

**SLIDE 1: Welcome, housekeeping and introduction to talk**

[A selection of archives from the NRS]

Welcome to the National Records of Scotland, we hope you enjoy your visit to Edinburgh this week.

Introductions

Fire alarm

Toilets

Now we are ready to begin. This talk will provide an introduction to the NRS' archives where you can access church records, civil and criminal court cases, exchequer records, property records, tax records, the archives of landed estates and more.

It will look at this diverse material, including some interesting and surprising examples, explaining what the records are and how you can access and use them for historical research. There will be an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the talk.

But first a brief introduction to NRS – who are we, where are we and what do we do and hold?

**SLIDE 2: Telling the Story of Scotland**

NRS is a non-ministerial department of the Scottish Government and was established on 1 April 2011, following the merger of the National Archives of Scotland and the General Register Office for Scotland. We have a duty to collect, preserve and produce information about Scotland's people and history and make it available to inform current and future generations.

Before records were officially stored in the archive, there was no permanent accommodation for Scotland's national records. For hundreds of years they were stored in various locations, including a place you may have visited, Edinburgh Castle. The accommodation was far from satisfactory and the archives were damaged by damp and vermin.

In 1765, a grant of £12,000 was obtained by Lord Frederick Campbell, the Lord Clerk Register, from the forfeited Jacobite estates towards building 'a proper repository'.

**SLIDE 3: 'A Proper Repository'**

[Detail of 'Elevation of the South Front of a Building for the Register Office in Scotland.' By Robert Adam, architect, 30 July 1772. Crown copyright, NRS, RHP6082/7]

This 'proper repository' would become General Register House. Designed by Robert Adam, it is one of his finest public buildings. It's also the first purpose-built public record repository in the British Isles, and is one of the oldest archive buildings in the world still being used for its original purpose. The foundation stone was laid in 1774 and it opened to the public in 1789. It cost in total £29,000 to build. (Worth approximately over £2,500,000 in 2017 according to The National Archives currency converter).

This plan is from a volume of plans for alterations and additions for the building of General Register House, c. 1772.

**SLIDE 4: General Register House today**

[Photograph of General Register House, June 2021. Crown copyright, NRS.]

NRS' collections are housed in four buildings in Edinburgh, three of which are in the New Town: General Register House, New Register House (where you are this morning) and West Register House. The fourth, Thomas Thomson House, a modern purpose-built repository, can be found to the west of the city.

**SLIDE 5: What we hold**

NRS holds around 80 km (49.7 miles) of records which are stored in secure and temperature controlled rooms. The records span from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

**SLIDE 6: Our earliest record**

[Brieve by King David I that grants to St Cuthbert's Church near the castle [of Edinburgh] all the land below the castle from the spring which rises beside the corner of the king's garden along the road which goes to the church, and from the other side beneath the castle until a road is reached which is beneath the castle towards the east. [1127]. NRS, GD45/13/216.]

The oldest record held by NRS is a private record: a brieve by King David I to the church of St. Cuthbert dated 1127 from the papers of the Maule family, Earls of Dalhousie. A brieve is the original instruction from which a Royal Charter would be created. The charter, when it

was drawn up, gave a legal grant of land beneath Edinburgh Castle to the Church of St. Cuthbert.

I will now provide examples of some of the other record types held by NRS explaining what they are and how they can be used for research purposes.

#### **SLIDE 7: Government records**

NRS holds records created by the Scottish Government from the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the present day as well as records of the Scottish census and post-1855 civil registration system (Statutory registers of births, deaths and marriages.)

#### **SLIDE 8: ScotlandsPeople**

ScotlandsPeople is the official Scottish Government resource where you can access digital images of statutory registers of births, deaths and marriages; the Census; Old Parish Registers; legal records and more. Once you have registered an account on the site, you can search the indexes for free and pay to view the images.

It is used by hundreds of thousands of people each year to apply for copies of official certificates and to research family history, biography, local and social history.

#### **SLIDE 9: Start searching**

[www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/search-our-records](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/search-our-records)

You can explore the site by starting to search our records, use the search tips on the search forms and find guidance when you need it.

#### **SLIDE 10: Help and guidance**

[www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/help-and-guidance](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/help-and-guidance)

Use our help and guidance pages to find out what records are in the site and how they can be used for different kinds of research. You can also get advice on technical issues like image viewing, filtering and sorting searches and managing your account.

#### **SLIDE 11: Advanced people search**

[www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/advanced-search](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/advanced-search)

On the ScotlandsPeople homepage, you can select the blue 'Advanced people search' option beneath the hero image. Alternatively, you can navigate to this option by clicking on the 'search our records' page.

