

highland family history society



comunn sloinntearachd na gaidhealtachd

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E D I T O R I A L

As I believe I mentioned, I have some difficulty researching my Canadian ancestry because Scotland is so far away from there, so I was pleased to be given an index to the Public Archives of Canada census microfilms and I've started borrowing them on the International Lending Library system, a few at a time. My grandfather was the youngest of the family, who followed a sister and two brothers to Western Ontario and in the microfilms there they all were with vast details of land broken and crops raised and even that they had a log cabin.

I get easily distracted reading census lists (they're so enthralling) so enjoy the names and hidden stories. One chap was John Dutchman, an emigrant from Germany. I suspect his English was not up to much, nor the German of the immigration interviewers, so Johann Something aus Deutschland got a new name. Another chap Simco Lee, Stage Actor, really sounds like a Stage Actor and I wonder if he knew the three-card trick?

Here in the Highlands there are extensive families with town or county surnames, the Rosses and Sutherlands abound for example, but few Dingwalls are left, even fewer in the town of Dingwall itself. Thus I was interested to find "Dingwel"s from Scotland in Southwold, Ontario.

Thank you for your help with reasons for the Mormons producing IGIs etc, an article will appear in the Journal in due course and I hope all of you will renew your subscriptions to be able to join me in reading it.

Still on names: Graeme MacKenzie has found many variations of "MacMullen" including MacMhaoilan, MacIlvoyl, MacGilleMhaoil, MacIlveil and even Bell. Can you suggest a name with more? Oh yes, my favourite name in the Canadian census was Ketchapaw!

One of our new members Paul Shaw (no. 847) along with his application included a copy of "AnsesTree" a publication of the Nanaimo Family History Society of which he is the volunteer librarian. In it was a short piece taken from the February 1991 edition of FAMILIES, the quarterly production of the Ontario Genealogical Society entitled "How are we going to write 3 February 2001?". We have reproduced the article on page 16 and if any of our readers wish to write to the editor of FAMILIES on the subject, could they please send a copy to our editor.

Finally a further reminder that the 3rd Annual Conference of the Association of Family History Societies will be held on Saturday 28th September 1991 at the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh. There will be four speakers including C. J. Burnett (Ross Herald) and the Very Rev. Dr. Shaw. The conference fee is £5 and an optional buffet lunch may be had for £4. For bookings and further information contact the Conference Secretary, 15 Victoria Street, Edinburgh EH1 2JL.

LUCY, JANE and the BISHOP
An Object Lesson in Extant Passenger Lists

by James Lawson

[This is the second part of an article, the first part of which was published in our previous Journal vol. 9 no. 3.]

The Migration

"Divine Providence", as the Bishop put it, came in the person of the Rev. MacEachern, whose pleas to lead a group to the Island of St. John were heard by his superiors in the Spring of 1790. Writes Bishop Geddes to the Scots mission agent in Rowe, John Thomson, in a letter dated 11th June 1790: "....Four hundred Emigrants are just going from the Western Coast to Canada and St. John's Island. Mr MacEachern, one of my old pupils, and really an excellent man goes to the Island." [7]

To prepare for the voyage, MacEachern had to work quickly. Provisions were hard to come by and it was impossible for him to know exactly what was needed on the Island in order for him to perform his professional duties. In due course, the boatload of emigrants would have to be mustered and assembled at port with their worldly goods in tow, ready for the voyage. If there were not yet sufficient parishioners on the Island of St. John to form a parish, then the addition of a couple of hundred might conceivably tip the balance. Seven weeks before the voyage, Rev. MacEachern sent this letter to Bishop Geddes in Edinburgh:

"Much honoured Sir Samalaman June the 3rd 1790.

