



Scotland Maps and Gazetteers

Dan Poffenberger, AG®

British Research Specialist ~ Family History Library
poffenbergerds@familysearch.org

Understanding the geography of where your ancestors lived can help us understand their lives better and it may also help the researcher solve research problems. This is absolutely true with Scottish research. Scotland is a diverse country geographically extending from the lowlands near the England border far north to the vast Scottish highlands and the islands of the north and west. Parish and civil records that record the vital events of Scottish ancestors' lives often record the small town or village and maybe even farm where your ancestor lived. This course will help you find these locations on the various Scottish map resources available, find written descriptions of the locales and help the researcher understand why historical geography is important. Lastly, it will explore ways for finding additional resources.

National Geography

Scotland is the second largest in area and population of four countries making up the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Edinburgh, on the east coast, is the country's capital and Glasgow in the west is the largest city. Other major cities include Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth, Stirling and Inverness. Currently the country is divided into 32 unitary authorities. This has been the case since 1996.

Historical Geography

From 1975 to 1996, the country was divided into 12 regions and many districts. However, prior to 1975, the country was divided into 34 counties, also called shires. The seven cities listed above also had status as burghs from the government.

As a researcher, knowing the 34 historic counties is important because virtually all records are cataloged that way by FamilySearch and repositories in Scotland and genealogical software standards record Scottish places by parish, county and country. On modern maps, however, the 12 modern regions or even the 32 unitary authorities may be shown. The table below shows the modern regions and which historic counties they cover:

New Region (County) Old Counties

Borders	Berwick, Peebles, Roxburgh, Selkirk, and a small part of Midlothian
Central	Clackmannan, parts of Perth and West Lothian, and most of Stirling
Dumfries and Galloway	Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, and Wigtown
Fife	Fife
Grampian	Aberdeen, Kincardine, Banff, and most of Moray
Highland	Caithness, Nairn, and Sutherland and most of Argyll, Inverness, Moray, and Ross and Cromarty
Lothian	East Lothian and most of Midlothian and West Lothian

Strathclyde	Bute, Dunbarton, Lanark, Renfrew, Ayr, and parts of Argyll and Stirling
Tayside	Angus, Kinross, and part of Perth
Orkney	Orkney
Shetland	Zetland (or Shetland)
Western Isles	Island areas of Inverness and Ross & Cromarty

Unlike place names in other European countries, many place names in Scotland have not changed for hundreds of years although some counties have alternate names. Several shires have alternative names of long standing. These include: Angus – Forfarshire, East Lothian – Haddingtonshire, Kincardineshire – Mearns, Midlothian – Edinburghshire, Moray – Elginshire, Peeblesshire – Tweeddale, Selkirkshire – Etrick Forest, West Lothian – Linlithgowshire. The town of Dunbarton is in the county often spelled Dunbartonshire. Within the counties are thousands of towns, villages and other named areas. Because of the Church of Scotland, the established state church, about 900 parish churches were built to which the towns and villages belong.

Gazetteers

A gazetteer is a dictionary of place-names. Gazetteers describe towns, villages, parishes, counties, rivers, mountains, population, and other geographical features. The place-names are generally in alphabetical order, similar to a dictionary.

Gazetteers may provide more information about towns, such as: distance from nearby places, religious denominations, major manufacturing works, canals, docks, and railroad stations, and seats of landed-gentry families. This is true for Scotland. Knowing this information might also explain historical movements of population between various areas.

Use a gazetteer to find the places where your family lived and to determine the civil and church jurisdictions over those places. Gazetteers are also helpful for determining the county jurisdictions used in the FamilySearch Catalog.

Many places in Scotland have the same or similar names. A gazetteer can help you identify the most common spellings and the counties that have a place by that name.

Online Gazetteers

There are some very good gazetteers available online for Scotland. They are:

Vision of Britain - <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk>

To use this resource, click on the link and then on the first page. Then go to Step one: Select a location. In the location you need to identify the city. It will come up with one or more choices to choose from. Next you have your choice as to what you want to know. At the bottom on the right hand side it gives you a choices of maps.

At the bottom of the home screen, you may also click on Expert Search. On the next screen, select the "Descriptive gazetteer search," then you may search for a place of interest to see a gazetteer description from Francis H. Groome's Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland, the 1885 edition.

