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MIGRATION AND ECONOMIC CHANGE IN THE  
NORTHERN HIGHLANDS DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY,  
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE PERIOD 1851 - 1891

by

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"And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them...therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens...but the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.

"And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord...Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgements...And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage."

Exodus 1: vii, xi; 6: ii, vi, ix.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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R.H.

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## SUMMARY

The socio-economic problems of the Northern Highlands during the nineteenth century were rooted in the apparent paradox of a society simultaneously experiencing net migration losses and overpopulation. The paradox is partly explained by the fact that the two situations affected different groups and different districts within the region. The unravelling of the relationships between these two sets of factors rests on the analysis of lifetime migration data at parish level as reconstructed from the censuses of 1851, 1871, and 1891.

The first stage in this analysis deals with migration and is set out in Part II. Here it is demonstrated that the majority of migrants at local and regional levels originated in parishes on the east coast, or from those bordering on the Great Glen and on other major routes to the south. Internal migration was therefore predominantly a feature of these zones. Conversely, most overseas emigrants in the period 1851-91 were natives of the remoter western and insular districts. But overseas movement represented only a small proportion of the total migration flows originating in the region. On this analysis, the main problem of the north-west mainland and the Hebrides was not emigration but overpopulation.

Part III of the thesis focuses particularly on the causes and consequences of the latter problem. The approach here is

to consider the population problem in relation to the possible options of local employment; and subsequently, having established that those options offered no permanent solution, to analyse the policies for and attitudes to the alternative of relieving the strain on resources through emigration. Contrary to popular belief, the forty years from the potato famine of 1845-6 to the crofting legislation of 1886 did not witness a sharp increase in migration from the Atlantic fringe parishes. Overpopulation increased as the crofting population grew by thirty per cent from 1851 to 1891, and as crofter mobility, calculated on the basis of those enumerated in their parish of birth, declined by nearly forty per cent during the same period. The increase in migration in these years was concentrated in the non-crofter sections of the population on or near the eastern coastal plain.

The reasons for this divergence are complex, but it is argued that they rest fundamentally on three sets of circumstances. The first was the dramatic switch in landlord policy from favouring population concentration as a source of cheap labour in the early nineteenth century to favouring extensive land usage after the potato blights. This switch affected east and western zones differently, contributing to population immobility in the western and insular districts and encouraging a more flexible response to commercial opportunities in the eastern areas. The contrast between the comparative immobility of population in the west and

mobility in the east was merely reinforced by the crofting legislation following the Napier Commission report.

The second set of factors underlying these divergent experiences relates to the nature of crofting and of the crofter. Seasonality was part of the crofting cycle, but the extensive personal mobility and considerable occupational specialisation required of those seeking employment in other sectors within the region often placed such opportunities beyond the reach of the crofter who sought simultaneously to maintain his own croft. This is illustrated with reference to the fishing, transport, and service industries in particular. It is argued that to a large extent crofting was incompatible with most other employment opportunities available in the region.

The third immobilising factor was a complex intertwining of social and cultural considerations embodied in kinship, language, religion, and education. An enduring legacy of the clan system was the survival of an ultimate dependency on kin and landlord in times of distress. In the western and insular districts there persisted a fundamentally primitive society, unresponsive to market forces, in which stability rather than mobility was the normal condition.

The principal conclusions of the study are threefold. In the first instance, although migration losses were a predominant feature of Highland society during the period under consideration, they have served to divert the attention

of twentieth century historians from the extent to which congestion and not emigration was a primary problem at a sub-regional level. Secondly, the areas and the people most affected by overpopulation were generally different from the districts and groups of inhabitants most affected by migration losses. Thirdly, while contemporaries were aware of the extent of congestion in some areas, they did not realise that the attempts to alleviate it by assisted migration, however well motivated, tended to encourage movement by those elements of the population most likely to move spontaneously and to leave untouched the impoverishedcrofting peasantry, who were inherently immobile. Thus many of the policies of nineteenth century landlords and legislators, which were intended to alleviate overpopulation by alternative local employment or by migration, did not achieve their desired effect. Moreover, in some cases, they actually resulted in stimulating the movement of the more mobile inhabitants of the region, to the greater detriment of the remainder.



P A R T    I

INTRODUCTION

C H A P T E R 1

Investigating the Problem

## Background to the present study

The demographic history of the Northern Highlands of Scotland is generally discussed in terms of prolonged depopulation. This is customarily believed to have begun with the failure of the Jacobite risings in the first part of the eighteenth century and the resultant disbandment of the clan system after 1745. Thereafter depopulation is popularly thought to have been hastened by agrarian change, in particular by the introduction of sheep farming into the area. This is not an accurate interpretation of the course of Highland history. In the first place, some of the earliest and most influential emigrations from the region were not so much due to internal political or economic pressure, as to increased Scottish participation in overseas colonisation following the Act of Union in 1707. Among the first British settlers in Georgia in 1733 was a group of Highlanders; others went to colonies in North Carolina and Virginia. Their enthusiastic letters home played a major part in encouraging their families and friends to leave the Highlands.<sup>(1)</sup> Secondly, the

1) D.F. Macdonald, *Scotland's Shifting Population 1770-1850*, Glasgow, 1937, pp. 140-153. Also D. Meyer, *The Highland Scots of North Carolina 1732-1776*, University of North Carolina Press, 1957, reprinted 1961, pp. 43-4.

encroachment of sheep into the upland areas brought about no sudden change in the region as a whole. It was, rather, a gradual and unco-ordinated process, beginning in Perthshire in 1762 and finally reaching Shetland and parts of the Hebrides towards the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the first clearance of population in the Highlands was not a result of sheep farming but of the introduction of black cattle in Argyll in 1745.<sup>(2)</sup> Thereafter, sporadic clearances of settlements occurred as leases expired and were not renewed.

Thirdly, to equate clearance with depopulation is to overlook the influence of economic developments, both in the Northern Highlands and in other parts of Scotland, which were taking place simultaneously. Far from becoming depopulated, all seven crofting counties<sup>(3)</sup> attained their maximum recorded populations between the censuses of 1831 and 1861, and many individual parishes continued to grow thereafter. The clearances caused dispossession but not necessarily depopulation. There were numerous resettlement schemes. Other economic opportunities, such as those in the expanding fishing industry, sometimes offered an alternative to leaving the region. Moreover, while it

2) Macdonald, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

3) The former crofting counties are the present districts of the Highland Region and the island authorities, viz. Argyll, Caithness, Inverness, Orkney, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland, and Shetland.

is arguable that the populations of the Highland counties began to decline approximately in the order in which sheep were introduced into them, it should be emphasised that this order - from south to north - also corresponds with the relative proximity of these areas to Glasgow and central Scotland, where rapid industrial growth was taking place, and where, in consequence, there were innumerable new employment prospects. (4)

Because of the immense interest that the history of the Highlands since 1745 has evoked among both popular and academic writers, it is impossible to undertake in the course of these pages a comprehensive review of all the literature available on the subject. However, the background for the present study is suggested by the contrasting views of two currently well-known authors. One, John Prebble, explains the Highland clearances in the following terms:

"Once the chiefs lost their powers many of them lost also any parental interest in their clansmen. During the next hundred years they continued the work of Cumberland's battalions. So that they might lease their glens and braes to sheep-farmers from the Lowlands and England, they cleared the crofts of men, women, and children, using police and soldiers where necessary." (5)

4) M. Gray, *The Highland Economy 1750-1850*, Edinburgh, 1957, p. 99. cf. Chapter 2.

5) J. Prebble, *The Highland Clearances*, London, 1963, introduction.

While this line of argument has attracted a substantial following of both amateur and professional historians since the early nineteenth century, it is highly generalised and as such must be treated with considerable caution on that basis alone. A more detached stand is taken by Philip Gaskell, author of "Morvern Transformed" :

"...To be expelled suddenly from a dearly-loved home with the alternatives of either starving in an overcrowded slum-village nearby or of leaving to seek work in a strange place with no knowledge of its language or its ways was the atrocious plight of these ordinary people who had done nothing to deserve it, and the thought of their misery can still move us deeply. Nevertheless we must reject an emotional approach if the clearances are to be understood... the Highland clearances were the symptom of the inability of the old Highland economy to adapt to a changing world, and of the breakdown of the old Highland way of life, not their cause." (6)

6) P. Gaskell, *Morvern Transformed, a highland parish in the nineteenth century*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 25.

The main purpose of this thesis is to assess the extent to which population movements in the Northern Highlands resulted from "the inability of the old Highland economy to adapt to a changing world". Fundamental to this objective, however, is the preliminary aim of establishing that the "breakdown of the old Highland way of life" did not always manifest itself in evictions and emigration. Neither of the foregoing excerpts gives any indication that one of the basic Highland problems of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was in fact overpopulation.<sup>(7)</sup> Moreover, there is no suggestion that in many instances this problem was not alleviated by migration.