Six **categories** of records are indexed by personal name: the statutory (or civil) registers, church registers, census returns, valuation rolls, legal records and poor relief and migration records. They can be searched for free in different ways and you can pay for copies using credits or vouchers.

The statutory registers are official records of births, deaths and marriages. They have been kept in Scotland from 1855 onwards when compulsory civil registration was introduced to replace the system overseen by the Church of Scotland (the Established Church). In more recent years registers of divorces, dissolutions and civil partnerships have also been kept. The registers can be searched by personal name but some modern records are closed to protect the privacy of individuals.

#### **SLIDE 12: Searching for a birth record for Arthur Conan Doyle**

Using the statutory registers of births we can search for the birth record of Arthur Conan Doyle, writer and creator of the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes. Enter his forename and surname into the search boxes, select his gender and then click search.

**SLIDE 13: Search results for Arthur Doyle**

We are presented with a list of search results for 'Arthur Doyles' and can purchase and view the image of interest: 'Arthur Conan Doyle'. In the image viewer, you can also save the image to your account or download it to your own device.

**SLIDE 14: Birth entry Arthur Conan Doyle**

[Birth entry for Arthur Conan Doyle in the statutory register for St Andrew, Edinburgh. Crown copyright, NRS, 1859/685/2/367.]

Arthur Conan Doyle was born on 22 May 1859, the son of Charles Altimont Doyle, second clerk at the Office of HM Works and Mary Foley. The entry in the statutory register of births for the district of St Andrew, Edinburgh, gives the place of birth as 11 Picardy Place.

**SLIDE 15: Jemima Boyd's birth entry**

[Birth entry for Jemima Boyd, 1857, Statutory Registers Births. Crown copyright, NRS, 1857/342/76, page 76.]

This is Jemima Boyd's birth entry in the statutory registers of births which states that she was born on 20 August 1856 and was illegitimate. It provides her mother's name, Ann Boyd, and the parish, Crieff, where she was born. Now remember Jemima, as we're going to come back to her later on.

**SLIDE 16: Death during construction of Forth Bridge**

[Entry for David Clark Russell's death in the statutory register of Inverkeithing, 13 September 1888. Crown copyright, NRS, 1888/432/73, page 25.]

David Clark Russell was a rivet catcher on the Forth Bridge construction. David would have been stationed near the joints to be riveted where a furnace would have been set up. A rivet warmer would have heated up the rivets until they were more malleable and then removed them with tongs and thrown them to the catcher who would catch them in an ash lined leather or wooden bucket.

Sadly, David died age thirteen during the course of his employment on the bridge and appears to be the youngest casualty of the 73 men known to have died. David died on 13 September 1888 on part of the Forth Bridge on the Island of Inchgarvie, Dunfermline. His cause of death is given: fracture of base of skull and of spinal column. Fracture of both legs. Death instantaneous.

**SLIDE 17: Register of Corrected Entries**

[Entry for David Clark Russell's death in the statutory Register of Corrected Entries, 24 September 1888. Crown copyright, NRS, 1888/000/001, page 149.]

The Register of Corrected Entries (or RCE) records additional authorised information about the births, deaths and marriages following registration. For deaths, this usually means further details about cause of death in cases of sudden, accidental and violent deaths. An RCE reference is inserted beside the original entry in the statutory register of deaths.

Linked to David's death entry is an RCE which gives more details regarding his death. He fell from staging on the Forth Bridge construction, a distance of about 180 ft (54.8 m). and was killed instantly.

**SLIDE 18: Statutory registers: Agatha Christie's 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage**

[Entry for Agatha Christie in the statutory register of St Giles, 11 September 1930. Crown copyright, NRS, 1930/685-4/938.]

The statutory registers of marriages also include some famous names, such as Agatha Christie, the 'Queen of Crime', a prolific writer of murder-mystery stories featuring the Belgian detective Hercules Poirot or the English Miss Marple.

Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller or Christie married Max Edgar Lucien Mallowan on 11 September 1930. The entry in the statutory register of marriages for the district of St Giles in Edinburgh gives the place of marriage as St Cuthbert's Church. The entry also shows that she had obtained a decree of divorce from her first husband, Colonel Archibald Christie. Her usual residence was 22 Cresswell Place in London but she was living at the Broadford Hotel in Strath at the time of this marriage.

#### **SLIDE 19: Unusual names**

[Birth entry Equator Thunderbolt, statutory register births, 1897. Crown copyright, NRS, 644/9/600, page 200.]

You can find some unusual names registered in the records including this birth entry for Equator Thunderbolt who was born on 12 April 1897 at 158 Woodlands Road, Glasgow. Her parents were Edward and Lily Thunderbolt who were married in Melbourne Australia on 21 February 1896. Edward was an engineer which seems an appropriate occupation for his surname!