Gazetteer for Scotland - www.scottish-places.info/

The Gazetteer for Scotland is a vast geographical encyclopedia, featuring details of towns, villages, bens and glens from the Scottish Borders to the Northern Isles. The first

comprehensive gazetteer produced for Scotland since 1885, it includes tourist attractions, industries and historical sites, together with histories of family names and clans, biographies of famous Scots and descriptions of historical events associated with Scotland.

Gazetteers of Scotland, 1803-1901- <http://digital.nls.uk/gazetteers-of-scotland-1803-1901/>

Twenty volumes of the most popular descriptive gazetteers of Scotland, providing a comprehensive geographical encyclopaedia of Scotland in the 19th century. Principal places in Scotland, including towns, counties, castles, glens, antiquities and parishes, are listed alphabetically. Each entry includes detailed historical and geographical information about each place.

A Gazetteer of Scotland - www.gazetteerofscotland.org.uk/

This website enables you to search Groome's Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland for any city or town, village or parish, mountain or river, island or loch. It was first published in six volumes in 1882 and this website contains facsimile images of every page of the six volumes of the 2nd Edition of 1896, including the 1754 pages of text, (the Gazetteer articles and the General Survey), 32 photo-lithographs, 30 county maps and eight fold-out street plans and additional maps. We have also included the 64 plates of Scottish scenes from the First Edition which were printed from hand-engraved plates. It quickly established a reputation as the authoritative gazetteer of Scotland, and has been the standard reference to the present day.

It also has a list of parishes for each county. These are accessed from links on the Index of Counties page. For each parish there is a link to its article in the Gazetteer. A further link for each parish enables you to locate the parish on a modern Ordnance Survey map on the Multimaps web site. Another version is available at Electric Scotland (<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/gazetteer/index.htm>).

Gazetteers at the Family History Library

Groom, Francis H. *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland*. 6 vols. Edinburgh, Scotland: Thomas J. Jack, Grange Publishing Works, 1883-6. (Family History Library book Ref 941 E5g; fiche 6020391-411.) This set of gazetteers alphabetically lists place names as they appeared during the 1880s. A brief description includes distance from other nearby places, name(s) of the church denomination(s) in the area, historical background, and the civil district.

Wilson, John. *The Gazetteer of Scotland*. Edinburgh, Scotland: W. & A. K. Johnson, 1882. (Family History Library book Ref. 941 E5j; film 990430 item 14; fiche 6026374.)

A good atlas and gazetteer showing the modern regions is:

Mason, Oliver. *Bartholomew Gazetteer of Places in Britain*. Edinburgh, Scotland: John Bartholomew & Son, 1986. (Family History Library book Ref 942 E5ba 1986.) Places are in alphabetical order. The town descriptions in the gazetteer will tell you where to find each locality on the maps included in the book.

Maps

Maps can help you locate where your ancestors lived. There are many types of maps and each can help you in a different way. Maps may describe: economic growth and development, boundaries, migration and settlement patterns, locations of clans and families, military campaigns, transportation development, highways, rivers, town size, effects of plagues.

Other types of maps that will be critical to your research include: historical, parish, county, topographical, enclosure, civil district, clan and family and church diocesan maps. When bound into a book they are called atlases but often they are published separately. Maps may also be found in gazetteers, guidebooks, local histories, directories, or historical and social texts. City and street maps are helpful when researching in large cities. Remember, each map was made by the cartographer for a specific reason. Therefore, a map of Scotland parish jurisdictions would not likely be the kind of map to show the mountains, valleys, rivers or the general contour of the land. Obtaining different types of maps for the area of research can be very helpful.

Using Maps

It is important to use maps carefully because several places have the same name. For example, there are 57 places called Mount Pleasant in Great Britain. Also, the place-name on the map may not be spelled as expected. Names in records were often spelled like they sounded.

Online Maps

Perhaps the best way to start a map search is to begin with a simple map of Scottish counties. These can be found through a simple online search using the terms "Scotland Counties Map Pre-1974". The following link is to the pre and post 1974 Scotland county maps at

FamilySearch.org -

http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Scotland_Old_Counties_pre_1974_and_New_Counties_post_1974

ScotlandsFamily.com - <http://www.scotlandsfamily.com/parish-maps.htm>

Next, a simple map of the parishes in the county of research is helpful. Such maps can be found at ScotlandsFamily.com at the address above.

