

# Researching your Dundee Family History

## Before you start...

Write down what you know. It may be useful to draw up a family tree. Ask family members about what they remember - ask them about specific people. Whilst people can be great sources of information remember that memories and family stories may not always be accurate.

Look at any records you may have at home: certificates, letters, photographs. They may give you names, dates or addresses to start with.

## Sources to use

The information you can find out about a person, will depend on where and when they lived, their occupation and what they did when they were alive. Research may take time and is not always easy. Some records have been indexed by name but others may take time to look through.

This guide lists the key sources which may be of use to most people researching their family history. There is no set order to using these records but we usually recommend starting with certificates and the census.

For more information about these sources, please see our research guides which explain more about what information they contain and how to use them.

## Certificates

Birth, marriage and death certificates have been issued in Scotland since 1855. You can obtain a copy of a certificate [from the Registrars](#) (Email: [registrars@dundeecity.gov.uk](mailto:registrars@dundeecity.gov.uk); Tel: 01382 435222). Alternatively births over 100 years, marriages over 75 years and deaths over 50 years can viewed online at [www.ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk](http://www.ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk) for a small fee. If you are doing a lot of family history you may wish to consider visiting the Scotlands People Centre in Edinburgh.

## Census Records

A census recording names was taken in Scotland every 10 years from 1841. The returns are closed for 100 years. So only 1841-1911 are available until 1921 is released in 2021. You can view all of these censuses online at [www.ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk](http://www.ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk) for a small fee. Again if you are looking for a lot of people you may wish to consider visiting the Scotland's People Centre in Edinburgh. The Registrars may be able to provide copies of census returns. Copies of 1841-1901 are available to view on microfilm at the Central Library but they are not indexed by name. You can also view transcripts of these on [Ancestry.co.uk](http://Ancestry.co.uk) but a subscription is needed.

## **Church Records**

Before 1855, the main record of births, marriages or deaths are the Old Parish Registers. In 1855 all registers were closed and sent to Edinburgh. The records that have survived can be searched and viewed online at [www.ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk](http://www.ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk) for a small fee. If a person did not attend an established church they may not appear in these records. We hold records of many Dundee churches, including non-established churches, e.g. Methodist. This includes some pre-1855 records and also post-1855 registers.

## **Burial Records**

The main place of burial in Dundee was the Howff. Other cemeteries and churchyards were built in the 19th century. Records of the Howff, the New Howff, Roodyards, St Peters, St Andrews and Logie are held at Dundee City Archives. Information about burials in the Eastern, Western, Balgay, Birkhill or Pitkerro Grove Cemeteries can be obtained from the Burials Administration team by emailing [parks.burials@dundeecity.gov.uk](mailto:parks.burials@dundeecity.gov.uk). You will need a full name and date of death. For more information please see our [Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Research Guide](#).

## **Directories**

These are a great source of information. Generally they are split into three parts: General Directory, Street Directory and Trades Directory. Usually only the head of the household is listed. Take note – you had to pay to be in a directory. So not everyone will be listed. We hold directories for 1782-1974 (with gaps). Some directories from before 1912 are available to view online on the National Library of Scotland website.

## **Valuation Rolls**

These list properties within a local authority area and the value of that property for the purpose of collecting rates (taxes). They started in 1855 and were created annually until 1990. Each roll will tell you the type of property, owner's name, tenant's name and occupation, the value of the property and the rates due. Only the head of the household or lease holder will be listed. These can be useful for finding out where someone lived if they are not in the directories.

We hold valuation rolls for Dundee covering 1871 and 1895-1990. You can also access valuation rolls from 1855 at the Wellgate Local History Library (on microfilm), at the National Records of Scotland and on [www.scotlandspeople.co.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.co.uk).

## **Electoral Rolls**

Electoral Rolls list everyone who is registered to vote. They are produced every year. There is a volume for each constituency which is then split into wards. Within each ward, names are listed by address. Before 1873 they are sorted by surname. We hold registers for 1939 and 1951-2011. A full run of electoral registers from 1856 onwards can be found at the Wellgate Local History Library.