I send you these lines by my two favourite pupils James MacLellan & Angus MacIntyre. B. MacDonald has at last consented to my going to St. John's. He told me that this was no new plan of his, and that he had always in view to send them a Clergyman. But that he wished they should feel the want of one. If I had got notice of his intentions in time I would do myself the pleasure and honour of seeing you in Edin. But the vessel is to sail about the 1st of July from this coast, and I find myself a little diffculted in many respects, especially for want of proper prayer books for the people in St. John's. And as we are so far removed from the market here it is not easy for me to buy clothes necessary for such a journey. I will expect a letter from you by course of post, and would wish to know whether the people of St. John's have sent any money to Cap'n John for equipping a Clergyman; upon the faith of which I might draw some small sum. I wrote to you last year, wishing you would withdraw £1 2s 8d from my quota which I was too long due you for tools you sent from Edin. I will leave said sum with B. MacDonald. And in the meantime I return you my most hearty and grateful thanks for the books you then sent me, which if I had not disposed of would be today a valuable collection. The vessel is to be here by the 20th current and

there is not time for any further commissions. I will do myself the honour to write as yet, once, before I go to the other side of the Atlantic.

signed: Angus MacEachern" [8]

At this point in time it is clear that MacEachern expected to fill but one vessel for the voyage to St. John's, soon two would be required. Bishop Geddes' letter of 11th June indicates that a total of four hundred of Clanranald's tenants had subscribed for two migrations, one to St. John's and another to Canada (see note following on the 'British Queen'). The construction of the list for the ship 'Jane' (it being the longer) might suggest that it was filled first and as subscriptions to the voyage out-stripped the capacity of her berths, a second list for 'Lucy' (it being the shorter) was appended.

At first glance the absence of MacEachern's name on either list may be problematic, it may also be logical to assume that the writer of the lists did not see the need to include it. While it is apparent that MacEachern was leading the migration to St. John's, it does not necessarily follow that he was the person organizing the trip. The handwriting on the lists is strikingly similar to MacEachern's, but there are also notable differences. In the absence of expert analysis it remains safer to assume that we don't know who the author of the lists was. However, the writer was probably local with a knowledge of both Gaelic and English, as the lists are titled in English while Gaelic proper and place-names appear without correction or erasure.

It would appear then, that these lists served two purposes, as muster rolls listing the families which had subscribed to the voyage, and as tables for calculating the total fare for the trip. Beside the name of each head-of-family is their address, presumably to avoid confusion of identities where so many shared common surnames. Further to the right appear six columns for sorting the age groups of families and the percentage of fare owed by each: above 12, full passage; 12-8 yrs., $\frac{3}{4}$ of full passage; 8-6 yrs., $\frac{1}{2}$ passage; 6-4 yrs., $\frac{1}{4}$ passage; 4-2 yrs., $\frac{1}{8}$ passage; under 2 yrs., free. Scribbled in the margins, calculations adding the total number of passengers and another determining the number of full fares owed for the voyage.

It is doubtful that these particular lists ever saw the light of day on St. John's Island. While safely mustered at port awaiting the voyage with his charges, MacEachern probably turned them over to the same Bishop MacDonald from whence they came into the collection of the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh. A duplicate set must have made the journey, however, of which only transcriptions appear to have survived. [9]. These transcriptions indicate that 'Lucy' and 'Jane' sailed from Drimindarach on the 12th of July 1790, information

not contained on the Scottish copies. Also on the transcripts is a marginal note adding passengers from 'Lucy' and 'Jane' to those who sailed on the 'British Queen' a month later.

Whether a group of emigrants landed and settled at their proposed destination cannot be assumed, even when their intentions are as clearly known as in this case. Secondary records are necessary to confirm the whereabouts of the settlers and these are not always available. A public appeal for information has helped confirm that many of the families settled on Lot #36 where the Glenaladale settlement began, eventually branching out from there to the areas where MacEachern in later years would oversee the building of parish churches. The 1798 census of the island reveals the names of about 60% of the heads-of-families on board 'Lucy' and 'Jane', proving that these names refer to the same individuals as a worthy task but one unfortunately beyond the scope of this article. Researchers interested in furthering this line of enquiry may find land records of use, but not always. Parish records would be more useful, other sources are scarce for that time period.