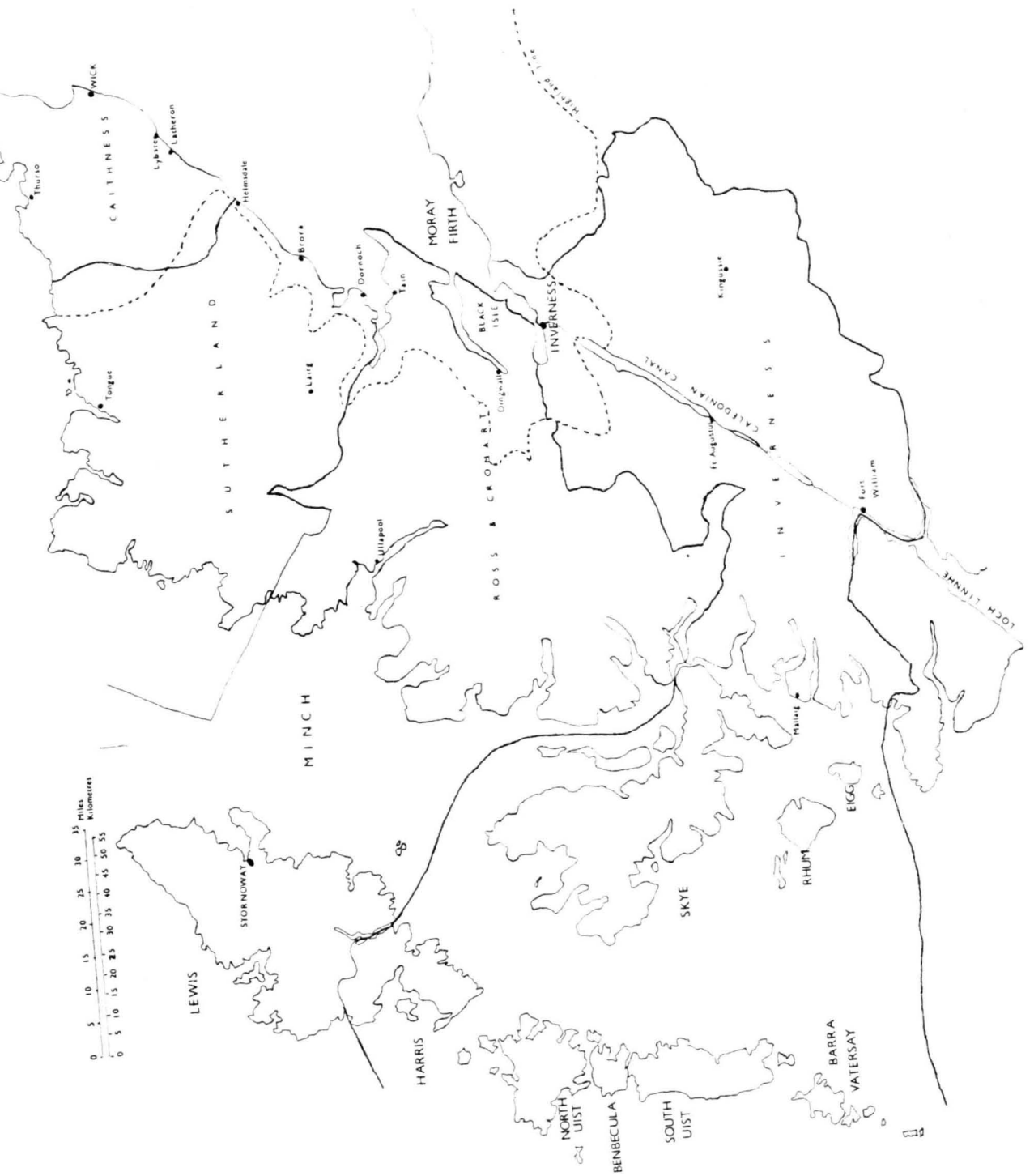
7) Gaskell, however, makes this point elsewhere. cf. Chapter 9, notes (9)-(10), p. 348. (N.B. cross-referencing of this nature in the present study invariably relates to the relevant point in the text, not to the actual footnote).

## The Northern Highlands : the region and its inhabitants

In the Northern Highlands, propensity to migrate was to some extent predetermined by the distribution of the region's inhabitants in relation to its main topographical features and resources. It was also influenced by its largely natural boundaries and by its comparative isolation from the principal centres of population in Scotland. The area covered by this study includes both the mainland and island districts of the former counties of Inverness-shire, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland, and Caithness. The boundaries of the region are illustrated in map 1 overleaf. However, it should be noted that county, district, and parish boundaries are usually established for proprietorial or administrative purposes and may have no particular geographical or socio-economic significance. For the purposes of the present study it was important to define a group of administrative units which were not only as homogeneous as possible in socio-economic and cultural terms but which also had boundaries that may themselves have affected movement to some extent. For these reasons the thesis concentrates on the four mainland counties (and their island areas) located predominantly west and north of the Great Glen.<sup>(8)</sup> However, in order to enable comparisons to be made with published

8) Argyll was excluded because its proximity to Glasgow and West Central Scotland accelerated out-migration from the county (its largest population was recorded in 1831) and because it does not extend from west to east coasts, thus decreasing the scope for comparisons between highland and lowland areas within the same region.





material, the southernmost parishes of Inverness-shire have also been included.

The region as a whole is naturally bounded to the north, east and west by sea. To the south, the Great Glen runs south-east from the town of Inverness on the Moray Firth to Corpach (just north of Fort William) on Loch Linnhe. Clearly the Glen was not a serious obstacle to migration from north to south: indeed, in places such as Inverness burgh itself it was easily traversible. However, because it was virtually a natural waterway it tended to channel population movements between the east and west coasts, especially in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the Caledonian Canal was fully operational. It also influenced the dimensions of those movements to a certain extent. (9)

The Northern Highland counties have distinct topographical features, an understanding of which is essential

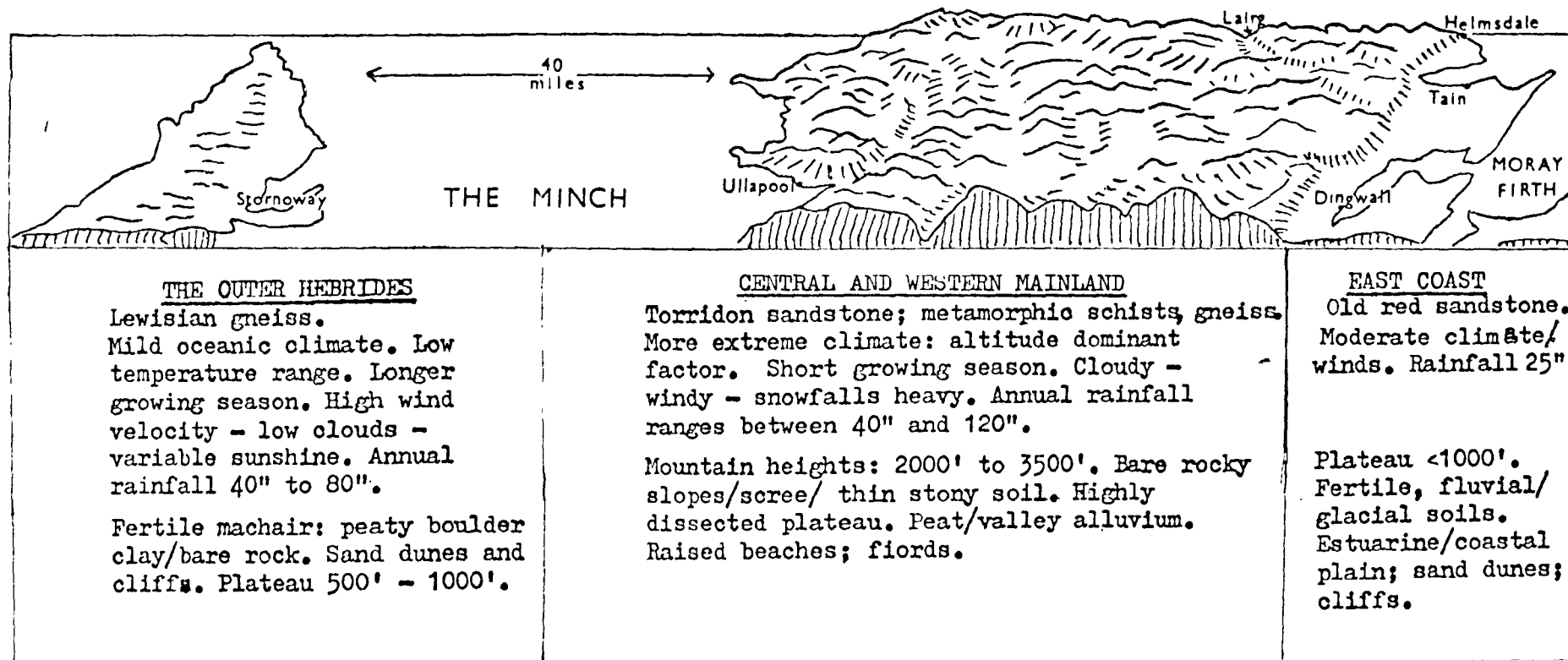
- 9) References in secondary sources to the Great Glen in the nineteenth century and earlier indicate that a substantial proportion of movements in the area, in accordance with its geological features, were in an east-west direction. For example, in his observations on the construction of the Caledonian Canal, A.D. Cameron writes: "The wealth of Bronze Age remains in the Great Glen...shows that it attracted very early settlers, using river and loch to make their way inland and gain access to the east coast." Moreover, "...the Great Glen running from south-west to north-east...looked as if it had been shaped by nature to make the canal-builder's job easy... the location was attractive and the prospect of a great navigation there to join the Atlantic with the North Sea was to many observers an intriguing possibility." A.D. Cameron, *The Caledonian Canal*, Terence Dalton Ltd., 1972, pp. 15 - 17. See Chapter 6, pages 211 - 214.

