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First Steps: the Internet and Other Resources

- 2.1** When you decide to find out who your ancestors were, ScotlandsPeople, the NRS or the internet should not be your starting point. First ask your Aunt Jessie. In other words, begin with your own living family. There is usually at least one relative who is interested in the family and acts as the family memory, though that memory may be reliable for only a couple of generations back. Be wary of romantic family traditions that claim descent from the disinherited child of a nobleman, the owner of a castle or Robert the Bruce. Note names, dates and places on old family letters, photographs, and documents, such as birth certificates and wills, which relatives may have preserved.
- 2.2** From this information, you will have a basis on which to build. You will probably now want to consider the resources available to the genealogist on the internet. Later chapters describe how to use the resources of ScotlandsPeople and the NRS. In this chapter we provide pointers to some useful resources you can find on the internet and in paper format. If you do not have the internet, try visiting your local library or family history society. It is still possible to carry out research in the traditional manner using published reference books and other material. As your research progresses and you have more lines of enquiry to pursue, you will probably want to return to the many useful internet resources that exist. As with reliable published sources, you may not exhaust them on your first trawl.
- 2.3** A useful research habit is to note the source of your facts as you go. Although it may seem an unnecessary chore, it invariably saves time in the long run. Even a bare reference number can be sufficient to pinpoint an image or document, and avoid a duplicate search when your memory of the original source fades.



Wedding photograph 1930, private collection.