

‘Like All These Country Folks Very Stupid’:
Glasgow Highlanders in the
Poor Law Application Records



Scottish Indexes Conference
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What the records contain

The majority of poor relief application forms as filled in by the city's inspectors are of tremendous value to family historians. However, the date and place of birth were not the only things that interested them. To complete the application form, they would also need to find out

- each address at which the applicant had lived, for as far back as they could recall, and for how long
- their occupation, earnings and rent paid
- names of parents, spouse, siblings, children, in-laws, and grandchildren, their addresses and income
- the reason for the application
- religious denomination
- date and place of marriage
- state of health
- details of any family problems that had led to their present circumstances, such as abandonment or bereavement.

Glasgow Libraries provide an excellent research guide to the post-1845 Poor Law and its records:

<https://www.glasgowfamilyhistory.org.uk/ExploreRecords/Pages/Poor-Law.aspx>

The majority of original poor law records for this time period are held by local archives throughout Scotland. Some indexes to these are available online and can help you determine if there is material relevant to your research housed in a particular archive. A selection of these is listed below.

Online Collections

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire – Details of what Aberdeen archives hold, as well as background information and suggestions for searching poor law records. There are some indexes listed, including a database held by Aberdeen & North East Scotland Family History Society.

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/libraries-and-archives/aberdeen-city-and-aberdeenshire-archives/catalogues-and-indexes/poor-relief-records>

Ayrshire – Free registration to a regularly-updated index of what's available (but note that while film ordering from LDS/FamilySearch centres is no longer an option, requesting digital copies may be possible)

<https://www.ayrshireroots.co.uk/Genealogy/Records/Poor%20Relief/Poor%20Relief.htm>

Borders – Search or browse a record index for 1845-1933 records

<http://bordersfhs.org.uk/BFHSPoorLawsearchform.asp>

Dundee – Friends of Dundee City Archives' database covers two poorhouses from 1854 to 1878 http://fdca.org.uk/Dundee_Poorhouse_Records.html

Moray – A database of many different types of Moray records includes an index to poor relief registers for the county and the former Banffshire area. Start with a people search at <http://libindx.moray.gov.uk/mainmenu.asp>

Paisley – Covering Paisley and its associated Abbey parish from 1839 to 1948 is this downloadable index

<https://libcat.renfrewshire.gov.uk/iguana/uploads/file/Website%20version%202019.pdf>

Stirling – Online indexes for various parishes in the county, plus some images of the kind of records you will find in their archives <http://www.stirlingarchives.scot/poor-relief-indexes/?LMCL=toWP1E&LMCL=r0NII>

FindMyPast – Many northern Scottish counties as well as East Lothian, Ayrshire and Renfrewshire have transcribed records here

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/scotland-poor-law-and-poor-lists>

Ancestry – As well as North Lanarkshire's database of poor relief application (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/ai/collections/UK/UKNorthLanarkshireArchives>), Ancestry has images of Kirkcaldy's Abden poorhouse records. Locate this collection in the Ancestry Card Catalogue under 'Kirkcaldy, Fife, Scotland, Poorhouse Records, 1888-1922'.

Further Reading

Gossman, Lionel, *Thomas Annan of Glasgow: Pioneer of the Documentary Photograph*, 2015. <http://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0057>. Annan is famous for his photographs of Victorian Glasgow slum dwellings, and chapter 6 of this e-book gives an insight into the grim living conditions of the time.

Kennedy, Tracy, 'Paupers and Poverty: Easter Ross Union Poorhouse', <https://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/2017/10/13/paupers-and-poverty-easter-ross-union-poorhouse/>

Nicholls, George, *A History of the Scotch Poor Law*, 1856.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015062241933&view=1up&seq=7>

Useful Reference Material

GENUKI – A valuable reference website that includes contact details for archives throughout Scotland, although do call or write to archives in advance of a visit to confirm that the opening hours posted are up to date, and make an appointment where necessary.

<https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/sct>

'Old Disease Names' by Sylvain Cazalet – useful when stumped by vintage medical terminology!

<http://www.homeoint.org/cazalet/oldnames.htm>