to an interpretation of migration and economic changes in the region. In the first place, there is a marked contrast in the characteristics of the east coast, the central and western (hereafter referred to as western) mainland, and the outer islands.<sup>(10)</sup> These three zones are illustrated in map 1A on the following page. The division between Highland and Lowland areas (marked on page 9 in map 1) is indicated by the 800-foot contour and marks the approximate extent of cultivable land on the eastern seaboard. (For convenience this boundary is referred to as the "highland line".) This narrow, comparatively fertile strip of land - which extends around the coast to join the farming country of Aberdeenshire and north-east Scotland - is at its widest in the Black Isle (Easter Ross) and Caithness. In the nineteenth century, as now, a major proportion of the inhabitants of the region lived in this zone.<sup>(11)</sup>

By contrast, the western Highlands are dominated by high barren plateaux, with few flat or low-lying cultivable areas, and a coastal fringe deeply indented by long sea lochs. Settlements in this part of the mainland are peripheral, usually located on the coast or on relatively fertile soil by the shores of the lochs. Prior to the clearances there were many crofting townships or individual smallholdings in the inland straths as well, clustered on the better land along the major routeways.

10) See map 1A. For a geological description of the region, cf. A.C. O'Dell and K. Walton, *The Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Regions of the British Isles series*, Nelson, 1963, pp. 27 - 31; also F. Fraser Darling, *West Highland Survey*, Oxford University Press, 1955, for a fuller discussion of the western districts.

11) Chapter 2, table 11, page 49.



I A . TRANSECT OF NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

Despite the clearances and the inhospitable environment, the proportion of the regional population living west of the "highland line" was far from negligible throughout the nineteenth century. (12)

The third zone of the Northern Highlands is the Atlantic fringe, the vast number of islands off the west coast, the largest of which comprise the Inner and Outer Hebrides. Like the mainland, some of the larger islands (such as Skye and Harris) have a contrasting landscape of low-lying fertile soil (machair) and high, rugged mountains. The western isles vary in size from those which are merely stacks of rock formations, and are totally uninhabited, to those which have significant towns and settlements. The main centre of the Outer Hebrides is Stornoway in Lewis. The concentrated pockets of fertile soil in this vicinity were to underlie the congestion of population characteristic of many parts of the insular zone.

In addition to and largely in consequence of its natural features and boundaries, and its relative remoteness from the main urban and industrial centres of lowland Scotland (which is shown in map A5 on page 405), the Northern Highland region throughout most of the nineteenth century was reasonably homogeneous in terms of the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of its inhabitants. The economy was predominantly agrarian and, with the exception of much of the east coast, it was predominantly based on crofting. (13) Since crofters comprised the

12) *ibid.*

13) See table 27, page 110 and table 28, page 112. For a definition of crofting, see Chapter 4, footnote (12), page 111, also Appendix 3, page 385.

largest single occupational sub-category in the region, it was as late as 1891 still mainly a peasant society. It differed substantially from that of the rest of Scotland in other ways as well. It was largely a subsistence economy, dependent on the ties of kin, and having its own distinctive language and culture. Highland society, even at the end of the nineteenth century and despite the denial of Prebble, still contained tangible traces of the clan system. The bonds of kinship remained of greater importance (especially in western and insular districts) than elsewhere in the country because it was, even at that advanced stage in British industrial development, still a fundamentally primitive society. The economic relationships and cash nexus which were an integral part of a market economy with an urban or industrial base were of little relevance in this context. (14)

Finally, the Gaelic language and culture prevailed throughout much of the region - with the notable exception of Caithness - even after the 1872 Education Act. The majority of its inhabitants were bilingual, and a substantial proportion of those west of the "highland line" were still monolingual Gaels, by the end of the nineteenth century. (15) The extent to which these various locational, socio-economic and cultural factors affected migration in the Northern Highlands is discussed throughout the thesis, especially

14) cf. Chapter 8, pages 323-8, and Appendix 4, map A7, page 407.

15) Chapter 8, table 53, and Map 17, page 309.

in Part III.

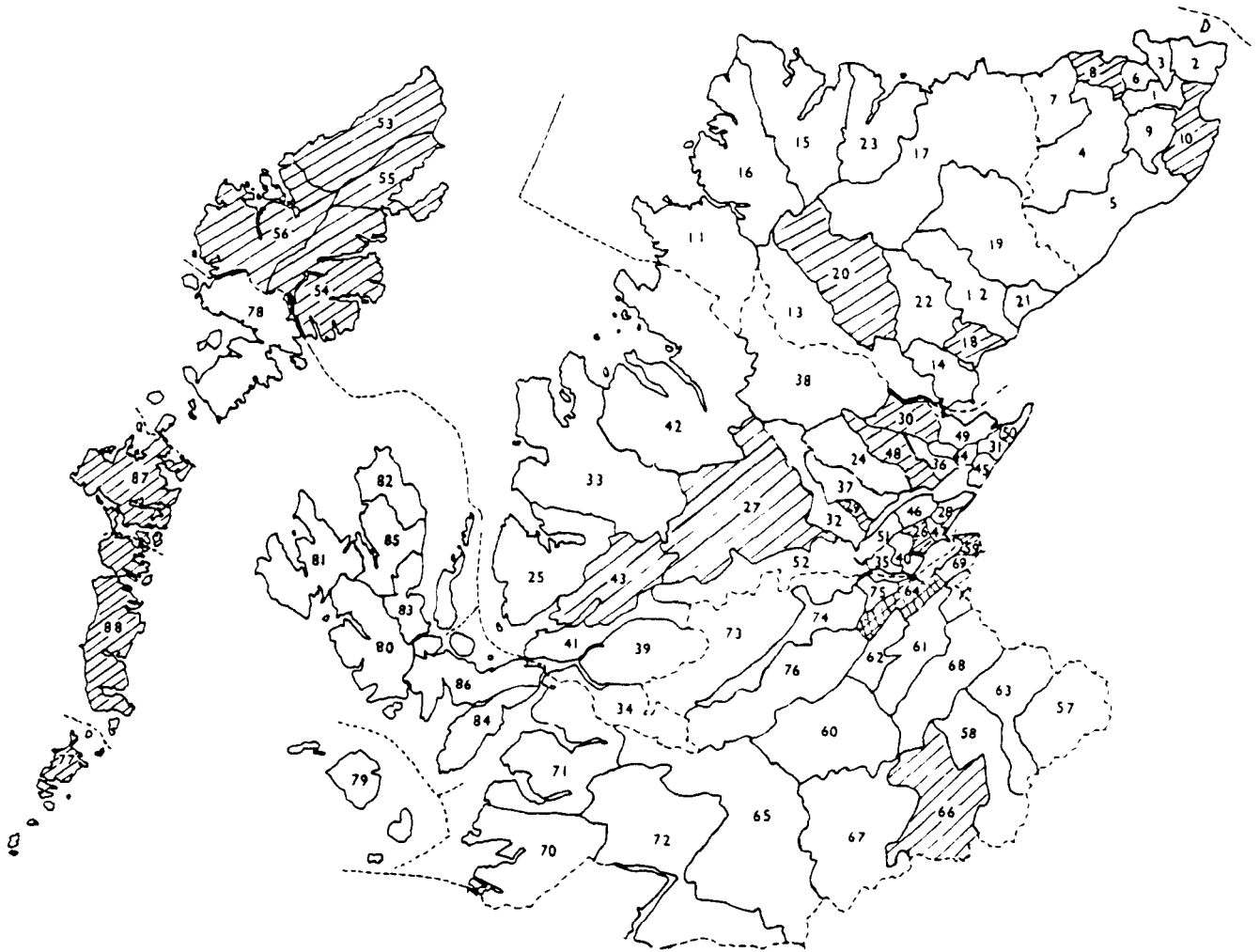
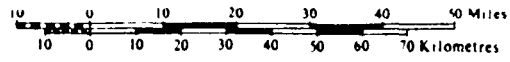
The period under consideration

The nineteenth century generally was a time of transition to an industrial society throughout most of Britain. For the vast majority of the population, it involved a major upheaval at least in living and working patterns. For a significant proportion it also meant a change in place of residence. By comparison, the inhabitants of the Highland and Islands, geographically isolated from the most major developments, were for a long time relatively unaffected by changes of this kind. (16)



All four counties attained their maximum recorded populations between the censuses of 1841 and 1861: Inverness-shire (97,799) in 1841, Ross and Cromarty (82,707) and Sutherland (25,793) in 1851, and Caithness (41,111) in 1861. At parish level, some districts continued to experience population growth thereafter. This is indicated by map 2, overleaf, showing the location of individual parishes (which are named in Appendices 1A and 1B) and illustrating the areas of overall population increase and net migration gain in the intercensal decade 1861 - 71. (17)

16) Chapter 2, table 1 ff, pages 29-30.

