

Summer 1978

Notes on search for family history in Scotland

Introduction

Several types of records can shed light on a family history, some more accessible or rich in information than others. The records which will yield most information most quickly are the Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths and Old Parish Registers, which are kept in the Registrar's Office in Princes Street, Edinburgh (opposite the GPO). Other potentially useful records are the land registers which are kept in the building next door to the Registrar's Office, or possibly the Scottish Railway Archives. Clearly, documents such as wills or land registers will be richer in biographical details than Birth, Marriage or Death Certificates, whereas the latter are more useful for establishing the major details such as dates, names of family members, and whereabouts.

Records held in the Registrar's Office (Registrar General's Office)

From 1855 in Scotland, registration of Birth's, Marriages and Deaths was compulsory, and certificates were issued along the lines we know today. Before that time the Old Parish Records contain, to a greater or lesser extent similar details. Census's were held every 10 years from 1841 and these can provide extremely useful information to help pinpoint the whereabouts of the family.

In summary, the Office contains:

1. Census records from 1841-1891
2. Certificates of Birth's, Marriages and Deaths from 1855.
3. Old Parish Records up to about 1855.
4. Index of the script on the headstones in most of the Scottish Churchyards (provided by the Scottish Genealogical Society)
5. Alphabetical lists, year by year, of the certificates of Birth, Marriage and Death held by the office (known as the Indices).

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The Indices of Births and Birth Certificates

If the year of birth is known this index will give the parish (very important) of birth and the number of the entry in the local register. Knowing the parish and entry number, the actual certificate can be found very quickly (on request to the assistants ~~XXXXXX~~ in the office, who will look out the register from the archives at the back of the room). The Birth Certificate itself will provide the following additional information :

- father's name
- mother's name (and maiden name)
- date of marriage (not for a few years immediately after 1855)
- address of birthplace
- occupation of father

The Indices of Marriage and Marriage Certificates

Knowing the ~~approximate~~ date of marriage (from the Birth Certificate of one of the children) the Marriage Index will give the parish and entry number of the marriage in ~~the~~ the local register. The marriage certificate, very helpfully, gives the following:

- age of both parties
- occupation of both parties
- parents (both) of both parties (including the maiden names of the mothers)
- occupations (sometimes) of the fathers

Knowing the age of the two parties their birth certificates can be found easily, as described above.

Incidentally, in cases of doubt, a cross check can be made in the Index by looking separately for the name of the man (in the male index) and the woman (in the female index). Both Indices should refer to the same entry in the same local register.

The Indices of Death and Death Certificates

Deaths are indexed in exactly the same way as births and marriages. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to know the year of death ~~(birth)~~ (birth and marriage certificates do not contain such information; one ~~can~~ tends not to know the day nor the hour!) This is a great pity as the Death Certificates sometimes contain much useful information:

- date of death and cause (sometimes very detailed)
- place of death
- age at death (bless them, sometimes they lost count)
- whether the person was a widow or widower (this helps in the process of elimination to find the date of death of the other partner)
- marriage partner of the deceased (including maiden name)
- maiden name of the deceased (if female)
- parents of the deceased

The amount of information in the Death Certificates makes it worth the extra effort involved in looking up the indexes for ~~several~~ several years when the approximate date of death is known.

Old Parish Records

The local ministers were obliged to make an entry for every birth marriage or death which came under their jurisdiction. However, some of them were not very reliable in doing this, and some of them had atrocious hand-writing, so there are a few gaps, fortunately not many. Worse than this, these documents are not indexed, so that a search in them requires painstaking scrutiny of every entry. It is clearly an advantage to know the approximate date of the entry one is looking for, and one can only hope ~~that~~ that the family did not move to or from an unknown parish during the period of interest. Clues as to parish of origin are given in the ~~marriage~~ marriage entries (so-and-so of such-and-such a parish). The women in all cases are referred to by their maiden names. Unlike the later Death Certificates, the death entries contain little more than the cause of death.

