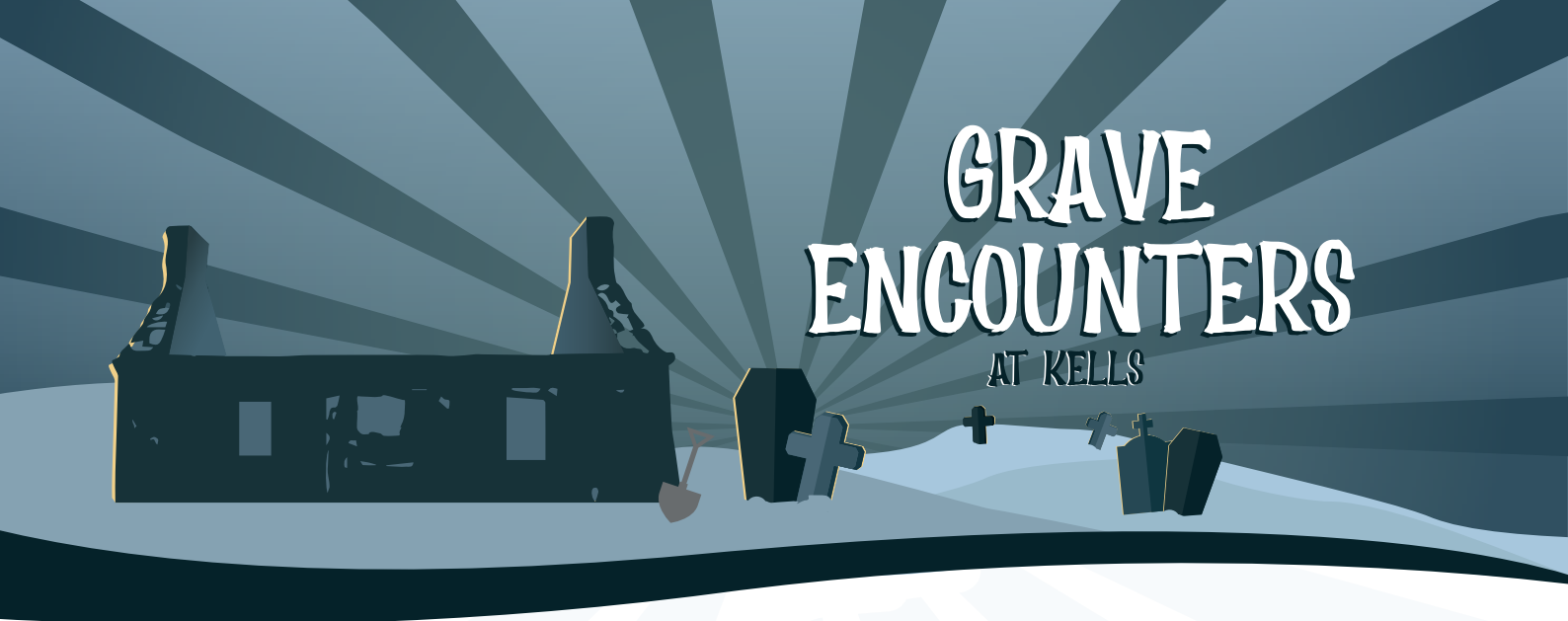




GRAVE ENCOUNTERS

AT KELLS

Kells Parish Church dates to 1822, but the gravestones that surround it go back to the early 1700s and feature some of the finest sculptures to be seen in Scottish kirkyards – it's why they've been given Listed Building status.

In these stones are carved the lives of people from the last 300 years of Galloway's history, including merchants, covenanters, artists and soldiers among many others. Several of their stories have long been forgotten and with your help, we're hoping that we can bring them back into public knowledge and create a record of their lives that will continue to be shared throughout future generations.

WHO WILL I BE RESEARCHING?

We'll assign you three gravestones to start off with (some of which might represent a family group), which will be yours exclusively to research. You can then choose between all the individuals named who you'd like to research – you don't have to research them all!

You might find that there is very little information for some gravestones while others turn up a lot more. We can also assign you additional stones if you feel you've done all that you can on the ones you have.