Rev. MacEachern would become a Bishop when the See of Charlottetown was created (11th August 1829), encompassing Prince Edward Island (renamed from St. John's Island in 1799), New Brunswick and the Magdalen Islands. MacEachern's trials and tribulations as priest and then Bishop are described in an article in a 1984 edition of 'The Island Magazine', [10] not least the continuing frustrations he experienced over chronic monetary and clergy shortages which he alluded to before ever setting foot on the Island!

The British Queen

The relation of this migration of Scots Catholics from Clanranald's estate in July 1790 under the guidance of Rev. MacEachern to that of the sailing of the 'British Queen' a month later from Arisaig with another ninety of Clanranald's tenants is not glaringly apparent. While the Canadian transcripts of the 'Lucy' and 'Jane' lists contain a marginal note lumping the two migrations together, it is not understood why, nor who made the notation and when. Bishop Geddes' letter of 11 June 1790 where he refers to '.....four hundred emigrants (going) to Canada and St. John's Island....', demonstrates that both groups had already formed their intentions well before either sailing.

The 'British Queen' passengers sailed to Quebec, eventually settling near Johnstown in Upper Canada where they apparently had relatives living. Most, but not all of the passengers on the 'British Queen' were from different parts of Clanranald's estate, and apart from the requisite MacDonald's on board, most bore different surnames from the families on 'Lucy' and 'Jane'.

It is not certain what religion the 'British Queen' passengers were, nor is it apparent from supporting documentation (of which there is little) how they were organized or by whom. Evidence might suggest that they were also a Church-sponsored migration, but it does not appear that they were led by a priest.

Perhaps only this can be said: that in the Spring of 1790 the Church was preparing to sponsor two groups who planned to emigrate from their farms on Clanranald's estate; one group eventually numbering 328 who followed Rev. MacEachern to St. John's Island, and another of 90 who planned to settle inland. Evidence suggests both groups made it to their destinations. Apart from that we may know nothing for certain.

The Lists

Previous efforts transcribing lists of uncertain quality have convinced me what sheer folly such an enterprise can be, especially given modern methods of print reproduction which can publish true copies of the originals. To avoid discrepancies, I felt it best to allow the reader a glimpse at the originals from the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh which were used for this article. [A4 copies reproduced on next 2 pages. The author has kindly sent the Society full-size copies on A3, which will be held in the Society's own collection - Ed.]

In closing, it might be a fitting reminder that there is no rule of genealogy stating that a passenger list must exist for every boatload of emigrants that ever sailed the high seas. Quite the opposite is true, in fact, and the genealogist may find that the story behind why any particular list does exist is often a fascinating one.

I hope that this enterprise, to be published concurrently in the Journal of the Highland Family History Society and on Prince Edward Island, may encourage people on both sides of the Atlantic to use this valuable source to link up names and places. Good Luck!

James Lawson
Hudson, Quebec
June 1990

The author wishes to thank the following people for their kind assistance: Marilyn Bell, Public Archives of Prince Edward Island; Daniella Shippey, Edinburgh; Bill Lawson, Isle of Harris, Scotland; the Rev. Dr. Mark Dilworth, Scottish Catholic Archives, Columba House, Edinburgh; Mrs Teresa Strain, Charlottetown, P.E.I.; Edward MacDonald, The Island Magazine, P.E.I. Museum and Heritage Foundation, Charlottetown.

- [7] Blair's Letters, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh, BL4/24/12.
- [8] Blair's Letters, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh, BL4/33/10.

[9] Allegedly from the personal papers of one Colin S. MacDonald, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, MG 1, Vol. 559-11, #527, transcribed by: Dale, Janet; P.E.I. Passenger Lists: A Genealogical Myth Struck Down, Island Magazine #1, Fall-Winter 1976, pp 38-39. P.E.I. Museum & Heritage Foundation, Charlottetown.

also:
 Bumstead, J.M.; The People's Clearance, pp 238-241, Winnipeg & Edinburgh, 1982.
 note: Bumstead's preamble to the transcription refers to the originals in the S.C.A. in Edinburgh, but the transcription bears the marginal notes of the P.N.A.S. transcription.

also:
 Public Archives of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, manuscript.

