

Bonnie Auld Scotland: Researching Your Kilted Ancestors Handout

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Essential Terminology

- **Scots/Scottish:** Refers to the people and language.
- **Scotch:** Refers to whisky.
- **Scots-Irish/Scotch-Irish:** An American term for Protestant Scots that fled to Northern Ireland due to religious persecution.
- **Parish:** The local unit for church and civil records.
- **The Kirk:** The Church of Scotland (Presbyterian); "kirk" refers to the church building.
- **Shire/County:** Geographical administrative units (e.g., Aberdeenshire, Lanarkshire).
- **Burgh:** A town with special legal rights (e.g., Edinburgh).
- freepages.rootsweb.com/~wedderburn/genealogy/glossary.htm

Key Research Principles

- **Work Backwards:** Always start with what you know and work back in time.
- **Context Matters:** Understand the history, culture, and geography of Scotland.
- **Document Everything:** Maintain meticulous records of your findings.
- **Specifics:** You must identify the specific Parish name or town of origin to successfully locate immigrant ancestors.
- **Understand the "Why":** Research the historical reasons for migration, such as the Jacobite Risings, Highland Clearances, the American Revolution, or the Industrial Revolution.

Geography

- Map at genuki.org.uk
- Borders, Lowlands, Highlands, Islands
- Counties and parishes

Clan System

- Clan System – from medieval times
- Highlands and Islands
- Laird or Clan Chief was the landowner and tenants were his vassals
- A family group and a political/military unit
- Protection of the Clan in return for loyalty and rents
- Not always blood relatives
- Council of Scottish Clans and Associations – cosca.scot

Scottish Naming Patterns

- Note: These are traditional trends rather than strict rules.
 - **1st Son:** Paternal grandfather.
 - **2nd Son:** Maternal grandfather.
 - **3rd Son:** Father.
 - **1st Daughter:** Maternal grandmother.
 - **2nd Daughter:** Paternal grandmother.
 - **3rd Daughter:** Mother.

Parishes

- Over 900 parishes in Scotland
- List of parishes at National Records of Scotland – nrscotland.gov.uk and ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk
- Church Parish overseen by a Kirk Session – Church Court; baptisms, marriage banns, burials – Parish names still in use today, although boundaries may change
- Civil Parish – government unit 1854-1975; poor relief, education system, local council records. No longer in use, but good for historical research.

Core Scottish Genealogical Records

- **Old Parish Registers (OPR):** Records covering Presbyterian baptisms, marriages, and burials from the 1550s to 1854. Images at Scotland's People. Catholic records at Scottish Catholic Archives. Other denominations – look at the National Records of Scotland website.

- **Statutory (Civil) Registration:** Started in 1855; includes births, marriages, and deaths with detailed certificates. Indexes at FamilySearch, Ancestry, Find My Past and images at Scotland's People
- **Census Records:** Taken every 10 years (1841–1921 available); essential for mapping households and relationships. Access images online at Scotland's People
- **Probate Records:** Wills and testaments (1513–1925) useful for making family connections and inventory of possessions. Access online at Scotland's People
- **Tax & Land Records:**
 - General Register of Sasines (land ownership) – access at Registers of Scotland – 1869 – on. Prior to 1869 through the National Records of Scotland website.
 - Feu Records (yearly rents) – found in the General Register of Sasines and access them through National Records of Scotland website.
 - Valuation Rolls (annual land tax) – 1855-1940 online at Scotland's People. In person viewing available at National Records of Scotland and local archives up to 1989. 1989-current – Scottish Assessors Association.

Online Resources & Websites

- **Scottish Glossary:** freepages.rootsweb.com/~wedderburn/genealogy/glossary.htm
- **Clan Lineage Societies:** cosca.scot.
- **Scotland's People:** ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk (Official Scottish government records: Civil registration, OPRs, Census, Probate).
- **National Records of Scotland:** nrscotland.gov.uk (Parish lists and OPR information).
- **Genuki:** Genuki.org.uk (Includes interactive county maps).
- **FamilySearch:** FamilySearch.org.
- **Ancestry:** Ancestry.com.
- **Findmypast:** Findmypast.co.uk.
- **National Library of Scotland – Maps** maps.nls.uk/os/
- **Scottish Places Gazetteer:** scottish-places.info.
- **Scottish Indexes:** scottishindexes.com