

# Top 10 Resources for Getting Started With Your Scottish Research

## ... And how to use them without breaking the bank

### 1. Scotland's People indexes

Scotland's People is the official government website for births, deaths and marriages from 1855 to the present day. It is also the only place online where you can access the 1911 or 1921 Scotland census. They also have wills, some property records, and the original images of the 1841-1901 censuses, although transcriptions for these early census years may be found elsewhere.

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

Scotland's People operates on a pay-per-view model rather than on a membership model. That means that each record costs credits/money. No discount for buying credits in bulk.

- Birth/marriage death or census – 6 credits = £1.50 = \$1.85
- Wills – 10 credits = £2.50 = \$3.07

Searching the indexes is free. Stop to think...

- Do I really need to see the full birth record for each sibling in a family or is the year and district of birth enough?
- Can I use the mother's maiden surname on a birth record or a death record to identify a marriage?

Be selective about what you pay to look at, note down record numbers and remember you can always come back to look at records later.

Second option to book a day ticket to the Scotland's People Centre in Edinburgh or the Mitchell Library in Glasgow for £15, which allows you access to whatever you want to look at. But you cannot download, save to your account or take photographs with any device. Also, requirement to book many weeks in advance.

### 2. Family Search Transcriptions

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/location/united-kingdom-and-ireland/scotland> - Scottish research page with lots of links.

Scroll down to "Indexed Historical Records" and then "See All Scotland Collections". You can then search for people in specific collections, or do a more general search as preferred.

### 3. National Library of Scotland Maps

<https://maps.nls.uk/>

All free to view, wherever you are in the world.

Click on “map finder with pin” top left, and enter a modern day placename in the search box.

Browse through the different map options presented on the right side of the screen, oldest maps at the top, most recent at the bottom.

Side by side viewer – this lets you compare and contrast between two different periods of mapping. Move one side, the other side moves too. You can customise the map displays to your own preferences, or see modern satellite view of the same area shown on the old maps. Use the +/- top left to zoom in and out.

Health warning : this map site is addictive and you can lose hours in here. Also on a more serious note, maps are copyrighted which means you can look and download for personal use only. You are not allowed to put them online, share them on social media, or publish them in print without getting permission.

#### **4. Findagrave**

<https://www.findagrave.com/>

also <https://billiongraves.com/>

Worldwide site so unless you are working with an unusual name you will probably need to fill in more than just name and surname.

Can also browse through the listing per cemetery – can be useful in rural areas where everyone is inter-related and generations of the same family are buried in the same plot.

Click the camera icon at the top of the website if you want to request a photograph of a grave marker – you will need to sign up to the website to do this, but there is no charge. Also you can respond to other researchers’ requests for photographs of gravestones close to you.

#### **5. FreeCEN**

<https://www.freecen.org.uk/>

This is a UK-wide site not Scotland-specific. Idea is to transcribe the census returns “as is”, complete with spelling mistakes or errors. Very easy to search, enter as much information as you have. Results are laid out in the same way as the original census forms.

Volunteer project and coverage is not complete. Quality of transcriptions is good as everything is transcribed by two separate people then checked. Ongoing project, more years/counties will be added. Always worth checking before you pay to access records on Ancestry, FindMyPast, Scotland’s People.

If you’re interested in helping out with the transcription, hit the “volunteer” button on the homepage to find out more.

## 6. National Archives

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Based in Kew, London. National repository holding the most important documents from all over Britain.

Many records relating to Scottish people, families and places held in National Archives, although not everything is online. From the homepage, hit the search box at the top right, then click in the box which says “to search for records, go to our catalogue”.

Then enter the term you wish to search for, and if there are too many results filter by period. Particularly good for wills (some dating back many centuries) and naturalisation files. Anyone can sign up for an account which allows you to download up to 100 items in a 30 day period for personal use, free of charge.

If item not digitised, search elsewhere for same information or pay a researcher to pull the record for you.

## 7. Edinburgh Gazette

<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/>

This is the official government record of official notices. For genealogy most useful for notices about bankruptcies (known as sequestrations in Scotland) and military records as it was commonplace to list each promotion during someone’s career. Also appointments to civil service positions in India, South Africa etc.

Enter the name of the person you wish to search for in the box on the homepage, then filter by year or edition. Click on the preview to see the full page – a scan of the original. These can then be downloaded as a pdf.

## 8. Post Office Directories

<https://digital.nls.uk/directories/>

Date as far back as 1773 but really came into their own in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Enter the first three letters of the surname you are interested in, and a place. Common names may return many results. Or browse through records by place/year.

Directories can be excellent for looking at where people were between census years, and often give occupations. Look at what other people in the same street were doing, or if there is a directory where people are grouped by occupation, how many people are doing similar jobs. Remember that people listed in the same directory for the same town with the same surname may be relatives you haven’t identified yet – but might not be.

These records are not copyrighted and you can use them on your own website or social media under creative commons rights – as long as you credit the source.

## 9. Virtual Mitchell

<https://www.mitchelllibrary.org/virtualmitchell/home?WINID=1737041399085>

Huge database of photographs of life in Glasgow in days gone by. Search by area, street or subject, or just browse through. Images can be used for personal or educational purposes, but you will have to pay for a licence for commercial use.

Similar Sites for other parts of Scotland:

Capital Collections	<a href="https://yourlibrary.edinburgh.gov.uk/web/arena/capital-collections">https://yourlibrary.edinburgh.gov.uk/web/arena/capital-collections</a>	Edinburgh
Aberdeen Archives	<a href="https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/libraries-and-archives/aberdeen-city-and-aberdeenshire-archives/catalogues-and-indexes/photographs">https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/libraries-and-archives/aberdeen-city-and-aberdeenshire-archives/catalogues-and-indexes/photographs</a>	Aberdeen
National Library of Scotland	<a href="https://www.nls.uk/collections/photographs/">https://www.nls.uk/collections/photographs/</a>	Worldwide, but mostly Scottish
View Dumfries and Galloway	<a href="https://www.viewdumfriesandgalloway.co.uk/">https://www.viewdumfriesandgalloway.co.uk/</a>	SW Scotland
Am Baile	<a href="https://www.ambaile.org.uk/">https://www.ambaile.org.uk/</a>	Highlands
Canmore	<a href="https://canmore.org.uk/">https://canmore.org.uk/</a>	All of Scotland

Plus many more. Google “image archive” or “photo archive” plus the county/city you are interested in, and see what you find. There are also many Facebook groups and similar devoted to sharing historic photos of specific locations.

## 10. Scottish Indexes

<https://www.scottishindexes.com/>

Searchable database, free of charge. Option to purchase full record should you wish to do so. Most of these records are not online and will involve a trip by a researcher to the records office, so you can expect to pay from £8 for basic prison records up to £45 or more for more complex wills, with additional fees for commentary or transcription.

Good video content in the “learning zone” explaining the various records which is free to access, plus a regular online conference featuring talks by a range of experts which is free to attend but donations requested.

1. Familysearch transcriptions
2. National Library of Scotland maps
3. National Library of Scotland post office directories
4. Findagrave / Billiongraves
5. FreeCEN
6. National Archives – Naturalisations
7. London/Edinburgh Gazette
8. Virtual Mitchell – photographs
9. Scottish Indexes