[10] *ibid*, #4, above.

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The Society has recently acquired the microfiche Indexes to the Chelsea Out Pensioners covering the years 1806 to 1838. The fiche are grouped by infantry regiment and each index which is alphabetical covers approximately 14 regiments. All entries show Year Pensioned; Surname and Given Name (usually abbreviated); Age; Infantry Regiment and Page on Original Document.

The originals of the documents are available at the Public Record Office at Kew. A list of birth places is held by J Beckett of the Manchester & Lancashire F.H.S, from whom the fiche were obtained. Microfilm copies of the documents are available at the Genealogical Society of Utah and can be viewed at their libraries in the United Kingdom.

At the start of each fiche you will find the Mormon Reference Number of the film for the section of documents which have been indexed as well as the P.R.O. Reference Number. For example the first fiche covers the 1st-13th Regiments, the Mormon Reference is 0854638 and the P.R.O. Reference W.O. 120/26.

There are a total of nine fiche covering seven ranges of regiment (the 59th-73rd and 74th-88th each extend to two fiche). They are now on view at the library along with the other microfiche indexes belonging to the Society.

(held on evening of 18th December 1990)

This quickly-arranged replacement for a lecture proved an acceptable alternative and the enthusiasm generated nearly overwhelmed the ordered structure planned for it. Instead of an invited panel of Experts, various committee members Neil Murray, Loraine Maclean and Jonathan McColl took the stand and kept the discussion going.

To start the ball rolling Neil displayed a campaign medal for Waterloo and pages reflecting his research into the identity of its original owner. The books in the Public Record Office at Kew are filed by regiment until about 1880 and this is stamped on the medal: 79th Regiment of Foot. As he did not die in service his papers are still in the P.R.O. too. He was William Malcolm, born parish of Wick, labourer by trade, attested Glasgow, 18th November 1812 at age 16, served as private until March 1837.

He was medically discharged at Edinburgh Castle with chronic rheumatism and asthma which had started in Toronto caused by exposure to cold and moisture. He had served in France and Canada and was present at Waterloo, this confirming the medal's authenticity, a lot having been done with false names. He was 40, 5'9½" and had brown hair, grey eyes and a fair complexion.

Such records are unavailable from World War I onwards, so the latest one can see them is about the Boer War, although as some served in both wars they are unavailable too, unless (added a voice from the audience) you can prove a close relationship. Jonathan threw in the comment that the Canadians sent him his grandfather's WWI service record and that the P.R.O. has the carbons of the Canadian battalions' war diaries, enabling him to trace his grandfather's movements around the villages of the western Front.

Other records in the P.R.O. include medal rolls on card indices which confirm entitlement to medals, and muster rolls, the roll-call records for early musters of regiments. Has any work been done on the Scottish regiments between 1660 and the union in 1707? There are several regiments still going (even if merged) who existed then: the Scots Greys, Royal Scottish Fusiliers, Royal Scots and Scots Guards at least.

Back to medals. They became fashionable when the Russians were our allies in the French wars. Some landed at Great Yarmouth and caused great excitement when they drank the oil from the street lamps; they also had chests covered with masses of medals. Aside from one or two gold medals awarded to officers who served in the Sudan and Egypt and the Davidson Nile medal, Waterloo was the first campaign medal as we know them. The Peninsular War ones were issued, but not until the 1840s and you had to be alive to receive one!

DINGWALL'S MUSEUM & HISTORY
by Dr Anthony Woodham

(Part of talk given to the Society 22nd January 1991)

I have been interested in museums and things ancient from a very early age. In Edinburgh during the war I had fire-watching duties in the staff-room of the Royal High School, which was also the school museum containing a wonderful collection of Eskimo relics and the like sent back from Canada by a former pupil. It brightened the weary hours. When I came to Aberdeen I maintained the interest and eventually served on the governing body of the National Museum in Queen Street until it merged with the Chambers Street one and I was given a handshake, not golden, just symbolic.