## **School Records**

We hold records for most schools run by the Council and its predecessors, including the School Board. In many cases these include admission registers, log books, photographs and much more. We also hold records of Dundee High School. Please note that some records may be closed if they are less than 100 years old.

## Photographs

Photographs do not exist for every building, street or place. Usually there has to be a reason for the photograph to be taken and then to be kept. Not all photographs are available online but it is a good place to start. Try our Flickr site [www.flickr.com/photos/dundeecityarchives](http://www.flickr.com/photos/dundeecityarchives) or the library's photopolis site:

[www.leisureandculturaldundee.com/photopolis](http://www.leisureandculturaldundee.com/photopolis) first to see if you can find any old photographs of the area you are interested in.

## Maps

Maps can give you a great sense of what the area your ancestors lived in—particularly if the building they lived in no longer exists. We hold Ordnance Survey Maps, Town Plans, Fire Insurance Maps and many more.

You can also view old maps online at <http://maps.nls.uk>. These have been digitised and made available by the National Library of Scotland. They cover the whole of Scotland, and in some cases England and Wales too.

## Newspapers

Hard copies of Dundee newspapers are held at the Wellgate Local History Library. However you can search some papers up to 1955 on the British Newspaper Archive: [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk). There is a charge to use this site but you can use it for free at Dundee City Archives or any Dundee Library.

Other records that might be of use:

- Court records—see our [Court Records Research Guide](#)
- Poorhouse records—see our [Poorhouse Research Guide](#)
- Hospital records—held by the [University of Dundee Archives](#)
- Wills—held by the [National Records of Scotland](#). Some can be accessed online via [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk)

## Visiting the Archives

Our search room at 14 City Square, Dundee is open to the public Monday to Friday 9.30 am-4.30 pm. An appointment is not necessary but we do advise getting in touch with us before your visit to check that we hold the records you are looking for.

Visitors should first report to City Chambers reception at 21 City Square. The Search Room is down a flight of stairs and at the end of a long corridor. Special arrangements can be made for members of the public with disabilities.

## Contact Us

Dundee City Archives  
14 City Square  
Dundee,  
DD1 3BY

Email: [archives@dundeecity.gov.uk](mailto:archives@dundeecity.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01382 434494  
Website: [www.dundeecity.gov.uk/archive](http://www.dundeecity.gov.uk/archive)

## Key Sources and where to find them

Sources	Held at	Alternative
Birth, Marriage & Death Certificates	Registrars	ScotlandsPeople online or in Edinburgh
Census	Registrars, Library (1841-1901)	ScotlandsPeople online or in Edinburgh, Ancestry (1841-1901)
Wills	NRS	ScotlandsPeople
Valuation Rolls	DCA, Library	ScotlandsPeople, NRS
Directories	DCA, Library	NLS website (pre-1912)
Electoral Rolls	DCA, Library	
Newspapers	Library	BNA
Poorhouse Records	DCA	FDCA indexes
Hospital Records	DUA	
School Records	DCA	FDCA indexes
Church Records	DCA, NRS	Scotlands People
Maps	DCA, Library	NLS website
Army Records	TNA	Ancestry, Black Watch Museum
Burial Records	Burials Dept, DCA	FDCA indexes
Police Records	Police Scotland	
Court Records	NRS, DCA	Newspapers
Prison	NRS	Newspapers
Immigration/ Emigration	TNA	Ancestry
Photographs	DCA, Library, DUA, DC Thomson	Flickr, Photopolis
Jute Industry	DUA, Verdant, DCA	
Shipping (including Whaling)	DCA, TNA, McManus, DUA	

DCA = Dundee City Archives

DUA = Dundee University Archives

NRS = National Records of Scotland

TNA = The National Archives, London

NLS = National Library of Scotland

BNA = BritishNewspaperArchive.co.uk

FDCA = Friends of Dundee City Archives  
([www.fdca.org.uk](http://www.fdca.org.uk))

Please contact other repositories to find out more about the records they hold and how you can access them. Some of the online access options may require a subscription or purchase of credit before documents can be viewed.