



THE JUTE INDUSTRY

Family History Fact Sheet

So, one of your ancestors worked in the jute industry and you want to discover his or her family history?

Dundee Heritage Trust may be able to help you with your research. The museum at Verdant Works has many different types of documents, photographs and objects related to the industry. If you wish to have a look at these items it is possible to make an appointment with the Museums Officer c/o Discovery Point, Discovery Quay, Dundee, DD1 4XA, alternatively all material is available to browse online at www.dhtcollections.com

Tel. 01382 309079

E-mail collections@dundeeheritage.co.uk

What can we do?

- We can provide you with information on life in the mills, working conditions, the manufacturing process and the type of products that were produced in the industry.
- We have a comprehensive reference library on the history and manufacture of textiles and in particular jute.
- The museum holds extensive archives of documents relating to the manufacture, social history and business history of jute.
- We hold a large collection of documents relating to Verdant Works itself, mainly referring to the later period when it was not a jute mill.
- The photographic collection is large and covers many of the jute mills in Dundee as well as other subjects like textile engineering, Dundee families working in the Indian jute industry and linen and polypropylene manufacture.

We may not be able to find information specific to your relative but we will endeavour to help all that we can.

The rest of this document gives some more general advice about other potential sources of information for your family history research.

The Jute Industry

It is important, firstly, to have a basic understanding of the jute industry and of its relevance to the economy of Dundee and surrounding areas. If at all possible you should visit the Verdant Works museum as this will graphically bring home to you the nature of the work done by your ancestor. In the meantime the following will give you some background to the rise and fall of this important industry.

From the 1850s until well into the 20th century, jute was one of the most important materials in the world. Said to be the fabric of a thousand uses, jute was used for everything from clothing to flooring and from deck chairs to explosive fuses! It was the material that covered the pioneers' wagons on the American West and made the ropes used by the British Navy. World trade relied on it as sacking and it was a vital wartime commodity that was made into tents, guns covers, sand bags and horse blankets.

A large grass-like plant cultivated in India for centuries, jute was processed in Dundee from the early 19th century. From the 1850s the Scottish jute industry boomed, at its height employing around 50,000 people in Dundee and thousands more in nearby towns such as Forfar and Tayport.

The jute factories were deafeningly noisy and the atmosphere was full of tiny particles of jute fibre or 'stour' which filled workers' noses, mouths and lungs. Women and children were the main groups employed in the factories as they could be paid less than men and their smaller bodies and hands could move more easily amidst the dangerous spinning and weaving machines.



Jute production made vast fortunes for “jute barons” such as the Cairds and the Baxters who lived in splendid villas. Their lives were markedly different from those of the mill workers. Cramped and unsanitary housing, low wages and periods of unemployment meant that life was hard and often short for most mill workers and their families.

By the end of the 19th century jute production was shifting to Calcutta in India. But even as jute manufacturing in Dundee declined, the City continued to play a vital role in the industry. Scottish managers and engineers went to India to oversee the jute mills there and Indian and East Pakistani textile students came to study at Dundee Technical College. By the 1980s almost all jute manufacturing in Dundee had ceased but the industry had changed Dundee forever.

The Genealogy

The first step is to research and write up your family tree in order to provide you with a detailed framework on which to hang your subsequent discoveries.

Firstly, decide which “line” you wish to follow and concentrate on it. Don’t try to cover all the various sides of the family at the same time as you’ll get hopelessly confused. There are, basically, three ways to discover your ancestry:-

- Using the comprehensive resources at the General Register Office in Edinburgh
- Using the official pay-per-view website www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk
- Employing a professional researcher

As you will see from the following, each of the above have advantages and disadvantages and it may be that, at the end of the day, you finish up using a combination of all three.

At its simplest, the research process consists of starting with a known “event” in Scotland, typically a birth or marriage. Birth certificates normally indicate when and where parents were married so that this facilitates the discovery of the marriage certificate. Once found, this indicates the ages and parentage of the bride and groom which, usually, leads to the eventual discovery of his or her birth certificate, and so on back to 1855 which is when Statutory Civil Registration began in Scotland.