I was living in Inverurie and got permission from the Town Council to do something about the sort-of museum in the reading room. I joined the Council and got money for it. We moved upstairs to a much nicer room, better lit and moved the library downstairs. The local government was reorganised in 1975 and I got another handshake and told to leave the museum. Six months later I discovered the beautiful cases I had had built with money from the Carnegie Trust and the Inverurie ratepayers were scattered from Peterhead to Huntly. It was very sad. The collection from the people of Inverurie and the Garioch were likewise scattered.

When I retired in 1984 to Dingwall I vowed I would have nothing more to do with museums, so when asked if I would lend a hand with Dingwall's one I said yes! I am now just as deeply involved with this museum as ever I was with Inverurie or the National Museum in Edinburgh. It has a beautiful location in the old Town House, although quite unsuitable for museum purposes. The four rooms are small and we have a lot of stuff in store but nevertheless its "oor ain museum" and we do our best with the people of Dingwall Museum Trust who give a lot of time to it.

We are producing a series of local history pamphlets, three so far and a fourth in the pipeline about Thomas Simpson, Dingwall's arctic explorer.

Another booklet is on the Dingwall Canal. We tracked down the author of our tattered museum copy, Kenneth Clew, a waterways enthusiast, and he was delighted that we wanted to reprint it. I asked him what his connection was with the town? He had been on holiday and coming back by train from Kyle of Lochalsh he passed over what he recognised to be a canal, not just a muddy ditch as most people in Dingwall tended to consider it. When he got home to the South of England he wrote to the Town Clerk who sent him information from the Council minutes and so on and he produced his booklet. It is the most northerly canal on the British mainland and has attracted much interest in waterways circles since then.

Mrs Richardson raised the next subject of word-processing. It extended Alistair Cameron's article on the subject in the Journal, noting that the Society of Genealogists produces a newsletter on Computers in Genealogy of which we have a few copies in the library. Different requirements were discussed: for one-name studies, drawing drop-charts and pedigrees, outlining and coding for databases. One such coded the user's children as generation A, himself as generation B, his parents as C and so on. F1829 is the code for a person several generations back born in 1829. If the year is unknown an approximate one is used.

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This led somehow to Australia. The chief of the Clan Cameron Association in N.S.W. wrote the "Book of Coopers" on all the descendants of the families of thirty children by the four wives of his Cooper ancestor. Separately we discovered that the P.R.O. has microfilmed copies of censuses for early Australia in the 1820s, and that there is a woman in Surrey compiling everything she can of every convict under the The Arrow of Distinction. The first Governor had to marry the convict men and women, then he performed the civil marriages until the first minister Johnson came over on the Second Fleet, the First Fleet having had no chaplain.

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Naturally the next subject was Canada and borrowing films and books in the International Library Loans system, where the lending library pays the postage out, the borrowing library handles the administration costs and the borrower pays the return postage; everyone pays a bit and the system can work. This is where catalogues of other libraries come in handy.

Other items covered were: content of the certificates in N.S.W. and other Australian states, registration systems, the advantages of sending a 'Contribution for your Society' when sending extensive requests for information overseas, the name Jervis/Jarvis, the Mormons lending system. This last can be useful when you send off for a copy of the submissions from individuals for inclusion in the IGIs. There is a small fee but you can get a useful contact in the person who made the submission.

Another mention from Australia was of the manageress of an LDS library in N.S.W. who is attempting to reconstruct the 1921 Irish census (destroyed in the uprising) by working backwards through all the pension entitlements. She has done tens of thousands of entries so far and will eventually publish it. Finally we all agreed that New Register House is improving all the time in its facilities, which makes it a decidedly nice place to work in; and our international evening of "Any Questions" adjourned.

by Graeme MacKenzie

Firstly I must apologise to anyone who has, on the basis of my last article in the Journal, come to Edinburgh and turned up at New Register House at 8.30am expecting to wait in centrally heated comfort for the half hour that guarantees a seat on opening at 9.00am. Unfortunately, soon after I wrote about the great improvement in all their procedures, the General Register Office promptly discontinued this particular one - and did not even revert to queuing in the corridor; now one has to queue outside, whatever the weather. The only response to my irritated inquiry as to the reason for this retrograde step, was a grumpy mumble about security. One more reason for booking well in advance if you are planning to come to research at New Register House.

