



Researching family history of the Outer Hebrides

Tasglann nan Eilean

<https://www.outerhebridesh heritage.org.uk/service/archive-service>

Tasglann is the archive service of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council), based at Lews Castle in Stornoway. It holds a wide range of archival material, including records relating to the administration of local government since 1845.

Please note that Tasglann is not able to undertake detailed family history research on your behalf due to limited staff resources. You are, however, welcome to make an appointment to consult the resources described below in person:

<https://www.outerhebridesh heritage.org.uk/museum/tasglann-nan-eilean-archives/>

Please note that records less than 100 years old containing personal data are closed under Data Protection legislation.

Records which may assist with family history research include:

- **Poor Law/ Parish Council Records 1845-1948**

If you are aware of an ancestor having been described as a pauper, or having resided in a poorhouse or mental institution then it is likely they will feature in the Poor Law records.

The Poor Law Act of 1845 established Parochial Boards to administer assistance to those deemed to qualify for poor relief. Each board appointed an Inspector of the Poor to assess applications and bring those considered reasonable before the Board, which then determined whether poor relief was to be given. The Boards were also responsible for dealing with those with mental illness.

Tasglann nan Eilean holds Poor Law records for the following parishes in the Western Isles:

- Barra
- South Uist (Including Benbecula and Eriskay)
- North Uist
- Harris (including Berneray and St Kilda)
- Uig (Lewis)
- Stornoway (Lewis)
- Lochs (Lewis)
- Barvas (Lewis)

There are also records relating to the Lewis Combination Poorhouse at Coulregrein, Stornoway, and the Long Island Combination Poorhouse at Lochmaddy, North Uist.

- **Education Records such as school admission registers**

- School Admissions Registers 1872-

These typically contain information about individual pupils (such as date of birth, and the name and address of the parent or guardian). If you know the district or village your ancestor came from the relevant school admission register can be checked although it is usually easier to obtain parent's names from other sources such as birth certificate.

- Other education records:
 - School Board Minutes (1872-1919) - contain information about teacher appointments
 - School log books (1872-1980s)

If you are interested in the records of any other school in the Outer Hebrides please contact us so that that we can advise on the records which exist, where they are, and how they can be accessed, as not all of the school log books are held at Tasglann nan Eilean.

- **Valuation Rolls (1899-1973)**

Valuation rolls were local tax records. For each property they record the name and designation of the proprietor, the main tenant and the annual rateable value. Valuation rolls for the island of Lewis only are held at present.

<http://ica-atom.tasglann.org.uk/index.php/ross-cromarty-county-council-valuation-rolls;jsad>

- **Rent ledgers: Barvas Rent Ledgers 1854-1919**

These record the crofter's names, croft number and rents paid for all crofting townships in the parish of Barvas. They sometimes make reference to crofters having moved into or out of the district, or emigrating. However as they are not currently indexed it is not easy to track down individuals within the records. We are hoping to undertake a project to start indexing these very shortly.

- **Iolaire Disaster Fund (1919-1938)**

The Iolaire Disaster Fund was set up to assist the families who had lost fathers, sons and husbands on HMY *Iolaire* when it sank at the Beasts of Holm, Lewis. The Iolaire Disaster Fund Committee registered under the War Charities Act and was formed on 7th January 1919. Those who lost family made an application to the fund and a committee decided how much of a payment should be made. The Disaster Fund supported 201 families with the last payments being made in January 1938, by which time all the affected children had reached the age of eighteen.

Tasglann holds: administrative records 1919-1938; applications forms for assistance from the fund 1919; letter books 1919-1932; secretary's correspondence 1925-1938; loose correspondence 1928-1938; financial records 1918-1938.

Tasglann also holds historical records that have been deposited by individuals, businesses, or groups. An overview can be found here:

<https://www.outerhebridesh heritage.org.uk/collection/gifts-and-deposits/>

Please see below for further sources of guidance and information held outwith Tasglann.

Note that chief of these is **ScotlandsPeople**

<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>

The official repository of the National Records of Scotland: includes registers of births, marriages, deaths; census returns; church records; valuation rolls; and legal records from Scotland's courts of law.

Family history of the Outer Hebrides: sources of guidance and information outwith Tasglann

The National Records of Scotland guide:

Clarke, Tristram: *Tracing your Scottish ancestors : the official guide*
(Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2020) ISBN: 9781780276335

Other genealogy sources (arranged alphabetically); subscription and/or fees may be applicable:

Am Baile

<https://www.ambaile.org.uk>

Contains searchable photograph collections and a newspaper index relating to the Highlands and Islands.

Ancestry

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>

Part of the Ancestry.com global network of family history websites. Includes censuses, indexed birth, marriage and death records, passenger lists, British phone books, military and parish records.

