


Tracing your Family

History in Fife

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Tracing your Family History in Fife

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Tracing Your Family History in Fife

Introduction

Tracing your family history is a journey of discovery which leads you to explore the lives and times of ancestors who lived hundreds of years ago - in circumstances which may be all but unimaginable to you today.

Visiting Fife to trace your family history can be a rewarding experience, enabling the researcher to gain a sense of 'place' and an appreciation of what life must have been like for our ancestors. This voyage of discovery can be extremely fulfilling and it is the aim of this information sheet to provide you with the basic information necessary to help you begin your quest.

Getting Started

Start from the present and work back otherwise you may find you get lost. It is important to verify your information at each step. Don't be tempted to bend the facts to fit family legends or theories.

Talk to members of your family, especially older relatives. There is usually one member in a family who keeps track of birthdays and relationships. Once you get started it is amazing what relatives can tell you. Remember, old friends of the family may know more than some family members. If possible speak to more than one person to build up a full picture. Compare the answers you get. Normally, people do not deliberately mislead you, but people do forget and different people remember different things.

Collect family documents. There are all sorts of things that can give information about a person - references, diaries, insurance policies, medals, school reports. Photographs are great for stimulating recollection. Ask who is on the photo, where it was taken and why. Family Bibles may also contain valuable information, but sometimes they were filled in years after an event took place. Always verify the dates.

Grave stones can provide a lot of information, especially older family stones. However don't be too surprised if you can't find one. Most ordinary people could not afford a head stone. Some stones have been moved, lost, vandalised or become so weathered they cannot be read (Appendix 1).

Record in detail, the information you find and where you found it. The information may not seem immediately relevant, but may help you fill in blanks later in your research. There are a number of commercial forms available to help you plot your family history or you can devise your own. Once you have a basic family tree, you will be in a position to track down original records. It is also worth approaching one of the family history societies (Appendix 4).

Before You Arrive

If you plan to make a special trip to Fife to research your family history, it makes good sense to be as prepared as possible prior to your visit. This will save you valuable time once you are here and help to ensure that you find the information you are looking for.

If you have any certificates such as birth, marriage and death certificates, it's a good idea to bring photocopies with you. That way you have the correct information to hand and you can add your own notes without damaging the original documents.

If you haven't been able to find any documentation, bring along some background information about your family, including names, dates, places etc. It is very useful to have this information written out as a basic outline family tree, with the dates filled in where possible.

It is also worthwhile preparing a list of questions you want answered and if possible try to make appointments in advance. That way you can be sure that there will be staff on hand to provide you with assistance if required.

Certificates

Birth, marriage and death certificates contain a wealth of information and allow you to step back through the generations quite easily. They came into existence in 1855 when civil registration became compulsory in Scotland.

If you do not have certificates at home, you can acquire them.

- a) You can view them at New Register House in Edinburgh and either copy down the details or purchase a copy. (£17 to access records for a day, Tel: 0131 334 0380)
- b) You can purchase copies from local registrars.
- c) You can also view them online at scotlandspeople.gov.uk which is the GRoS pay per view site.

When copying certificates be sure to write down all the details, including where events took place, the names of witnesses etc. Witnesses are often family members and taking note of these may help you fill in names of brothers, sisters, sons, etc

Birth Certificates

These give name and date of birth of an individual; when and where born; sex (this is important as some names can be ambiguous and it is not easy to tell just from the name); parents' names; father's occupation; parents' marriage date.

Marriage Certificates

These give names of the participants; occupation and ages of both parties; their addresses at the time of marriage; when and where the marriage took place; names and occupations of both sets of parents; name of the officiating minister/registrars; names of witnesses.

Death Certificates

These give name and marital status of the deceased; spouse's name; when and where death occurred; age; parents' names and if they are alive or dead; father's occupation; mother's maiden surname; cause of death; name and address of informant.

Use these certificates to step back through the generations until you reach 1855.

