

The National Archives of Scotland



Edinburgh, 10th February 2010
Funded by a University of
Glasgow
Employability Award

In November 2009, we were awarded an Employability Award to enhance our skills as historians.

Alison Mackenzie Helen Tidd



Mariclaire McGuire



Hayley Cross

We study Economic and Social History and are in our final year.



Natalie Murray

We planned a trip to the National Archives of Scotland (NAS)



THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SCOTLAND
DEFINING MOMENTS IN HISTORY

www.nas.gov.uk

We were keen to visit the Archives to;

- Gain first-hand experience of working with archived material,
- Learn more about the work done by the National Archives of Scotland and
- Find out about becoming a professional archivist.



It is vital for historians to gain practical research skills

The NAS represents an invaluable source of historic material for the people of Scotland. A degree in Economic and Social History would not be complete without experiencing first-hand all the NAS has to offer

We felt that this would prove useful in terms of our employability because

The team wanted to learn more about the work carried out by the NAS and the steps needed to follow a career in archiving

Some of the team are interested in post-graduate studies and felt that by becoming acquainted with the NAS they would have a head start for future research

We travelled to Edinburgh on
Wednesday, 10th Feb.

We took the (very classy)
Megabus!

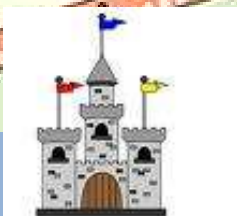
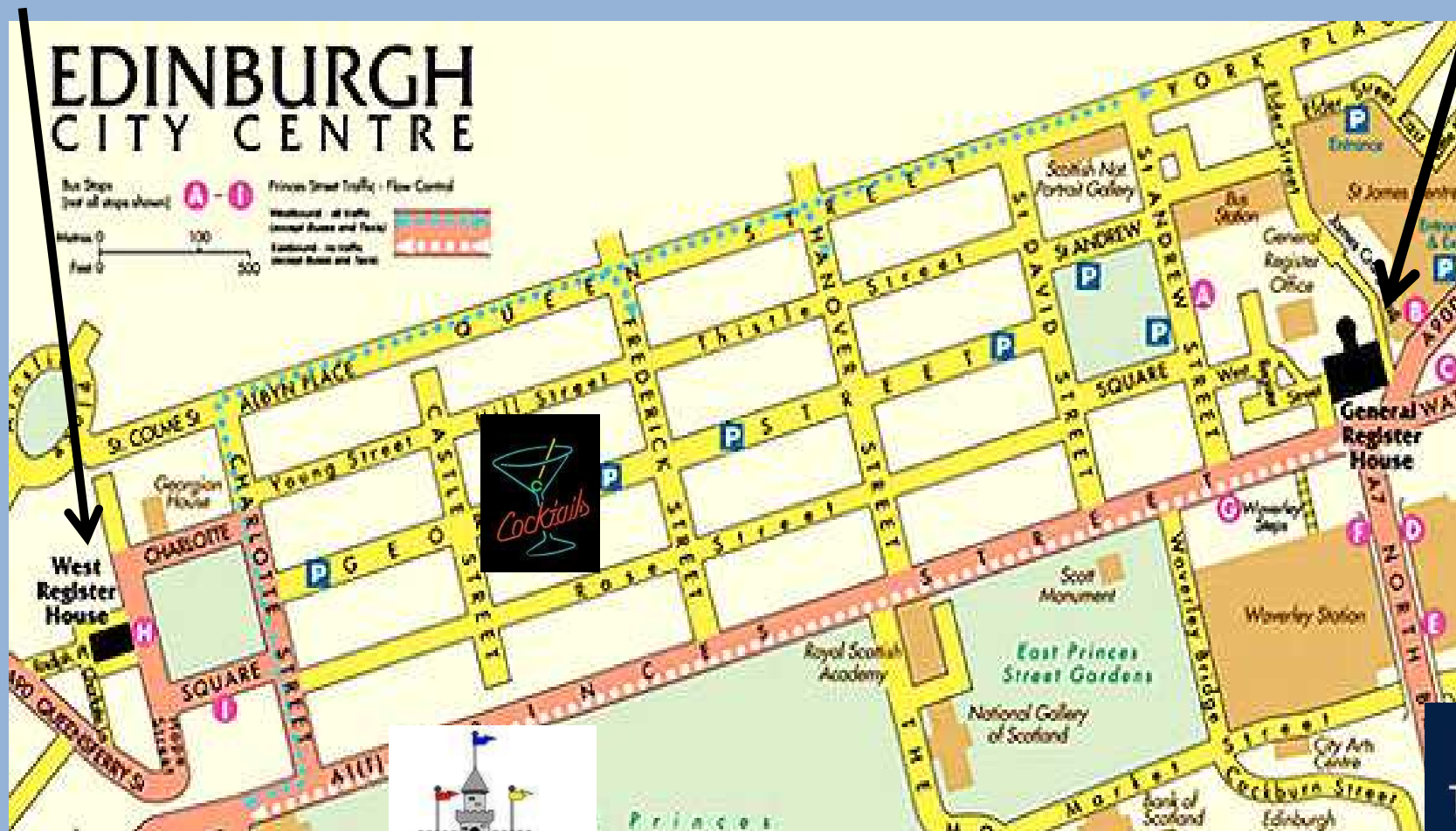
Buchanan Street bus station to St
Andrews bus station in around
1hour 30 mins.