17) pages 362-8.



MAP 2 - Location of parishes (see Appendix 1)

-  Population increase 1861-71
-  Net migration gain 1861-71



However, even an economy on the fringes of radical change elsewhere could not indefinitely escape unscathed. In any event there was urgent need of agrarian reform in the Highlands. As Miss Adam points out, by the late eighteenth century "the Highland population was over-running its resources."<sup>(18)</sup> Even so, the overcrowded areas of the north and west were among the last to receive the attention of the would-be improvers. An increase of population in these areas was actually encouraged during the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>(19)</sup> It took the disasters of two major famines within the space of ten years for the notion of a "redundant population" to be accepted by the legislators and by those landlords who had previously ignored - or misunderstood - the nature of the problem.<sup>(20)</sup>

It is thus impossible to neglect the first part of the nineteenth century in the present study, the more so since it was some of the earliest clearances and emigrations which have attracted the most attention.<sup>(21)</sup> Moreover, a major source of information on the whole region for the early and middle decades of the century is the New Statistical Account, a compilation of sometimes extensive returns by individual ministers or other officials for every parish in Scotland. In addition to material of topographical

18) cf. Chapter 7, note (8), page 238.

19) Chapters 4 - 6, *passim*.

20) Chapter 7, pages 251-4.

21) i.e. the Sutherland clearances. cf. Chapter 4, pages 121-2; also Chapter 7, pages 241-4, for a discussion of the Selkirk emigrations.

interest, it contains invaluable information - albeit in some instances biased<sup>(22)</sup> - on population, economic, and social change especially in the forty years following the publication of the Old Statistical Account in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Frequent references to the New Statistical Account (published in 1845) occur throughout the following chapters, serving particularly to illustrate contemporary awareness of the two problems of emigration and overpopulation.

However, this thesis is primarily concerned with the latter part of the nineteenth century and in particular with the period 1851-1891. There are two main reasons for such concentration. The first is the nature of the data available. A systematic analysis of lifetime migration flows at sub-county level is only possible from the individual enumerators' book for these five census years.<sup>(23)</sup> In addition, civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths first became compulsory in Scotland in 1855, making it possible to determine the extent of migration as a factor in population growth or decline from that time onwards.<sup>(24)</sup> Without an examination of inter-regional and sub-regional migration and its effects on natural increase, the extent of migration from the Northern Highlands cannot be seen in its proper perspective.

22) e.g. Chapter 3, note (15) ff, page 84. The ministers who compiled these accounts were normally estate appointees.

23) Appendix 2, pages 370-1.

24) Chapter 3, pages 75-8, and Appendix 1B, pages 366-8.

Secondly, from an historical point of view the last half of the nineteenth century is in any event important in its own right. The famine of 1845-6 was in some respects a watershed in Highland, as in Irish, history. So was the crofting legislation of 1886.<sup>(25)</sup> In the light of the 1886 Crofters' Holdings Act it might have been expected that the number of crofters leaving their native homes in the region, whether through eviction or through destitution, had substantially increased in the forty years since the famine. In fact, the number of crofters residing in the Northern Highlands had markedly risen between 1851 and 1891. Their propensity to migrate - despite all the pressures on them to do so - had in reality substantially declined.<sup>(26)</sup> It is this anomaly that forms the basis of the present study.

25) Chapter 4, pages 143-6.

26) Chapter 4, tables 31 and 32, pages 138 and 140.

P A R T    I I

~ Migration : Theory and reality

C H A P T E R     2

Migration and the Northern Highlands 1851-1891:  
theories and facts

## Some theories of migration

In Chapter 1, it was observed that the Northern Highlands during the nineteenth century was basically a peasant society. Part II of the present study establishes the background for the ensuing main section of the thesis by demonstrating that in such a society migration was the exception rather than the norm. It is argued throughout Part III that the incentives or options available to stimulate migration in the most congested parts of the region were generally based on the presupposition of a mobile and adaptable population and as such had little chance of achieving their objectives. First, however, it is the purpose of this section to show that depopulation is a completely inappropriate term to use with reference to the Northern Highlands in the nineteenth century, and that despite the net migration losses experienced by the region during the period under consideration, it was the comparative lack of movement in many areas which was the fundamental problem.

The differences between Highland society and that of Britain as a whole at this time become apparent even at a theoretical level. The theories devised from the late nineteenth century onwards to explain migration in an industrial society are simply inapplicable to many parts

of the Northern Highlands. Moreover, even in those instances where some theoretical considerations are relevant to an understanding of migration patterns, the basic theories have to be extensively modified in the context of the locational and topographical factors noted in Chapter 1. The present chapter examines movement in the Northern Highlands from 1851 to 1891 against the background of some of the assumptions commonly made about migration in Britain during this period.

While there have been many theoretical studies of migration generally and of migration in Britain in particular, there are very few which have any bearing on the Northern Highlands in the latter half of the nineteenth century. R.H. Osborne, in the 1950s, quantified the extent and directions of inter-regional migration in Scotland from the censuses of 1851 to 1951<sup>(1)</sup>. However, the first theoretical works on the subject were completed considerably earlier. Arthur Redford laid the foundations for Macdonald's more comprehensive Scottish study in his book, first published in 1926, on the migration of labour in England during the first half of the nineteenth century<sup>(2)</sup>.

1) R.H. Osborne, *The movements of people in Scotland 1851-1951*, *Scottish Studies*, no. 2, 1958, pp. 1-46. Also R.H. Osborne, *Scottish Migration Statistics: a note*, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vol. 72, 1956, pp. 153-9.

2) Macdonald, *op. cit.*; A. Redford, *Labour Migration in England 1800-1850*, Manchester, 1926, revised and edited by W.H. Chaloner, 1964.

Despite its title, some observations are also made about Scotland. Redford's main thesis was that migration during that period usually occurred in short stages from rural to urban areas. That is, as agricultural workers nearest the towns moved from farm employment to manufacturing or service posts, more labourers from outlying districts moved in to take their place. This pattern, he argued, was reflected in the level of agricultural wages, which were highest near the rapidly growing urban or industrial areas and lowest in the most isolated rural ones<sup>(3)</sup>. A migration flow from one area to another was thus related both to the distance between them and to the availability of economic opportunities at origin and at destination.

The first exponent of this theory had actually been a nineteenth century statistician, E.G. Ravenstein, who used as his sources both his own observations and the residence/birthplace tables from the contemporary censuses.<sup>(4)</sup>

Ravenstein wrote in 1885 that migration between any two areas was directly related to the size of their respective populations and inversely related to the distance between them. This statement, the most fundamental of Ravenstein's

3) cf. A.L. Bowley, *The statistics of wages in the United Kingdom during the last hundred years, Part 1, Agricultural Wages in Scotland*, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 62, 1899, pp. 140-151. Also T.A. Welton, *England's Recent Progress: an Investigation of the Statistics of Migration, Mortality, etc., in the Twenty Years from 1881 to 1901 as indicating Tendencies towards the Growth or Decay of Particular Communities*, London, 1911.

4) E.G. Ravenstein, *The laws of migration*, *Journal of the Statistical Society*, Vol. 48, 1885, pp. 167-227, esp. pp. 198-9.



"Laws", has been the basis of much subsequent hypothesising and experimenting with models in attempts to explain and to forecast migration flows<sup>(5)</sup>. In its essential form, it is often termed the "inverse square law", allowing for the fact that the actual distance travelled between any two areas of origin and destination should not be measured on a purely linear basis but ought to be magnified to take account of the most likely transport and time required for the journey. This principle may be expressed as follows :

$$M_{ij} = \frac{P_i P_j}{(D_{ij})^2}$$

where  $M_{ij}$  represents the number of migrants from area of origin (i) to area of destination (j);  $P_i, P_j$  are the population of areas i and j respectively; and  $D_{ij}$  is the distance between the two areas. This particular "gravity model" illustrates Ravenstein's theory that the closer two places are to one another, and the larger they are in terms of population, the greater the movement between them is likely to be; or conversely that migration between any two areas diminishes the smaller i and j and the greater the distance between them. According to both Ravenstein and Redford, distance was a major determinant of the extent and direction of migration in nineteenth century Britain.

5) cf. Gerald A.P. Carrothers, An historical review of the gravity and potential model concepts of human interaction, Journal of the American Institute of Planners, Vol. XXII, 2, 1956, pp. 94 - 102.