Gravestones

The indices of gravestones can be used to correlate members of ~~family~~ families, and may help to locate a family if it was suspected that they had moved.

Census records

These give much useful information, e.g.

- occupants of a given address on the night of the census
- occupations of the occupants
- ~~ages~~ ages
- details of the accommodation (e.g. how many windows)
- acreage of ~~farms~~ farms

As these records are not indexed, it is again necessary to know the parish of the family sought for. The records can be very useful in finding who belongs to which family, and in finding details about brothers and sisters. Although they often had to guess at their ages, the census records ~~give~~ give clues about dates of birth.

Access to the records

The following options are available:

1. Search in the Indices and Certificates of Birth, Marriage and Death (currently £3 for one day)
2. As 1. plus access to the Census records and Old Parish Registers (£3.50 per day).

Option 2 requires allocation of a seat in the library which are issued on a first-come-first-served basis. The rush starts at 9.30 a.m. when the doors open. It pays to ~~pay for a seat~~ take out a week's search which costs £8 if you think you will be there for more than two days in one week. Doing this will automatically entitle you to a seat in the library, and, of course, access to all the records. The Office is open from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. on weekdays.

Family History Notes

The following are the notes obtained from Census Records, The General Registers, and Old Parish Registers of Scotland. The Search concentrated on the Nimmo's but a small amount of information was also obtained about the Williamsons. The notes here are as they were gleaned from the records with little attempt to co-ordinate the conclusions. In a few instances information was obtained about branches of the family which have little direct relevance to the family line but are included for the record. These red herrings occur from time to time during a search because it may not be clear whether the facts are relevant or not. Often, in any case, these red herrings shed light on family relationships.

Williamson

- Family Bible: Alexander Williamson m. Alison Walker Sept 1890,
North Esk Church, Musselburgh
- Verbal : John Walker, father of Alison, was brought up
by stepmother. JW b.1842
- Marriage Cert: Isabella Brown m. John Walker, Sept 1866 at Inveresk
Manse, Musselburgh (28.9.1866)
John Walker; Fisherman, age 24, Gibson's Close,
Fisherrow, parents: William Walker, fisherman,
and Jane Peat (deceased).
Isabella Brown: Fishseller, age 21, Cairds Row,
Fisherrow, parents: Walter ~~Brown~~ Brown, fisherman,
and Alison Hay.
- Birth Cert : Alison Walker, b.7.7.1867, Cairds Row, Fisherrow,
Parents, John Walker, fisherman (literate, because he
signed his name), and Isabella Brown.
JW m. IB 28.9.1866
- Birth Cert : Alexander Williamson b. 5.7.1865, New Street, Fisherrow.
Parents: William ~~Williamson~~ Williamson, fisherman (illiterate)
Jane Gray
WW m. JG 15.9.1848
- Index : Isabel Brown b. 1861 ~~ix~~, Inveresk
d. 1938 , Inveresk

