'Should auld acquaintance be forgot'
by Kerry Farmer

'Auld Lang Syne' exhorts us to remember and celebrate former times and people – a challenge taken up by family historians. Ayrshire-born Robert Burns is generally attributed as its author, but when he recorded it in 1788, he said that it was based on earlier Scottish poems.

The pay-to-view site 'ScotlandsPeople' provides researchers with images of birth, marriage and death certificates – both from the civil registration period (beginning in 1855) and also earlier. The Old Parish Registers begin in the 1500s but are far from complete. There are also other, non 'established church' records, including Roman Catholic. Kirk Session (church court) records were added recently. These can be searched by place and date but are not indexed by names. The records provide fascinating insights into the lives of individuals in the parish.

'ScotlandsPeople' also has images of census records from 1841 to 1911, as well as valuation records (similar to rental records) from 1855 to 1940. Researchers should combine the information from all these sources. For example, the valuation rolls provide information between censuses, especially when combined with the very informative birth, marriage and death certificates.

'ScotlandsPlaces' records are ordered by location. In addition to history and medical surveys, photographs and drawings, there are many lists of names, such as in various tax rolls, dated from as early as the 17th century.

The 'National Library of Scotland' has a wide range of digitised records useful for family historians. Their collection of maps (for all of UK and some for overseas) is particularly useful, as are the post office directories – even more of which are available on Internet Archive.

The subscription sites 'Find my past' (especially) and 'Ancestry' both hold many collections of Scottish records. 'Find my past' also has the British newspaper collection. Searches can be filtered by date, place, county and even newspaper, to locate articles of interest.

'Scottish Indexes' contains an increasing number of searchable indexes of a variety of records. Researchers can also order copies of the original records.

Poor relief records provide a wealth of details about ancestors in their time of need. Scottish poor laws were designed to provide support for those unable to support themselves. In attempts to avoid assisting 'able-bodied poor', their examination reports recorded extensive biographical information about individuals seeking support. Poor relief records are not all online in one place – some may be found in local or county archives, some are on dedicated websites, while others may be found within 'FamilySearch'. The 'National Records of Scotland' guide advises where to look.

Those interested in ancestors from the Scottish Highlands should explore the wide range of historical resources (especially photographs and newspapers) on the 'Am Baile' website, subtitled 'highland history and culture'.

'British History Online' and also the 'Statistical Accounts of Scotland' are two sources of detailed histories about locations, occupations and community infrastructure at different periods. Such information helps us interpret information about individuals found elsewhere.

Further reading

- Am Baile *(Highland History and Culture)* – **ambaile.org.uk**

- Ancestry.com.au – **ancestry.com.au**

- Auld Lang Syne – **en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auld_Lang_Syne**

- Ayrshire Archives – **ayrshirearchives.wordpress.com**

- British History Online – **british-history.ac.uk**

- Burns Monument Centre – **ayrshireandarran.com/burns-monument/**

- Family Search – **familysearch.org**

- Find my past – **findmypast.com.au**

- Internet Archive, National Library of Scotland collection – **archive.org/details/nationallibraryofscotland**

- National Library of Scotland – **digital.nls.uk/gallery/**

- National Records of Scotland – **nrscotland.gov.uk**
  - Poor Relief Records – **bit.ly/NRS-PoorRelief**
  - Pre-1841 Census Records – **bit.ly/NRS-Pre1841**

- Pre-1841 Censuses & Population Listings *(Colin Chapman)* –**familyhistorybooksonline.com/census-30**

- ScotlandsPeople – **scotlandspeople.gov.uk**

- ScotlandsPlaces – **scotlandsplaces.gov.uk**

- Scottish Indexes – **scottishindexes.com**

- Scottish Resources *(Kerry Farmer)* – **kerryfarmer.info/courses/UKFamilyHistory/UK_Scottish.htm**

- Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-1845 – **stataccscot.edina.ac.uk/static/statacc/dist/home**

- Three Towners – **threetowners.com**

- (The) Workhouse in Scotland – **workhouses.org.uk/Scotland/**