One modification of this theory of particular significance for the Northern Highlands was more recently suggested by Everett Lee<sup>(6)</sup>. He introduced two further variables into Ravenstein's original statement: those of "intervening opportunities" and "intervening obstacles". In the latter instance, the area of destination is selected not only by its size and distance from the area of origin but also by the mutual accessibility of both places. In the former, the numbers of migrants who actually arrive at their intended destination are to some extent determined by the availability of alternative opportunities at intermediate stages of the journey. Both variables are additional qualifications of the distance factor. The size of the migration flow  $M_{ij}$  is determined not only by the respective sizes or opportunities of  $i$  and  $j$  and the distance separating them, but also by the availability (or otherwise) of direct communications: the greater the number of "obstacles" or "opportunities" en route from  $i$  to  $j$ , the greater are the chances that the number of migrants from  $i$  who actually arrive at  $j$  will be diminished.

The principle underlying the hypotheses discussed so far is that the majority of moves occur over relatively short distances. However, the theory has also been

6) Everett S. Lee, A theory of migration, in J.A. Jackson (ed.), Migration, Sociological Studies 2, Cambridge University Press, 1969, pp. 185 -6.

advanced that distance regulates population movements only to a limited extent. Once a certain threshold is exceeded, the factor  $D_{ij}$  ceases to have any significant bearing on the migration flow  $M_{ij}$  <sup>(7)</sup>. This modification is especially applicable in countries such as Norway and Sweden, with their remote and sparsely settled rural regions in the north often separated by hundreds of miles from the more densely populated urban areas. In these and other parts of the world, especially where the main communications between two areas are by sea and not by land, considerations of distance are of diminished relevance to an understanding of the main directions of migration.

By the same reasoning, distance is often but not always a primary determinant of the counter-flow from  $j$  to  $i$ . Ravenstein states that "each main current of migration produces a compensating counter-current". <sup>(8)</sup> Certainly the basic gravity model noted above does not distinguish between  $M_{ij}$  and  $M_{ji}$ , in that the populations of  $i$  and  $j$  and the distance between them are the same in both instances. It may therefore be assumed that, in theory at least, the factors that determine the size of the migration flow in one direction will proportionately regulate the extent of movement in the other. For example, family connections will be shown to be particularly important

7) Hannerberg, Hägerstrand, and Odering (ed.), *Migration in Sweden*, Lund Studies in Geography, Series B, Vol. 13, 1957.

8) Ravenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

in assessing the likelihood of return migration to the area of origin from any given destination.

Ravenstein's and Lee's "laws" of migration, together with Redford's empirical study, were formulated from aggregated observations based on the national experience. Even by the time of Ravenstein in 1885, the majority of the British population lived in or near major urban or industrial areas. His theories were therefore mainly based on patterns of movement which were generally not typical of those found in a remote rural region. This is illustrated by Redford's assumption of stepwise migration from rural to urban areas. In certain parts of Britain, and especially in the Northern Highlands, rural-to-urban movement was not a characteristic even of late nineteenth century society. It remains to be determined whether in such a region distance and related factors were a greater or lesser obstacle to migration than in the country in general.

The migration experience of the Northern Highlands, 1851-91:  
national and local perspectives

The Northern Highland region as a whole was a net exporter of population for most of the two centuries from the end of the Jacobite rebellion in 1745 until after the establishment of the Highlands and Islands Development Board in 1965. This is indisputable. It is, however, debatable whether such losses by migration were always

as extensive, or as damaging to the regional economy as has often been implied. It should in any event be stated that the Highland experience was not unique. Scotland as a whole suffered net migration losses throughout this period. Indeed, the seven crofting counties, <sup>(9)</sup> considered together, were less severely affected than were other parts of the country. (Table 1).

Table 1

Net migration by region in Scotland, 1861 - 1951 <sup>(10)</sup>

<u>Region</u>	<u>Net loss</u> <u>1861-1951</u>	<u>% of</u> <u>1861 pop.</u>	<u>Per cent loss or gain</u>	
			<u>1861-1901</u>	<u>1901-1951</u>
North :				
Crofting counties	238,000	62.6	- 39.4	- 25.0
North-east	501,000	70.2	- 34.3	- 29.2
Central (inc. Bute)	662,000	39.1	+ 2.8	- 23.8
South (inc. Borders)	<u>188,000</u>	<u>68.7</u>	<u>- 48.2</u>	<u>- 21.3</u>
Scotland	1,589,000	51.8	- 15.8	- 24.7

Table 1 shows that, according to the centennial report of the Registrar-General for Scotland, the net migration loss of the seven crofting counties between 1861 and 1951 was not as substantial in proportional terms as that sustained by the other predominantly rural regions of north-east and south Scotland. In particular, rural-to-

9) i.e. including Argyll, Orkney and Shetland.

10) Source: Osborne, Scottish Migration Statistics, op. cit., table 3, p. 155.

urban movement was considerably less marked from (or in) the crofting counties than in the case of the other regions. Remoteness from the expanding industrial and urban centres of lowland Scotland substantially reduced the number of casual moves to them from parts of the Northern and Western Highlands during the period under consideration,<sup>(11)</sup> and thus may have helped to check the prevailing trend of emigration. In the first half of the twentieth century, when rural-to-urban movement began to be superseded by urban decline and by suburban migration, the proportional net loss from the crofting counties scarcely exceeded that from the whole of Scotland and was not markedly greater than the rate of emigration from the central lowlands.

Another point to note is that emigration from the Northern Highland region actually declined in volume from the census following the potato famine of 1845-6 to that subsequent to the crofting legislation of 1886: exactly the period when many tenants, landlords, and politicians alike expected it to increase.<sup>(12)</sup> The population of the four Northern Highland counties, taken as a whole, declined from 243,709 in 1851 to 226,200 in 1891. This constituted a net loss of 17,509 persons over the forty-year period, or 7.2 per cent of the 1851 population. Table 2 shows the

11) cf. Chapter 8, note (4), page 280.

12) cf. Chapter 4. The expectations of politicians and landlords, and the response of crofting tenants, with regard to emigration schemes are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 respectively.

actual numbers enumerated in each county at the five censuses.

Table 2

Population of the Northern Highland counties,  
1851-1891 <sup>(13)</sup>

<u>County</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>
Inverness	96,500	88,261	87,531	90,454	89,317
Ross & Cromarty	82,707	81,406	80,955	78,547	77,810
Sutherland	25,793	25,246	24,317	23,370	21,896
Caithness	<u>38,709</u>	<u>41,111</u>	<u>39,992</u>	<u>38,865</u>	<u>37,177</u>
Totals	243,709	236,024	232,795	231,236	226,200

While the regional population as a whole declined continuously throughout this period, the overall rate of loss fell from -3.2 per cent between 1851 and 1861 to -0.7 per cent two decades later. Such a change was especially remarkable because the smaller the base figure became, the greater any loss was likely to appear in relation to it. At a county level, two developments were of significance. The first was in Caithness. As noted in Chapter 1, Caithness attained its maximum recorded population in 1861 <sup>(14)</sup> and was thus the last of the four Northern Highland counties to begin to register net losses. The second was in Inverness-shire, the population of which reversed its trend of rapid decline between 1851 and 1861

13) Source: census.

14) See also Chapter 5, especially notes (35) - (44), pages 179-184.

by sustaining a net increase of 3.3 per cent in the intercensal period 1871-81.

These changes are illustrated more clearly in table 3.

Table 3

Intercensal rates of population change in the Northern  
Highlands, 1851-91  
(per cent)

<u>County</u>	<u>1851-61</u>	<u>1861-71</u>	<u>1871-81</u>	<u>1881-91</u>
Inverness	- 8.5	- 0.8	+ 3.3	- 1.3
Ross & Cromarty	- 1.6	- 0.6	- 3.0	- 0.9
Sutherland	- 2.1	- 3.7	- 3.9	- 6.3
Caithness	<u>+ 6.2</u>	<u>- 2.7</u>	<u>- 2.8</u>	<u>- 4.3</u>
Regional totals	- 3.2	- 1.4	- 0.7	- 2.2
(Scotland	+ 6.0	+ 9.7	+ 11.2	+ 7.8)

Indeed, the rate of decline in Inverness-shire was generally much lower after 1861 than in the preceding decade. Ross and Cromarty also maintained a fairly gradual loss of population throughout the period. By contrast, both Sutherland and Caithness experienced an acceleration in their rates of depopulation in the later decades. This may have been partly due to their comparatively small total numbers of inhabitants, which would have made any decline appear relatively more significant than in either Ross and Cromarty or Inverness-shire. For example, between 1851 and 1861 Sutherland lost only 447 persons: yet its rate of decline was greater than that of Ross-shire, which lost 1,301 over the same period.



Perhaps more importantly, the population of two northernmost mainland counties was concentrated in the east, and neither had any major centres of consolidation after 1871. Wick slowly began to decrease in size from a population of 13,291 in 1871 to one of 13,105 in 1881 as the local fishing industry was superseded by that of Stornoway and other insular and west coast ports<sup>(15)</sup>. The western isles, which formed parts of the counties of Ross and Cromarty and Inverness-shire, generally experienced a renewed population increase in the second half of the period<sup>(16)</sup>.