There are two main building in which the public can carry out research;

West Register House in Charlotte Square off Princes Street

General Register House on Princes Street near Waverley station



General Register House



Opening
Hours

Monday to
Friday

9am –
4.45pm

Last time for
requesting
records: 4pm



West Register House

Opening Hours

Monday to Friday

9am – 4.45pm

Last time for requesting
records : 4pm

We arranged to meet with Alison Lindsay, head of the historical search room at General Register House.



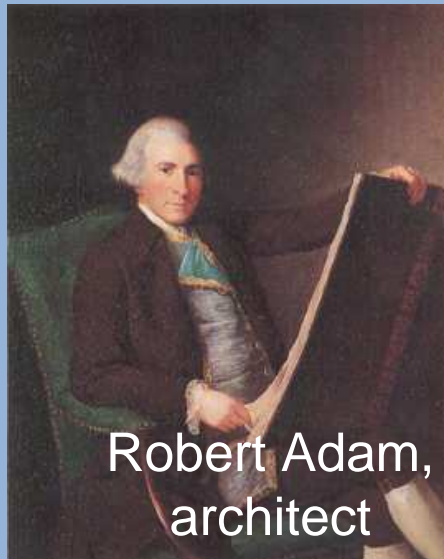
She kindly chatted to us about;

- the history of the Archives
- the work undertaken by the Archives
- how to carry out research in the Archives
- the skills needed to be a professional archivist

History of NAS

In 1995, Thomas Thomson house was opened. The site houses a conservation unit, staff offices and regulated record storage.

The first public search room was opened in 1847.



Robert Adam,
architect

Headed by
the Keeper
of the
Records of
Scotland.
Current
Keeper:
George
Mackenzie.

Work began on General Register House in 1774, funded by money from forfeited estates during the Jacobite rebellion. The building was completed in 1820s.

Record keeping is often used as a political tool; power, land, wealth.

Most famous document

The Declaration of Arbroath

A copy of the 14th century original which is now lost.

Declaration of Scottish independence.


'...as long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule.'



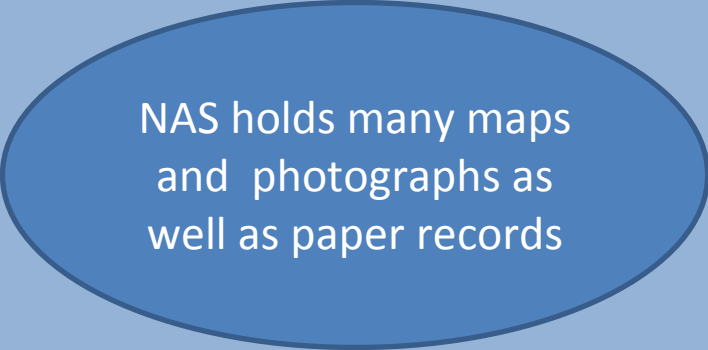
Work undertaken by NAS

- NAS preserves and documents the archives of Scotland. This includes; church records, legal records, land ownership, corporate records and wills and testaments.

- NAS aim to employ and develop the latest archival practices, offering record keeping advice to many bodies, including the Scottish government.



NAS holds
over 70km of
records



NAS holds many maps
and photographs as
well as paper records

- NAS is committed to providing a high quality public service via their public research rooms and digital collection.

- Around 60% of the research carried out at NAS is family history; this make NAS an important Scottish tourist attraction.

How to carry out research

- **Readers ticket**

In order to view documents in the search rooms, researchers require a Readers Ticket.

Two passport size photographs, photographic ID and proof of address.

- **Search rooms**

Documents may be viewed in the Historical Search Room, Legal Search Room or West register House.

On presentation of a valid Readers Ticket, researchers may use the online catalogue to search for documents. Researchers will then be allocated a desk and the documents brought to them.