Census

A detailed census has been held in Britain every ten years since 1841, with the exception of 1941. Libraries which house the Local Studies Collections hold microfilm copies of the census for their area. The latest available is 1901 (Appendix 2).

There are parts of the 1841 census for Fife missing as they were lost at sea while being transported to Edinburgh.

The 1841 and 1851 censuses are particularly important because they were taken prior to statutory registration in 1855 and so give valuable added information to the researcher.

The census gives a lot of information about people, occupations, and relationships. Again, always take down all the information as you never know what will prove useful. Don't neglect even the lodgers and servants. There may be a family connection.

Remember, too, if your ancestor was born in a census year that the census was usually taken in March or April, so if he or she does not appear it may be that they were born after this time.

Old Parish Registers

OPRs are the records of the Church of Scotland. It is important to remember that the other churches e.g. Catholics, Dissenting Churches, Free Churches kept their own records. Some of these records are held by the Scottish Record Office.

Prior to 1855 there was no statutory register of births, marriages and deaths and the responsibility for recording these events lay with the church. The accuracy or otherwise of these records depended on the diligence of the minister or session clerk.

The earliest records are 16th century, and some carry on after statutory registration for a few years. However, many of the registers are incomplete or missing completely. Those which remain have been microfilmed and most libraries have copies for their own areas.

There is an index to christenings and marriages in the OPRs. The index is a finding aid only. You should go back to the original record and take the details from there. OPRs are available at the libraries which house the Local Studies Collections (Appendix 2).

International Genealogical Index

This is a very useful tool. It was produced by the Church of Latter Day Saints to help with the ordinances of their church (Appendix 3).

The index contains only births and marriages. It is made up from extracts from the OPRs and family history traced by church members.

If you are using this index, you should always go back to the original sources and look carefully at them. The IGI is available in the libraries which house the Local Studies Collections (Appendix 2).

Monumental Inscriptions

'Monumental Inscriptions' are a series of publications held in all Local Studies Collections (Appendix 2). They were produced by the Mitchells - a husband & wife team who spent years recording information on pre-1855 gravestones which was in many cases worn away and only partly legible.

They are indexed, so people can check names of their ancestors in the index, get a transcription of the details on the headstone, and find out where they're buried prior to visiting the grave. The library at Cupar, near St Andrews, has the Monumental Inscriptions for East Fife (pre-1855) in its Local Studies Collection.

General Notes

It is often said that in past times, people did not **move around** much. This is not the case. Farm workers often moved at term days from farm to farm, and if their homes were near parish boundaries you may have to check several parishes to find them.

Most people did not own their homes and again on quarter days they would **move to other rented accommodation**. Generally this would be in the same town and within a few streets, but it probably means checking more than one enumerator book in the census.

When **mines or new factories** opened up there was often a migration into the area. Conversely, when factories or mines closed people moved on to other areas. Therefore, if your ancestors were in mining, weaving etc. you may find they moved about the country quite a bit.

There was also a lot of **emigration** in the mid 19th century. If your ancestor disappeared, he may have gone off to the other side of the world! See Appendix 3.

Names

Spelling has varied considerably over the centuries. It is only comparatively recently that it has been standardised. When most of the population could scarcely read or write, those who could, would make a stab at spelling what they heard or thought they heard. If the person supplying the information couldn't read, then no-one was any the wiser if it was wrong.

Don't get too hung up on the spelling of a name e.g. there is no difference between Mc and Mac, Thomson or Thompson. A lot of names were used interchangeably e.g. Janet, Jean, Jane, Jessie and people often used diminutive forms e.g. Elizabeth, Beth, Lizzie, Betty. Middle names were sometimes shortened e.g. Elizabeth Anne, would become Anne.

Scottish Naming Pattern

Until comparatively recently the Scottish naming pattern was extensively used. This was the tradition of naming the eldest son after the paternal grandfather, the eldest daughter after the maternal grandmother. The next son was named after the maternal grandfather, the next daughter after the paternal grandmother. After that, children were often named after parents, aunts, uncles etc. This pattern of naming can often help to determine who belongs to which family.

