



- ♦ **What are they?** The Old Parish Registers (OPRs) are the registers of births/baptisms, banns/marriages and some deaths/burials recorded by parishes of the Established Church of Scotland before civil registration began in 1855.
- ♦ **What dates do they cover?** The date range depends on the survival of records in each area. The majority of Highland OPRs commence in the mid to late 18th century, including those for Caithness.
- ♦ **What can I use them for?** To search for a birth, baptism, marriage proclamation, marriage, death or burial pre-1855. It should be noted that very few deaths are recorded.
- ♦ **What will they tell me?** The contents can vary greatly. Baptisms and marriages make up the bulk of the entries with births and burials also recorded in some parishes. Names of witnesses, occupations, places of residence are also frequently recorded.
- ♦ **Will there definitely be useful information in there?** Recording an entry in the parish registers could be expensive and was not compulsory and therefore the records are not a complete directory of all the births, marriages and deaths that took place. However, they are always worth checking. For the many entries that do exist, the information contained varies from one parish to another - no uniform system was introduced until 1855. In addition to the basic information included about the party/parties involved in the event, names of parents, places of residence, occupations and witness names can sometimes be found.



- ◆ **Do I need to know anything first?** If you are interested in a particular person it would be helpful to know the county and parish in which he/she lived. Also if you have a rough idea of the dates it helps to narrow down the search, as dates, especially for baptisms can vary from the expected year by a few months, or years. Some entries are difficult to read because they were badly written or the ink has faded over time. In older records there are unfamiliar handwriting styles and abbreviations.
- ◆ **Are there any viewing restrictions?** If the register has survived then you can view the relevant microfilm for Highland parishes in Caithness.
- ◆ **Where are the Original Records kept?** The original records are held by the National Archives of Scotland
- ◆ **Can I have photocopies?** Currently copies can only be obtained through the Scotlandspeople website.
- ◆ **Can I take photographs?** No. It is not permitted to take photographs from a screen: microfilm, microfiche or computer.



- ◆ **Where can I find out what you hold?** We hold Old Parish Registers for all Caithness parishes, as well as for those in Sutherland. These include: Bower, Canisbay, Dunnet, Halkirk, Latheron, Olig, Reay, Thurso, Watten and Wick. OPRs for parishes throughout Scotland are available to view on the ScotlandsPeople website.

