

SCOTTISH RAILWAY PERSONNEL

Family History Fact Sheet

So, your great grandfather was a railway worker and you want to discover his family history.

The first step is to research and write up your family tree in order to provide a detailed framework on which to hang your subsequent discoveries.

The Genealogy

Firstly, decide which "line" you wish to follow and concentrate on it. Don't try to cover all the various sides of the family at the same time as you'll get hopelessly confused. There are, basically, three ways to discover your ancestry:-

- Using the comprehensive resources at the General Register Office in Edinburgh
- Using the official pay-per-view website www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk
- Employing a professional researcher

As you will see from the following, each of the above have advantages and disadvantages and it may be that, at the end of the day, you finish up using a combination of all three.

At its simplest, the research process consists of starting with a known "event" in Scotland, typically a birth or marriage. Birth certificates normally indicate when and where parents were married so that this facilitates the discovery of the marriage certificate. Once found, this indicates the ages and parentage of the bride and groom which, usually, leads to the eventual discovery of his or her birth certificate, and so on back to 1855 which is when Statutory Civil Registration began in Scotland.

If the family being researched had a fairly common surname, then it is sometimes not easy to find the required birth certificate. In such cases, it can be useful to track the family down in a Census Return. This is a wonderful source of family history data providing a virtual snapshot of households on census night. Amongst other things, the entries show where everybody was born, so helping in the search for births. A full census has been held every ten years in the UK from 1841 (apart from 1941). They are opened to the public after 100 years, so that 1901 is the most recent for public inspection.

Before 1855, searching becomes more uncertain and less productive in that the main source is the collection of Old Parish Registers (OPRs). Not everybody went to the trouble or expense, to register "events" especially if they didn't belong to the Established Church, and not all OPRs have survived. Furthermore, they don't usually provide much more than just the basic facts of baptism and proclamation of banns.

The merits and demerits of the three methods of drawing up your family tree are:-

- **Visiting the GROS** – this is the preferred choice for anyone who “enjoys the thrill of the chase” and who is able to get to Edinburgh without too much expense. The facilities are superb and well worth the £17 daily admission fee. The railway archives are the most extensive in Scotland.
- **Using the www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk** pay-per-view site. This is ideal for anyone who lives some distance from Edinburgh, especially if the project is not too vast or complex. The initial minimum fee is £6 for 30 “page credits”. Each page of indexes costs 1 credit and each “image” costs 5 credits. It should be borne in mind that, when searching for deaths especially, many certificates have to be examined before the correct one is found. This costs money. Very few searches are totally straightforward so that secondary sources often need to be used. These are not usually searchable online
- **Employing a professional researcher** – This approach obviously requires a fee but it could be money well spent. The genealogy is going to form the basis of what will be a lifetime's hobby of researching your family history. It is absolutely vital therefore that you get it right from the outset. Remember also that the professional will be familiar with all the new research tools and that this enables him/her to offer ever increasing value for money. For a list of professional genealogists and research companies contact the GROS requesting Leaflet S5. If travel and subsistence costs are taken into account for those living some distance from Edinburgh, using a professional could be cheaper in the long run.

General Family History

The very act of researching your family tree will have provided you with a vast amount of historical data including:

- Places of residence
- Occupations
- Cause of death
- Numbers and composition of households
- Numbers of windowed rooms
- Places of birth
- Religion
- Whether or not Gaelic speakers
- Level of literacy (as evidenced by informants signing their name, or giving an X mark)

There are many other research sources including:-

MAPS and PLANS

The original Ordnance Survey maps, on the scale of 25 inches to the mile for the populous parts of Scotland and 6 inches to the mile for the whole country were produced in the mid to late 19th Century and copies may be ordered from the National Library of Scotland Map Library.

Old large scale town plans at a scale of about 10ft to the mile are also available in respect of 62 Scottish towns. These are available, free, online though they do not have the benefit of a street index or gazetteer. Other old unprinted maps are available at local level especially in local archive offices (see below). Once you have located precisely where your ancestors lived, this opens up the possibility of "walking in the footsteps" - an intensely emotional experience. Ordnance survey maps, of course, show railway lines and stations.