Appendix 1 Cemeteries in Fife

DUNFERMLINE & WEST FIFE: (Dunfermline Crematorium Lodge, Masterton Road, Dunfermline, KY11 8QR, Tel: 01383 602335

1. Dunfermline Cemetery, Halbeath Road, Dunfermline
2. Aberdour Cemetery incl Churchyard, entrance off Mill Farm Road, Aberdour
3. Dalgety Churchyard, Four Lums Road, Dalgety Bay
4. Hillend Cemetery, Clockluine Road, Hillend
5. Inverkeithing (Hope Street Cemetery), off Hope Street, Inverkeithing
6. Douglas Bank Cemetery, Pattiesmuir, by Rosyth
7. Torryburn Cemetery, B9037 to Torryburn
8. Culross Cemetery, Blairhall Glen, Shire Road, Culross, off A985(T)
9. Tulliallan Cemetery, Toll Road, Kincardine
10. Saline Cemetery, Drumhead, North Road, Saline
11. Beath Cemetery incl Churchyard, Old Perth Road, Cowdenbeath
12. Lochgelly Cemetery, A910 (Jamphlars Road) to Cardenden
13. Ballingry Cemetery, Hill Road, Ballingry
14. *St. Fillans Churchyard, Hawkcraig Road, Aberdour*
15. *Ballingry Old Churchyard, Hill Road, Ballingry*
16. *Carnock Cemetery, Main Street, Carnock*
17. *Cairneyhill Churchyard, behind Church, Main Street, Cairneyhill*
18. *Crombie Churchyard, Crombie Point*
19. *Culross Abbey Churchyard, Kirk Street, Culross*
20. *West Kirk Churchyard, by Upper Dean, Culross*
21. *Dunfermline Abbey, St Margaret Street, Dunfermline*
22. *Inverkeithing (St Peters) Churchyard, High Street, Inverkeithing*
23. *Mossgreen Cemetery, Coaledge, By Crossgates*
24. *North Queensferry Churchyard, Chapel Place, North Queensferry*
25. *Rosyth Old Churchyard, via Brucehaven Road and track from harbour, Limekilns*
26. *Saline Old Churchyard, Bridge Street, Saline*
27. *Torryburn Churchyard, Main Street, Torryburn*
28. *Woodlea Old Cemetery, Woodlea, Kincardine*

Warning!!

At present there is a big problem with dangerous headstones in cemeteries. Warning signs are at all entrances, however extreme caution should be taken when walking around sites and visitors should stay to pathways and outwith the possible fall space of headstones.

CENTRAL FIFE:

KIRKCALDY: (Kirkcaldy Crematorium Lodge, Rosemount Avenue, Dunnikier, Kirkcaldy, KY1 3PL, Tel: 01592 260277,

1. Hayfield Cemetery, Hayfield Road, Kirkcaldy
2. Dysart Cemetery, Fairways, Kirkcaldy
3. Bennochry Cemetery, Balsusney Road, Kirkcaldy
4. Abbotshall Churchyard, Abbotshall Road, Kirkcaldy
5. Kinghorn Cemetery, Viewforth Place, Kinghorn
6. Auchtertool Churchyard & Cemetery, off B925 Auchtertool to Crossgates road
7. Burntisland Cemetery, Kinghorn Road, Burntisland
8. *Barony Churchyard, Windmill Road, Dysart*
9. *Kinghorn Parish Churchyard,*
10. *Kirkton Churchyard, Church Street, Burntisland*
11. *Nether Street Cemetery, Kirkcaldy*
12. *Old Kirk Churchyard, Kirk Wynd, Kirkcaldy*
13. *Pathhead Churchyard, Kirkcaldy*
14. *St. Columba's Parish Churchyard, Burntisland*
15. *St. Serfs Cemetery, Dysart*

GLENROTHES: (Kirkcaldy Crematorium Lodge, Rosemount Avenue, Dunnikier, Kirkcaldy, KY1 3PL, Tel: 01592 260277,

