

Crofters and the Crofters Commission

General reading

Hunter, James (2018) *The making of the crofting community* Edinburgh: Birlinn. (Revised ed, first published in 1976)

Devine, Tom (1993) *From clanship to crofters war* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Willis, Douglas P (2001) *Crofting* Edinburgh: John Donald (First publ. in 1991 as *The story of crofting in Scotland*)

Cameron, AD (1986) *Go Listen to The Crofters: The Napier Commission & Crofting A Century Ago.* Stornoway, Lewis: Acair

Graham, Laurence (1987) *Shetland Crofters. A hundred years of island crofting* Published by Shetland Branch, Scottish Crofters Union

Thomson, William PL (2013) *Orkney crofters in crisis* Kirkwall, Orkney: The Orcadian (Kirkwall Press) (Napier Commission evidence, some Crofters Commission hearings and introduction.)

The Angus MacLeod Archive <https://angusmacleodarchive.org.uk/> Focus is Lewis. History of Lewis section has a lot about landownership and crofting in general.

Napier Commission

Evidence and report - five volumes and index: <https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/cultural/centre-for-history/research/resources/the-napier-commission/>

Background <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/help-and-support/guides/napier-commission>

Legislation

Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act 1886 – <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/49-50/29/enacted>

Scottish Land Court Records

(The Scottish Land Court replaced the Crofters Commission in 1912 when the provisions of the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act were extended to smallholders across Scotland under the Smallholders (Scotland) Act 1911)

Class LC at National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh

- LC1 – Annual reports
- LC2- LC53 – each county's land court records. Historic counties (LC2-LC34) until local government reorganisation in 1974. eg LC15 Inverness-shire, LC23 Orkney, LC31 Sutherland, LC34 Zetland.

Three main sections for each county: applications, landholders' holding books, and court rolls.
Example:

- **LC23/1 Orkney applications** Closed for 75 years
- **LC23/2 Orkney landholders holdings books**
- **LC23/3 Orkney court rolls**

All apart from the court rolls are held off-site so you need to order in advance of your visit, minimum three working days.

Court rolls are held by the Scottish Land Court but have been digitised and you can search them in the Digital Search Room at the National Records of Scotland.

See

<https://catalogue.nrscotland.gov.uk/nrsonlinecatalogue/details.aspx?reference=LC&st=1&tc=y&tl=n&tn=n&tp=n&k=&ko=a&r=LC&ro=s&df=&dt=&di=y>

The **Annual Reports** are also available through the National Library of Scotland (NLS), Edinburgh. You must be a member to pre-order. Order times here <https://www.nls.uk/tools-for-research/consult-collections-in-person/#collection-delivery-times>

How to find them in the NLS catalogue

Login > Go to the Main Catalogue > Advanced search > Select Title contains and type Report by the Crofters Commission as to their proceedings Find the year you want and request that volume.

Available online too through (Proquest) **UK Parliamentary Papers**

<https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers> Many institutions have a subscription or you can access through the National Library of Scotland if you are a member and living in Scotland.

To search either search the NLS catalogue as above or

Login > Go to eResources > Select UK Parliamentary Papers > Advanced search > in Title field type Report by the Crofters Commission as to their proceedings

You should get the reports up to and including the year 1911 (actually Dec 1910-Dec 1911). There are other ways to find the reports but this works for me.

Other

St John's Kirk – Walls Heritage. I'm a trustee and used two of their resources in my talk
<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnskirk>

My website has some crofters-related material <https://janealogy.co.uk/blog/tag/crofter/>

and more on North Walls and Brims, Orkney, my one-place study where there were many crofters
<https://janealogy.co.uk/north-walls-and-brims/>

(I no longer do client work)

Jane Harris January 2026