

Getting Started on Your Family Tree

Our aim is to facilitate your research by helping you to access all the resources we have in the centre - BUT we will not do your research for you.

The first piece of advice we give to everybody is to use the website www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk where you will find all the extant Scottish records of birth, marriage and death as well as the census returns from 1841 to 1911.

We do have access to the website in the centre, but it will save you time when you are here, if you look it up before you come. It contains all the information of this kind for the whole of Scotland. I am not aware of any other website which claims to have such comprehensive coverage of Scottish records.

If you have searched the scotlandspeople website and have not found what you were looking for, then it is extremely likely that there is no such record. We do not hold any records of birth, marriage and death other than those in this site. In the case of the pre 1855 church registers, there are many gaps, where the records have not survived. In the case of the 1881 census, the records for Dunscore parish and part of Dumfries parish were destroyed by fire.

The spelling of surnames has varied a great deal over the centuries (even within the same family), so it is wise always to tick the box marked 'surname variants'.

Another point to bear in mind is that a person who lived near the edge of two counties may have been registered in the neighbouring county. i.e. Wigtownshire/ Kirkcudbrightshire and Dumfriesshire/Kirkcudbrightshire. This applies particularly to people in Dumfries because the county boundary runs through the town.

We are always happy to help with explanations of any words or discrepancies which are difficult to understand.

We have an excellent collection of graveyard inscriptions, which we are still building up. We also have a number of local newspapers on microfiche, going back to 1777. We have a box of miscellaneous information for each parish, which we have collected over the years, and you never know what you may find there. We also have a small collection of books on local history.

And - perhaps our greatest resource - we have an army of friendly volunteers, who share your interest in family history and are always willing to discuss your research, sympathise with your problems, answer your questions and make helpful suggestions. So come in and talk to us.

You do not need to make an appointment to visit our centre. You are welcome to pop in any time we are open and our opening hours are displayed in this website. However, if you are only going to be in the locality for a short time, you may wish to phone or email the day before, just in case of the unlikely eventuality that we will not be able to open that day. If this happens, and we know you are coming, we will do our best make a special arrangement.

Can You Help?

We always welcome offers of help from our members. Whether you would like to meet visitors in the Centre or work behind the scenes, helping with publications, or research or graveyard recording – or whatever your particular interest is, we will be pleased to see you. You do not need to be tied down to coming every week or even every month. Whatever time you can offer will be valued.