

What we hold

National Records of Scotland (NRS) holds around 80 km (49.7 miles) of records which are stored in secure and temperature controlled rooms. The records span from the 12th to the 21st centuries, touching on virtually every aspect of Scottish life.

We are responsible for the public and legal records of Scotland but we also have many local and private archives. They relate to a variety of subjects including: the church, law, government and everyday life. We hold and make available one of the most varied archive collections of records in Britain:

- **Government records:** Records created by the Scottish Government from the 12th century to the present day; records of the Scottish census and post-1855 civil registration system.
- **Church records:** Records of the Church of Scotland, Free Church and other Protestant churches. Copies of the records of baptisms, marriages and burials for Roman Catholics before 1855.
- **Courts of law and legal registers:** Records of the Crown Office, Court of Session, High Court of Justiciary, Sheriff Courts, commissary courts, registers of sasines and deeds.
- **Local authorities:** Valuation rolls, records of some burghs, county councils, justices of the peace and other local authorities.
- **Private and corporate bodies:** Family, legal and estate papers; records of businesses, societies and institutions.
- **Maps and plans:** Topographical maps and plans, architectural and engineering drawings.
- **Nationalised industries and transport:** Records of the rail and canal systems, coal, gas, electricity, steel and shipbuilding industries.

NRS Onsite Services

We advise that you check the service status page on the NRS website for the most up-to-date notices relating to NRS onsite services or other important announcements:

www.nrscotland.gov.uk/about-us/service-status

Before you visit

- Please read the safe visit agreement and the Historical Search Room Guidance on the service status page on the NRS website. The agreement outlines the measures in place to ensure the safety of researchers. The guidance explains what you can expect during your visit and the range of services which are currently available from our search room:
<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/about-us/safe-visit-agreement>
<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//registration/nrs-temporary-historical-search-room-guidance-for-users.pdf>
- Consult the NRS online catalogue and research guides:
www.nrscotland.gov.uk/catalogue
www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides

- Contact the search room staff (lsrhe@scotlandspeople.gov.uk or via the 'contact us' form on ScotlandsPeople) to arrange a visit and order the records you would like to consult. Access is by appointment only and all records must be requested in advance.
- Bring identification (proof of address, photographic ID) and two passport sized colour photographs to obtain a reader's ticket.
- Bring pencils and paper for conducting your research.

Handling archives

Whilst conducting research in the search room, there are a few points to bear in mind when handling archives:

- Please ensure that your hands are clean and dry.
- Use only pencil when taking notes.
- Do not mark the documents in any way.
- Take care opening bundles/documents and handling the items inside.
- Keep the original order of the bundle.
- Use only acid free bookmarks and do not use post-it notes as markers.
- Do not eat or drink near archives.

Useful online resources

- **National Records of Scotland:** for records relating to Scotlands People and history: www.nrscotland.gov.uk Quick Links to Catalogues and Indexes and Research Guides on the home page.
- **NRS online catalogue:** www.nrscotland.gov.uk/catalogue
Tutorial: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGQoMKE4vKs
- **NRS Research Guides:** www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/a-z
Tutorial: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pnc90SgR2Ac
- **ScotlandsPeople:** for statutory registers of births, deaths and marriages; the Census; Old Parish Registers; legal records and more: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk
- **National Register of Archives for Scotland (NRAS):** for archives held in private hands in Scotland:
www.nrscotland.gov.uk/record-keeping/national-register-of-archives-for-scotland
- **ScotlandsPlaces:** a free resource for records about Scotland that draws from Historic Environment Scotland, the National Library of Scotland and NRS:
www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk
- **Palaeography**
Scottish Handwriting website: online tuition in palaeography for historians, genealogists and other researchers for help reading manuscript historical records written in Scotland from 16th to 18th centuries: www.scottishhandwriting.com
ScotlandsPeople guidance:
www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/reading-older-handwriting
www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/glossary
University of Glasgow course: www.futurelearn.com/courses/ems-palaeography

- **Dictionary of Scots language:** for tracking down the meaning and historical origin of Scots words: www.dsl.ac.uk

Useful Publication

- **'Tracing Your Scottish Ancestors: The Official Guide'**. 7th edition, (Birlinn, 2020)
Available in both paperback and e-book versions.

Keep up-to-date

You can find out more about family and historical research at ScotlandsPeople and you can keep up-to-date with news and events by subscribing to our newsletter and following ScotlandsPeople on Facebook and Twitter.

Contact us

If you have any questions, please get in touch with us at: education@nrscotland.gov.uk