Nimmo

- Birth Cert : Andrew Harvey Nimmo, b 22.9.1894, Salmond Place, Edinburgh
 Parents: Alexander Nimmo, railwayman
 Jessie Harvey
 AN m. ~~JH~~ JH 22.6.1890, Airdrie
- Marriage Cert: Alexander Nimmo m. Jessie Harvie 20.6.1890 at 6, John St, Airdrie.
 Alexander Nimmo; railway stoker, age 26, 6, Meadowbank, Abbeyhill, Edinburgh.
 Parents: William Nimmo, railway platelayer
 Agnes Emslie
 Jessie Harvie: domestic servant, age 25, 6, John St, Airdrie,
 Parents: Andrew Harvie, enginekeeper at ironworks
~~Jain~~
 Jane Baird (deceased)
- Birth Cert : Jessie Murdoch Harvey b. 2.11.1864, 49, North Bridge St, Airdrie.
 Parents: Andrew Harvey, stoker in an iron works
 Jane Baird
 AH m. JB 15.5.1861
- Marriage Cert: Andrew Harvey m. Jane Baird 15.5.1861
 Andrew Harvey: age 23, hammerman, 4, John St, Airdrie
 Parents: Robert Harvey, baker (deceased)
 Janet Murdoch
 Jane Baird : age 20, mill worker, North St, Airdrie
 Parents: Robert Baird, pitoversman
 Catherine Carrick
- Birth Cert : Alexander Nimmo b. 16.2.1863, Loan, Muiravonside
 Parents: William Nimmo, labourer
 Agnes Emsley
 no date of marriage of WN to AE given
- Death Cert : Mary Nimmo, d. 18.5.1864, age 93, Polmont
 wife of Alexander Nimmo, farmer (deceased?)
 daughter of Robert Simpson, innkeeper
- Death Cert : Helen Nimmo, d. 18.9.1869, age 75, Awells, Polmont
 d. of jaundice caused by hepatic tumour
 widow of John Nimmo, labourer
 father John Binnie, mother Helen Craig
 certificate signed by son Thomas
- Death Cert : Alexander Nimmo, portioner, d. 14.11.1858, age 90, Loan, Muiravonside
 Parents not given
 cert. signed by son Alexander
- Death Cert : John Nimmo, d. 16.8.1858, age 5, no cause given
 father William Nimmo, mother Agnes Emsley
 cert. signed by father
- Death Cert : William Nimmo, railway surfaceman, age 76, d. 12.7.1903
 wife, Agnes Emslie. He died at Loan, Muiravonside
 father, John Nimmo, farmer
 mother, Helen Binnie

Nimmo (cont)Census 1841 : Polmont

Grange: James Nimmo, 25, male servant, b. Polmont
 Haypark: Janet Nimmo, 20, female servant, b. Polmont
 Bennetstone: Widow Nimmo, 65, independent means (scored out)
 b. Polmont
 house shared with Isabella Stewart, 15, born
 elsewhere
 Nestquarter House: John Nimmo, 15, male servant, b. Polmont
 Nestquarter Lodge: Hugh Nimmo, 40, agricultural labourer,
 born elsewhere
 Janet Nimmo, 40, wife of Hugh, b. Polmont
 George, 20, son of Hugh, mason, b. Polmont
 Margaret, 20, daughter, b. Polmont
 Mary, 12, daughter, b. Polmont
 Hugh, 9, son, b. Polmont
 Elizabeth, 7, daughter, b. Polmont
 Redding, Northmuir: George Nimmo, 45, carter, b. Polmont
 Janet Binnie, 45, wife, b. Polmont
 Alexander, ~~xxxxxxx~~ 24, son, boatman,
 b. Polmont
 Robert, 20, son, b. Polmont
 Mary, 18, daughter, b. Polmont
 Janet, 16, daughter, b. Polmont
 George, 14, son, b. Polmont
 Christian, 12, son, b. Polmont
 Helen, 10, daughter, b. Polmont
 Andrew, 7, son, b. Polmont
 Margaret, 4, daughter, b. Polmont

Muiravonside

Candie End: John Nimmo, 35, born elsewhere
 Helen, 35, b. Polmont ? (difficult to read)
 William, 14, b. Polmont?
 Mary, 10, b. Polmont?
 Margaret, 8, b. Polmont?
 Thomas, 5, b. Polmont?
 Hendry, 1, ~~M~~ b. Muiravonside