If the family being researched had a fairly common surname, then it is sometimes not easy to find the required birth certificate. In such cases, it can be useful to track the family down in a Census Return. This is a wonderful source of family history data providing a virtual snapshot of the household on census night. Amongst other things, the entry shows where everybody was born, so helping in the search for births. A full census has been held every ten years in the UK from 1841 (apart from 1941). They are opened to the public after 100 years, so that 1901 is the last available for public inspection.

Before 1855, searching becomes more uncertain and less productive in that the main source is the collection of Old Parish Registers (OPRs). Not everybody went to the trouble or expense to register “events” especially if they didn’t belong to the Established Church, and not all OPRs have survived. Furthermore, they don’t usually provide much more than just the basic facts of baptism and proclamation of banns.

The merits and demerits of the three methods of drawing up your family tree are:-

- **Visiting the GROS** – this is the preferred choice for anyone who “enjoys the thrill of the chase” and who is able to get to Edinburgh without too much expense. The facilities are superb and well worth the £17 daily admission fee
- **Using the www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk pay-per-view site.** This is ideal for anyone who lives some distance from Edinburgh, especially if the project is not too vast or complex. The initial minimum fee is £6 for 30 “page credits”. Each page of indexes costs 1 credit and each “image” costs 5 credits. It should be borne in

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mind that, when searching for deaths especially, many certificates have to be examined before the correct one is found. This costs money. Very few searches are totally straightforward so that secondary sources often need to be used. These are not usually searchable online

- **Employing a professional researcher** – This approach obviously requires a fee to be paid but it could prove to be money well spent. The genealogy is going to form the basis of what will be a lifetime's hobby of researching your family history. It is absolutely vital therefore that you get it right from the outset. Remember also that the professional will be familiar with all the new research tools and that this enables him/her to offer ever increasing value for money. For a list of professional genealogists and research companies contact the GROS requesting Leaflet S5. If travel and subsistence costs are taken into account for those living some distance from Edinburgh, using a professional could well be cheaper in the long run.

General Family History

The very act of researching your family tree will have provided you with a vast amount of historical data including:

- Places of residence
- Occupations
- Cause of death
- Numbers and composition of households
- Numbers of windowed rooms
- Places of birth
- Religion
- Whether or not Gaelic speakers
- Level of literacy (as evidenced by informants signing their name, or giving an X mark)

There are many other research sources including:-

Maps and Plans

The original Ordnance Survey maps, on the scale of 25 inches to the mile for the populous parts of Scotland and 6 inches to the mile for the whole country were produced in the mid to late 19th Century and copies may be ordered from the National Library of Scotland Map Library.

Old large scale town plans at a scale of about 10ft to the mile are also available in respect of 62 Scottish towns. These are available, free, online though they do not have the benefit of a street index/gazetteer. Other old unprinted maps are sometimes available at local level especially in local archive offices (see below).

Photographs

These take many forms, all of which are of potential interest to the historian. This applies especially to family collections. Every effort should be made to track down all relations who might hold family photographs and be able to identify those depicted. Clues as to approximate dates can be gleaned from the type of photograph and the clothes worn etc.

Photographs of streets and buildings where ancestors lived can often be found in the local history sections of public libraries.

Verdant Works holds a substantial collection of photographs dating between about 1870 and the 1980s. The collections cover a number of different textile companies and premises. The images range from mill buildings (exteriors, interiors

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and people at work), foundries, machines, significant individuals, sporting and social events, Indian factories and Scottish workers in Indian factories. Some depict identified workers.

Burial

All family historians hope to discover where their ancestors were buried and, hopefully, to come across an inscribed headstone.

