What is the Scottish Emigration Database?

Since the 1980s scholarly research into emigration from the British Isles has led to the publication of a substantial body of monographs, articles and collections of essays, which have addressed the subject from a variety of thematic, chronological, regional and international perspectives. The Scottish Emigration Database is the product of an Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) funded project based at the University of Aberdeen’s AHRB Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies from January 2003 to March 2005. The Data Compilation and Analysis Project: Diaspora Studies was one of seven projects funded through the Centre’s Diaspora Programme.

The database seeks to identify patterns of movement from Scottish ports between 1890 and 1960 using information transferred digitally from the passenger manifests of the Board of Trade’s Statistical Department (BT 27) held at The National Archives in Kew, London. It contains the records of 21,090 passengers and adds a unique quantitative dimension to the scholarship of the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies.

Using the Database

It is possible to analyse information contained within the database through either the copy of the dataset deposited with the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) or via the online edition (www.abdn.ac.uk/emigration). The versions are slightly different. That deposited with the AHDS contains records of 19,128 passengers who embarked at the Scottish ports of Dundee, Glasgow, Leith, Lochboisdale and Stornoway in the first 4 months of 1923. The online edition contains these records, along with the records of 2,062 further passengers who embarked between 1890 and 1960 at the Scottish ports of Aberdeen, Ardrossan, Ayr, Granton, Greenock and Oban.

Detailed explanations on how to use the online edition are provided at the database website. The copy made available via the AHDS is a standard relational Microsoft Access database containing 3 separate tables. The ‘Glossary of Terms’ explains what each of the fields means. Further information regarding the dataset can be obtained from the authors (details shown below).

Glossary of Terms

Document Table

*ID.* Identification reference.

*Document start/end date.* Period covered by data entry.

*Port.* Port at which the vessel embarked.

*TNA Reference Number.* Archival reference code for the original manifests held at The National Archives at Kew, London.

Passengers’ Table
Class of Passage.  Third, Second Cabin, Cabin, Steerage, First, Tourist.

Contract Ticket No.  Number for the passenger or group of passengers travelling on a ticket.  If several passengers travelled together on the same ticket, it usually demonstrated kinship connections.

Count.  Unique identification number given to each record on the database.

County.  Counties have been transcribed using 1923 nomenclature and divisions, except for ten passengers sampled at an earlier date, eight of whom came from ‘Forfarshire’ (Angus) and two from ‘Linlithgow’ (West Lothian).  The spelling of counties conforms to B. B. Hartop and M. Rodger, Johnston’s Gazetteer of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1958) or the University of Edinburgh’s online Gazetteer for Scotland.

Country of Origin.  Between 1890 and 1960 countries of origin of passengers embarking at British ports were recorded in six (later seven) categories: English, Scottish, Irish, Northern Irish (after 1922), Welsh, British Dominions, Foreign Countries.  In cases where more specific information (such as a particular dominion or foreign country) is provided in the manifests, this has been entered into the Notes field.

Date of Birth.  Year-month-day, in figures.

Departure Date.  The official date when the vessel was due to clear the port (year-month-day, in figures).

Destination Country.  This was the country where passengers stated they intended to reside for the subsequent eighteen months or longer.  The declaration was often misleading, as many passengers who claimed they were destined for Canada actually moved over to the United States, thus avoiding the restrictions on immigration into the USA resulting from the 1921 and 1924 Quota Acts.

Destination Port.  This information has been transcribed from the last column of the passenger manifest.  Although the cover sheet of the manifest may have indicated that a ship was bound for a particular port, the vessel could have called into other ports en route or subsequently.  For instance, all vessels belonging to the Cunard Company and setting out from the port of Glasgow had begun their journeys at Sandon Dock in Liverpool before collecting additional passengers at the Tail of the Bank (mouth of the Clyde).  Similarly, all those sailing with the Anchor Line called into Moville (near Londonderry) en route to North American destinations.  Furthermore, passengers shown as being destined for New York were sometimes allowed to disembark at Boston.

First name.  Names with variable spellings have been transcribed as they appear on the passenger list, with the exception of abbreviations, which have been standardised in full (e.g. Alexander and Isabella, rather than Alex and Isa).  In cases where married female travellers were recorded simply under their husband’s given name, that name has been entered in the Notes field, with the female traveller being entered as ‘Mrs’.  For initial queries it is advisable to experiment, using initials or fuller names with varied spellings.