Census 1851 : ~~Oldwalls~~Polmont

Oldwalls: Margaret Nimmo, 19, House servant, b. Polmont
~~xxxxxxx?~~
 ?:
 Front Row: Agnes Nimmo, 32, widow, teacher, b. Polmont
 James Nimmo, 40, labourer on Coal Hill, b. Falkirk
 Anne, 33, wife, b. Linlithgow
 Margaret, 11, daughter, b. Falkirk
 Isabella, 3, daughter, b. Polmont
 Helen, 1, daughter, b. Polmont
 Front Row: Mary Nimmo, 77, widow, proprietor of houses,
 b. Slamannan, Stirlingshire
 ?:
 Hugh Nimmo, 52, agricultural labourer, b. Mull,
 Argyll
 Janet, 54, wife, b. Polmont
 Elizabeth, 17, daughter, b. Polmont
 John, 23, ~~xxxx~~, house servant, b. Polmont
 ?:
 James Nimmo, 20, farm servant, b. Polmont
 ?:
 Henry Nimmo, 50, coal carter, b. Polmont
 Elizabeth, 47, wife, b. Polmont
 Peter, 12, son, apprentice tailor, b. Polmont
 Elizabeth, 10, daughter, b. Polmont
 Helen, 7, daughter, b. Polmont

Nimmo (cont)

Census 1851: Polmont (cont)

- ?: George Nimmo, 55, carter, b. Polmont
- Janet, 57, wife, b. Muiravonside
- Grace, 23, dressmaker, b. Falkirk
- Andrew, 16, son, apprentice joiner, b, Polmont
- Margaret, 14, dahghter, b. Polmont

Muiravonside

- Candie End: John Nimmo, 50, farmer of 50 acres arable and 4 acres moor, employing 1 labourer and 1 boy b. Muiravonside
- Helen, 51, farmer's wife, b. Polmont
- Thomas, 15, son, b. Polmont
- Henryx Johnston, 10, son, b. Muiravonside
- Grace Thomson, 23, house servant
- ?; William Nimmo, 24, agricultural labourer, b. Polmont
- Agnes, 23, wife, b. Linlithgow
- Mary, 2, daughter, b. Muiravonside
- Helen, 1, daughter, b. Muiravonside
- ?: John Malcom, 36
- Janet, 31, wife
- John Nimmo, 3, stepson, b. Muiravonside
- ?: Alexander Nimmo, 22, agricultural labourer, b. Muiravonside
- Margaret, 27, wife, b. Linlithgow-Ecclesmachan

Whitebridge Farm: Alexander Nimmo, 49, farmer of 50 acres, b. Muiravonside

- Mary, 36, wife, b. Muiravonside
- Marion, 26, b. Muiravonside
- David, 16, b. Muiravonside
- Mary, 14, b. Muiravonside
- Jane, 12, b. Muiravonside
- William, 12, b. Muiravonside
- George, 10, b. Muiravonside
- Janet, 6, b. Muiravonside
- John, 4, b. Muiravonside
- Margaret, 10 months, b. Muiravonside

Handburn No.1: Alexander Nimmo, 79, proprietor, b. Muiravonside

- Mary, w 81, wife, b. Muiravonside
- Alexander McGibbon, 22, grandson, servant

Handburn No.2: Thomas Nimmo, 36, Labourer on coal pit head, b. Muiravonside

- Helen, 40, wife, b. Muiravonside
- Alexander, ~~Nimmo~~ 9, b. Muiravonside
- Margaret, 5, b. Muiravonside

Nimmo

Census 1861: Polmont No relevant information to be found in this census. A number of Nimmo families lived here but John Nimmo and Helen Binnie did not.

Muiravonside John Nimmo and Helen Binnie are not recorded in this census. Helen Binnie (widow) died in Polmont in 1869. It is possible that John was already dead and that Helen was staying with her family elsewhere at the time of the census. A search for the death certificate of John after 1855 proved fruitless.