#### **SLIDE 20: Census returns: 1901**

[Detail from 1901 census return for Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Crown copyright, NRS, 1901/644-7/23, page 28.]

An official census of the Scottish population has been taken every ten years since 1801 with the exception of 1941 during the Second World War. However, little information about individuals has survived for 1801 to 1831.

From 1841 to 1911, enumerators prepared transcript books after the collection of household schedules from the head of every dwelling, institution and vessel. Census returns are lists of people living at each address, giving ages, places of birth and other information about them.

In 1901 Charles R Mackintosh, 32, architect and employer, was at 120 Maine Street with his wife Margaret, artist, who worked from home. The census return for the district of Blythswood in Glasgow shows that the household included a visitor, Harry C Marillier, metal worker, who was born in the Cape of Good Hope and a servant, Maggie Macdonald, who spoke Gaelic and English.

#### **SLIDE 21: Church records**

On ScotlandsPeople you can search the registers of the Church of Scotland, some other Presbyterian churches as well as the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland.

The Old Parish Registers (or OPRs) comprise the records of births and baptisms, banns and marriages and deaths and burials kept by the individual parishes of the Church of Scotland before the introduction of civil registration in 1855.

The parish minister or session clerk normally assumed responsibility for maintaining these registers, but since there was no standard format employed, record keeping varied enormously from parish to parish and also from year to year. As a result the information may be sparse, unreliable and difficult to read.

In the Dunning OPR, in 1764 it is noted: 'Any person that wants a child's name in any of the three preceding pages may scarcely expect to find it in the proper place. They being wrote by Mr King, late schoolmaster depute here without any regularity or order.'

And, in different handwriting and ink: 'The above ill-natured ungentlemanlike observation was written by Mr James Whyte and stands as one mark of his own distinguished Idiotism.' (Dunning, 1764; OPR 350/1, page 119).

#### **SLIDE 22: Our oldest register on ScotlandsPeople**

[Baptism record for Christane Hay, 27 December 1553. Crown copyright, NRS, 351/10, page 3.]

The oldest register dates from 1553 (baptisms and banns from Errol, Perthshire) and the earliest record is for Christane (or Christine) Hay who was baptised on 27 December 1553. Although there was a requirement from 1552 that parishes record baptisms and marriages, many did not commence until much later, and some more remote areas only have registers from the early 19th century. Some registers have been lost or destroyed and the condition of the surviving 3500 is variable.

#### **SLIDE 23: Example of poor record keeping**

[Baptism entry for George ?, 9 April 1704. Crown copyright, NRS, 609/10, page 367.]

In this example the minister cannot recall all the details for a child who was baptised in Ochiltree: 'Something George Something lawful son to What-ye-call-him in Mains of Barskimming was baptised April 9<sup>th</sup> 1704.'

#### **SLIDE 24: Baptism for James Clerk Maxwell**

[Baptism entry for James Clerk Maxwell in the OPR for Edinburgh, 29 July 1831. Crown copyright, NRS, OPR 685-1/56, page 341.]

Thankfully, other entries are more illuminating such as the baptismal record for James Clerk Maxwell, one of the nineteenth century's greatest scientists.

#### **SLIDE 25: Death of Jean McFarlan[e]**

[Death entry for Jean McFarlan. Crown copyright, NRS, OPR Deaths, Canongate, 685/03 0240 0121.]

Here is a typical OPR death entry on ScotlandsPeople in this case for a woman called Jean McFarlan[e]. Remember her, as we'll come back to her later on.

#### **SLIDE 26: Spellings of forenames and surnames**

[Sample extracts from ScotlandsPeople, Crown copyright NRS.]

The spellings of forenames and surnames in the records on ScotlandsPeople may not be as you expect, particularly in the older records due to transcription errors, misspellings, phonetic spellings, deliberate or accidental variations by informants as well as variations of the names.

In the case of this woman, she was baptised Jean in 1835, married as Jane in 1866 and died Jeanie in 1900!

#### **SLIDE 27: Search options**

If you are unsure of the spelling of a name or you suspect it may have been recorded differently, you can use the search options to the right hand side of the Surname and Forename search boxes to improve your search. The options are: exact names only, fuzzy matching, wild cards, names that begin with and phonetic matching

**SLIDE 28: Kirk session and other church court records**

On ScotlandsPeople you can also search for records that are not indexed by personal name, most notably the church court records using the virtual volumes search. You can navigate to this page by clicking on the 'Search for kirk session and other church court records' featured block on the home page or via the 'Search our records' page.