If population changes at both regional and sub-regional levels are disaggregated into their two components of natural increase on the one hand and migration on the other, it becomes apparent that the fluctuations already noted in the overall rates of change were evident in both the natural increase and net migration rates. At the same time, it should be noted that the intercensal rate of natural change for the region as a whole reached its lowest point in the period under consideration during the decade 1871-81, when the rate of loss by migration was also at its lowest in three of the four counties<sup>(17)</sup>. (Table 4).

15) *ibid.*

16) Appendix 1A, page 365.

17) A discussion of the effects of migration on natural change is undertaken in Chapter 3. See also references to the Great Depression of 1873-96 later in this chapter (pages 65-70).

Table 4

Components of demographic change in the Northern Highlands,  
1861-1891 <sup>(18)</sup>

<u>County</u> <sup>(19)</sup>	Natural increase (rate per cent)			Net migration (rate per cent)		
	<u>1861-71</u>	<u>1871-81</u>	<u>1881-91</u>	<u>1861-71</u>	<u>1871-81</u>	<u>1881-91</u>
Inverness	9.1	8.8	8.5	- 10.6	- 5.5	- 9.8
Ross & Cromarty	10.6	8.7	9.7	- 11.1	- 11.7	- 10.6
Sutherland	6.8	6.1	6.2	- 10.5	- 10.0	- 12.5
Caithness	<u>12.5</u>	<u>10.2</u>	<u>10.2</u>	<u>- 15.2</u>	<u>- 13.0</u>	<u>- 14.6</u>
Regional totals	10.0	8.7	9.0	- 11.6	- 9.4	- 11.1
(Scotland	13.6	14.0	13.6	- 3.9	- 2.8	- 6.4)

It is apparent from table 4 that the decline in the rate of net lifetime migration losses experienced by the whole region during the decade 1871-81 was particularly marked in Inverness-shire. The question then arises whether this was due to a decline in out-migration or an increase in

18) Source :Centennial Report of the Registrar-General for Scotland, 1953. It should be noted that all the migration statistics in this study refer to lifetime movement and take no account of intermediate moves. See Appendix 2, page 371.

19) i.e. registration counties. Births and deaths in Scotland were recorded on a registration district basis after the Civil Registration Act of 1855. On the whole, there were few differences between civil parishes and registration districts in the Northern Highland region. The registration districts actually facilitated the demarcation of county boundaries, since the whole of Reay district was included in the registration county of Caithness and the whole of Urray in that of Ross and Cromarty. (See Appendices 1A and 1B). Cawdor was wholly included with Nairn and the districts of Ardnamurchan and Kilmallie were both counted as part of Argyll. At the same time, several districts in the south-east part of the region were transferred in their entirety to Inverness-shire from the neighbouring counties of Elgin (Moray) and Nairn. These adjustments necessarily affected the regional population totals. For example, the total population of the civil counties of Inverness-shire, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland and Caithness was 236,024 in 1861; whereas for the registration county equivalents it was 237,542. See especially tables 2 and 16 in the present chapter, table 19 in chapter 3 and Appendices 1A and 1B, pages 362-8.

in-migration, or both. (Table 5)

Table 5

Gross migration rates, 1871-1881  
(to and from rest of Scotland) <sup>(20)</sup>  
(rate per cent)

<u>County</u>	<u>1871</u>		<u>1881</u>	
	<u>In</u>	<u>Out</u>	<u>In</u>	<u>Out</u>
Inverness	15.8	35.1	18.1	35.8
Ross and Cromarty	9.6	22.0	10.5	27.1
Sutherland	12.8	32.6	15.3	35.9
Caithness	<u>10.4</u>	<u>21.2</u>	<u>11.9</u>	<u>27.4</u>
Regional totals	12.3	27.6	14.0	31.3

The fact is that both in and out-migration to and from the Northern Highland counties, considered both individually and jointly, increased during this decade. However, in the case of Inverness-shire and Sutherland - as for the region as a whole - the rate of increase in the number of incomers exceeded the corresponding increase in the number of those who moved away. (Table 6). By contrast, Ross-shire and Caithness, the counties with the most extensive eastern farming lands in the region <sup>(21)</sup>, experienced a substantial acceleration in their rates of gross out-migration loss between 1871 and 1881.

20) From the published census data, it is impossible to discover the county of origin of migrants from Scotland to the rest of the U.K.

21) See map 1, page 9 and map 1A, page 12.

Table 6

Percentage rates of change in gross migration flows<sup>(22)</sup>,  
1871-81  
(1871 = 100.0)

<u>County</u>	<u>Natives residing elsewhere in Scotland</u>	<u>Inhabitants born elsewhere in Scotland</u>
Inverness	- 4.6	+17.6
Ross and Cromarty	-18.8	+ 5.9
Sutherland	- 5.5	+15.2
Caithness	<u>-25.5</u>	<u>+ 5.0</u>
Regional totals	-11.6	+12.2

The strategic location of the town of Inverness in relation to both the northern and north-eastern counties of Scotland may explain much of the growth of the population of Inverness-shire during this decade. Forty per cent of all the inter-county migrants residing in Inverness-shire in 1871, and forty-two per cent in 1881, were enumerated in the town and its surrounding parish.<sup>(23)</sup> Map 2 on page 16 shows the extent of in-migration into Inverness even in the previous decade. The whole county bordered on no less than eight others, and parts of it, especially the burgh of Inverness itself, were situated on well-established routes linking the region with the remainder of Scotland. These are illustrated by Maps A4 and A5<sup>(24)</sup>.

22) i.e. within Scotland only (see note 20).

23) The growth of the town of Inverness is discussed in detail in Chapter 6, pages 206-228.

24) pages 404-5.

By contrast, the county losing most and gaining least in relative terms (according to table 6) was Caithness. The most northerly of the four counties in the region, it bordered only on Sutherland and on account of its location was less likely than the rest to receive migrants or to accommodate temporary inhabitants in transit for other destinations, especially those located within the region itself.

#### The extent of internal migration

Internal movement between the four counties themselves accounted for much of the migration observed in tables 5 and 6. When the individual counties comprising the Northern Highland region are considered separately, it becomes apparent that the largest single out-migration flows were usually to an adjoining county. Thus a substantial proportion of the migration losses illustrated in tables 4 and 5 was still being contained within the region, even when the "gravitational" effects of the population sizes of areas of origin and destination were taken into consideration.<sup>(25)</sup> This point is illustrated by table 7, in which the largest absolute out-flows are compared with those calculated by inverting the "gravity model" to minimise the effects of population size (already postulated as the greatest positive determinant of migration) on the movement from *i* to *j*.

25) cf. R. Hildebrandt, Some internal migration patterns in mid-nineteenth century Scotland, University of Glasgow, Discussion Papers in Social Research, No. 3, 1974.

Table 7

Main inter-county migration flows <sup>(26)</sup>

<u>County of origin</u>	<u>Primary county of destination by absolute flows</u>	<u>Adjusted primary county of destination</u> $(\frac{M_{ij}}{P_i P_j})$
Inverness	Ross & Cromarty	Nairn
Ross & Cromarty	Inverness	Nairn
Sutherland	Caithness	Caithness
Caithness	Edinburgh	Sutherland

Table 7 is of relevance to two statements made earlier in this chapter with reference to the causes of migration. First, distance does appear to have regulated many moves in the Northern Highlands during the nineteenth century. (It should be noted that part of the county of Nairn was included in Easter Ross until 1892). The threshold beyond which distance ceased to be a major obstacle to migration contained within Scotland was reached sooner in the case of emigrants from Caithness than from the other three counties, for reasons discussed below. Secondly, the distance factor may have been more important than the population size (or numbers of opportunities) of either origin or destination in determining the extent of movement between any two places. Certainly a general exodus from the Northern Highlands to the expanding areas of central Scotland is not apparent from this table.

26) Source: 1851 census. The migration flows in this table are based on percentages of all out-migrants from the county of origin.

Just as a substantial proportion of out-migration from each of the four counties was contained within the region, so in-migration into them was also dominated by migrants from elsewhere within the Northern Highlands. The proportion of natives of the other three counties enumerated in any given county increased during the period under consideration and especially between 1871 and 1881. As might be anticipated from its location, the only county not experiencing this trend was Caithness. (Table 8).

Table 8

Inter-county migrants within Northern Highlands <sup>(27)</sup>

(per cent of enumerated population of each individual county)

<u>County</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1881</u>
Inverness	7.0	8.6
Ross & Cromarty	5.8	6.1
Sutherland	8.2	9.1
Caithness	6.5	6.4

On average, slightly less than half of the in-migration flows illustrated in table 5 consisted of natives from other parts of the Northern Highland region. Moreover, the tendency to move between neighbouring areas, noted at a county level in table 7, was predictably even more marked at a sub-county one. In the region as a whole,

27) Source: census.

approximately fifteen per cent of the population at any given time during the period under consideration was comprised of persons born outwith it, and a slightly greater proportion of those born in the Northern Highlands resided elsewhere in Scotland. (28) Indeed, the proportion of non-natives in the population of Sutherland rose from less than 9 per cent in 1841 to almost 15 per cent ten years later. (29) It was the natives of eastern Sutherland who were generally the first to leave when the local economy began to decline. (30) As already indicated, the inhabitants of Inverness-shire also became increasingly migratory. By 1871 over 20 per cent of its population had been born outwith the county. Meanwhile, at a local level, the number of family heads who were enumerated in parishes other than their place of birth ranged from 0 to over 90 per cent of the resident population of the various parishes at each of the censuses analysed. (31) Both the total population of migrant inhabitants in any one parish and the average proportion of migrants (32) in all the parishes increased throughout the period, as shown in tables 9 and 10.

