust upon him, William Pitt Dundas was also saddled with taking the 1861 census in Scotland, was given overall responsibility for that of 1871, and also had some part in the arrangements for the 1881 census. No other Scottish Registrar General was responsible for more than one decennial census.

The 1861 census was not the first Government-conducted census of Scotland, but previous arrangements had been made largely by the Home Office. Those of 1801, 1811, 1821 and 1831 contained records of the number of persons in each parish, but contained no personal facts and appear to have been published as received from the overseers. These returns were destroyed in London in 1904. In 1903, the enumerators' transcript books from the 1841 census - the first to record any personal details - were found in the lofts above the House of Lords committee rooms. About the same time, a search revealed those for the 1851 census in a vault at the General Register Office in London. They were later transferred to New Register House in Edinburgh. At present, only the 1841 - 1891 censuses can be examined, and subsequent censuses will be opened for search only after expiry of 100 years from their creation.

Various minor registers held at the General Register Office include the Foreign Register, the Marine Register, the Registers of Neglected Entries etc., brief details of which are given in the Ancestry Leaflet they send to enquirers.

There are about 22 million entries in the statutory registers of births, deaths and marriages; an estimated eight million entries in the OPRs; and the total number of census entries is very much greater still. By combining work in these various forms of records however, progress can be better than expected.

Normally in the statutory registers of births, date and place of marriage is given in the case of all legitimate births. Not only is the place of birth given, but the usual residence of the father, with his full name and occupation and the maiden name of the mother. The age of the parents at birth of the child is not given, except in 1855 when, optimistically, those establishing the system tried to collect more extensive information than was later thought practicable. By going back, however, to the marriage register, not only can the age of the parents be found, but details of their own parents, and usual addresses of the parties at time of the marriage. By a process of mental arithmetic, probable birth-year can be established and, if the name is reasonably uncommon, quick checking in the general index to births should lead to the appropriate entry. Thereafter, the process can be repeated until an event is found in the period of the "open" censuses. Of course, if information can be obtained among older relatives, verbally or by checking extracts of birth or marriage certificates in their possession, you can obtain a flying start for your work in New Register House. Such enquiries are best conducted with discretion, however, as there is often sensitivity about illegitimacy, or children conceived before marriage.

Once back to the period of the open census, if a family were resident at an address found in a birth-register, marriage register, or death register, the additional information traced is often of considerable utility.

From 1851, the occupation, parish of birth if the birth was in Scotland, age, and relationship to the head of household, is asked in the case of all occupants. It is often possible, by tracing the successive births and form of designation adopted, to map the career of an ancestor.

Many begin research on their ancestry in the hope that they will establish relationship to the rich or the famous. Most will be disappointed in that expectation, but will find that the lives of their working-class or middle-class ancestors arouse in them greater interest than they ever thought possible.

(The full text of Dr Grant's lecture is in the Society's library).

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NEWS

SOCIAL NIGHT - A small but convivial group of about 30 members and their partners enjoyed an informal get-together in the residents' lounge of the Caledonian Hotel, Inverness, just before Christmas. It gave us a chance to meet each other socially, and to have a "blether" over a dram and a bite to eat - an experiment well worth repeating (and attending) this year, although perhaps in a slightly less spacious venue.

OPEN NIGHT - Our January meeting took the form of an "Open Night" which attracted a good turn out (on Burns' Night, too!) and proved to be a great success. Committee member John Gradon gave a brief, but interesting and entertaining talk on his family history, taking us back to 14th century Berwickshire, and demonstrated on a large-scale chart his very effective method of recording results. Other committee members had brought along examples of their own work, and showed alternative ways of presenting the fruits of their research. As people mixed and mingled, there was also a chance to raise particular research problems - although answers could not be guaranteed! Another attraction was the opportunity of a look (necessarily brief) at the Mormon microfiche index which had arrived just a few days before.

I.G.I. - As just mentioned, the International Genealogical Index finally arrived in January, having been on order from the Genealogical Society of Utah since early 1982. The index is on microfiche, and the Society now have possession of those parts of it which relate to the whole of Scotland and Ireland. Within each country, surnames are listed alphabetically and are not broken down on a county-by-county basis. The events indexed are, in the main, marriages and births/baptisms, although there are some deaths.

POSTSCRIPT.

MARRIED - At No. 14, Stewart Street, Greenock, on the 31 current, by the Rev. Mr Morvan, Donald Macdonald, Esq. of Dunstrath, to Isabella, eldest daughter of John Marquis, Esq. Greenock.

At Blairgowrie, on the 22d ult., John Mackintosh, Esq. to Jessie, eldest daughter of Campbell Gardner, Esq. Supervisor of excise, Inverness.

DIED - At his house, in the Parish of Kilnair, Isle of Skye, on the 10th ult., Lieutenant Soirle Macdonald, at the very advanced age of 106. He died not of any particular complaint, but merely from decay and exhaustion of nature. He has left three children under ten years of age.

At Ceylon, in March last, Lieutenant Lovell Maclean, of the Ceylon rifle regiment, sixth son of the late Archibald Maclean, Esq. of Pennycross.

At Grantown, on the 7th instant, Mrs. Stewart, Laundress, upwards of 100 years of age. This respectable female was the oldest person in the district. She retained all her faculties until a little before her dissolution, and had a perfect recollection of the rebellion of 1745, some of the incidents connected therewith, which came under her personal observation, particularly an interview between John Roy Stewart and two of his associates, at which she was present, she took peculiar pleasure in relating. Mrs. Stewart's dejection as a wife, as a mother, and as a neighbour, was various and becoming, and her charity to the poor was unbounded. Respected and beloved by her friends and relations, she died much and deeply regretted.

Inverness Journal
and Northern Advertiser.
Friday November 12th 1830.

