

SCOTTISH PRISONERS OF WAR SOCIETY

A Behemoth Website Redesign

When Toni Rome first connected with the Scottish Prisoners of War Society (SPOWS) she was following a trail to track down an ancestor who was taken prisoner during the Battle of Dunbar in 1650 — one of two battles of the English Civil War. SPOWS is dedicated to promoting and preserving the research concerning the Scottish prisoners who were exiled to New England after the Battles of Dunbar (1650) and Worcester (1651).

The founder of SPOWS was managing a WordPress website that had ballooned to hundreds of pages and images, which was becoming increasingly more difficult to maintain. Although not a web developer, she did yeoman's work handling a repository of historical and genealogical information, including 264 prisoner profile pages that descendants and researchers from around the world accessed daily. It was the perfect time for a redesign.

Those who are familiar with the WordPress platform know that it is a gamechanger for web development. One need not be a programmer to have a website with dynamic functionality. There are thousands of plugins that can be added to a website, allowing functionality from e-commerce to form creation, SEO to site security, and literally everything in between.

THE PROCESS

The first step in the process was to audit the site and content, establish goals, and then plan the information architecture and user experience. The overarching goal for the entire project, was to organize everything in a meaningful way – to make navigation easy, and streamline content management.

CHALLENGE

A thorough audit of the site revealed the following main issues.

For Users:




- Content was unorganized or redundant.
- The site had no clear navigation, users had to make multiple clicks to find content. Some prisoner information resided on multiple pages.

- Many prisoner profiles had long content that included genealogical information with biographical notes, footnotes, and several images of records. All text was visually similar, making it difficult to differentiate between sections.
- Visually the site was plain and didn't have many photos or graphics to represent the subject matter.


SOLUTION:

1. Content was siloed into categories: Battle of Dunbar, Battle of Worcester, and information about the society. The goal for the site's architecture was to give the visitor a chronological hierarchy for each battle—information about the battle, the aftermath and prisoners taken, their exile, indentured servitude, genealogy, and the documentation—with menus designed for easy access to this structure, including the home page elements and breadcrumbs.
2. Prisoner profile pages were designed with content organized in logical order. At the top of each page is a simple grid—a snapshot that lists which battle the prisoner was in, the ship that transported him to New England, his name variations, the places where he lived, and his association with other prisoners. The remaining documentation and genealogical information was formatted with consistent treatment of headings and text. In addition, all information that resided on other pages was added to the profile pages to alleviate unnecessary clicks.
3. A visual sense of history was incorporated into the design of the site with photos of battle reenactments and historical images used throughout. Background images were incorporated in both battle sections. For battle main pages we used images of old engravings for each battle. For prisoner profile pages, the background images are historical documents—hand-written lists of the prisoners exiled to New England, the originals of which are housed at New England Historic Genealogical Society (Boston, Massachusetts).



SCOTTISH PRISONERS OF WAR SOCIETY



ABOUT US | **BATTLE OF DUNBAR** | BATTLE OF WORCESTER | Y-DNA PROJECT | EVENTS | FAQ | RESOURCES |   



About the Battle
Aftermath and Prisoners
Original List of Dunbar Prisoners Profiles
Prisoner Profiles: Dunbar
Where Did the SPOWS Go?
Durham University Scottish Soldiers Project
Documentation





of the Scottish prisoners from the Battles of Dunbar (1650) and Worcester (1651).

BATTLE OF DUNBAR - 1650  




BATTLE OF WORCESTER - 1651  

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ABOUT THE BATTLE OF DUNBAR

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Photo above used with permission by Rusty Aldwinckle www.mistresswinckle.co.uk

About the Battle of Dunbar provided by Dr. Arran Johnston of *Scottish Battlefields Trust* for more information about the battle you can purchase Arran's book: *Essential Agony, The Battle of Dunbar 1650*, Warwick, England. Helion and Company, 2019.

"Civil wars had raged across the British Isles since 1639, as religious and political disputes erupted into violence across the three Stuart kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland. During that time, Scotland was governed by the Covenanters, a nationwide movement of those subscribing to a National Covenant to protect the Presbyterian church from royal interference. From 1643, the Covenanters had been allied to the English Parliamentarians in their successful war against King Charles I. At the end of the war, however, relations between the allies were strained. In 1649 the English parliament executed the king – who was himself a Scotsman – without the consent of the Scottish parliament. The latter therefore acknowledged the right of the dead king's son to reign as King Charles II. After complicated negotiations, the young king was invited to Scotland on the condition that he signed the National Covenant and acted merely as a figurehead for the Covenanter government.