Gender.

House Number.  Entered if appropriate.

House/Street.  Normally the name of the house, building or street named by the passenger as their last place of residence.  All street and sub-street names for addresses in Edinburgh and Glasgow have been checked in the relevant Post Office Directory for 1922-3.  Some addresses (e.g. 54 St Nicholas Street, Aberdeen; 63 Main Street, Dundee) refer to the commercial premises of agents who purchased...
tickets on behalf of passengers, including those travelling in organised parties arranged by the Salvation Army or the YMCA. In the case of crofting settlements the name of the crofting township (and, where applicable, the croft itself) appears under House/Street. Croft and street numbers appear in the street number field, which is accessed through a second-level search, using the Passengers’ Table Results Fields.

Name of Building. Name of house, hotel, office premises etc.

Occupation. Abbreviated occupations have been given in full (e.g. Blacksmith for B’smith). In cases where ditto marks appear on the manifest but the occupation is clearly incorrect (e.g. female blacksmith), the occupation field has been left blank, with the information originally recorded on the manifest being entered in the Notes field.

Official Number. The identification number assigned to a particular vessel on all its voyages, though foreign-registered ships rarely had such numbers. The official number permits record linkage between the Passengers’ Table and the Ships’ Table in the database.

Organised Group. Some passengers travelled in groups under the auspices of organisations such as the Hudson’s Bay Company or the Salvation Army. The eleven organisations identified in the manifests can be selected by using a drop-down menu.

Street Name. Street or croft/crofting township.

Sub-Street Name. Entered if appropriate.

Sub-Street Number. Entered if appropriate.

Surname. Surnames have been transcribed as they appear on the manifests. It is advisable to search under variable spellings (e.g.; Mcintosh, Mackintosh; Thomson, Thompson). For semi-legible surnames guidance was sought from George F. Black, Surnames of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1999).

Title. Not given unless specified on the manifest. (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Master, Dr, Rev, Major, Prof).

Town, City or Island. Spellings conform to B. B. Hartop and M. Rodger, Johnston’s Gazetteer of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1958) or the University of Edinburgh’s online Gazetteer for Scotland.

Travel Agent. Name of person who purchased the ticket on behalf of the passenger. Their status was normally indicated on the manifest by the prefix ‘c/o’ before the passenger’s address. The category included both commercial agents and relatives of passengers.

Type of Passenger. Between 1890 and 1905 all passengers were classified as either British or Foreign. After 1906 all passengers were shown as ‘British’, ‘Alien Transmigrant’ or ‘Alien Non-transmigrant’.

Urban District/Village. Districts within towns and cities that were included in the manifest addresses have been transcribed. In Glasgow these have been categorised by the Registration District for the street address given in the 1923 Post Office Directory for Glasgow. In cases (e.g. Ibrox) where the district was entered incorrectly according to Registration District criteria, a correction has been made in the transcription, with the original information being entered in the Notes field. The spelling of village names has been standardised using B. B. Hartop and M. Rodger, Johnston’s Gazetteer of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1958) or the University of Edinburgh’s online Gazetteer for Scotland. Gaelic place names have been standardised in English, since the majority of entries in the manifests used English spellings.
Ships’ Table

**Age.** Transcribed from the manifest. For those aged under 12 months old decimal points have been used accordingly: Infants aged 1 month old would be shown as 1.01, those aged 10 months 1.1, etc.. Ages, particularly of older female passengers, were often not recorded.

**Age Category.** Assigned by pursers of shipping companies when completing the manifests. They used a standard eight-category template (male with wife; female with husband; male over 12; female over 12; male child over 1, female child over 1, male infant, female infant). Entries could be misleading. E.g. any woman who was travelling alone would be classified as ‘female over 12’, and any man travelling alone as ‘male over 12’, with the implication that such passengers were single.

**Country of Birth.** Transcribed from the manifest.

**Country of Which Subject.** The nationality shown on a passenger’s passport.

**Date Signed.** Date on which the ship’s master signed the manifest before officials from the Board of Trade at the port of embarkation.

