



Using ScotlandsPeople

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SCOTLANDS PEOPLE

ScotlandsPeople (www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) is “the official Scottish Government site for searching government records and archives.”¹ A free account is required to search the indexes. Viewing most of the records requires buying credits. For details about what things cost and to purchase credits, click “Our charges” at the top of the site. Credits expire after two years unless more credits are purchased within the two years after the first credits were bought.

There are three types of records available online: those indexed by personal name, searchable by place, and special categories.

Records

Indexed by Personal Name

Records searchable by personal name are:

- Statutory registers of births, marriages, and deaths (civil registration), 1855-present
- Census returns, 1841-1911 (1921 will be released in the latter half of 2022)
- Church records (Church of Scotland, other Presbyterian churches, and Catholic), from 1553
- Valuation rolls (tax), every 10 years from 1855-1915, every 5 years from 1920-1940
- Wills and testaments, including soldiers’ and airmen’s wills, 1513-1965
- Military service appeals tribunal, from 1916
- Coats of arms, 1672-1920
- Highland and Island Emigration Society records, 1852-1857

Searchable by place

Records searchable by place name are:

- Kirk session records, 1560-1870
- Other church court records, from 1560
- Maps and plans, from 16th century
- Collections indexed by personal name

Special Categories

- Image Library (photographs from 1850s and other images)
- Scottish Cabinet records, 1999-2005

¹ “About us.” ScotlandsPeople. <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/about-us>. Accessed November 2021.

Search Options

There are various ways you can search by name.

- Exact name only
- Fuzzy matching
- Wild cards allowed
- Names that begin with
- Name variants
- Phonetic matching

Toggle the switch to turn 'Tips' on to have ScotlandsPeople give you advice about how you might improve your search. For more information about how ScotlandsPeople uses the above searches and problems you may encounter with Scottish names, check out their "Surnames" and "Forenames" guides.

Guides

ScotlandsPeople has very detailed guides about each record collection, topics relating to the records, and how-to guides. You can find these by clicking "Help and guidance" at the top of the site. If you are new to Scottish research (and even if you aren't), I recommend reading the guide on the type of record you plan to search before jumping into the search.

Timelines

Timelines help you organize your research. Find them by clicking on your name after you have logged in. You can create multiple timelines, add records to your timelines (it will tell you if you've already added the record), and view, edit, and sort your timelines. You may delete a timeline if you no longer want it.

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