28) *ibid.* Also M. Flinn (ed), *Scottish Population History from the Seventeenth Century to the 1930s*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 463.

29) An economic and social survey of Sutherland undertaken at St. Andrews University in 1971-2 revealed that the ancestors of some of the fishermen presently living in Halmsdale came from such areas as Peterhead and Buckie.

30) cf. Chapter 5, notes (31)-(38), pages 178-180. The population of Sutherland declined between 1831 (25,518) and 1841 (24,782) before rising to its maximum recorded population of 25,793 at the 1851 census (table 2).

31) This statement is based on the results of the analysis of sample census data for 1851, 1871 and 1891, described in Chapter 4, pages 105-6 and in Appendix 2, pages 372-380.

32) i.e. those whose parish of enumeration differed from their parish of birth. See Appendix 2, page 371, for a discussion on the limitations of the census residence/birthplace data for migration studies (note 18 above).



Table 9

Extent of inter-parish movement in Northern  
Highlands, 1851-1891 (33)

(per cent of total sample)

<u>Census year</u>	<u>Non-migrants</u>	<u>Migrants</u>	<u>Totals = 100%</u>
1851	58.9	41.1	2,594
1871	58.1	41.9	2,540
1891	57.4	42.6	2,476

Table 10

Percentage of migrant heads of family in individual  
Northern Highland parishes, 1851-91 (34)

<u>Census year</u>	<u>Average %</u>	<u>Maximum %</u>
1851	41.0	75.7
1871	43.2	85.7-
1891	45.9	92.9

The proportion of inter-parish migrants amongst the sample population, while considerably greater than those moving between counties, increased only very slightly throughout the region as a whole during the period studied. (Table 9). However, there was a much more striking increase in the percentages of migrants enumerated in individual parishes, as indicated by table 10. These changes were not spread evenly throughout the Northern Highlands. There was a marked decline in the proportions of migrants

33) Source: sample census data.

34) *ibid.*

enumerated in many western and insular districts between 1851 and 1891, while an equally apparent increase in those proportions was observed in some east coast parishes. These changes are illustrated in maps 3, 3A, 4 and 4A on the following pages. Another feature of these maps is the increasing amount of movement in the parishes between the towns of Inverness and Fort William, following the line of the Great Glen. The proportions of migrants within the Glen itself were comparatively low at both terminal dates. (35)

Elsewhere on the mainland, the proportion of migrants in the main coastal settlements of eastern Caithness (especially Wick) began to decline in the decade following the 1861 census. (36) The most significant relative increases indicated by table 10 occurred not in Inverness - already observed in map 2 to have been the only district in the region with a net migration gain between 1861 and 1871 and indeed during most of the later nineteenth century - but in Dingwall and Fodderty in Ross-shire and Kirkhill (to the north of Inverness burgh) in Inverness-shire. All were parishes containing or adjoining major regional centres of population, which attracted migrants from further afield as the century progressed. For example, Dingwall's sample population in 1891 came from Gairloch,

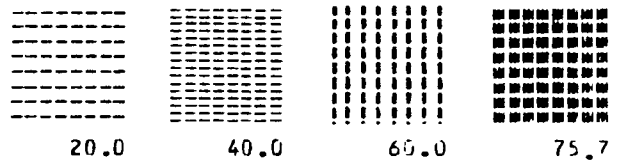
35) cf. Chapter 1, page 10, for a discussion of the direction of migration flows in the Great Glen. The growth in the proportion of migrants enumerated in 1891 in Kilmallie parish (which included both Fort William and Corpach) may also have been due to boundary changes between Inverness-shire and Argyll. See note (19), page 34.

36) cf. note (14), page 31.



NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 75.68  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 40.77  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 18.45  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 20

MAP 3. PERCENTAGE OF MIGRANTS IN EACH PARISH, 1851



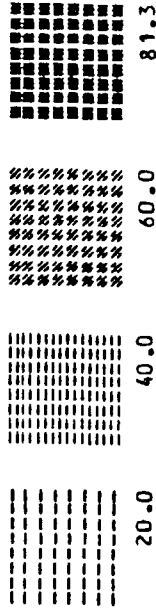
20.0	40.0	60.0	75.7
NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP			
16	22	35	15

NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 81.25  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 37.34  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 18.22

DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 20

MAP 3A

PERCENTAGE OF OUT-MIGRANTS FROM EACH PARISH, 1851

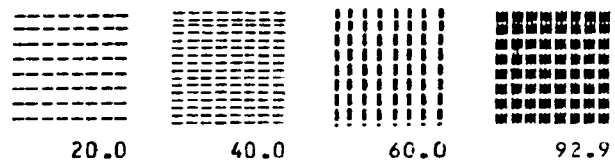


NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 16                    35                    27                    10



NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 92.86  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 45.97  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 21.71  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 20

MAP 4. PERCENTAGE OF MIGRANTS IN EACH PARISH, 1891



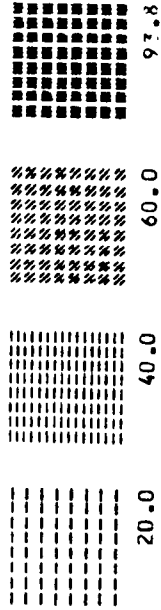
NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP				
	14	20	26	28

NUMPER OF RESULTS IS 84  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 93.75  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 41.18  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 20.99

DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 20

MAP 4 A

PERCENTAGE OF OUT-MIGRANTS FROM EACH PARISH, 1891



97.8

NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 15 32 22 19

Lochbroom, Stornoway, Urray, Boleskine, Kilmorack and Inverness, as well as from the more immediate vicinity of Fodderty, Alness and Dingwall itself. In 1851, on the other hand, the persons included in the sample were mainly natives of Dingwall or its neighbouring parishes of Contin or Fodderty. But the gains made by Inverness parish were nevertheless far more substantial in terms of actual numbers than those of other parishes. Since its base population was so comparatively large, its migrant population of 69.7 per cent in 1891 did not fall within the highest category in map 4, although numerically its migrants outnumbered those enumerated in any other single district. They were also considerably more diverse in origin than those settling elsewhere in the region, a point which is discussed further in Chapter 6.

With reference to the insular parishes in maps 3 and 4, Lochs and Stornoway (in Lewis) and South Uist (including Benbecula) had populations comprised of a significant number of migrant families in 1851: indeed, in Stornoway the proportion was 43.4 per cent. By 1891, however, the percentage of migrants had declined in the islands, except in Barra, where it increased.<sup>(37)</sup> The insignificant level of movement into parishes already suffering from overcrowding and economic stagnation is not surprising. Perhaps more remarkable is the low level of out-migration from the insular parishes recorded elsewhere in the region

37) Chapter 5, note (45), page 185.

(maps 3A and 4A).<sup>(38)</sup> The general pattern illustrated in these maps further supports the evidence contained in map 2 on page 16 and Appendix 1B (page 368) that the insular population grew as a result of a high natural increase rate and not of net migration gains. At the same time, it should be noted that the proportion of migrant family heads in the Skye parishes, which experienced an overall decline in population throughout the period under consideration, remained fairly consistent and indeed increased slightly. Emigrants from Skye also continued to be enumerated elsewhere in the Northern Highlands between 1851 and 1891. The location of Skye in the immediate proximity of the mainland, and the growing network of communications between Fort William and both Inverness and Glasgow, was undoubtedly significant in this respect.<sup>(39)</sup>

#### Distribution and destinations of migrants

While these four maps demonstrate the distribution of migrants throughout the region during the latter part of the nineteenth century, table 11 shows the actual changes

38) It is impossible to indicate the full extent of migration from each parish in the Northern Highlands, because such movement was not necessarily contained within the region. Only the county of origin was given in the published censuses for migrants enumerated elsewhere in Scotland, and only the native country for those enumerated in other parts of the U.K. (cf. note 20). The birth-places of native Highlanders resident abroad were not systematically recorded at all in any centralised sources. See the following sections of this chapter and also chapter 7, notes (18)-(21), pages 243-4.

39) cf. Appendix 4, Maps A4 and A5, pages 404-5.



in the distribution of population among the three main topographical divisions<sup>(40)</sup> between 1851 and 1891. (The population of every division is expressed as a percentage of the total numbers of inhabitants of the region at each census).