Regarding the latter, it should be borne in mind that monumental stones were relatively expensive so that only a small minority of miners will have been accorded one. The Memorial Inscriptions (MIs) of most graveyards have now been indexed by local Family History Societies and other volunteers. Copies of listings are available for purchase from the relevant Society or from the Scottish Genealogy Society, or for consultation at public libraries.

Up to the mid 19th Century, nearly everyone was interred in the local parish churchyard but, thereafter, especially in the towns and cities more and more people were buried in municipal cemeteries and some of these are no longer used. Information on burial location can usually be obtained from the relevant Local Authority Cemeteries or Environmental Department. A precise date and place of death is usually essential and, frequently, a fee is payable (see below for address).

Local History

Family history and local history are closely intertwined and the sources consulted, when researching your genealogy, will have indicated where your ancestors lived. Its important to discover more about the streets, villages, towns, parishes etc. Maps will have pinpointed where people lived and worked so the next step is to contact the relevant Local History Library (see below). They will hold, for example, the “Old” and “New” Statistical Accounts for Scotland. These contain detailed information on every Parish as written by the local Church of Scotland Minister. The “Old” was produced at about the time of the Agricultural Revolution and the “New” during the Industrial Revolution.

All libraries hold more or less complete runs of local newspapers most of which carried obituaries of local people. Very often they also hold extensive photographic collections which may well include your ancestor’s street or place of work.

Archives

The Archive collection at Verdant Works is wide-ranging and comprehensive. It includes material and drawings related to the processing machinery, business archive collections as well as day-to-day management documents, marketing catalogues and personal correspondence such as engineers’ or managers’ notebooks.

The University of Dundee Archives Services have substantial collections of business archives relating to the jute industry both in Dundee and in India.

In addition to, there could be relevant material in local Archive Centres. Their collections vary considerably but they might include school records, applications for poor relief, electoral registers, local government records etc.

The National Archive of Scotland, located in central Edinburgh, is responsible for the custody and preservation of the records of government in Scotland. It also holds a wide range of church, business and family records. The following are of particular relevance to family historians:-

- a) Inheritance: Wills and Testaments



Although mostly for the upper and middle classes, many Scots of quite humble backgrounds held wills. These provide a vast amount of information of interest to the family historian. This applies particularly to the inventories itemising their possessions including furniture, farm animals and the tools of their trade. This collection is now searchable on the Scotlands People website (www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk)

b) Valuation rolls

From 1855, an annual system of uniform valuation of houses was introduced showing the address, name of proprietor, tenant and occupier and its value. Unfortunately, the names of the occupier were not shown when the annual rent was less than £4. This would have included most lead miners. Nevertheless, finding the name of the owner of a row of cottages could indicate the company owing the mill.

The broader picture

Researching family history is not just about genealogy and the written word, it is also an intensely emotional experience. Nothing can replace the act of walking in the footsteps of your ancestors or of standing in the graveyard where your ancestors are buried. Similarly a visit to the Verdant Works depicting what life was like for the jute worker and his or her family, can be an unforgettable experience. You will be given a warm welcome.

Anyone interested in becoming involved in family history is advised to subscribe to either Practical Family History or Family Tree Magazine, or both. The former is directed primarily at the beginner.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Museums

Verdant Works
Dundee Heritage Trust
West Henderson's Wynd
Dundee
DD1 1BT
Tel: 01382 309060 (Museum reception)
Tel. 01382 309079 (Curator)
Email: museum@dundeeheritage.co.uk
www.verdantworks.com

McManus Galleries
Dundee City Council
Albert Square
Dundee
DD1 1DA
Tel. 01382 432350 (Reception)
www.mcmanus.co.uk



National Institutions

General Register Office for Scotland
New Register House
Edinburgh
EH1 3YT
Tel: 0131 334 0380
www.gro-scotland.gov.uk

National Archive of Scotland
HM General Register House
Edinburgh
EH1 3YY
Tel: 0131 535 1314
www.nas.gov.uk

National Library of Scotland
George IV Bridge
Edinburgh
EH1 1EW
Tel: 0131 226 4531
www.nls.uk

