

Caithness Archive Centre: Principal Family History Sources

Census

A national census has been taken **every 10 years since 1841**, recording details of all persons living in a household (including occupation, age and place of birth), and those from 1841 to 1911 are open to the public. The Caithness Archive Centre holds microfilm copies of the following censuses for the counties of Caithness and Sutherland:

1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901

We also hold indexes for the 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871 and 1881 censuses (Caithness only).

The 1911 census is available via the **Scotland's People** website – www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk ; please note that a **charge** is made for each page accessed. (A Public Computer terminal is available for public use in our searchroom, and can be used to access the Scotland's People website if they have a personal account with them. **We do not have an Archive account.**)

Old Parish Registers

The Caithness Archive Centre holds microfilm copies of Old Parish Registers for all Caithness parishes, as well as for those in Sutherland. They are church records for baptisms and marriages **pre-1855**, and the **only source** for that period of time. As it was not compulsory to registers births/baptisms and marriages there will be gaps and not everyone will be in them. Dates especially for baptisms, can vary from the expected years by a few months, or years. **(The original records are held by the National Archives of Scotland.)**

Bower: B 1740-1855, M 1740-1854, Bu 1790-1795

Canisbay: B 1652-1854, M 1652-1854

Dunnet: B 1751-1854, M 1802-1854, D 1751-1756

Halkirk: B 1772-1854, M 1772-1854, Mission Registers 1790-1819

Latheron: B1740-1777, 1789-1854, M 1755-1854, 1855-1856

Orrig: B 1699-1854, M 1699-1854

Reay: B 1732-1854, M 1745-1854, D 1783-1791

Thurso: B 1647-1718, 1721-1817, 1820-1854, M 1671-1854, D 1671, Free Church Baptisms 1843-1854

Watten: B1714-1854, M 1714-1854

Wick: B 1701-1854, M 1703-1756, 1760-1854

International Genealogical Index

Also known as the **IGI**, this is an index to the Old Parish Register births and marriages prepared by the **Mormon Church**, and arranged by **surname**. It was created in 1969 to trace the names and family tree of the Mormon's ancestors who had died without knowledge of the restored Mormon gospel, so that they could be baptised by proxy in the temple. We hold the IGI on microfiche for Caithness, Sutherland, Inverness, Ross & Cromarty, Highlands, Orkney and Shetland. Location – Folder titled 'Microfiche' on Searchroom Shelves

Valuation Rolls

Compiled **annually since 1855**, Valuation Rolls give details of properties, owners and tenants/occupiers, and give an annual rental value, they were produced annually for taxation purposes.. Caithness Archive Centre holds copies of Valuation Rolls from **1855 to 1970** for the county of Caithness (**microfilm for 1855-1880, hard copies for 1880-1970**). They are organised by **Parish**, and then **geographically** and only list the names of the primary tenant, not the names of everyone who lived there. They also do not always give a specific address, and the name of the address may change throughout different years e.g. *house with land* could become *Freswick House* the next year. **Red Volumes** cover the **Burgh of Wick**. While **Blue Volumes** cover the **County of Caithness**.

Monumental Inscriptions

A useful resource for **deaths pre-1855**. The **Cowper & Ross** books are transcriptions taken from readable headstones in cemeteries in Caithness, they also contain some entries that are more modern. There is a section for each cemetery in the books, and a key at the front explaining the abbreviations used. There are also folders on the searchroom shelves detailing the more modern cemetery sections.

Abridgements of Sasines

The Sasines show the **ownerships of lands & property**, and the **passing of ownerships** from one individual to another. They give the names of the parties, the property and some boundary information. The full **Instruments of Sasines** are held by the National Records of Scotland, in Edinburgh.

Kirk Session Records

The Kirk Session was made up of the minister and elders of the church. It oversaw the care of the poor, maintaining the parish mortifications (charity rolls) and licensing beggars, and policing morality among parishioners. The original records of the Kirk Sessions for Caithness are held by the National Records of Scotland, but can be viewed free of charge on the **Public Access Computers** in the Nucleus searchroom via the **Scottish Documents** website.

Bower: 1870-1909	Olig: 1700-1848
Canisbay: 1652-1864	Reay: 1835-1866
Dunnet: 1786-1849	Thurso: 1647-1833
Halkirk: 1778-1842	Watten: 1701-1892
Latheron: 1734-1843	Wick: 1701-1816

Poor Law Records

The Poor Law (Scotland) Act of 1845 set up parochial boards to administer poor relief in each parish, and in 1894 this responsibility passed to parish councils. We hold a variety of Poor Law Minute Books and Registers **1845-1930**, which record (among other things) the names of applicants for poor relief. **All Poor Law Records have Closure Periods**. They are divided into sections:

Parochial Board Minute Books - These hold individual cases discussed and outcomes of cases, general Parish Business, Inspector's reports, list of paupers and the aid they are receiving from the Parochial Board.

Caithness Archives is part of **Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archives**, Airport Industrial Estate, Wick, Caithness, KW1 4QS

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Applications for Relief - Volumes kept by the Inspector of Poor as records of those he visited in each Parish, and the outcomes of each visit, details of circumstances of those requesting aid, if an applicant was admitted to the poor roll the application has a reference to look up in the General Register of Poor.

General Register of Poor - Often a complete record of an individual's interactions with the Parochial Board, including dates of discussions in the Board Minutes, circumstances, and aid required. If an individual had been struck off the Register as their circumstances had improved, but then re-admitted, they would keep the same reference, and their entry would resume when added back onto the roll. If an individual died while still receiving aid, the date and cause of death would be noted.

Children's Register - Similar to the General Register, but for children under 16. After 16, they are transferred to the General Register.

Pay Rolls - Show who was in receipt of aid, and how much they were receiving.

Letter Books - These are of the Inspector of the Poor, or other associated parties, and can contain details of specific cases to be brought before the Board.

School Records

The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act introduced state controlled schools, run by local school boards. **Log Books** comprise a diary of the life of the school, while **Admission Registers** record date of admission to the school, name, date of birth, and name of address of parent or guardian. We hold School Log Books, Admission and Attendance Registers for a number of schools in the county from **1874-1974. (Please note that Closure Periods apply)**

Ordnance Survey (O.S.) Maps

There are two editions of Ordnance Survey maps; the **First Edition made in 1872**, and the **Second Edition made in 1903**. The Map Key is on the Searchroom tables, there should also be another Key hanging in the Map Tanks. The **smaller scale is 25" to 1 mile**, and the **larger scale is 6" to 1 mile**. There are also the O.S. placename books, located in the bottom drawer of the filing cabinet in the Production Room.

Parish and Burgh Minutes

The Parish and Burgh Minutes, along with the early Commissioners of Supply, and the later Council Minutes are administrative records of the County and consist of decisions and transactions relating to matters of the Parish and County.

Customs and Excise

The main series of records are the **Fishing Boat Registers**, which give details of Fishing Boats **registered in Wick from 1869-1989**, and include details of owners, crew, name and description of vessel – Index on Searchroom Shelves