**SLIDE 29: Virtual Volumes search**

<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/virtual-volumes>

In Virtual Volumes there are more than a million pages from around 6,000 volumes from the courts of the Church of Scotland. If you are registered with the website, you can search the records and then browse through the images on the site at no charge. You can also save or download a copy for a small fee.

**SLIDE 30: Church court records**

[Detail of first page of Borthwick kirk session, 1690. NRS, CH2/38/1, page 1.]

A new system was introduced to run church affairs, education and poor relief following the Scottish Reformation in 1560: the General Assembly, synods, presbyteries, and kirk sessions.

The records created by church courts are very useful for family and local history research. They contain details of key events in communities across Scotland, mostly in the form of evidence in church court cases, offering a vivid snapshot into the everyday lives of ordinary Scots. In this period, cases could involve paternity of children and irregular marriages, and the church also carried out many functions later taken over by local government. The evidence given can give fascinating details of how our ancestors lived, worked and worshipped.

These included school education and poor relief, registering births, deaths and marriages, and disciplining parishioners for what would now be termed anti-social behaviour such as drunkenness, cursing or breaking the Sabbath.

The records also show that in an age of private health care, the ministers and sessions sometimes paid medical bills for the poor. There are also accounts of exceptional events, such as witchcraft trials, outbreaks of epidemics, crop failures, extreme weather events and the Civil Wars.

**SLIDE 31: Anti-social behaviour**

[Extract from Lanark kirk session minutes, 1724, NRS, CH2/1529/1/3, page 1.]

Of most interest for genealogists and local historians are the minutes of the kirk sessions, which typically contain a detailed and often colourful record of the discipline the minister and kirk elders handed out to errant parishioners for offences such as drunkenness, swearing, breaking the Sabbath, quarrelling and sexual misdemeanours. This is an example of a discipline case brought before Lanark kirk session in December 1724.

'This Day it was reported, that James Weir Son to David Weir, and Helen Hastie, Daughter to John Hastie in Lanark, both single persons, were found together under Cloud of Night, in an outer Coalhouse in the Ministers close, and that it is suspected they have been guiltie of unsuitable Behaviour with each other...William Rob servant to James Moodie Dyester in Lanarkshire is suspected to be concerned in that Wickedness equally with the foresaid James Weir he being with him at that Time...'

All three were summoned before the kirk session to account for their 'unsuitable behaviour'. James and Helen claimed that they were wrestling for an apple in the coalhouse and William said that he was waiting outside for James to come out.

They were solemnly rebuked by the session for their 'uncircumspect Behaviour' and were dismissed 'with a grave Admonition leaving Room for further process, if any Thing shall be discovered by the providence of God' and 'their Absolution from this Scandal' was delayed 'till they see, whether anything be discovered in providence or not.' (NRS, CH2/1529/1/3, page 5).

The kirk session was the primary body that provided poor relief to members of the parish. It also sought to determine who the fathers of children born outside marriage were, in order to confirm whether the parish was financially responsible for supporting the mother and child, if the father could not be identified.

Do you remember Jemima Boyd's birth entry from earlier? Her mother was Ann Boyd and she was born outside marriage and her father is not named. We consulted the church records for Crieff kirk session from 1856 to 1857 for a reference to Ann Boyd to see if we could find out more information.

#### **SLIDE 32: Crieff kirk session minutes**

[Extract from Crieff kirk session minutes, 9 March 1857. NRS, CH2/545/6, page 322.]

Ann appeared before Crieff kirk session, as that was where her daughter was born. It states that 'Ann Boyd... named Peter Kemp as the father of her child'. She also appeared before the kirk session in Madderty where 'she resided when the guilt was contracted'.

Peter refused the charge against him. It was recorded in the Crieff minutes on 8 June 1857 that, following a declaration that her statement was true, Ann was 'solemnly admonished of her sin and expected to lead a virtuous life... [and] was restored to the privileges of the church'.

Jemima died in 1931 and her father's name is not included in her death entry, suggesting that Peter did not take responsibility for his child or that they never formed a relationship during her lifetime.

It is always worthwhile searching the corresponding records for the parish where you know a family lived; you might be surprised what you find!

#### **SLIDE 33: List of population of parish**

[Dallas kirk session – List of population of parish, June 1811. NRS, CH2/1129/2, page 25.]

The kirk sessions may also provide information about the inhabitants of the parish. For example, the kirk session minutes for Dallas, Morayshire, includes a list of the population of the parish from June 1811. It is very unusual for early census records to include children making the 1811 census of Dallas one of the best of the known surviving records. Each entry includes address, name, rank (this can be occupation, marital status, lodger) and age.