Loan, Muiravonside: Thomas Nimmo, 46, head surfaceman on railway, b. Muiravonside

Elizabeth, 42, wife, b. Kirknewton, Edinburgh

Alexander, 19, son, engineman, b. Muiravonside

Loan, Muiravonside : William Nimmo, 31, surfaceman on railway, b. Polmont

Agnes, 30, wife, b. Linlithgow

Mary, 13, daughter, b. Muiravonside

Helen, 12, daughter, b. Muiravonside

Agnes, 10, daughter, b. Muiravonside

Margaret, 6, Daughter, b. Muiravonside

Peter, 3, son, b. Muiravonside

Whiterigg farm: Alexander Nimmo, 60, farmer 65 acres, b. Muiravonside

Mary, 46, wife, b. Muiravonside

David, 25, son, ploughman, b. Muiravonside

Jane, 22, daughter, dairymaid, b. Muiravonside

George, 17, son, agricultural labourer, b. Muiravonside

Janet, 15, daughter, servant, b. Muiravonside

John, 13, son, b. Muiravonside

Margaret, 10, daughter, b. Muiravonside

Robert, 9, son, b. Muiravonside

James, 7, son, b. Muiravonside

Andrew, 4, son, b. Muiravonside

?: John Malcom

Janet Malcom, wife

John Nimmo, 13, stepson

Nimmo
Old Parish Registers
Polmont

Births : Henry Johnston Nimmo, b. 12.7.1840
parents John Nimmo, Helen Binnie
Thomas Nimmo, b. 27.1.1836; parents John Nimmo, Helen Binnie
Mary Nimmo, b. 20.4.1829, parents John Nimmo, Helen Binnie
Alexander Nimmo, b. 25.7. 1829, parents Henry Nimmo,
Elizabeth Dougal
Margaret Nimmo, b. 22.4.1831, parents John Nimmo, Helen Binnie
Helen Nimmo, b. 25.12.1822, parents John Nimmo, Helen Binnie
William Nimmo, b. 24.11.1826, parents John Nimmo, Helen Binnie
John Nimmo, b. 14.11.1824, parents John Nimmo, Helen Binnie
Henry Nimmo, b. 25.2.1801, ~~parents John Nimmo, Helen Binnie~~
parents Alexander Nimmo, Grizel Roger
Mary Nimmo, b. 27.7.1799, parents Alex. Nimmo, Grizel Roger
Helen Nimmo, b. 25.10.1797, parents Alex. Nimmo, Grizel Roger
George Nimmo, b. 9.7.1795, parents Alex Nimmo, Grizel Roger

Marriages

Marriages: Alexander Nimmo, Helen Donaldson, m. 24.2.1836
~~John Nimmo, Helen Binnie, m. 26.11.1819, m~~
John Nimmo, Helen Binnie, m. 26.11.1819, m

Muiravonside

Births

: Mary Nimmo, b. 5.7.1848, parents William Nimmo, Agnes Ainsley
John Nimmo, b. 17.10.1847, parents Alex Nimmo, Mary Robertson
Thomas Nimmo, b. 22.5.1814, parents Alex Nimmo, Mary Brown
Jean Nimmo, b. 24.6.1810, parents Alex Nimmo, Mary Brown
William Nimmo, b. 4.6.1806, Parents Alex Nimmo, Mary Brown
Charlotte Nimmo, b. 13.1.1803, parents Alex Nimmo, Mary Brown
girl, not named, b. 27.4.1801, parents Alex Nimmo, Mary Brown
Alexander Nimmo, b. 1.5.1800, parents Alex Nimmo, Mary Brown
Janet Nimmo, b. 22.12.1797, parents Alex Nimmo, Mary Brown
John Nimmo, b. 14.5.1796, parents Alex Nimmo, Mary Brown
Jean Gibson Nimmo, b. 27.10.1799, parents John Nimmo,
Helen Inglis

Alexander Nimmo, b. 20.1.1771, parents John Nimmo, Isobel Johnston
John Nimmo, b. 11.12.1768, parents John Nimmo, Isobel Johnston
Walter Scott (illegit.), b. 14.12.1760, parents Walter Scott,
Mary Nimmo (see also note below)
Thomini Nimmo, b. 30.4.1746, parents Alex Nimmo, Christian
Buchan

