



# Suddenly Scotland!

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## History Of Scotland

43 A.D.—Caesar arrives in Britain

1100s—1500s - Roman Catholicism is the primary religion of Scotland

1528-1560s—Religious Reformation and Church of Scotland established, Presbyterian

1707—Scotland and Britain form the United Kingdom

2004—Scotland legally ended feudalism.

## Immigration of The Scots

1700s emigrants were usually Highlanders who settled in the 13 Colonies. 1800s emigrants were Lowlanders who settled either in Canada or the United States. The reasons for leaving Scotland were like other Europeans; freedom of religion, disagreement over politics, and partly because of laws of primogeniture, financial opportunities.

## What's in a Name?

Women didn't lose their maiden names in the records. Aside from national census records, the maiden name is nearly always included in records. Women sometimes reverted to their maiden names after their husbands died. If a daughter inherited land or title from her father, her husband may have changed his surname to hers, ensuring their children would inherit. The records show his former surname. Many Scots followed traditional naming patterns:

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/blog/help/traditional-scottish-naming-patterns>, and parents sometimes gave the names of children who died at a young age to a younger sibling.

## Census Records

Scottish Census records are subject to a 100-year privacy hold.

- ❖ 1801, 1811, 1821, 1831: Census contained statistical data only, no names and surviving returns are incomplete.
- ❖ 1841-1921: Available at Scotland's People, free to search, pay to view and save.
- ❖ 1851-1891: Index and images at any FamilySearch affiliate library, FSC, or the FSL. Go to "Records," then "Search all Collections," and start typing "Scotland" into the search box. The individual years will appear. They do not show up if you're searching from home. Accessing the collections through the catalog will take you to browsable images.
- ❖ 1841, 1901: Only an index is available at FamilySearch.
- ❖ FamilySearch Wiki: [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Scotland\\_Census](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Scotland_Census)

1841: "Scotland, Census, 1841," <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/2016000>

1851: "Scotland, Census, 1851," <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/2028673>

1861: "Scotland, Census, 1861," <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/2028677>

1871: "Scotland, Census, 1871," <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/2028678>

1881: "Scotland, Census, 1881," <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/2046756>

1891: "Scotland, Census, 1891," <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/2046943>

1901: "Scotland, Census, 1901," <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/3212239>

### Vital Records

Civil Registration began on 1 January 1855 for all births, marriages, and deaths.

- ❖ Births: Online access after 100 years. Include the maiden name of the mother and the date and place of the parent's marriage.
  - 1855 entries also include information about the parents' other children, and ages, birthplaces of the parents
- ❖ Deaths: Online access after 50 years. Include spouse name, maiden names for married women, names & occupations of the parents of the deceased.
  - 1855 entries also include the names and ages of the deceased, burial information, and birthdate of the deceased.
- ❖ Marriages: Online access after 75 years. Include when, where, and how married; occupations and residences of the bride and groom; name and occupation of the fathers; name and maiden name of the mothers.
  - 1855 entries also include birth place of the parties, children from prior marriages, and the number of previous marriages.
  - Irregular marriages might appear after the fact in the registers. The law abolished irregular marriages in 1939, which also gave provision for civil marriages at registration offices.
- ❖ Scotland's People: free to search, pay to view and save.
- ❖ FamilySearch: index and images at an affiliate library, FSC, or FSL. "Scotland, Civil Registration, 1855-1875, 1881, 1891," <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/5000163>.
- ❖ FindMyPast collection: "Scotland, Modern and Civil Births 1855-2019," transcript only.

### Church Records

- ❖ Presbyterian is the established Church of Scotland. The Old Parish Registers date from 27 December 1553 and record baptisms, marriages, and burials of parish members. The record set is not complete. However, Scotland's People has digitized and made available over 3500 surviving volumes.
- ❖ FamilySearch: "Scotland, Births and Baptisms, 1564-1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/1771030>. An index is available from home; images are available at an affiliate library, FSC, or FSL. Selected localities.
- ❖ For Catholic Scottish Ancestors, visit the Archives: <https://www.catholic-heritage.net/>

### Tax Records

Surviving taxation records start in the 1640s. These records will, at minimum, list the person responsible for the tax, what is being taxed, and the total of the tax. They are organized by location.

- ❖ Valuation Rolls. Land taxes. The 1832, 1861, 1881, and 1911 Indexes are not yet online. Valuations were published every ten years 1855-1915, and every five years from 1920-1940. These valuations are online at ScotlandsPeople. Free to search, pay to view and save.
- ❖ Learn more: <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/help-and-support/guides/valuation-rolls>
- ❖ Other taxes; such as hearth taxes, window taxes, carriage taxes, servant taxes. Online at ScotlandsPeople Virtual Volumes, free to browse, pay to save.