1. Bowhill Cemetery, Main Street, Cardenden
2. Leslie Cemetery, Kinross Road, Leslie
3. Kinglassie Cemetery, West End, Kinglassie
4. St. Drostan's Cemetery, Lawhead, Markinch
5. *Northall Cemetery, Markinch*
6. *Auchterderran Churchyard*
7. *Kirk on the Green Churchyard, Leslie*
8. *Kinglassie Churchyard, Church Lane, Kinglassie*
9. *Parish Churchyard, Kirk Street, Markinch*

LEVEN: (Kirkcaldy Crematorium Lodge, Rosemount Avenue, Dunnikier, Kirkcaldy, KY1 3PL, Tel: 01592 260277,

1. MacDuff / East Wemyss Cemetery, Main Road, East Wemyss
2. Kennoway Cemetery, Langside Avenue, Kennoway
3. Methilmill Cemetery, Holly Bank, Methilhill
4. Scoonie Cemetery, Largo Road, Leven
5. West Wemyss Churchyard, Main Street, West Wemyss
6. *The Causeway Churchyard, Kennoway*
7. *Milton of Balgonie Churchyard, Milton of Balgonie*
8. *St Mary's Churchyard, East Wemyss*

ST ANDREWS & EAST FIFE: (County Buildings, St. Catherine Street, Cupar, KY15 4TA, Tel: 01334 659334

1. *Abdie Churchyard, Grange of Lindores*
2. *Anstruther Cemetery, St Andrews Road, Anstruther*
3. *Anstruther Easter Churchyard, School Green, Anstruther*
4. *Anstruther Wester Churchyard, High Street, Anstruther*
5. *Auchtermuchty Cemetery, Station Road, Auchtermuchty*
6. *Auchtermuchty Old Cemetery*
7. *Balmerino Cemetery, Balmerino*
8. *Boarhills Cemetery, A917 by Boarhills*
9. *Cameron Cemetery, off A915, Cameron*
10. *Carnbee Churchyard, off B9171 by Anstruther*
11. *Ceres Cemetery, St Andrews Road, Ceres*
12. *Ceres Old Churchyard, Main Street, Ceres*
13. *Collessie Churchyard, Braehead, Collessie*
14. *Crail Churchyard, Marketgate, Crail*
15. *Crail Cemetery & Extension, Bow Butts Road, Crail*
16. *Creich Cemetery, Brunton, Creich*
17. *Cults Churchyard/ Cemetery, Kirkton of Cults, nr Pitlessie*
18. *Cupar Cemetery & Casket Area, Ceres Road, Cupar*
19. *Cupar - St James Parish Churchyard, Kirk Wynd, Cupar*
20. *Cupar - St Johns Churchyard, Bonnygate, Cupar*
21. *Dairsie Cemetery & Churchyard, Dairsie Mains, by Cupar*
22. *Dunino Churchyard/ Cemetery, Dunino*
23. *Dunbog Cemetery, off A913 to Newburgh*
24. *Elie Churchyard, High Street, Elie*
25. *Falkland Old & 1st, 2nd Extensions, Newton Road, Falkland*
26. *Falkland Old Churchyard, High Street, Falkland*
27. *Flisk Cemetery, Flisk*
28. *Forgan Cemetery, nr Vicarsford Cemetery – same single track road off A92*
29. *Kilconquhar Churchyard/ Cemetery, Main Street, Kilconquhar*
30. *Kemback Cemetery, Kemback*
31. *Kilmany Cemetery, Kilmany*
32. *Kilmany Old Cemetery, Kilmany*
33. *Kilrenny Cemetery, Main Street, Kilrenny*
34. *Kingsbarns Cemetery, The Square, Kingsbarns*
35. *Kingskettle Cemetery, just off A92 before Kettlebridge*
36. *Kingskettle Old Churchyard, 30 Main Street, Kingskettle*
37. *Largo Cemetery, North Feus, Upper Largo*
38. *Largo Old Churchyard, Church Place, Upper Largo*
39. *Logie Cemetery, Logie*
40. *Leuchars Cemetery, by St Michaels Golf Course, Leuchars*
41. *Leuchars Old Cemetery, School Hill, Leuchars*
42. *Monimail Cemetery, Monimail*

EAST AREA (CONT.)