We have a copy of 'Kells Graveyard Memorial Inscriptions' by the Dumfries and Galloway Family History Society, which contains the inscriptions of 485 of the gravestones in the churchyard and we'll use this to send you the full transcriptions. Each stone is individually numbered and there's even an accompanying plan showing their location. We'll try and give you a range from different periods – while the earlier headstones are always interesting, you might find information is more readily available for later individuals, so we'll give you the option of looking into both and working out which resources work best.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE RESULTS?

Once you've collected all the information that you can on someone, then all you need to do is type up a summary and email it through to

contact@rathmell-arch.co.uk

with either 'Grave Encounters' or 'Kells' included in the subject title. You can type your summary directly into the email or attach it as a separate document written in Word, Google Docs, Libre Office or an equivalent.

Title your text with the person's name and the gravestone number from the initial memorial inscription so that we can tie their story to the correct stone. You can make your summary as simple or as detailed as you like. You can write it up as paragraphs or as a list of bullet points, add in images or keep it plain, and, if you want, you can also attach any documents that you find – how you lay it out is up to yourself!

Feel free to either wait until the end of April to submit your findings, or to submit your findings for each individual as you go.

DID YOU KNOW?

Kells contains three or four 'Adam and Eve' gravestones, which depict the temptation scene from the Garden of Eden. While depictions of Adam and Eve appear more in Scotland than in the rest of the UK, there are still only around 45 examples in the country and they date back to the early 1700s.



WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH MY FINDINGS?

We're very keen to share any knowledge that we gather, so we'll be sending the results through to local societies for their archives and to remain as a future resource. These groups will include LING (Local Initiatives in New Galloway), who manage many community projects including the **New Galloway Town Hall**, and the **Dumfries and Galloway Family History Society**. If there are any other groups that you think would be interested, just let us know – the more the merrier. We'll also add your findings to Can You Dig It's **online resources** and share little snippets from your research on the Can You Dig It social media (@**gglparchaeology** on both Facebook and Twitter) throughout the year – let us know if you'd rather your name was left off of the final results.

ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions at all throughout the project (or even some tips that we could forward on to your fellow researchers) then just send us an email at **contact@rathmell-arch.co.uk** and pop 'Kells' or 'Grave Encounters' into the subject title.

The first (and most important) piece of advice given when you start in archaeology is to 'always ask' – we're here to help and if we don't have the answer right away, then we will endeavour to hunt it out for you!

WHERE DO I START?

The best way to start is by gleaning as much detail as you can from the initial gravestone inscription. This might not be much – their full name, the date that they died and their age (which will let you calculate the approximate year they were born). It might also have the names of their spouse or relatives, which can help you to be sure that you have the right person when looking at records such as birth registers and census returns. The inscription might also give you a location for where they had been living and some might even mention the person's occupation. It's worth keeping a note of everything you find out as you go along to help you narrow down any search results.

Below you will find a list of the main resources available to help you get started. There's no particular order and you'll find out for yourself which resources you find easier to use, but if you're unsure then the Findmypast option on the National Library of Scotland might be a good one to start with (see below for more details).

DID YOU KNOW?

You will find memorials to Covenanters across most of the kirkyards in Galloway, and Kells is no exception. Covenanters were effectively made religious outlaws by Charles II during the 17th century, with government troops stationed throughout the Glenkens for the purpose of their capture and, often, their execution.

There is an abundance of information available about Covenanters on the internet and it's worth doing a general search to see what you can find. Two resources that can be helpful for our area though are the **Scottish Covenanter Memorials Association** and **Jardine's Book of Martyrs**.

TOP TIP



It might be an idea to type up pieces of information as you uncover them - this will hopefully stop you from having a major typing up exercise at the end!

VIRTUAL TEA BREAKS

Throughout March and April we'll be holding weekly 'Virtual Tea Breaks' on Thursdays - alternating each week between morning and afternoon.

There's no pressure to attend but it's a chance for you to drop in at any point to ask questions, share tips and findings, or just have a friendly chat.

These will take place over Zoom and we'll send you out the link and confirm the time by 9am every Thursday morning.

Our first Tea Break will be on

Thursday 3rd March

10:00-11:00am

BYOB (Bring your own biscuits!)