### Court Records

- ❖ From 1560, the Church of Scotland formed Kirk Sessions to handle the running of the Parish and serve as a court. The session books include minutes of the sessions, records of poor relief, Church disciplinary matters, disputes amongst members, bastardy suits, and much more.
- ❖ From 1845 to 1894, Parochial boards relieved the Kirk Sessions of responsibility for the poor.
- ❖ Elected parish councils were created in 1894 and by 1929, the Kirk Sessions had been entirely replaced by the councils and abolished.
- ❖ Volumes for 1559-1990 are now digitized and available at ScotlandsPeople. The volumes are not indexed, but navigation is possible using the name of the kirk session or court, or place name. Researchers can browse the records for free and save individual images for a fee.  
<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/virtual-volumes>

### Land & Inheritance Records

- ❖ Scotland operated under the Feudal system until 2004; therefore, the laws regarding inheritance were established by the government and there was little ability for the deceased to dictate what happened to the estate.
- ❖ Rich or poor, male or female, look for a testament. You may or may not get the names of the heirs, however for married women you will get their maiden name.
- ❖ Law of primogeniture meant the eldest legitimate son inherited immovable property. Of the moveable property, the widow inherited a 1/3 portion and the remaining children shared a 1/3 portion. The deceased could bequeath the final 1/3. If there was no widow, the children got 1/2 of the moveable property.
- ❖ Wills and testaments: <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/wills-and-testaments>

### Notes:

### Online & Learning Resources

1. The 1921 Census: <https://www.1921census.org.uk/>
2. The Association of Scottish Genealogists and Researchers in Archives: <https://www.asgra.co.uk/>. On-site professional research assistance.
3. Census Transcripts. <https://www.freecen.org.uk/> Includes some Scotland records.
4. *The Edinburgh Gazette* (1793-current) <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/>. Free.
5. Electric Scotland: <https://electricScotland.com/> Free. Historical, Cultural, Geographical resources.
  - a. Statistical Accounts: [https://electricScotland.com/webclans/statistical\\_accounts.htm](https://electricScotland.com/webclans/statistical_accounts.htm)
6. FamilySearch: <https://www.familysearch.org> Free. As of 14 October 2025, 12+ video courses on Scottish research. [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Classes\\_in\\_the\\_Learning\\_Center](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Classes_in_the_Learning_Center)
7. FamilyTree Webinars: <https://familytreewebinars.com/> \$, 12-part series on Scottish Genealogy by Dr. Bruce Durie.
8. Free UK Genealogy: <https://www.freeukgenealogy.org.uk/> Free transcripts of UK records.
9. Genuki: [www.Genuki.org.uk](http://www.Genuki.org.uk) A virtual reference guide for the UK and Ireland.
10. Google News: <https://news.google.com/newspapers> Free. *The Glasgow Herald* (1806-1990), *The Glasgow Advertiser* (1783-1801), and the *Evenings Times* (1914 – 1990, incomplete).
11. Historic Environment Scotland: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/>
12. National Library of Scotland: <https://www.nls.uk/>
  - a. Map collection: <https://maps.nls.uk/>
13. National Records of Scotland: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/>
  - a. Catalog: <https://catalogue.nrscotland.gov.uk/nrsonlinecatalogue/welcome.aspx>
14. Scotland's People: <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/> Free to search, pay-per-view.
15. Scottish Indexes: <https://www.scottishindexes.com/> Free to search, must purchase images.
16. Trove.scot: <https://www.trove.scot/> Free.

### General Reference:

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4. Epperson, Amanda. *The Family Tree Scottish Genealogy Guide*. Cincinnati: Family Tree Books, 2018.
5. Ferguson, Joan Primrose Scott. *Directory of Scottish Newspapers*. National Library of Scotland, 1984.
6. Irvine, Sherry. *Your Scottish Ancestry A Guide for North Americans*. Utah: Ancestry Inc, 1996.
7. James, Alwyn. *Scottish Roots: A Step-by-step guide for Ancestor-Hunters*. Scotland: Macdonald, 1981.
8. Maxwell, Ian. *Tracing Your Scottish Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians*. Second Edition. South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2009.
9. Sinclair, Cecil. *The Statutory Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages from Jock Tamson's bairns: a history of the records of the General Registrar Office for Scotland*. National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2000; National Records of Scotland, [https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20240326192235mp\\_/https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/research/chapter-on-statutory-registers-from-jtb.pdf](https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20240326192235mp_/https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/research/chapter-on-statutory-registers-from-jtb.pdf)).