

*Genealogy in the Gaidhealtachd:
Clan and Family History in the Highlands of Scotland*
Graeme M Mackenzie (2013)

This is a very comprehensive and valuable book for anyone contemplating research into their Highland forebears. The content is especially helpful for those researchers who want to find out what Highland resources are available, and more importantly how and where to access them. Graeme begins the book with an honest 'step by step' account of how he initiated the research into his own family beginning back in the 1980's. Much of this initial work was done before the availability of on-line resources which have dramatically eased the modern researchers' work. Graeme describes the possible puzzles which appeared then, and which still apply now when carrying out research and he goes on to provide examples from his own experience of common issues which you may encounter while researching your own family history research using Highland resources.

A substantial section of the book comprises naming traditions and patterns, descriptive by-names and nicknames; lists of name equivalents; surnames, clan information, septs and related names. Graeme displays the vast extent of his own research by providing numerous examples of name changes including alternative names, additional names and patronymics in his own family history research, all showing that while researchers must be vigilant to differences between spellings, they should not rule out an entry purely because it is spelt differently. *(See extract on this page)*

Further chapters explore Highland history and the diaspora and Graeme provides some fascinating examples from his own research of Highlanders throughout Asia, North America and the West Indies. One particular account concerns the treachery after the battle of Culloden on the part of the Laird of Grant; who after the battle swiftly sided with the Duke of Cumberland. He then sought to trick his Jacobite supporting tenants by promising them protection if they surrendered their arms to him. The unfortunate 84 men, who took him at his word, were promptly shipped off to the West Indies in shackles, whence few ever returned.

Throughout the book Graeme includes references, and provides useful illustrations, photographs and family trees which add to the flow for the reader as well as providing handy tips covering many sources and records such as statutory birth, marriage and death certificates, census records, Old Parish Registers, Memorial Inscriptions, Valuation Rolls, Rent Rolls, Sasines, Military Records, Newspapers and Immigrant records. Graeme's research also highlights the breadth of Highland material which can be accessed from additional sources, in particular burgh records.

There are many appendices at the end of the book which are extremely helpful as they provide a comprehensive guide to the wide variety of Highland specific resources which are available to researchers, and most importantly where and how these might be accessed. Also included in the appendices are details of pre-1855 resources and where they are located, dates of commencement for Highland Old Parish Registers listed by county, as well as details of burial grounds listed by county and parish which have accompanying monumental inscriptions compiled. Finally Graeme provides useful lists of contact details for all relevant archives, libraries, museums, heritage centres as well as Family History, Local History and Heritage Groups in the Highlands.

Graeme is quick to point out that he did not want to duplicate the numerous books on 'How to Research Your Scottish Ancestors' and I believe he has achieved this goal. However, the content of the book makes it apparent that Graeme has gained invaluable experience throughout his many years as a professional genealogist and family historian. I would recommend this book to anyone in the process of studying Highland genealogy and family history or indeed studying any aspect of the Highland history in general.

Alison Mason
(Highland Archivist, Highland Archive Centre)