The English parliament had meanwhile abolished the monarchy, and to prevent the king's

SCOTTISH PRISONERS OF WAR SOCIETY

Viewing Prisoner Profiles

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PRISONER PROFILES: DUNBAR

Home » Battle of Dunbar » Aftermath and Prisoners » Prisoner Profiles: Dunbar

The Scottish prisoners found on this website are prisoners of war from two battles of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, the first, in Scotland in 1650 and, the second, in England in 1651.

On 03 Sep 1650, the **BATTLE OF DUNBAR**, took place at *Dunbar, Scotland* and resulted in many Scottish prisoners of war being marched to Durham Cathedral where they were kept before being moved on to other places. Out of the thousands in Durham only about **150** were sent to the *Massachusetts Bay Colony* via the ship, *Unity*. A passenger list for the ship *Unity* has yet to be found.

On this site a list has been compiled with over **180** suggested names of men found in *New England* who appear to fit the criteria of a *Scottish prisoner of war*. [View the documentation](#) and explore the links below to see if your ancestor may be on the list.

VIEW PROFILES:

- ▶ Dunbar Prisoners of War – All
- ▶ Dunbar Prisoners in Connecticut
- ▶ Dunbar Prisoners in Maine
- ▶ Dunbar Prisoners in Massachusetts
- ▶ Dunbar Prisoners in New Hampshire
- ▶ Dunbar Prisoners in New Jersey
- ▶ Dunbar Prisoners in Rhode Island
- ▶ Possible Scottish Prisoners of War

SCOTTISH PRISONERS IN NEW ENGLAND ▶ SCOTTISH PRISONERS IN BARBADOS ▶

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DUNBAR PRISONERS IN CONNECTICUT

Home » Battle of Dunbar » Aftermath and Prisoners » Prisoner Profiles: Connecticut

The men below are documented SPOW living in the following

- DANIELSON**
 - ▶ Cone, Daniel
 - ▶ Danielson, James
- HADDAM**
 - ▶ Cone, Daniel
- HARTFORD**
 - ▶ Bow, Alexander
- MIDDLETOWN**
 - ▶ Forbes, James
 - ▶ Grimes, Henry

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Bow, ALEXANDER

Home » Battle of Dunbar » Aftermath and Prisoners » Prisoner Profiles: Dunbar » Bow, Alexander

BATTLE:	Battle of Dunbar in Dunbar, East Lothian, Scotland
SHIP/ARRIVAL:	Unity, Dec 1650
PRISONER AND LIST:	Alexander Bow, #7 on George S. Stewart's Captured at Dunbar list ¹
NAME VARIATIONS:	Bow, Bowe, possibly Bowes?
RESIDENCES:	Charlestown, Massachusetts and Middletown, Connecticut
OTHER SPOW ASSOCIATIONS:	

Every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy; please independently verify all data

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Researchers: Teresa Rust
Editor: Teresa Rust

FIRST GENERATION IN THE NEW WORLD

1. **ALEXANDER¹ BOW/BOWE**, was born, *presumably* in Scotland, and died at Middletown, Connecticut on 06 Nov 1678.^{2, 3} He married, first, at Charlestown by 1659, **SARAH** (____).⁴ She died in the Spring of 1665 with her infant daughter, Mary.^{3, 5} He married, second, at Middletown, Connecticut, on 25/6 Nov 1673, **REBECCA HUGHS/HOUSES/HUSE**.^{3, 2}

Biographical Notes:
1. A descendant is a donor to the Scottish Prisoners yDNA Study.
2. See the blog: Alexander Bowe, by Elizabeth Bowe Boogs.