Photographs

These take many forms, all of which are of potential interest to the historian. This applies especially to family collections. Every effort should be made to track down all relations who might hold family photographs and be able to identify those depicted. Clues as to photographs' approximate dates can be gleaned from the type of photograph and the clothes worn.

Photographs of streets and buildings where ancestors lived can often be found in the local history sections of public libraries. The Scottish Railway Preservation Society does not hold a large collection of railway photographs. Some of the Scottish railway history societies do, but these are not indexed by names.

Burial

All family historians hope to discover where their ancestors were buried and, hopefully, to come across an inscribed headstone.

Regarding the latter, it should be borne in mind that monumental stones were relatively expensive so that only a small minority of miners will have been accorded one. The Memorial Inscriptions (MIs) of most graveyards have, for the most part, now been indexed by local Family History Societies and other volunteers. Copies of listings are available for purchase from the relevant Society or from the Scottish Genealogy Society, or for consultation at public libraries. Where disasters occurred it is often the case that plaques were erected in some appropriate location giving the names of those killed.

Up to the mid 19th Century, nearly everyone was interred in the local parish churchyard but, thereafter, especially in the towns and cities more and more people were buried in municipal cemeteries and some of these are no longer used. Information on burial location can usually be obtained from the relevant Local Authority Cemeteries or Environmental Department. A precise date and place of death is usually essential and, frequently, a fee is payable. The relevant Local/Family History Library should be able to tell you who to contact.

Local History

Family history and local history are closely intertwined and the sources consulted, when researching your genealogy, will have indicated where your ancestors lived. It is important to discover more about the streets, villages, towns, parishes etc. Maps will have pinpointed where they lived and worked so the next step is to contact the relevant Local History Library (see below). They will hold, for example, the "Old" and "New" Statistical Accounts for Scotland. These contain detailed information on every Parish as written by the local Church of Scotland Minister. The "Old" was produced at about the time of the Agricultural Revolution and the "New" during the Industrial Revolution.

All libraries hold more or less complete runs of local newspapers most of which carried village news and obituaries of local people. Very often they also hold extensive photographic collections which may well include your ancestor's cottage, street or place of work.

Archives

The National Archive of Scotland, located in central Edinburgh, is responsible for the custody and preservation of the records of government in Scotland. It also holds a wide range of church, business and family records. The following are of particular relevance to family historians:-

a) Inheritance: Wills and Testaments

Although mostly for the upper and middle classes, many Scots of quite humble backgrounds held wills. These provide a vast amount of information of interest to the family historian. This applies particularly to the inventories itemising their possessions including furniture, farm animals and the tools of their trade. This collection is now searchable on the Scotlands People website (see Internet Sites below)

b) Valuation rolls

From 1855, an annual system of uniform valuation of houses was introduced showing the address, names of proprietor, tenant and occupier and its value. Unfortunately, the names of the occupier did not need to be shown when the annual rent was less than £4.

In addition to the Archive collection at the National Archives of Scotland, there could be relevant material in local Archive Centres. Their collections vary considerably but they might include school records, applications for poor relief, electoral registers, local government records, etc.

The Scottish Railway Preservation Society – Bo'ness Station, yards and object collections

Although this fact sheet concentrates on sources of the written word, it should always be remembered that the museum objects themselves are likely to be of great interest to family historians, particularly if they relate specifically to the job of your ancestor.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Museums

Scottish Railway Preservation Society
Bo'ness Station
Union Street
Bo'ness
EH51 9AQ
Tel: 01506 825855
Email: enquiries@srps.org.uk
www.srps.org.uk
www.srpsmuseum.org.uk

National Railway Museum
Leeman Road
York
YO26 4XJ
Tel: 01904 621261
www.nrm.org.uk