#### **SLIDE 34: Courts of law and legal registers**

NRS holds the records of the Scottish courts of law including the Court of Session, High Court of Justiciary, sheriff courts and commissary courts, and legal registers associated with them, such as registers of deeds and sasines (which record the transfer of property or land in Scotland). These records contain a wealth of information relating to people and places in Scotland and have been described as a treasure trove of anecdote and incident. These records can be consulted in the Historical Search Room at NRS.

It is an irony of ancestor-hunting that you are more likely to find information about an individual who committed a crime than one who was a respectable, law abiding citizen. Criminal records can unveil fascinating stories about people, many of which are often quite grim or sad. This information may be found in records of the investigation into the case, records of the various criminal courts and in prison records.

Precognitions are pre-trial papers and form part of the records of the Lord Advocate's department and include witnesses' evidence about the alleged crime. This evidence includes a wealth of incidental detail and in these records you can almost hear people speaking. These records are indexed and therefore provide a way into the records of the trial itself.

### **SLIDE 35: Indictment of Hellen McGrigor**

[Extract from indictment of Hellen McGrigor, 1847. Crown copyright, AD14/47/151/1, p. 1.]

This example is an Indictment from precognition papers relating to Hellen McGrigor who was accused of murdering her child on or at the bank of the river Falloch, Killin parish, Perthshire in 1847.

According to the process papers relating to this case (which are in the high court records), Helen was found guilty in terms of her own confession and was sentenced to serve 12 months in the general prison at Perth.

### **SLIDE 36: A Victorian Valentine**

[Valentine's card, 1880. NRS, SC58/22/630.]

Sometimes it is possible to find out more about children born to an unnamed father in actions before a Sheriff Court to order the father to contribute to the maintenance of the child. The record of these actions will usually provide the names of the mother, the father and the date of birth and sex of the child.

Depending on what categories of records have been created by each sheriff court and on what has survived, you may have to look at a variety of records to try and locate the case. For example, minute books, act books, diet books, decree books etc.

An interesting example is the case of Anne Lindsay, born in Johnstone, Renfrewshire, on 27 October 1880. Her birth entry recorded her mother as Mary Ann Lindsay, yet her father's details were left blank. Mary Ann knew that the father of her baby was the son of her previous employer - William Steel junior, a student at Glasgow University where he was studying for the ministry.

The previous year, the couple had enjoyed a brief period of courtship. William had sent Mary Ann a festive note in December 1879 and later a pretty Valentine card, expressing his love for her. By the time Anne was born, the relationship had turned sour and William refused to admit that he was the father. Mary Ann sought a decision from Paisley Sheriff Court using letters and the valentine card as evidence of an honourable courtship with a view to marriage.

On 19 July 1881 the Sheriff found against William stating '[I] cannot come to any other conclusion than that the defender is the father of the pursuer's child.' He awarded Mary Ann court expenses and the money that she had claimed for the birth and maintenance of the child. William appealed to the Court of Session, but the verdict was upheld. He was ordered to pay Mary Ann a total of £5. 6s. 1d. As in similar cases, the father's identity was recorded in the Register of Corrected Entries.

**SLIDE 37: Robert Burns' testament**

[Detail from Robert Burns' testament, 1796. Crown copyright, CC5/6/18, page 74.]

Wills and testaments can be found in the records of the commissary and sheriff courts. Wills can often provide a wealth of detail about family relationships, and a vivid snapshot into the past about how people lived. You may find names of family members, their relationships and details of everyday possessions, as well as details of the debts that they owed at the time of their death.

Robert Burns' testament, a detail of which is shown here, is not a will in the popular sense. It's a 'testament dative' whereby his widow applied to the commissary court to recover two outstanding debts owing to her husband for which she required legal authority. The sole purpose of the testament was to confirm Jean as her late husband's executor, as he had not made a will before he died, and this enabled her to recover the debts.

You can search over 611,000 wills and testaments using the ScotlandsPeople service and the online resources in the Historical Search Room covering the period 1513 to 1925. Records from 1926 to 1999 are available to consult at NRS. Testaments recorded from 2000 onwards are not held by NRS. Instead you should contact the Commissary Department at Edinburgh Sheriff Court.

**SLIDE 38: Jean McFarlane's testament**

[Detail from Jean McFarlane's testament, 1800. Crown copyright, NRS, CC8/8/131, p. 1723.]

Do you remember Jean McFarlane's death entry which we found in the OPRs? We found her testament on ScotlandsPeople. The Testament dative and inventory of the goods and gear which pertained and belonged to umq[uhil]e Jean McFarlane late servant to also deceased Mrs. Jean Smollet late of Bonhill, 27 Aug 1800.