National Library of Scotland Map Library
33 Salisbury Place
Edinburgh
EH9 1SL
Tel: 0131 226 4531

Local/Family History Libraries

Local History Centre
Central Library
The Wellgate
Dundee
DD1 1DB
Tel: 01382 431 550
Email: local.studies@dundeecity.gov.uk
www.dundeecity.gov.uk/centlib/loc_stud.htm

Local Archive Centres

Dundee City Archive and Record Centre
Support Services
21 City Square
Dundee
DD1 3BY
Tel: 01382 434 494
Email: archives@dundeecity.gov.uk



Archive & Record Management Museum Service
University of Dundee
Dundee
DD1 4HN
Tel: 01382 384 095
www.dundee.ac.uk/archives

Burial Information

Parks Department
Dundee City Council
Crichton Street
Dundee
DD1 3RA
Tel: 01382 433 089
Email: parks.burials@dundeecity.gov.uk
www.dundeecity.gov.uk

Family History Societies

Tay Valley FHS
Hon Secretary c/o Research Centre
179-181 Princes Street
Dundee
DD4 6DQ
Tel: 01382 461 845
Email: tvfhs@tayvalleyfhs.org.uk
www.tayvalleyfhs.org.uk

Magazines

Family Tree Magazine/Practical Family History
61 Great Whyte
Ramsey
Huntingdon
Cams
PE26 1HJ
Tel: 01487 814050
Email: info@family-tree.co.uk
www.family-tree.co.uk



USEFUL WEBSITES

The above listings indicate website addresses but these, for the most part, simply provide information on the resources available. Increasingly, there are websites which offer specific data. Most of these are pay-per-view sites. The following are of potential interest to the lead mining ancestor hunter.

www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

The official online source of parish registers, civil registration and census records for Scotland. It now also includes the Scottish Wills data formerly provided by www.scottishdocuments.com

www.ancestralscotland.com

The official site of Visit Scotland's ancestral tourism initiative. It is free and provides detailed information on sources for family historians throughout Scotland.

www.scan.org.uk

The online catalogue of the Scottish Archive Network, which provides detailed information on the contents of archival collections throughout Scotland.

www.scran.ac.uk

Formerly the Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network, SCRAN was a major Millennium Commission project. It comprises photographs, museum objects, films and audio records. Excellent for illustrating family histories. All the resources on SCRAN are freely available as thumbnails. For access to full screen images, there is an annual subscription of £29.99.

www.archive.scotsman.com

Makes the entire contents of the Scotsman newspaper available online. The index which has been provided by optical character recognition (OCR), is free. Access to the full text of the articles costs £7.95 for a 24 hour period. All major lead mining "events" are likely to have been reported in the Scotsman, which began publication in 1817.

www.genuki.org.uk

A key starting point for genealogists with links to innumerable websites arranged by geographical area

<http://edina.ed.ac.uk/StatAcc/>

Free access to scanned digital images of both Old (1791-9) and New (1845-) Statistical Accounts covering every Scottish Parish. Arrangements may be made to enable keyword searches throughout the whole collection.

www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz

Provides details of towns, settlements and industrial sites throughout Scotland.

www.familysearch.org



The largest online genealogical research in the world, this site is free and made available from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). It is particularly useful for searching the Old Parish Registers (OPRs).

www.familia.org.uk

Provides details of family history resources at local libraries.

www.fdca.org.uk/databases.htm

The Friends of Dundee City Archives website. It includes a listing of Wesleyan baptisms (1785-1898) detailed listings of burial records for the Howff, Dundee's principal cemetery, and indexes of Poor Registers (1854-1878).

www.dundee.ac.uk/archives/sourcetop

Extensive catalogues of archives held by Dundee University, many of which relate to jute companies and to conditions of work

www.dundee.gov.uk/centlib/loc_stud.htm

Includes maps, plans, genealogy resources and "photopolis" (images of Dundee 1880-1910).