James Nimmo, b. 5.7.1742, parents Alex Nimmo, Christian Buchan
James Nimmo, b. 26.8.1739, parents Alex Nimmo, Christian Buchan
John Nimmo, b. 4.8.1737, parents Alex Nimmo, Christian Buchan
Margaret Nimmo, b. 7.8.1734, parents Alex Nimmo, Christian Buchan
George Nimmo, b. 2.7.1732, parents Alex Nimmo, Christian Buchan
Marie Nimmo, b. 18.1.1730, parents, Alex Nimmo, Christian Buchan
Joan Nimmo, b. 20.8.1727, parents Alex Nimmo, Christian Buchan
Margaret Nimmo, b. 12.7.1725, parents Alex Nimmo, Christian Buchan

Note: Birth of Walter Scott Normally all the birth entries carry the names of two witnesses. However, in this case, the name John Nimmo appears on its own beneath the names of the parents, and above the names of the two witnesses.

Nimmo family tree

The following is a summary of the Nimmo family tree researched so far leading to Andrew Harvey Nimmo, born in Salmond Place, Edinburgh.

Andrew Harvey Nimmo, b. 22.9.1894, d. 18.8.1970,
 parents Alexander Nimmo, Jessie Murdoch Harvey
 Alexander Nimmo, b. 16.2.1863, d.
 parents William Nimmo, Agnes Emsley
 Jessie Murdoch Harvey, b. 2.11.1864, d.
 parents Andrew Harvey, Jane Baird
 William Nimmo, b. 24.11.1826, d. 12.7.1903
 parents John Nimmo, Helen Binnie
 Agnes Emsley, b. ca 1827, d.
 parents

~~Jessie Murdoch Harvey~~

Andrew Harvey, b. ca.1838, d.
 parents Robert Harvey, Janet Murdoch
 Jane Baird, b. ca.1841, d.
 parents Robert Baird, Catherine Carrick
 John Nimmo, b. 14.5.1796, d.
 parents Alexander Nimmo, Mary Brown
 Alexander Nimmo b. 20.1.1771, d. 1858
 parents John Nimmo, Isobel Johnston
 John Nimmo, b. 4.8.1737, d.
 parents Alexander Nimmo, Christian Buchan
 Alexander Nimmo, b. d.
 parents George Nimmo, Mary Dougal ??
 George Nimmo b. d. 1711?

Notes to above conclusions

The evidence for the line back to John Nimmo and Helen Binnie is very conclusive. William Nimmo's death certificate confirms that his parents were John Nimmo and Helen Binnie. The parentage of John Nimmo, however is not so certain, but the following facts support the theory that his parents were Alexander Nimmo and Mary Brown:

1. He was born in Muiravonside (he later moved to Polmont, when he married Helen Binnie, and his first four children were born there. He moved back to Muiravonside between the births of Thomas and Henry, between 1836 and 1841) Helen returned to Polmont again to die there in 1869). All this information can be established from the censuses of 1841-1861.

2. The census information suggests that he was born around 1800, but he was not too clear about his age as he put on 15 years between the 1841 and 1851 censuses. The only John Nimmo to be recorded in the Muiravonside Parish register around this time was born to Alexander Nimmo and Mary Brown in 1796.

3. His son Henry ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Johnston may well have been called after ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ John's grandmother Isobel Johnston. (Against this, however, although he called his eldest son Alexander he may not have followed tradition for naming his subsequent children if his parents were indeed Alexander Nimmo and Mary Brown; ~~xxxx~~ search for Helen Binnie's parents would shed some light on this; one should expect them to be called Helen and John.).

It is quite possible that Alexander Nimmo, portioner, b.1771, d. 1858, was a farmer who split his farm, giving 50 acres to Alexander b. 1800. John, the eldest son got 50 acres when he returned to Muiravonside. In any case, we know from the census information that both John and Alexander ~~xxxx~~ (the eldest and second sons of Alexander b. 1771) were both farmers, and it would be reasonable to assume that, if they had inherited their farms, the family had been tied to Muiravonside for some time. The line back to Alexander Nimmo and Christian Buchan follows fairly easily by checking all the entries in the Muiravonside Parish Register.