**SLIDE 39: Government records part 2**

We've already explored the records of the Scottish census and post-1855 civil registration system. The records of the Scottish Government also include those of the exchequer, one of the earliest government departments that developed out of the king's chamber. This was the branch of the king's household which was responsible for the royal finances.

**SLIDE 40: ScotlandsPlaces: historical tax rolls**

[www.scotlandspplaces.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspplaces.gov.uk)

ScotlandsPlaces is a free resource where you can search for records by place name. It draws from the collections held by Historic Environment Scotland, the National Library of Scotland and NRS so you can find maps, surveys, plans and drawings; photographs; archaeological records; taxation records, Ordnance Survey Name Books and publications about places of interest.

271 of our historical tax volumes (from the exchequer records) are freely available to consult and download via the ScotlandsPlaces website. You can also consult digital images in the Historical Search Room at NRS. The tax records relate to carriage, cart, clock and watch, dog, farm horse, hearth, horse, inhabited home, land, male and female servant, poll, shop and window tax.

In Scotland in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, taxes were levied on households employing 'non-essential' female/male servants. This was primarily aimed at domestic/personal servants in the town and country, for example, cooks, butler, valets, grooms, gardeners and coachmen.

The Female servant tax records cover 1785-1792 and the male servant tax records, 1777-1798.

**SLIDE 41: Jean McFarlane in the female servants tax records for Bonhill.**

[Extract from female servant tax records, Bonhill, Dunbartonshire Jul 1785-Apr 1786. Crown copyright, NRS, E326/6/1, p. 73.]

Do you remember Jean McFarlane's testament? It mentions that she was Jean servant to Mrs. Smollet of Bonhill and here she is in the female servants tax records for Bonhill.

**Window taxes**

From 1748 until 1851 taxes were levied on the occupants of buildings with several windows in Scotland. Window tax rolls, listing the householders and the number of windows in their properties, survive for the period 1748-1798 among the records of the Exchequer (E326/1). (The window tax had been imposed in England from 1696).

The rolls are arranged by county and royal burgh and there are gaps for certain years for some counties and burghs.

**SLIDE 42: Extract from Window Tax, Dunbartonshire, Apr 1785**

[Extract from Window Tax records for Dunbartonshire, 1785. Crown copyright, NRS, E326/1/31, p. 55.]

This page lists inhabitants of Bonhill parish in Dunbartonshire whose properties were surveyed for windows in April 1785-6 including Mrs Smollett Cameron, Jean McFarlane's mistress.

**SLIDE 43: Local authorities**

NRS holds Valuation rolls, records of some burghs, county councils, justices of the peace and other local authorities.

Valuation rolls are records of property ownership compiled for the collecting tax man. From 1855 they record properties (apart from those with a very low rental value), listing annually the names of the proprietor, tenant and principal occupier and the annual rateable value of the property listed.

These records can sometimes be a useful aid to finding a family if they are not readily found in the census because the indexed entries cover inter-census years and beyond. You can also use them to search the history of buildings such as shops and businesses of all kinds, churches, schools, hospitals, railway stations and even lighthouses.

The valuation rolls from 1855-56 to 1957-58 have all been digitised and are available to consult at NRS together with an index. Indexes and images of valuation rolls for selected years are also available to consult via ScotlandsPeople.

**SLIDE 44: 'Prince Valler'**

[Detail from Glasgow Burgh valuation roll, 1925-1926. Crown copyright, NRS, VR102/1370, page 61.]

A tattoo specialist calling himself 'Prince Valler' is the most unusual person we have found in the Valuation Rolls. He is unique in being listed as a 'tattooer', a professional tattooist, working from a rented flat at 63 Stewart Street in the east end of Glasgow in 1925. His flat was modest, with a rateable value of £11. 15s. He later ran his business from a shop in Glasgow.

**SLIDE 45: Private and corporate bodies**

NRS' gifts and deposits series (GD) include the family and estate papers of landowners from all over Scotland as well as the records of businesses, societies, hospitals, charitable schools and institutions.

In the family and estate papers, you may find correspondence and legal documents concerning the ownership and succession of the land holding family as well as genealogical information. You may also find records relating to those people who rented and worked on the land in rentals, leases and records kept by the factor (the proprietor's estate manager and agent).

Information relating to building on the estates from the owner's castle or country house, to farms, mills and estate workers' cottages can be found in these papers. Records relating to agriculture, forestry and fishing as well as industrial activities such as mining may also be found in estate records.

#### **SLIDE 46: List of servants from GD 40**

[List of Marquess of Lothian's indoor and outdoor servants and their wages, pensioners and their allowances, horses and carriages, 1841. NRS, GD40/8/429.]