National Library of Scotland Maps - <http://maps.nls.uk/>

Having established the basic lay of the land through county and parish maps, Scotland what must be one of the greatest collections of online maps at the National Library of Scotland website. Currently, the website has over 86,000 online maps. These include the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd edition Ordnance Survey maps, historic maps from as early as 1560. They are extremely well done with the images being very clear.

While there is no substitute for exploring a website and trying a variety of searches, begin by clicking on "Find by Place" or the large green outline map of Scotland. In the column on the left, type the name of a place in the box labeled "Gazetteer / NG Ref:" Also be sure to select the maps series using the drop down menus for the boxes "1. Select a category:" and "2. Select a map group:" If a map for the category and series selected exists for the location, the main map area will show the area and it will be shaded in a color. Click on that space and a list of available map(s) will appear in the column on the right. Select one of these and a detailed description of the map and a thumbnail map will be displayed. Click on the map thumbnail and it will enlarge and can be magnified to the desired size.

ScotlandsPlaces - <http://www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/>

ScotlandsPlaces brings together in one place a place search with results including gazetteers, maps, ordnance survey listings and other records. Some parts of it are available to subscribers only but there is enough free information that it is definitely worth exploring.

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland - <http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/>

The commission has an archive of many millions of photographs, maps, drawings and documents about buildings and landscapes, from prehistory to the present day. They are all available for your personal or commercial use and can be browsed, copied or purchased both in person and online. They add about 100,000 new items a year.

Highlights of the collection include: over 1.6 million images of Scotland, and many millions of military aerial intelligence photographs. The Canmore search on the website has information on more than 300,000 places in Scotland, with over 150,000 digital images.

A map showing the districts of the highland clans of Scotland of interest to many with Scottish ancestry. An internet search will uncover a number of them such as this one at Electric Scotland (www.electricscotland.com/webclans/clanmap.htm).

Historical societies, county record offices, and public and university libraries also all have collections of maps.

Some Key Scotland Maps at the Family History Library

Civil Parishes and Counties of North East Scotland. [Scotland]: Aberdeen and North East Scotland Family History Society, [198-]. (Family History Library book 941 E7c.)

National Map Series, Scale 1:100,000. Var. eds. Edinburgh, Scotland: John Bartholomew & Son, 1978-81. (Family History Library book 942 E7bm.) These are detailed, modern sheet maps, roughly one-mile-to-the-inch. Also in a bound atlas.

Parish Maps of Scotland. Salt Lake City, Utah: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1991. (Family History Library book 941 E7ch 1991.)

The Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers. 2nd ed. Chichester, England: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1995. (Family History Library book 942 E7pa 1995.)

The Ordnance Survey 1:50 000 Landranger Series. Southampton, England: Ordnance Survey, c1987-89. (Family History Library book 942 E5o.)

Keeping Current

Search the internet for "Scottish maps gazetteers online" and an excellent list of online options will be displayed.

Search the FamilySearch Wiki at: <http://wiki.familysearch.org>

At the Family History Library search the FamilySearch Catalog doing a place search for Scotland or the county name followed by clicking on the "Gazetteers" and "Maps" subject links.

Additional Resources

Civil Parish Map Index. Edinburgh, Scotland: General Register Office for Scotland, [1985?]. (Family History Library book 941 B4sg no. 1, 1987.)

Gilbert, Martin. *British History Atlas*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1968. (Family History Library book 942 E3bri). This national historical atlas contains maps to illustrate population movements, railways, battles, plagues, and more.

Harley, J.B. *Ordnance Survey Maps: A Descriptive Manual*. Southampton, England: Ordnance Survey, 1975. (Family History Library book 942 E3osa.) This explains the history of and detail on Ordnance Survey maps.

McNeill, Peter, and Ranald Nicholson, eds. *An Historical Atlas of Scotland, c. 400-c. 1600*. St. Andrews, Scotland: Atlas Committee of the Conference of Scottish Medievalists, 1975. (Family History Library book 941 E3ha.) This book contains many maps to illustrate population movements, settlement patterns, battles, and other important events in Scotland.