Some more disappointing news from the General Register Office is that the 1901 Census is not to be made available for researchers this year in Edinburgh - as the 1891 Census has been for the last ten years. This will bring Scotland in line with England where 1891 has not previously been available - but as we are used to being ahead of London in most aspects of Genealogy, this is very frustrating indeed. And just to complete the bad news, as usual the charges at New Register House are going up at the beginning of April - one day's Inclusive Search will rise from £13 to £15.

Now to the good news however. As an experiment certain statutory certificates are being made available for examination in New Register House on a self-service basis. At the moment this is confined to Births from 1855 to 1914, and deaths in 1855 only. These are records that have been transferred to micro-fiche (so there is no danger of damage to original written records), and one is allowed to get three entries at any one time - in addition to any ordered in the usual way for delivery to one's desk. Combined with the provisions of a device that enables one to view these fiche at one's own desk (instead of having to compete for one of the communal readers) this really does mean that one can get through an enormous amount of work in a day, since (for these records anyway) there is no longer any waiting at all - and anyone who remembers the old system will appreciate how remarkable that is.

It also, I think, points the way to a very attractive future for researchers at New Register House when the programme of computerisation of the indexes and micro-filming of the records is complete. While certain restricted records will probably still have to be "fetched" to one's desk, the bulk of them will be instantly available - and the only constraint on one's work will be fatigue (especially of the eyes, since most of the time will be spent reading micro-fiche and micro-films, which is very tiring indeed). Considering the time and the cost required

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(The remainder of Tony's talk was extensively illustrated by slides of Dingwall's past and present and touched on many topics in its history, some of which follow)

- A picture painted in 1824 from Mitchell Hill looking north showing carriage and horses galloping along Hill Street, the parish church in the middle next to the Town House. It also shows a two-masted ship sailing up the Canal to the basin which is now Victoria Park.

- Tulloch Castle' long the seat of the Boynes and then of the Davidsons, looking down on the church built in 1802 with money largely provided by the current Davidson of Tulloch, who insisted that the front door faced his castle. The church thus faces away from the town.

- Captain Donald MacLennan made a lot of money as a privateer in the South Seas. He came back and purchased the land of Dingwall Castle and used its ruins to build his house, still called the Castle House. His brother was killed in a skirmish off Chile and was brought back to be buried in the grounds.

- St Clement's Aisle in the church yard. It is the earliest bit of construction in Dingwall and only just survives. It was an early 16th-Century chapel attached to the original parish church which was burnt down in 1790 when someone shooting rooks set fire to its thatch.

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The Society has purchased a number of books recently which have been deposited in the section of the library set aside for our use. They are :-

World War 1 Army Ancestry.
Norman Holding. [Federation of Family History Societies 1982]

More Sources of World War 1 Army Ancestry.
Norman Holding. [Federation of Family History Societies 1986]

The Location of British Army Records.
Norman Holding. [Federation of Family History Societies 1987]

Tracing Your Ancestors in the Public Record Office.
Amanda Bevan & Andrea Duncan. (4th Edition) [H.M.S.O. 1990]

Tracing Your Scottish Ancestors - Scottish Record Office
Cecil Sinclair. [H.M.S.O. 1990]

Tracing Your Scottish Ancestry.
Kathleen Cory. [Polygon 1990]

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for similar research in England, I think the General Register Office of Scotland can be justly proud of their efforts to improve their service (despite the queues in the rain), and we should not cavil too much - if at all indeed - at the annual increase in their fees.

