

		THE	
		NATIONAL	
		ARCHIVES	

## Tracing your Scottish ancestors in The National Archives (UK)

The National Archives is not the place to start researching your Scottish ancestry, but it may be your second port of call after the vital records, and census and probate records held in Scotland.

There are many records in The National Archives that contain information on Scottish men and women. Most of these are in general record series relating to the United Kingdom as a whole, which of course included Scotland following the Act of Union in 1707. In particular, Scots have always been well-represented in the armed forces and the Merchant Navy. The Coastguard Service and Customs and Excise are also UK-wide, and the records therefore include Scotland.

More detail on each record series can be found in The National Archives catalogue Discovery <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> but the best place to start is with the hundreds of **research guides** <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/> especially those in the **Family History** category. These deal with 'name-rich' records that are obviously useful to genealogists, but other kinds of records may also be of interest; so guides in other categories such as **Social and cultural history** may guide you towards useful background material.

### Scotland, England and the United Kingdom

Scotland was a separate nation until James VI of Scotland also became King James I of England in 1603. Scotland retained its own parliament until 1707, when the Act of Union created the United Kingdom. From that date onwards, many records are British, rather than Scottish, but there are some very important exceptions; Scotland has its own separate and distinct legal system, and its own arrangements for birth, marriage and death registration. So the core records for Scottish family history - vital records, probate records and census records are held in Scotland.

### Records in The National Archives

Records are arranged according to the government department or agency that created or collected them, as indicated by the letters in catalogue references; eg ADM - Admiralty, HO - Home Office, T - Treasury, WO - War Office, and so on. Records in a specific subject area may come from several different departments, and this may not be obvious from catalogue searches alone, one of the reasons for starting with **Research guides**, before embarking on catalogue searches. But although there are hundreds of guides, they don't cover every subject area, so catalogue searches can still be worthwhile

There is no specific record series devoted to Scotland, because most Scottish matters are either dealt with in Scotland, and the records are held there, or else as part of a UK-wide department, like those listed above. Within some departments there may be sections that can be defined as Scottish, but not necessarily. Even where records are arranged on a regional basis, they may be listed by town or county name without 'Scotland' appearing in the catalogue description. Most legal records, and those to do with land and property, or births, marriages and deaths are held in Scotland, but there are some exceptions.

### **Military and naval records**

The biggest collections of records for Scottish ancestry in The National Archives are those of the British Army, the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and, latterly, the Royal Air Force. Although the British Army includes many Scottish regiments, many of the men who served in them came from outside Scotland, and many Scotsmen served in other regiments or corps. The other forces do not have any regional divisions. Many Scots also served in the merchant navy.

### **Research guides**

As well as outlining sources held in The National Archives, the guides explain how you can access them. They will indicate whether records have been indexed, or digitised, and how to search them. Digitised records may be on The National Archives own site, but some of the most popular records are digitised under licence on commercial family history sites - notably military records.

All guides follow a similar format, first indicating whether any records are online. Most guides have a contents box with direct links to sections of the guide; these describe records held by The National Archives, with references, and links to other sites as necessary. Next there are details of records held elsewhere, useful web links, and further reading, if applicable.

Of the current guides, 191 are in the Family History category, (many guides are listed in more than one category). There are too many that can help with Scottish family history to list them all here, and new guides may be added and existing ones amalgamated at any time. But the main types of guide to look out for are military and naval (including the merchant navy) immigration, emigration, nationality and anything to do with former British colonies; some occupations such as coastguards, and Customs and Excise.

### **Some records with identifiable Scottish sections**

#### *CUST - Customs and Excise*

Customs Establishment, Scotland 1860-1885 in CUST39/103-121 and Customs Establishment, Scotland and Ireland 1885-1894 in CUST39/141-144. Scottish pension records are in CUST39/160.

#### *IR - Inland Revenue*

Apprenticeship tax 1710-1808; 'Country' Registers in IR1/41-72 includes tax paid in Scotland. These records are online at Ancestry.co.uk.

## *WO - War Office*

Records of Army and other pensions paid out locally, arranged by payment district. WO22/118-140 includes pensions paid in Scotland 1842-1862

Militia records in WO 68, arranged by county. They include enrolment books, description books, court martial records, correspondence, some registers of births, marriages and deaths and miscellaneous other records.

### **Exceptions**

Scottish birth, marriage and death records are mostly held Scotland, but The National Archives' collections of births, marriages and deaths overseas and at sea contain records of many Scots as well as English and Welsh people.

Scotland's separate legal system means that court and legal records are held in Scotland, but anyone sentenced to transportation then came under the direct jurisdiction of the Home Office. So records of transportation, and of pleas for clemency, of Scottish prisoners are in The National Archives' HO record series.

### **Discovery – The National Archives catalogue**

Many records relating to Scottish people and places throughout the holdings of The National Archives can be identified by searching Discovery. The level of detail varies a great deal, and comparatively few records can be searched by personal name (many name-rich records are searchable on other sites, under licence, and not on The National Archives' own site).

General searches in Discovery for Scottish place names can yield interesting and sometimes unexpected results. Keyword searches for 'map' or 'photograph' plus the name of a Scottish town or county produce many results, in a variety of record series.

### **No-one has everything on anything!**

No matter how comprehensive the collection in a single repository, there will always be supplementary material held elsewhere. Other types of record may be spread among a variety of record offices and libraries. The **Advanced search** facility in Discovery can be used to search the catalogues of archives throughout the UK and beyond. It can also be used to locate specific record collections, using the **Record creators** tab. Research guides also indicate significant collections held elsewhere.

### **Links**

**Discovery advanced search** <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/advanced-search>

### **Education at The National Archives**

Aimed at schools, but contains useful historical background material for anyone interested in history.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/>