43. *Monimail Old Cemetery*
44. *Moonzie Cemetery*
45. *Newburn Cemetery*
46. Newburgh Cemetery, Cupar Road, Newburgh
47. Pittenweem Cemetery, David Street, Pittenweem
48. *Pittenweem Churchyard, Kirkgate, Pittenweem*
49. *St. Andrews Cathedral - Historic Scotland*
50. St. Andrews Eastern, The Pends, St Andrews
51. St. Andrews Western & Roundal, Strathkiness Low Road, St Andrews
52. St. Monans Old & 1st, 2nd Extensions, West End, St Monans
53. Strathmiglo 1st & 2nd Extension, Kirk Wynd, Strathmiglo
54. Tayport Old & 1st, 2nd Extensions, Newport Road, Tayport
55. *Tayport Churchyard, Queen Street, Tayport*
56. Vicarsford Cemetery, off A92 near Pickletillem

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

At present there is a big problem with dangerous headstones in cemeteries. Warning signs are at all entrances, however extreme caution should be taken when walking around sites and visitors should stay to pathways and outwith the possible fall space of headstones.

The above entries which are in italics are those sites which are only maintained, no interments take place.

The address given at the top of each list of cemeteries is the main contact office which in most cases but not all will hold the relevant ledgers (Lair Records). To avoid disappointment it is recommended that visitors phone an office prior to visiting, to confirm that the ledgers for the cemetery/churchyard are available.

Appendix 2 **Libraries/Archives in Fife**

Cupar Library

33 Crossgate, Cupar, KY15 5AS

Tel: 01334 659367

Email: cupar.library@fife.gov.uk

Dunfermline Carnegie Library

Abbot Street, Dunfermline, KY12 7NL

Tel: 01383 602365

Email: dunfermline.library@fife.gov.uk

Fife Archives

Carleton House, Haig Business Park, Balgonie Road, Markinch, KY7 6AQ

Tel: 01592 583352

Email: AndrewDowsey@fife.gov.uk

Kirkcaldy Central Library

War Memorial Gardens, Kirkcaldy, KY1 1YG

Tel: 01592 583206

Email: kirkcaldy.library@fife.gov.uk

Methil Library (Family History Room)

Wellesley Road, Methil, KY8 3PA

Tel: 01334 659374

Email: methil.library@fife.gov.uk

Methil Heritage Centre

272 High Street, Lower Methil, KY8 3EQ

Tel: 01334 659339

Email: kevan.brown@fife.gov.uk

URL: www.methilheritage.co.uk

St Andrews Library

Tel: 01334 659378

Email: standrews@fife.gov.uk

It is advisable to contact the library before visiting to check opening hours, and to book a microfiche/film reader if required. **An appointment is essential prior to visiting the Fife Archives in Markinch.**

Appendix 3 **Web Resources**

Local Sources

www.fifefhs.org/

Fife Family History Society.

www.tayvalleyfhs.org.uk/

Tay Valley Family History Society.

www.thefifepost.com

A local Fife site containing a wide range of information of relevance to the family historian as well as general Fife information.

<http://specialcollections.st-and.ac.uk/genealogy.htm>

Genealogical sources available in St Andrews University Library.

www.fifedirect.com

Fife Council's website contains a wealth of information of use to the genealogist.