You may also find records relating to servants in family papers deposited in NRS. John Kerr, 7<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Lothian, owned land in Midlothian and Roxburghshire. This record lists the staff he employed on his Midlothian estate, the type of work they did and their annual salaries.

#### **SLIDE 47: NRAS**

Aside from the private papers held by NRS, some collections have been deposited in the archives and libraries of local authorities and universities, or are held in private hands by private individuals and families, landed estates, clubs and societies, businesses and law firms. The National Register of Archives for Scotland (a department within NRS) holds surveys or lists of these collections which can be viewed online or at NRS. They also give advice to owners of private archives on how to care and manage their collections.

#### **SLIDE 48: Maps and Plans**

The Register House Plans' series (RHP) is an artificial collection containing over 170,000 topographical maps and plans and architectural and engineering drawings from a wide variety of sources. Most drawings relate to other collections we hold, such as court or estate records. These can be useful for family and local history research and enhance the value of the visual material as historical evidence for buildings and places. A selection of these maps and plans are available to view via ScotlandsPeople but images of many more can be viewed at NRS.

#### **SLIDE 49: Plan of lands in South Walls, Orkney**

[Part of plan of lands in South Walls, Orkney, showing names of tenants, 1823. 'No 3. Duplicate plan of Wards previous to the division in 1823'. By Thomas Grainger, surveyor. [1:2700] 1 in = 3 Scottish chains. 582 x 828 mm, on sheet 622 x 875 mm. Ink and colour wash. Linen backing. Crown copyright, NRS, RHP2910.]

This plan is from the records of Crown Estate Commissioner. It notes steadings with tenants' names, a church and enclosure for plants. Fields and rigs are numbered to correspond with acreages and land use is given in table of contents. It is coloured to show the Crown and Mr Heddle of Melsetter's property.

#### **SLIDE 50: Nationalised industries and transport**

NRS holds the Scottish records of the rail and canal systems, coal, gas, electricity, steel and shipbuilding industries. These include the archives of what used to be called British Rail and the railway companies that formed it. We also hold several private collections of railway papers.

Staff records can be found within the railway company papers. Railway staff listed in these records are those who worked for the railway companies, not those who built the railways and who worked for contractors.

If your ancestor worked for a railway company, you are more likely to find a record of his service if he worked in a station than if he was an engine driver or plate layer. You are also more likely to find him if he worked for the Caledonian Railway company or the North British Railway company, because more of their staff records have survived.

The most useful staff records are those which give the date of birth and show the detailed career of each railwayman, from job to job to place to place.

#### **SLIDE 51: The Caledonian Railway Company**

[Entry relating to John Anderson from the Caledonian Railway staff register, Dundee-Aberdeen District, 1881-1924. NRS, BR/CAL/15/1. Permission granted for re-use by the Department of Transport. Reproduced under [Open Government Licence version 3.0.](#)]

This record shows that John Anderson (b. 15 January 1866) started work for the Caledonian Railway company as a porter at Airth in 1881 and gradually moved step by step until he completed his career in 1924 as a station master at Guthrie on a salary of £260 per year.

Staff records also detail reprimands given for offences such as being drunk on duty, oversleeping or other misdemeanours. For example, Henry Glennie who like John Anderson worked for the Caledonian Railway company, was 'personally and severely cautioned for using foul language towards [the] wife of a trader...' (BR/CAL/15/1 entry for Henry Glennie).

I have also found references to women employed by the Caledonian Railway in the same staff register. For example, Christina P. McLeod (b. 16 Jan 1899) worked as a Clerkess in Aberdeen from 1916 to 1926.

#### **SLIDE 52: News and features**

[Image of News and Features page on ScotlandsPeople and link: [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/news-and-features](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/news-and-features)]

You can explore more stories we have found in the archives on the News and Features page on the ScotlandsPeople website.

#### **SLIDE 53: NRS blog Open Book**

[Image of home page of the NRS blog Open Book and link: <https://blog.nrscotland.gov.uk/>]

As well as articles on the NRS blog, Open Book.

#### **SLIDE 54: Historical Search Room**

This is the Historical Search Room which is located on first floor of General Register House. You can access records created by the Scottish government and courts (civil and criminal), as well as private records created by businesses, landed estates, families, churches and other corporate bodies.

#### **SLIDE 55: Before you visit**

Before you visit, please:

- Read the Visit Us and Historical Search Room pages on the NRS website (there is a link via the home page). The guidance explains what you can expect during your visit and the range of services which are currently available from in our search room.
- Consult the online NRS catalogue and research guides.