TOP TIP

Keep a note of any alternative spellings that you come across – you never know when someone might have accidentally added an error or typo into the record!

TAKE CARE

It's possible that you might find some of the material you come across upsetting – in the past, they will have perceived events and occurrences differently from how we do today, and certain accounts or the language used might seem offensive or distressing by today's standards.

If you come across anything that you find upsetting or disturbing, then think carefully about whether you want to continue with it – it might be best to stop and move onto the next individual on your list. And if you write up the material in your findings, it's best to keep as close to the original source as you can and write without bias – the past was a very different place!

AND ENJOY IT

Undertaking research can be a very rewarding task, but it can also become frustrating if your search is coming up empty.

Don't be disheartened – if you find yourself hitting a wall, then maybe it's time to have a break or move onto the next individual on your list. And you can always use us as a sounding board if you need to.

By recording the person's history, no matter how scant your findings, you will be ensuring that they remain in local memory for many years to come.



AUGUST OPEN DAY

We're hoping to have a small 'open day' at Kells Churchyard in August where we can share your findings and demonstrate how to create 3D models of some of the 'Adam and Eve' stones that are starting to lose their detail.

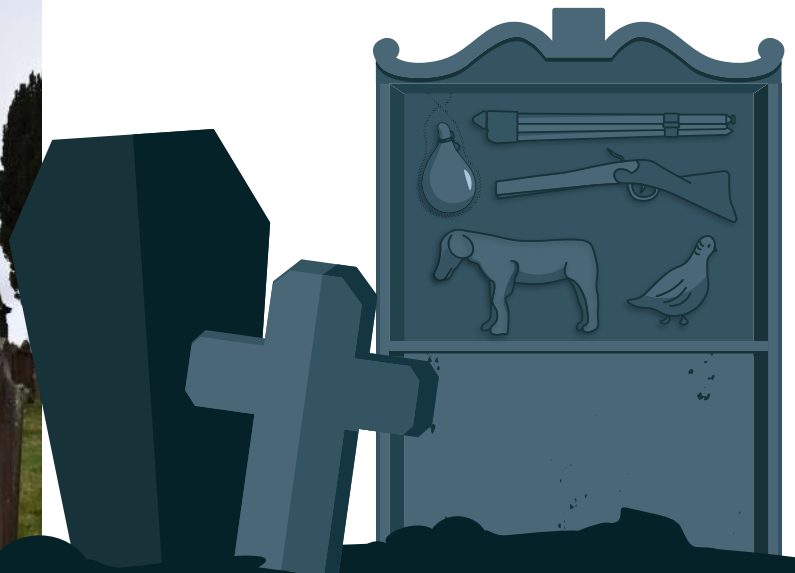
If you're happy to get involved, we'd love to have you along so that you can stand by the stones that you researched and share their stories to passers-by.

We'll let you know the details but there's no pressure to attend. We can share your stories for you and keep you updated on how we get on. We'll also send you links to any of the 3D models that we create.



TOP TIP

If something pops out that you want to look further into, such as a particular conflict someone was involved in, their profession or even their house, feel free to add it into your findings – it all adds to revealing a part of their lived experience.



RESOURCES

There are many resources available for researching the history of people. Here is a list of the main ones that we've come across. Most of them are free but, for the few that are charged, we can help you out so don't worry. Feel free to share any tips or other resources that you come across and we'll forward them on to your fellow researchers.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND

If your main address is in Scotland, you can apply to become a member of the **National Library of Scotland (NLS)**. To get a physical card you'll need to visit in person, but by just registering online, you will get free access to over 100 online resources.

This includes thousands of books, reports, newspapers and journals. But probably most importantly for this project, it includes the Library's account with 'Findmypast'.

Findmypast is a searchable online archive of over 2 billion records including birth, marriage and death records, parish records, censuses, migration records and military collections – a perfect place to start your research.

TOP TIP



When looking at any results in the Findmypast section of the NLS website, check if there's an option to 'View original record'. If there is, then be sure to have a look as you might find that it holds more information beyond what appears in the typed entry.