Those of you thinking of using Censuses in New Register House should be aware of the various street and district indexes that are available - which not only cover the big cities, as at first may appear. The following indexes are of interest to Highland family historians - and might profitably be acquired by the Society to go with the Census films in Inverness (if the General Register Office are willing to let us have copies; I have not enquired about that, but they probably will - at a price!):

Inverness Parish 1871, 1881, 1891.
Perth Parish 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891
(last includes Kinnoull parish).
Stornoway 1871, 1881, 1891 (last two include parishes of Barves, Carloway, Lochs and Uig).
Ardnamurchan District 1881 - this includes the following parishes:- Acharacle, Appin, Ballachulish & Corran of Ardgour, Duror, Glencoe & Ballachulish, Lismore, Strontian & Sunart.

A most exciting new acquisition in New Register House is a names index to the 1841 Census covering the whole of Ross & Cromarty. Though bound in one volume that covers the whole county, this is actually a series of separate indexes covering the group of parishes on each roll of microfilm - with a reference to the parish, the enumeration book and the page on which each name appears (the names also having their ages and whether born in the county specified too). There is also a cumulative list (not index) of all names mentioned somewhere in the county in 1841, which will be of great interest to scholars of names. This index was sent to the General Register Office by the compiler, who I imagine may be prepared to sell (or even give?) a copy to the Society if the Committee care to contact her. The details given in it are as follows: Compiled by Marjorie Wylam Bleidner, Apartment 706, 2000 Coco Plum Drive, Marathon, Florida 33050, USA. I have written to her myself to ask about the availability of copies, and will pass the information on in a future issue of the Journal.

Researchers interested in tracing Roman Catholic families may be interested to know that the Scottish Record Office (next door to New Register House) now have photo-copies of most, if not all, of the pre-1855 Catholic Registers. These do not necessarily cover the whole of Scotland, nor do they cover anything like the timespan of the Church of Scotland Registers (Marydale, Beauly, being perhaps the earliest in the Highlands, starting in 1793 - which is at least thirty years before most of the others).

I have to say that those I have so far used are a lot more difficult to read than the micro-film copies of the Church of Scotland records in New Register House - largely because they are reproduced in the negative form, so they come out as white writing on a black background (as is the case with the micro-films of English Censuses available at the PRO in Portugal Street in London). They also come in very bulky volumes that are tiring to handle; but it is useful to know that they are here to consult in Edinburgh now, and that one no longer has to travel to individual parishes to examine the originals still held there. The index volume to consult in the SRO to see what they have is RH21, and I will try and compile a complete list of parishes covered in the Highlands for the next issue of the Journal. If in the meantime you want to ring the SRO and check if a particular parish is covered, the number is Edinburgh (031) 556-6585 - ask for the Historical Search Room.

The National Library of Scotland and the Edinburgh Central Library (Scottish Section), both to be found opposite each other on the George the Fourth Bridge, have between them copies of most printed Scottish clan and family histories - and many unpublished manuscript histories too. Most of these are referred to in Joan Ferguson's essential "Scottish Family Histories Held in Scottish Libraries" (which incidentally can be purchased from the National Library itself if you cannot obtain it locally); but there are some more obscure works that one occasionally comes across not mentioned there - usually articles in local newspapers or other specialist periodicals. References to some of these can often be found in bibliographies of the region in which a particular family or branch of a clan lived. It is worth looking in your local library for these, or in the National Library under the names of the relevant counties or regions.

One such I have just come across is called "A Genealogical Bibliography of Caithness and Sutherland" by Rev. D. Beaton, which was published in 1928 (specifically "genealogical" bibliographies are relatively rare, but many general local bibliographies will contain genealogical works - and sometimes in a separate section). Apart from many works on assorted - and often pretty obscure - branches of the well known clans, there are references in this pamphlet to many smaller families chronicled mostly in the local newspapers. How well chronicled they are I couldn't say; but if it is the family you are researching, there is almost bound to be something of interest to be found in them. Among many others, the following names have articles referred to outside well known sources (such as Henderson's "Notes of Caithness Family History", or Calder's "History of Caithness"): Cheyne, Cotmack, Hemer, Rorison and Swanson. Since the pamphlet is out of copyright now, I have obtained a photocopy of it - and if I find it is not already available in the Inverness Library, I will deposit a copy in the HFHS library for the benefit of all our members.