**Departure Date.** Official date when the vessel was due to clear port. (Year-month-day in figures).

**Destination Address.** Only recorded for passengers who left during November and December 1960.

**Destination Date.** The official date when the vessel was due to clear the port (year-month-day, in figures).

**Destination Country.** Transcribed from the manifest.

**Destination Town.** Only recorded for passengers who left during November and December 1960.

**Dock.** Dock where the vessel was provisioned. If the ship was berthed in a Clydeside dock, the passengers would have embarked from there, but if it had originally been docked (and provisioned) in Liverpool, the passengers would have been ferried by tender between Glasgow or Greenock and the Tail of the Bank (the Clyde estuary). This information was gleaned from [HM Customs Bills of Entry](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/116576/HM_Customs_Bills_of_Entry.pdf) held at the Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool.

**Image Number.** The number of the digital image from which the information was transcribed.

**Journey Cancelled.** If a passenger was crossed off the manifest this has been recorded as a cancelled journey. The manifests do not indicate the reasons for cancellations.

**Master’s Name.** Transcribed (in its fullest form) from the passenger manifest.

**Notes.** A miscellaneous field, which highlights unorthodox, non-standard or erroneous entries, identifies sources or additional information, and indicates any disparities between the original record and the transcription.

**Number of Statute Adults.** Number of adults conveyed. Every passenger aged over twelve was classed as one statute adult; those aged from 1-12 were classed as half a statute adult and infants were not counted. For example, a ship carrying 260 adults, 80 children and 6 infants would have returned 300 Statute Adults.
Occupation. Transcribed from the manifest, except where there are obvious errors. In such cases, the field has been left blank, with the information from the manifest being entered into the Notes field.

Official Number. The identification number assigned to a particular vessel on all its voyages. Since foreign-registered ships rarely had such numbers, artificial numbers have been created. The official number permits record linkage between the Passengers’ Table and the Ships’ Table in the database.

Origin Country. Transcribed from the manifest.

Original Port of Departure. Port from which the ship had originally left. Normally applicable only to vessels sailing from Greenock that had left from Liverpool and called AT Greenock.

Passenger Footage. Amount of space for all passengers (not including staff quarters) when recorded on the Passenger Manifest. This figure was based on the Passenger Certificate issued by the Board of Trade and allocated each passenger a specified amount of space.

Port of Arrival in UK. The port at which foreign passengers had disembarked on arrival in the UK. Such information was only supplied (after 1906) for transmigrant passengers, or those who arrived and re-embarked from Britain within fourteen days.

Port of Embarkation. Final port from where passengers embarked for ports outside Europe and the Mediterranean. Note that several passengers who sailed from Aberdeen in the 1950s had originally embarked at Hull, and had addresses in that town, but since the Aberdeen-Hull leg of their journey was classed as a domestic trip, they were only recorded as leaving Britain on outward-bound passenger manifests once they had set sail for a non-European/non-Mediterranean port. This did not apply to those who embarked upon ships that called into an Irish port.

Provision Days. Number of days, set by British maritime law, for which the provisions carried on the ship could feed the passengers.

Provisions for Adults. Legal declaration by the master of the vessel, required under British maritime law, stating that he had adequate provisions (food and refreshments) for all passengers.

Registered Tonnage. The gross registered tonnage of the vessel according to the Ship’s Manifest. Where this information was not provided the figure has been gleaned from Lloyd’s Register of Shipping.

Ship. The names of all ships entered in the database can also be selected using the Ships’ Table. All ship names have been checked against the Lloyd’s Register of Shipping, held at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Steamship Line. Transcribed from passenger manifest. Name of the company which provided the service, according to Lloyd’s Register of Shipping. The pre-printed forms were often out of date. For instance, Donaldson Brothers of Glasgow owned vessels in their own right and managed four vessels for the Anchor Line from 1916, before buying out the dissolved Anchor Line in 1935 to form the Donaldson Atlantic Line. For more information on the shipping fleets, see The Ships List.

Steamship Line to UK. The shipping companies that conveyed foreign passengers to the UK. Such information was only supplied (after 1906) for transmigrant passengers, or those who arrived and re-embarked from Britain within fourteen days.

TNA Reference Number. Archival reference code for the original manifests at The National Archives at Kew, London.
*Where Bound.* Overseas port where the vessel was bound. [This did not include ports within Europe or the Mediterranean at which the vessel may have subsequently called in order to collect more passengers.]

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