SCOTTISH PRISONERS OF WAR SOCIETY

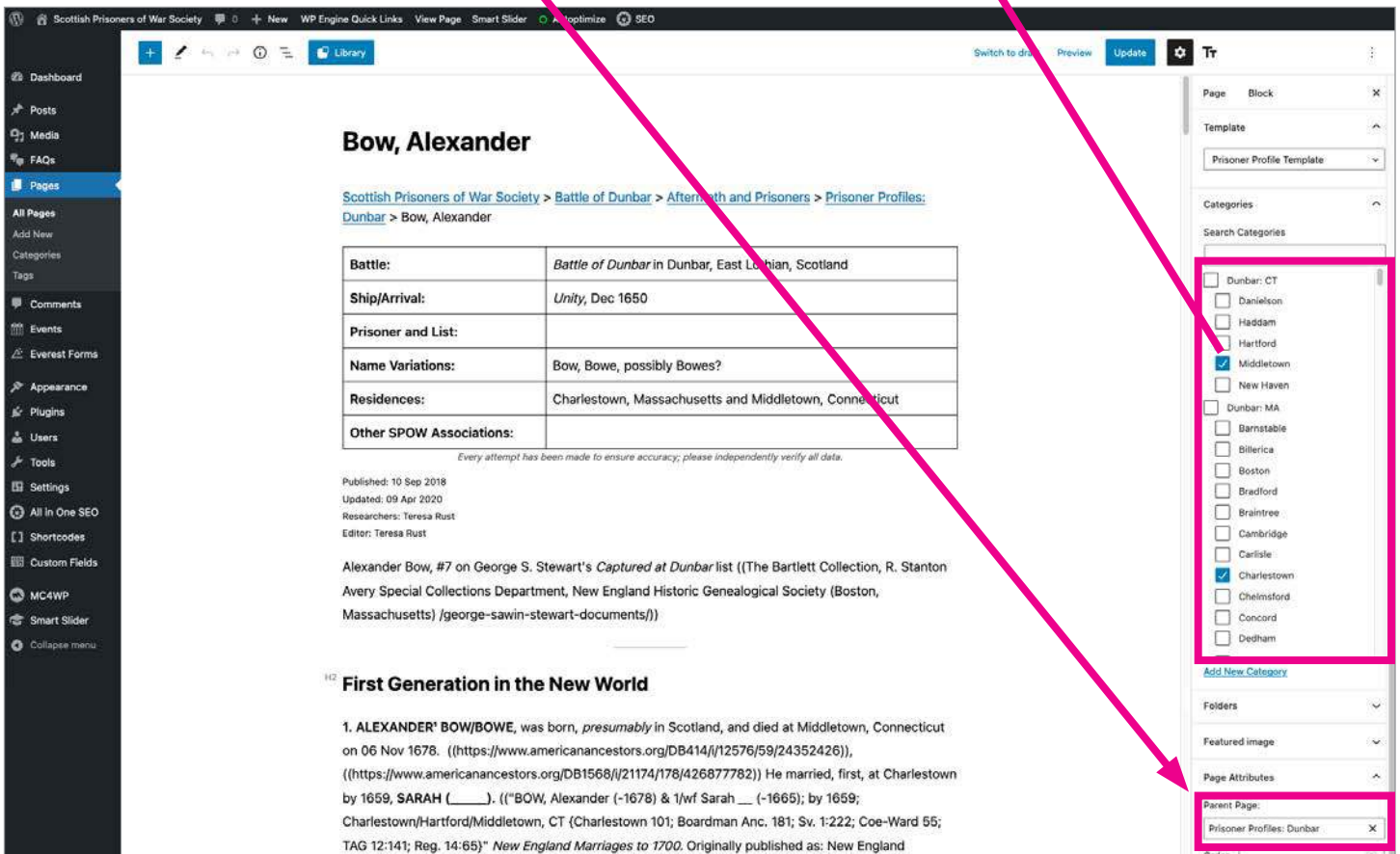
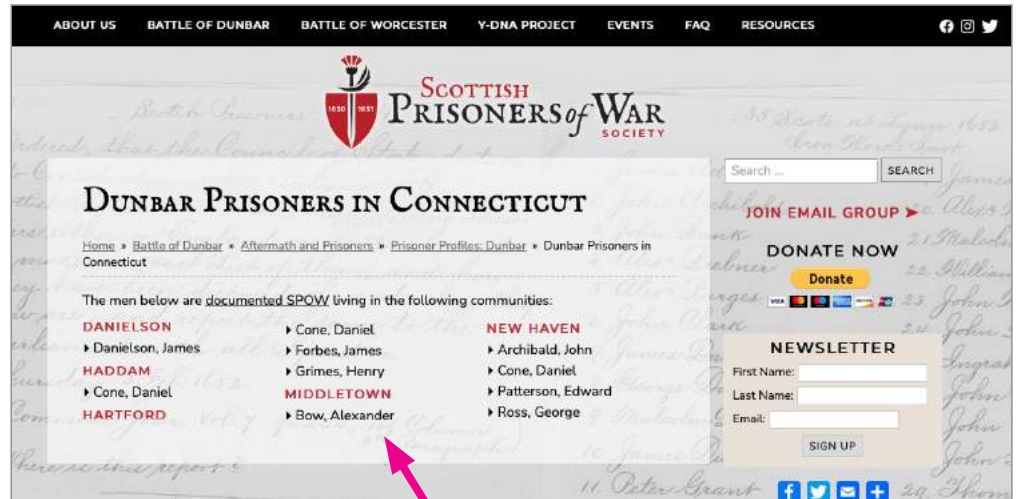
Viewing Prisoner Profiles: Creating a Custom System