Pens and photographic equipment are not allowed in search rooms; notes must be taken in pencil or on a laptop computer. Lockers are provided for all other personal belongings.

- **Staff**

We found the staff to be both helpful and knowledgeable, we recommend potential researchers make use of their expertise.

Online Catalogue

- The online catalogue allows the researcher to search the Archives holdings for key terms, or more specific records if known. The search will provide reference numbers that can be used to pre-order records, which is especially important if the records are 'outsourced' at the Archives third location, Thomas Thomson House.
- Documents are held at both General Register House and West Register House and NAS are available to assist researchers in the location and availability of documents.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address <http://www.nas.gov.uk/onlineCatalogue/>. The page header includes the logo for 'THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SCOTLAND' with the tagline 'DEFINING MOMENTS IN HISTORY' and the title 'Catalogue search - internet'. A navigation bar contains links for 'Welcome', 'Browse', '[Search]', and 'Help'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for 'Simple search', 'Maps & Plans', 'Advanced search', 'Build your own search', and 'Name Authorities'. The main content area shows the user is in 'Catalogue search > Simple search' on 'Thursday 2 July 2009 14:07'. On the left, there are 'Page options' (Print this page, E-mail this page, Previous page) and 'Records updated: 1 July 2009'. The central section is titled 'Search catalogue records' and contains a search form with the following fields and options:

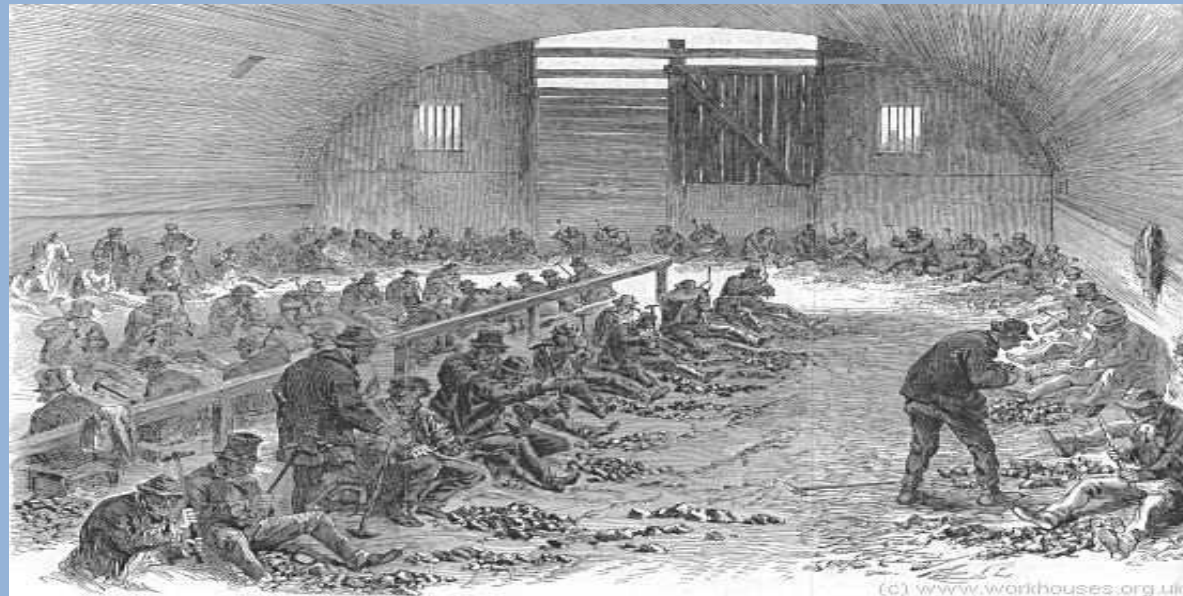
- Search for:** A text input field with the placeholder 'Type in your search term'. Radio buttons for 'Phrase', 'All words (AND)' (selected), and 'Any word (OR)'.
- Reference:** A text input field with the placeholder 'Type in your search term'. Radio buttons for 'Matches' (selected), 'Starts', 'Contains', and 'Exactly Matches'.
- Dates from:** A text input field with the placeholder 'Type in your search term'. **Dates to:** A text input field with the placeholder 'Type in your search term'. A checked checkbox for 'Include undated records'.

At the bottom of the search form are two buttons: 'Search' and 'Clear search fields'. The footer of the page provides contact information: 'The National Archives of Scotland, H.M. General Register House, 2 Princes Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3YY; tel +44 (0) 131 535 1314; email: enquiries@nas.gov.uk'.