NEWSPAPERS

Old newspapers are a great resource, they can transport you back to the past in a way that few other archives can. You can often uncover information just by searching for a person's name. You might find obituaries, marriage announcements, local events or maybe they've appeared in a newsworthy story.

There are some newspapers available in the **NLS online resources**, including the Scotsman, but the best online resource for newspapers is the **British Newspaper Archive (BNA)**. The BNA stems from a partnership between the British Library and Findmypast to digitise the Library's vast newspaper archive dating back to the 17th century.

You can search the BNA website for free and use the filters on the left to narrow your results by date and area. It's also worth trying out different search terms or adding in extra words, such as a place name, to help.

Once you have found a list of articles that might be relevant to your search, you can look to see if any of them are 'Free to View' (another filter option), although you will need to register.

Many of the results will likely require a paid subscription to view them though, but this is where we can help – once you have narrowed down your search and picked out the articles that you think are relevant, then just email us the weblink from the top bar and we can download and email the articles straight through to you. We can do this for as many as you want so don't worry – if you're uncertain how relevant it is, just add it to the list to make sure!

LOCAL LIBRARIES

This project is primarily an online one but if you do have access to a local library and fancy a visit, then you will find that most have a section dedicated to researching family history. By visiting in person, you will be able to search either Scotlands People, Findmypast or an equivalent, such as Ancestry, for free – just check their website to find out where it's available.

CENSUS RETURNS

The census began in 1801 and was repeated every tenth year (with the exception of 1941) collecting information on households across the country. This can include a person's age, birthplace, occupation and marital status at the time the census was taken. Very little information about individuals survives for 1801 to 1831, but you will be able to find census information from 1841 to 1911 online – a 100-year secrecy rule is in place, with the 1921 census return due out this year.

Thanks to the Friends of the Archives of Dumfries and Galloway and several volunteers, you can access the returns of the 1851 census for Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire and Wigtownshire for free on the **Dumfries and Galloway Council website**.

You are also able to access some of the census returns for free through **FreeCen** and, if your main address is in Scotland, by registering online with the **National Library of Scotland**.

The census records are also available through a subscription to **Scotland's People**.



TOP TIP

The 1841 census enumerators were instructed to round down a person's age to the nearest multiple of five – this is worth remembering when trying to calculate a person's possible birth date.

SCOTLANDS PEOPLE

The official Scottish Government site for searching records and archives, **ScotlandsPeople** provides access to the statutory registers of births, marriages, deaths etc; census returns; church records; valuation rolls and legal records from Scotland's law courts.

You can search this website and look through the results as much as you like, but you will need credits to be able to click on a document and look at it in detail.

It's worth doing a search on Scotlands People to compare the results with what comes up on Findmypast in the NLS resources. If Scotlands People turns up records that you can't find elsewhere then we can issue you with a voucher for credits to cover the cost of viewing them. We'll only be able to issue so many within our budget so it's best to make as much use of the free resources as you can.

Scotlands People also have a range of guides which are freely accessible on their website and can help you to make sense of the different records available and what information they contain.

SCOTLANDS PLACES

ScotlandsPlaces is a free resource that lets you explore thousands of records simply by searching for a place name, clicking on a map or typing in your postcode. Search results bring together the national collections of Historic Environment Scotland, the National Records of Scotland and the National Library of Scotland so that you can easily find maps, photographs and written records about your chosen place.

The website gives you access to tax rolls and the Ordnance Survey Name Books, as well as photographs, archaeological records, drawings and publications.

ScotlandsPlaces is very useful for searching for a specific place name that a person might be associated with, such as a house, estate or farm. You can often connect people to places through tax records and in the Name Books – for the latter, be sure to check who's listed under 'Authorities for spelling' as this will often include the tenant or landowner.

AND SO MANY MORE...

We've picked out the main resources that we think will be most helpful in your search but there are many others out there which may prove useful. For a full guide of what's available, have a look at our guide for **Web-Based Heritage Research**.

TOP TIP

It's always worth doing a general internet search for the people or places you are researching, particularly for the older burials or individuals that might be well-known locally. There is a wealth of local online resources from community websites to personal blogs and you might well turn up some new information.



TOP TIP

Keep a note of any alternative spellings that you come across – you never know when someone might have accidentally added an error or typo into the record!