National Institutions

General Register Office for Scotland
New Register House
Edinburgh
EH1 3YT
Tel: 0131 334 0380
Email:
www.gro-scotland.gov.uk

National Archives of Scotland
HM General Register House
Edinburgh
EH1 3YY
Tel: 0131 535 1314
Email:
www.nas.gov.uk

Detailed information on the Scottish Railway Archive can be found at www.nas.gov.uk/the_collections.htm
(select Transport Records from drop down menu)

National Library of Scotland
George IV Bridge
Edinburgh
EH1 1EW
Tel: 0131 226 4531
Email:
www.nls.uk

National Library of Scotland Map Library
33 Salisbury Place
Edinburgh
EH9 1SL
Tel: 0131 226 4531
www.nls.uk/collections/maps/links/index.html

Great North of Scotland Railway Association
The railway company operated trains in the area from Aberdeen to Elgin, Deeside and Buchan.
The Association website lists the company records and their locations:
www.gnsra.org.uk/gnsra_staff_records.htm

Highland Railway Society
The railway company operated trains between Inverness and Perth, Elgin, Kyle of Lochalsh, Wick and Thurso. The society website lists the company records and their location:
www.hrsoc.org.uk/staff.html

Local/Family History Libraries and Local Archive Centres

There are local/family history libraries and local archive centres throughout Scotland. To discover the most relevant one(s) for your needs, consult either www.ancestralscotland.com, www.genuki.org.uk or www.familia.org.uk

FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETIES

There are numerous Family History Societies covering, between them, the whole of Scotland. To discover the most relevant one for your needs contact:-

The Scottish Association of Family History Societies
Hon Sec, Family History Research Centre
9 Glasgow Street
Dumfries
DG2 9AF
Tel: 01387 248093
www.safhs.org.uk

There is also a UK national railway Family History Society:-

Railway FHS
J F Engert
"Lundy",
King Edward Street
Barmouth
Gwynedd
Wales
LL42 1NY
www.railwayancestors.fsnet.co.uk

USEFUL WEBSITES

The above listings indicate website addresses but these, for the most part, simply provide information on the resources available. Increasingly, there are websites which offer specific data. Most of these are pay-per-view sites. The following are of potential interest to the coal mining ancestor hunter.

www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

The official online source of parish registers, civil registration and census records for Scotland. It now also includes the Scottish Wills data formerly provided by www.scottishdocuments.com

www.ancestralscotland.com

The official site of Visit Scotland's ancestral tourism initiative. It is free and provides detailed information on sources for family historians throughout Scotland.

www.scan.org.uk

The online catalogue of the Scottish Archive Network, which provides detailed information on the contents of archival collections throughout Scotland.

www.scran.ac.uk

Formerly the Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network, SCRAN was a major Millennium Commission project. It comprises photographs, museum objects, films and audio records. Excellent for illustrating family histories. All the resources on SCRAN are freely available as thumbnails. For access to full screen images, there is an annual subscription of £29.99.

www.archive.scotsman.com

Makes the entire contents of the Scotsman newspaper available online. The index which has been provided by optical character recognition (OCR), is free. Access to the full text of the articles costs £7.95 for a 24 hour period. All major railway "events" are likely to have been reported in the Scotsman, which began publication in 1817.

www.genuki.org.uk

A key starting point for genealogists with links to innumerable websites arranged by geographical area

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

Gives free access to scanned digital images of both Old (1791-9) and New (1845-) Statistical Accounts covering every Scottish Parish. Arrangements may be made to enable keyword searches throughout the whole collection.

www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz

Provides details of towns, settlements and industrial sites throughout Scotland.

www.familysearch.org

The largest online genealogical research in the world, this site is free and made available from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). It is particularly useful for searching the Old Parish Registers (OPRs).

www.familia.org.uk

Provides details of family history resources at local libraries.

The Scottish Railway Preservation Society wishes you success with your genealogical researches. If you find an interesting story, one that illustrates the working or family life of a railwayman in Scotland, and if you would like to share it with us, we will be delighted to add it to our archives.