BACK-END ADMIN:

One of the primary requirements for the user interface was for people to have the ability to view prisoner profile pages based on where they lived in New England – by colony (state) and then by town. Since many of them lived in multiple places, the system needed to accommodate this.

In order to implement this functionality, we configured multiple plugins that allow site administrators to assign categories to each prisoner. This automatically writes links to their profile pages onto the appropriate pages.

Likewise by specifying a parent page, a link to the prisoner page is automatically written onto the “view all prisoners” page.



SCOTTISH PRISONERS OF WAR SOCIETY

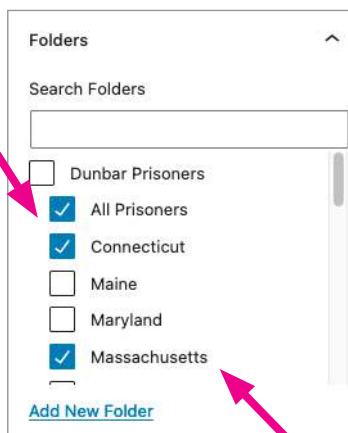
CHALLENGE

For Content Managers:

- In WordPress admin, the default interface for the management of pages or images displays a maximum of 20 links. Because there are over 300 website pages and 700+ images, finding the desired page or image to manage meant clicking through several pages of links, which is cumbersome.

SOLUTION:

1. We installed and configured the plugin: Wicked Folders Pro. This valuable plugin organizes pages and media into manageable folders. For pages, we created folders for Dunbar Prisoners and Worcester Prisoners with subfolders for each New England state that the prisoner lived in, then on each prisoner profile page we assigned them folders for easy organization.



Title	Categories	Page Folders	Last Modified	Author	Last Modified
Archibald, John Parent Page: Prisoner Profiles: Dunbar	Lynn, New Haven	All Prisoners, Connecticut, Massachusetts	September 5, 2020 8:25 am	SPOWS	
Bow, Alexander Parent Page: Prisoner Profiles: Dunbar	Charlestown, Middletown	All Prisoners, Connecticut, Massachusetts	November 28, 2020 12:26 pm	Sue Raymond	
Cone, Daniel Parent Page: Prisoner Profiles: Dunbar	Haddam, Hartford, New Haven	All Prisoners, Connecticut	August 31, 2020 3:15 pm	Sue Raymond	
Danielson, James Parent Page: Prisoner Profiles: Dunbar	Block Island, Danielson, Lynn	All Prisoners, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island	September 1, 2020 5:50 am	Sue Raymond	
Forbes, James Parent Page: Prisoner Profiles: Dunbar	Hartford	All Prisoners, Connecticut	September 10, 2018 3:05 pm	Toni Rome	
Grimes, Henry Parent Page: Prisoner Profiles: Dunbar	Hartford	All Prisoners, Connecticut	September 15, 2018 10:58 pm	Toni Rome	
Patterson, Edward Parent	New Haven, Oyster River	All Prisoners, Connecticut, New	September 19, 2018 6:21 pm	Toni Rome	

CHALLENGE

For Site Migration:

- The original SPOWS website consisted of over 300 pages with very long URLs.
- The society's domain scottishprisonersofwar.com is long. Changing it to a short name, spows.org, was needed to reflect their non-profit status and to make it memorable and easier to promote. However, when the pages and images from the old site were imported into the new, links to hundreds of images had absolute paths to the old domain.

SOLUTION:

1. Once pages were imported into the new site, permalinks (URLs) for the prisoner profile pages were shortened to make them meaningful for search engine results. We then integrated the plugin Redirection, which allowed us to point the old URLs to the new. If someone visited the new website from a link to an old page, whether from a web search or bookmark, they were redirected to the new page.
2. To fix the broken image links, we installed a "search and replace" plugin to remove the domain and make the URLs relative.