The documents we looked at

On our visit to the Scottish National Archives I decided to view a document from the late 19th century on labour colonies in Scotland. The document was a pamphlet written by the founders of the Dumfriesshire work colony to promote labour exchanges as methods of alleviating poverty and dealing with vagrants in the 1890s. As I am currently studying a course on poverty, the document proved invaluable in affording me an insight into popular ideas on vagrants during this period, and I was able to incorporate the source into an essay on labour colonies.

Natalie



The documents we looked at

My source was a set of love letters from 1833 between a man from Pennsylvania and a woman who lived in Paisley. It was interesting to read how they communicated with each other as I had taken a module in Family and Relationships last year, and particularly enjoyed the courtship aspect of it, which this source was a good example of. I felt that looking it up in the archives gave me a good idea of how the whole system works, which will hopefully benefit me in my future career.

Helen



The documents we looked at

I looked at a scrapbook made by a Scottish immigrant to America in the 19th century. The book contained letters, newspaper cuttings, cartoons, maps and documents from a farewell dinner given to a visiting MP. The book was a interesting source as it represented an individual's collection of documents relating to his own experience of immigration and the American Civil War.

Hayley

'Let the States which are in rebellion see definitely and certainly that in no event will the states you represent ever join their proposed Confederacy, and they cannot much longer maintain the contest'

Lincoln, Cincinnati Post, 21st July 1862



The documents we looked at

My documents were held in West Register House. This is a much smaller search room than General Register House yet the staff are just as helpful. I looked at a number of court records relating to criminal women in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

It was so different to read about the women first-hand, compared with secondary sources and interpretations.

Mariclaire



Becoming an archivist

We were keen to get to know more about how to get involved with archiving and working with historical material more generally. Alison gave us some good advice;

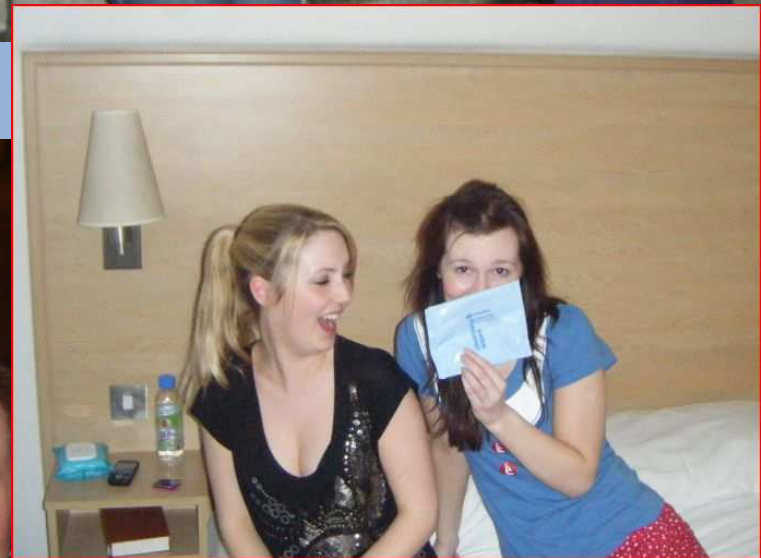
- The Society of Archivists provides useful information for people wishing to enter the field. The Society advises on the latest courses available on archival science and runs a number of events in relation to the conservation and cataloguing of historical documents.
- Work experience is key to gain entry to this field. Alison told us that smaller archives are located throughout the country, including local councils and large educational and business establishments. Experience with these sites will not only develop the necessary skills to become an archivist but will also show enthusiasm and initiative to potential employers.
- Post-graduate and professional study are necessary for archival work. Alison advised us to check out both Scottish and International programmes. Further, she advised us that employers will often give opportunities for advancement alongside paid employment; it pays to check this out during job search.

After a hard days
work...

Research is thirsty work...



Around 10pm
(honest) it was time
to head back to the
hotel and catch
some sleep.



Organisational

Planning the trip

Getting in contact with professionals



Practical research skills

Best practice

Familiarity with NAS

Primary research



Our skills

Job sector knowledge

Post-graduate study

Work experience

National Archival Register



IT skills

Effective use of online resources

Creating this presentation



Contact details



National Archives of Scotland

- www.nas.gov.uk
- General Register House, 2 Princes Street, Edinburgh EH1 3YY



Dr Dickon Copsey, Employability Officer

- d.copsey@admin.gla.ac.uk
- LBSS Employability webpage:
<http://www.gla.ac.uk/faculties/lbss/forstudents/employability/>



Society of Archivists

- www.archives.org.uk/
- Useful source of information and links

Thank you