Other Sources For Fife Records

www.ancestralscotland.com

VisitScotland's family history tourism site.

www.gro-scotland.gov.uk

General Register Office of Scotland.

www.safhs.org.uk

Scotland's family history societies.

www.familyrecords.gov.uk

Information and links to UK government sites.

www.nls.uk/collection/maps

National Library of Scotland on-line map collection.

www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

Pay per view site operated on behalf of the General Register Office of Scotland (GRoS). It is the official online source of parish register, civil registration and census records for Scotland. Births 1553 – 1901; marriages from 1553 – 1926; deaths from 1855 – 1951 and census data from 1881 – 1901.

www.origins.net

Until recently, this was the official GRoS pay per view site. It still remains a valuable resource.

www.scan.org.uk

Scottish Archive Network site operated by the National Archives of Scotland.

www.scottishdocuments.com

Developed by the National Archives, this site provides pay per view access to Scottish wills.

www.familysearch.org

Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) site. The largest genealogical database in the world.

www.genuki.org.uk

Major UK genealogy portal, with dedicated Scotland section. Contains guidance notes, surnames lists, news groups, bulletin boards and links.

www.bbc.co.uk/scotland

Choose the history category and click on Scottish Roots. This site is useful for beginners, with lots of suggestions for sources to try.

<http://Edina.ed.ac.uk/StatAcc>

Detailed description of every Scottish Parish in the late 18th and mid 19th centuries.

www.scotsgenealogy.com

Scottish Genealogy Society site.

www.cwgc.org

Commonwealth War Graves Commission site. This is an essential site for anyone with relatives killed in any 20th century conflict. Information includes name, rank, regiment, conflict, place of death, date of death etc. May also list name and address of next of kin.

www.ellisland.org

Records of immigrant arrivals to the US.

www.nla.gov.au/oz/genelist.html

National Library of Australia.

www.archives.ca

National archives of Canada.

www.archives.govt.nz

New Zealand archives.

www.archives.gov

US National archives.

www.cyndislist.com/scotland

A vast site, with many topics and links. Very useful but can be confusing.

www.rootsweb.com

RootsWeb.com connects people so that they can help each other and share genealogical research.

Appendix 4 **Other Sources of Information**

Family History Societies

Fife Family History Society
482 Mayjhaven Road
Buckhaven
Leven
Fife
KY8 1EB
Email: membership@Fifefhs.org

Tay Valley Family History Society
The Family History Research Centre
179 – 181 Princes Street
Dundee
DD4 6DQ
Tel: 01382 461845
Fax: 01382 455532
Email: tvfhs@tayvalleyfhs.org.uk
Web: www.tayvalleyfhs.org.uk

Fife Attractions

- Abbot House, Dunfermline
- Andrew Carnegie Birthplace Museum, Dunfermline
- Burntisland Edwardian Fair Museum
- Buckhaven Museum
- Dunfermline Abbey & Palace
- Dunfermline Carnegie Library
- Dunfermline Museum (Open by appointment only)
- Fife Folk Museum, Ceres
- Kirkcaldy Public Library
- Kirkcaldy Museum & Art Gallery
- Laing Museum
- Scottish Fisheries Museum, Anstruther
- Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, by Dunfermline
- St Andrews Preservation Trust Museum & Garden

For more information on the above attractions, please ask for a copy of the Essential Guide.

Appendix 5 **Genealogical Services**

Local Genealogists

Jim Adamson
Scots Family Heritage
Craigmore
The Barony
Cupar
KY15 5ER
Tel: 01334 652620
Email: jim@baronyheritage.freeserve.co.uk

Frances Black
Scottish Genealogy Research
Braeside of Lindores
Newburgh
Cupar
KY14 6HU
Tel: 01337 840351
Email: FrancesABlack@aol.com
Web: www.scottishgenealogyresearch.co.uk

Caroline Makein
Fife Rootsearch
22 Canongate
St Andrews
KY16 8RT
Tel: 01334 476924
Email: makein@tesco.net
Web: www.scottishfamilyrootsearch.co.uk

Local Tour Operator

Scottish Routes
28 Spencerfield Road
Inverkeithing
KY11 1PQ
Tel/Fax: 01383 428585
Email: sales@scottish-routes.com
Web: www.scottish-routes.com