The principal sources appear to be the Old Parochial Registers and, after 1855, the records of compulsory registration. In the case of a birth/baptism the father's name is shown and (when available) that of the mother. With marriages, the spouse is named.

In both cases, the IGI gives the date of the event, the parish and the county. The index is undoubtedly a very useful source - and, for the first time, gives members something to "get their teeth into" - but it should always be remembered that the IGI is not a comprehensive index to every OPR entry and post-1855 certificate. There are gaps and omissions, so if you don't find what you're looking for in the IGI - don't give up in despair! Unfortunately, while we waited for the IGI to arrive, the Inverness library's microfiche reader was "borrowed" indefinitely by another department, but Peter Reynolds hopes this problem can be resolved - at least temporarily - fairly soon. Watch this space for developments.

LEAD ON, MacDUFFS - The MacDuff Clan Society is being re-organised, and asks all Duffs, MacDuffs, Abernethys, Fifes, Fyffes, Humes, Kilgours, Spences, Spens, Scrymgeours, Fernies, Syras (Ceres), Wemyss, or any others interested in re-activating the Clan, to contact the British Secretary: Mrs Clare Abernethy, Fogrigarth, Bridge-of-Walls, Shetland.

REGISTER OF RESEARCH - Some copies of Journal No. 4 omitted the good news that Committee member Douglas Stewart has now completed the very exacting task of compiling our Register of Research. Copies of this valuable research aid are available from the Treasurer, price £1.50 (inc. UK postage). The Register gives a full list of our members, the surnames or other interests they are researching, the area, and the period. Use of the Register, and other genealogical directories - local, national and international - is a good way to make new contacts and avoid duplication of research.

BOOKSHELF

Worldwide Family History. By Noel Curren-Briggs. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 39 Store Street, London. Price £9.95.

The enormous scope suggested by the title of this book, by one of Britain's foremost professional genealogists, is amply borne out by the content.

The first part deals with the political and linguistic structure of Europe, and includes fairly detailed chapters on genealogy in all the countries of Europe, as well as of Islam, China and Japan. Part Two deals with colonial shipping in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the settlement of the Americas (with chapters on British, German, Dutch, Scandinavian, French, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Slav and Greek emigrants). It also looks at the early settlement of Europeans in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and there is a chapter on heraldry as an aid to genealogical research.

Concentrating on non-British genealogical problems, the book aims to show how people of English speech but of foreign descent can begin tracing their ancestors, and will be of particular value to those of mixed-European ancestry. The author also points out that those who live in the New World are not alone in facing the problem of foreign ancestry - there are many thousands of people living in Britain who are separated by "oceans of sea and time" from forebears who came from countries with whose language, history and archives they may be unfamiliar.

Mr Curren-Briggs is a consultant to Debrett Ancestry Research, a Fellow of the Genealogists' Society, and a founder member and former chairman of the Association of Genealogists and Record Agents.

However, even he concedes it is impossible for a single author to be familiar with every aspect of such a complex subject as international genealogy, and he has therefore included contributions from a number of genealogists who are acknowledged experts in their own countries or disciplines.

The book is handsomely produced.

The Emigrant Scots: Why They Left and Where They Went.
By Michael Brander. Constable & Co., 10 Orange Street, London.
Price £8.95.

If only Mr Curren-Briggs had written this book instead ! While his book hardly mentions Scottish emigration (we and the Irish get a few paragraphs under "Anglo-Saxon Settlement of America" !), Mr Brander focuses exclusively upon it, but in a disappointingly superficial way.

In fairness, Mr Brander pitches the book no higher than "a general summary and introduction" and, as such, it contains a good deal of information. Sadly it also contains a number of mistakes, inaccuracies and popular misconceptions. For example: "In the 1850s the Highlands and Islands Development Board was encouraging emigration to Australia rather than to Canada ..." (The HIDB was set up in 1965 to help stem emigration, rather than promote it !).

Elsewhere, he says the Scots returned "a decisive negative" in the devolution referendum of 1979, whereas more than 50% voted in favour (Parliament decided the majority was too narrow).

I did enjoy, though, his description of 18th century Highland menfolk: "Unlike the Lowlanders, they felt no urge to work, and much of their time was spent making music, singing, drinking, and sheltering from the abysmal weather, which often made work impossible". Unlike this book, it sounds too good to be true !

How I Struck Gold

By Stuart Holland

When I became involved in researching my family history shortly after my retirement in 1974, I never thought I would discover relatives such as a sugar mill engineer in Hawaii, a cousin in Tampa, Florida, who had been a family historian for the past 25 years, a Vermont great-great-grandmother whose ancestors had landed in Massachusetts Bay in 1636 (shortly after the Mayflower), or Fraser relations in Montreal, Canada, and in the state of Michigan, and ultimately make a special trip to Scotland for further Fraser research.

Initially, the Fraser research had been largely a matter of consolidating fragments of family trees that had been assembled in Canada by several members of the family, and to combine these with genealogical material contained (a) in a letter written in 1869 by the Rev Alexander Fraser of Kirkhill to his niece Jane Fraser in Montreal, and (b) in a 22 page letter written in 1840 by John Fraser of Quebec, a former Provost of Inverness, to his eldest son Alexander at Kings College, Aberdeen.

I soon exhausted North American sources by extensive correspondence with older members of the family, mostly in eastern Canada. By that time, I had discovered the vast amount of genealogical material available on microfilm in the library of the Church of the Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. I made a number of two-week visits to Salt Lake City and early in 1982 I realized it was time for me to make a trip to Scotland, to see what further information I could find in the Scottish Record Office and the General Register Office for Scotland, in Edinburgh, and possibly to do some cemetery searches in Inverness and vicinity.