- Contact the search room staff ([lsrhe@scotlandspeople.gov.uk](mailto:lsrhe@scotlandspeople.gov.uk) or via the 'contact us' form on ScotlandsPeople) to order any out stored records you would like to consult.
- Bring identification and two passport sized colour photographs to obtain a reader's ticket.
- And lastly bring pencils and paper and your laptop/mobile device for conducting your research.

#### **SLIDE 56: Handling archives**

These are a few tips to bear in mind when handling archives in the search room.

- Make sure 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. Do not use post-it notes as markers
- Do not eat or drink near archives

#### **SLIDE 57: NRS website**

[www.nrscotland.gov.uk](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk)

NRS' website provides information on records relating to Scotlands' people, places and history. You can find links to the catalogues and indexes as well as research guides from the home page.

It is also worth spending a little time exploring the website to read features relating to the records, information about registration, conservation and any news we want to share.

#### **SLIDE 58: NRS Online Catalogue**

[www.nrscotland.gov.uk/catalogue](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/catalogue)

Each collection of records held by NRS has a catalogue or index to help you find the right material, whether it's a file or a single document. Most of the records we hold are described on an electronic database: the NRS catalogue. The catalogue allows you to search descriptions of our records and is a good starting point for any research you wish to conduct.

On the NRS Archives YouTube Channel, there is a short tutorial which provides a brief introduction on how to use the NRS' online catalogue to search for records relating to your research, or area of interest: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGQoMKE4vKs>

#### **SLIDE 59: NRS Research Guides**

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/a-z>

The online research guides have been compiled by members of staff and provide useful information about some of our most popular record sets, and how they can be accessed. Different topics covered in NRS' records are listed alphabetically. These guides are a good place to begin your research, as they not only provide instructions on how to search the records, they also often give suggested archive references, which are invaluable for searching the archive catalogue.

On the NRS Archives YouTube Channel, there is a short tutorial which provides a brief introduction on how to access the NRS Research Guides and how they can help with your research: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNc90SgR2Ac>

**SLIDE 60: Handwriting**

[Extract from a witchcraft confession, Stirling Presbytery minutes, 1590. NRS, CH2/722/2, page 23.]

If you are new to research using original records prior to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Scottish Handwriting website provides practical online tuition to help improve your skills. Assistance is also provided in our guide on reading older handwriting and a glossary of abbreviations, words and phrases. You could also sign up for the University of Glasgow's FutureLearn course on early modern Scottish palaeography. Lastly, you can purchase the Scottish Handwriting Kit a self-help guide for palaeography from the ScotlandsPeople online store or download a free digital version from the NRS website.

- [www.scottishhandwriting.com/](http://www.scottishhandwriting.com/)
- [www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/guides/research-guides/reading-older-handwriting](http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/guides/research-guides/reading-older-handwriting)
- [www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/glossary](http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/glossary)
- [www.futurelearn.com/courses/ems-palaeography](http://www.futurelearn.com/courses/ems-palaeography)
- [Scottish Handwriting Kit](#)

**SLIDE 61: The Dictionaries of the Scots language**

The Dictionaries of the Scots language is a culmination of two major dictionaries of the Scots language in a searchable format. The resource provides invaluable assistance with tracking down the meaning and historical origin of Scots words. The example here given is the word 'Compere' meaning to put in a formal appearance, for example, in a court.

**SLIDE 62: Publications**

The NRS has a library and you can consult the publications available on the open shelves and via the NRS Library catalogue in the Historical Search Room. One publication we recommend is 'Tracing Your Scottish Ancestors' the official guide to the records made available via NRS and ScotlandsPeople which is indispensable for family historians, historians and biographers.

The seventh edition is packed with information about how to trace Scottish genealogy in the unique treasure trove of Scotland's national archives. It is available for the first time in both paperback and e-book versions. You can purchase a paperback copy from the online ScotlandsPeople store, or in person via other booksellers. You can also purchase the e-book online via the publisher Birlinn and other retailers.

Another useful source are NRS' leaflets for advice on undertaking various types of research such as family and local history and we've provided you with a selection to take home.

**SLIDE 63: Keep up-to-date**

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

**SLIDE 64: Thank you for listening**

[Declaration of Arbroath, 1320. Mike Brooks c Queen's Printer for Scotland, NRS, SP13/7.]

This year marks the 703<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath. It is a letter written in 1320 by barons and the whole community of the kingdom of Scotland to the Pope asking him to recognise Scotland's independence and Robert Bruce as the country's lawful king. The Declaration is currently on display at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh and it is a rare opportunity to see one of NRS' most famous historical documents.

Thank you for listening to this talk, we hope you have found it useful for your research. Do you have any questions now?

Alternatively, if you think of a question later on, please get in touch with us at [education@nrscotland.gov.uk](mailto:education@nrscotland.gov.uk)