Associated Clan MacLeod Societies Genealogical Resource Centre

<https://clanmacleod.org/genealogy>

Portal for online resources relating to this common Outer Hebridean surname.

The Association of Scottish Genealogists and Researchers in Archives

<http://www.asgra.co.uk>

Accrediting body; links to other associations, archives, and courses.

Comainn eachdraidh (local historical societies) of the Outer Hebrides

<https://www.outerhebridesh heritage.org.uk/community-heritage/>

The Outer Hebrides has a network of *comainn eachdraidh* which are run by local volunteers. Many of them hold genealogical information and photographs.

Family History Federation

<https://www.familyhistoryfederation.com/>

Co-ordinates the work of societies by sponsoring projects in these fields; provides research tips on first steps in family history, and links to non-commercial websites.

Findmypast

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

UK-based online genealogy service; hosts over 4 billion searchable records of census, directory and historical record information.

Hallan Cemetery, Daliburgh, South Uist

<http://www.hallancemeterysouthuist.co.uk/>

Database and photographs of monumental inscriptions relating to cemetery interments.

Hebridean Connections

<https://www.hebrideanconnections.com/>

This website contains thousands of records relating to the genealogy, history, traditions, culture and archaeology of the Western Isles. Data is mostly submitted by volunteers from local historical societies (*comainn eachdraidh*) and other member organisations, with valuable input from Hebrideans and the Hebridean diaspora.

Hebrides People

<https://www.hebridespeople.com/>

Online databases, printed croft histories and other guides, and a commercial research service.

Highland Archive Centre, Inverness

<https://www.highlifehighland.com/highland-archive-centre/>

Highland Archive centre in holds some records relating to pre-1975 local government in the Outer Hebrides which came under the former County Councils of Ross and Cromarty, and Inverness-shire.

Highland Family History Society

<https://highlandfhs.org/>

Includes burial indexes, and transcriptions of baptismal and marriage registers.

Museum of the Isles, Library and Archive

<https://www.armadalecastle.com/explore/library-archives/>

Rentals and estate documents relating to Skye and North Uist which provide a framework for local history and genealogy research, especially relating to Macdonalds.

National Library of Scotland

<https://www.nls.uk/family-history>

A wide variety of resources including research guides, multi-format collections, and digitised materials.

National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk>

Holds government records as well as the papers of the Mackenzies of Seaforth who owned Lewis from 1610-1844, and notably the Presbytery records for Lewis.

ScotlandsPeople

<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>

The official repository of the National Records of Scotland: includes registers of births, marriages, deaths; census returns; church records; valuation rolls; and legal records from Scotland's courts of law.

Scottish Emigration Database

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/emigration/>

Hosted by the University of Aberdeen: contains records of over 21,000 passengers who embarked from Scotland between 1890 and 1960.

Scottish Genealogy Society

<https://www.scotsgenealogy.com/>

Courses, plus specialist resources including trades lists, university rolls, journals of family history societies.

Scottish Indexes

<https://www.scottishindexes.com/>

Consultancy services, learning zone, and record sets including mental health records, criminal database, paternity index, poor relief records index, deeds index, register of sasines, and other specialist sources.

Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre

<https://www.highlifehighland.com/skye-and-lochalsh-archive-centre/>

Part of the Highland Archive Service.

SkyeRoots

<https://skye-roots.co.uk/>

Research service for genealogical records relating to Skye and Raasay (in the Inner rather than Outer Hebrides).

Social media, such as Facebook groups and pages; examples include:

Hebridean Genealogy & DNA <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1928474044089956>

Isle of Lewis Genealogy <https://www.facebook.com/groups/588522478550879>

Isle of Lewis to Canada <https://www.facebook.com/groups/hebrides>

Stornoway Now and Then <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1025657710790236>

South Uist Appreciation Society <https://www.facebook.com/groups/UibhistSUAS/>

Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches

www.tobarandualchais.co.uk

Audio recordings of Scotland's cultural heritage.

Tong Village Stories

<https://www.tonghall.co.uk/tong-village-stories>

Recollections and photos from the village of Tong in the east of the Isle of Lewis.

Western Isles Libraries: Local Studies Collection

https://www.wilibraries.org.uk/local_and_family_history

Holdings include local municipal and educational records plus:

- Local newspapers such as the *Stornoway Gazette*
- Microfilms of Old Parochial Registers which record christenings and marriages prior to 1855 when official registration commenced, and of returns from 1841 to 1911
- The International Genealogical Index on microfiche for the whole of Scotland
- Rental and Valuation Rolls, some dating back to the 18th century, provide details of landowners and tenants