Rural and City Maps. Typescript. Salt Lake City, Utah: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1985. (Family History Library book 942 E73c). A partial list of such maps available at the Family History Library

Whittington, G., and I.D. Whittington, eds. *An Historical Geography of Scotland*. London, England: New York: Academic Press, 1983. (Family History Librarybook 941 E3sg.) This is a good overall review of Scotland's historical geography.

Wilkes, Margaret. *The Scot and His Maps*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Scottish Library Association, 1991. (Family History Library book 941 E7wm.) This is a good overview of the history of Scottish maps and mapmaking.

“Learn by Doing” Exercise

Gazetteers

- 1) On the internet, go to <http://wiki.familysearch.org> and type “Scotland Gazetteers” in the ‘Search by place or topic’ box then click on ‘search’.
- 2) Click on ‘Scotland Gazetteers’ in your search results then scroll down to ‘Online Gazetteers’. Click on the link below ‘Gazetteers of Scotland, 1803-1901’ (<http://digital.nls.uk/gazetteers-of-scotland-1803-1901/>).
- 3) Select the gazetteer titled “(6) 1842 - Topographical, statistical, and historical gazetteer of Scotland [ID: 97491772]” by clicking on blue link.
- 4) Search ‘(1) Volume 1’ by clicking on the blue link, not the black rectangle!
- 5) On the top center part of the screen you will see the words ‘Select a page:’ with a drop-down menu to the right. Click on the drop down arrow and search for the parish of Dull, Perthshire by scrolling down until you find the line ‘(424) Page 342 - Dul’ to the right and select it. Use the pages before and after feature on the left side of the screen to find the beginning of the description of Dull, Perthshire. The page with a description of Dull, Perthshire is actually page 341.
- 6) Answer the question “What parish borders Dull on the north?” [Blair-Athole]
- 7) Now find a parish of interest to you and do a similar search in this gazetteer and find out the population of the parish in 1801. (Note: if you choose a place smaller than a parish, the population will not likely be given).

Maps

- 1) On the internet, go to <http://wiki.familysearch.org> and type “Scotland Maps” in the ‘Search by place or topic’ box then click on ‘search’.
- 2) Click on the result “Scotland Maps”
- 3) In the ‘Contents’ box click on ‘5 Finding Maps and Atlases’ and click on the blue link labeled ‘Scottish Parish Maps’ toward the end of the first paragraph.
- 4) Select ‘Perthshire’ on the list and find the parish of Dull on the map.
- 5) Now do this for a parish you are interested in.
- 6) Return to the same ‘Finding Maps and Atlases’ paragraph in the FamilySearch wiki and select the blue link labeled ‘National Library of Scotland’.
- 7) In the section labeled ‘Popular Areas’ click on the box labeled ‘Map images’.
- 8) Click on the big pixelated map of Scotland labeled ‘Find by place’.
- 9) In box labeled ‘Gazetteer / NG Ref:’ in the upper left corner, type “Dull” and select the option that pops up labeled ‘Dull, Aberfeldy, Perth and Kinross PH15, UK’.
- 10) The central map portion of your screen will turn pink. Click on the lower center pink rectangle area that includes the place labeled ‘Dull’.
- 11) A results column on the right will show a single map “thumbnail” labeled ‘Perth and Clackmannan, Sheet XLVIII.12 (Dull)’. Note that the map was surveyed in 1862 then click on that thumbnail.

12) Use the mouse to zoom in on the map that appears in the middle of the screen. The town of Dull is in the top center of the map. Answer the question “What river, the longest in Scotland, runs east and west just south of Dull?” [Tay].

13) Using the back arrow on your browser, return to the screen that has the search boxes in the upper left. Change the map category and map series by clicking on the drop-down arrow for the boxes labeled ‘1. Select a category:’ and ‘2. Select a map / map series:’ and explore other maps series. (Note: not every place in Scotland is covered by every map series).

More about Your Place

- 1) In your browser, type “<http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/>” for the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland website.
- 2) In the search box toward the top center of the page labeled ‘Search Canmore’ type “Weem”. (The pictures for Weem are more interesting than Dull, obviously).
- 3) In the first search result labeled ‘Weem, Old Parish Kirk And Burial-Ground’ note the number of online digital images to the right then click on the picture thumbnail.
- 4) Click on the various picture thumbnails to explore.
- 5) Use the search box toward the top center of the screen and explore a place of your own.