Table 11  
Population distribution, 1851-91<sup>(41)</sup>  
(per cent of total)

<u>Division</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
East coast parishes	46.6	47.9	47.9
Western parishes	29.2	27.2	24.8
Insular parishes	<u>24.2</u>	<u>24.9</u>	<u>27.3</u>
Total population = 100%	243,753	232,474	226,210

As already observed in Chapter 1 with reference to map 1A (page 12), nearly half of the total regional population resided in the eastern lowlands. This proportion did not change significantly during the period under consideration. More noticeable was the decline in the western parishes and the increase in the percentage living in the islands (despite the decline of the insular population in first decade of the study).<sup>(42)</sup> Table 12 shows the actual rates of change in each division.

40) These divisions are discussed in Chapter 1. See maps 1 and 1A, pages 9 and 12.

41) Source: census. See also Appendix 1A, note (1), page 363.

42) Appendix 1A, pages 362-5.

Table 12  
Intercensal rates of change by division, 1851 - 1891

(per cent)

<u>Division</u>	<u>1851-61</u>	<u>1861-71</u>	<u>1871-81</u>	<u>1881-91</u>
East Coast	-0.6	-1.2	-0.8	-1.8
Western	-5.2	-6.3	-5.3	-6.3
Insular	-4.2	+2.5	+5.2	+1.5
Region	-3.2	-1.4	-0.7	-2.2

The decline in the rate of loss - and indeed the increased growth - noted previously with reference to the decade 1871-81, applied to all three main topographical divisions and especially to the islands. The mainland districts west of the "highland Line" were the most substantially affected by population decline throughout the whole period, experiencing both a lower rate of natural increase and a higher rate of net migration loss than the other divisions.<sup>(43)</sup> To a certain extent this is attributable to the generally smaller base populations of many of the western parishes, accentuating the effect of losses which were often no greater in numerical terms than those from other districts. Nevertheless, the total net decline in the western division between 1851 and 1891 amounted to 15,066 or 21.2 per cent of the 1851 population, compared with 5,168 or 4.6 per cent of the 1851 inhabitants of the east coast. As will be shown in the following chapter, this was by no means entirely due to emigration. Moreover, maps 3 - 4A inclusive would suggest that much of the movement

43) The rates of natural increase and net migration changes for each division during the decade 1861-71 are given in Appendix 1B, pages 366-8. See Chapter 3, pages 76-8.

away from the western parishes was to the eastern part of the region. Many of those districts with the highest rates of decline, especially in Inverness-shire, bordered on the eastern lowlands and notably the parish of Inverness itself.<sup>(44)</sup> They were also near enough to experience the "gravitational pull" of the Scottish central lowlands.

The districts of the eastern division were nevertheless the source of most of the actual movement both within and outside the Northern Highland region. This was partly because of their larger base populations and their proximity to other populous areas<sup>(45)</sup>, partly because of the existence of good communications on the east coast<sup>(46)</sup>, and partly because of a number of other considerations closely related to the types of "opportunities" available.<sup>(47)</sup> The pattern of movement from Caithness, already mentioned with reference to table 7, demonstrates both the mobility of the east coast population and the extent of its migration to the rest of Scotland. As shown in Appendix 1B, the registration districts of Wick and Latheron each lost more inhabitants during the decade 1861-71 than any other district in the entire region. Alone of the four counties under consideration, the majority of out-migrants from Caithness to the rest of Scotland were not enumerated in neighbouring areas. At the 1871 census, 41.4 per cent of the natives of Caithness who

44) cf. Map 2, page 16.

45) *ibid.* See also tables 7 and 16, and note (4), page 24.

46) see note (39), page 48.

47) These are discussed more fully throughout Part III.

were enumerated elsewhere in Scotland were residing in the south-eastern counties of Linlithgow, Haddington, Edinburgh, <sup>(48)</sup> Berwick, Peebles and Selkirk. A further 19.5 per cent were in Renfrew, Ayr and Lanark. Only 10.5 per cent were enumerated in Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty, or Inverness-shire. The prevailing tendency was clearly to move the entire length of the east coast of Scotland. <sup>(49)</sup>

#### Effect of transport and communications on migration

This pattern, first noted in the pre-railway census of 1851, was probably attributable to the existence of a direct sea link between Thurso, Wick, and Leith (Granton), discussed further in Chapter 6. It was also due to the comparatively small "intervening" populations or opportunities in neighbouring counties. Even the north-east, including Aberdeen (which was likewise linked by sea with Caithness), had attracted only 9.7 of its Scottish-based emigrants as recorded in the 1871 census. As observed earlier in this chapter, distance is not necessarily an obstacle to migration if the means of transport actually facilitates a longer journey and if there is a greater possibility of gainful employment at the end of it: the whole history of overseas emigration testifies to this fact. Not only were there more opportunities available in the south-east of Scotland than

48) i.e. West Lothian, East Lothian, Midlothian.

49) A similar pattern was observed with regard to migrants from Orkney and Shetland. Hildebrandt, Some internal migration patterns in mid-nineteenth century Scotland, op. cit.

in areas further north: the wages were also better. For example, Bowley shows that the estimated annual earnings for a married ploughman were £35.10s. in Caithness (and only £22 in Sutherland) for the period 1867-70; whereas in Edinburgh and its surrounding counties they ranged from £38.10s. to £41 per annum.<sup>(50)</sup> There was also the consideration of the cost of the journey. Table 13 reveals the level of fares between Caithness and the main eastern Scottish ports in the mid-1860s.

Table 13  
Fares between Caithness, Aberdeen, and Granton<sup>(51)</sup>

<u>Journey</u>	<u>Cabin</u>	<u>Steerage</u>
Granton to Wick	16s.	7s.
Thurso	18s.	8s.
Aberdeen to Wick	13s.	5s.
Thurso	14s.	6s.

Obviously, it was more economical to travel as far as possible by the same conveyance: the longer the journey, the less costly it became in terms of the rate per mile. With sailings two or three times weekly on the east coast route, advertised in the local press, the predominance of south-east Scotland as a main destination from Caithness is not hard to explain, even after improved communications made other parts of Scotland more accessible. In this case the distance factor was no constraint to the migration flow, which was not affected to any great extent by the existence

50) Bowley, op. cit.

51) John O'Groat Journal, 14 January 1864.

of "intervening opportunities"; indeed, the means of transport and the economies of distance, together with the higher wages available in the south-east, may actually have acted as an incentive to travel beyond Inverness or Aberdeen. The more this pattern of movement became established, the more the friends and relatives of migrants were likely to follow suit.

Since no county in the region comprised solely west coast or insular districts, the patterns of movement of the natives of these areas to the rest of Scotland are impossible to trace from the published censuses. The prevailing means of transport to the south throughout the century remained the various shipping services which linked the western highlands and islands with Oban and Glasgow. Certainly it was the case that, at the 1851 census, 2,855 natives of Inverness-shire were enumerated in Lanarkshire (including Glasgow): almost as many as the 2,967 in Ross and Cromarty who comprised the greatest single flow out of that county.<sup>(52)</sup> But, as explained previously, migrants from Inverness-shire were more likely to be widely dispersed than those from the counties further north in partial consequence of its larger population and its greater number of neighbouring counties. In any event, the town of Inverness - the main population centre for the whole region - was from an early date directly linked with

52) Table 7, page 38.

Glasgow by inland waterway and later by rail.<sup>(53)</sup> So it was probable that a large proportion of those who were enumerated in West Central Scotland in fact originated from the eastern and inland parishes of the Northern Highlands. Table 14 shows the proportions of out-migrants from all four counties enumerated in East and West Central Scotland.

Table 14

Natives of Northern Highlands enumerated in East and  
West Central Scotland, 1871

(per cent of all out-migrants enumerated in Scotland)

<u>County of Origin</u>	<u>Destination*</u>		
	<u>West Central</u>		<u>East</u>
	<u>Div. V</u>	<u>Div. VI</u>	<u>Div. VII</u>
Inverness-shire	19.6	24.6	10.6
Ross & Cromarty	4.7	18.0	13.3
Sutherland	3.5	13.3	16.3
Caithness	3.2	19.5	41.4

\*Census divisions:

V: Stirling, Dumbarton, Argyll, Bute

VI: Renfrew, Ayr, Lanark

VII: Linlithgow, Edinburgh, Haddington, Berwick, Peebles, Selkirk

53) See chapter 6, pages 212-5. This pattern of movement is indicated in maps 3-4A, pages 43-6; and by the pattern of communications illustrated in maps A4 and A5, Appendix 4, pages 404-5.

The grouping of counties in table 14 is unsatisfactory in some respects. Argyll and Bute should not properly be linked with the industrial and urban areas of West Central Scotland; and Selkirk and Berwick belong more obviously with the Borders than with the Lothians. Nevertheless, the general direction of migration flows from the Northern Highlands to other parts of Scotland is illustrated by this table. The two most northerly counties, especially Caithness, sent the largest single proportions of their out-migrants to destinations in eastern Scotland, while the majority of those leaving Inverness-shire and Ross and Cromarty who remained in Scotland tended to arrive at destinations in the west.<sup>(54)</sup> The inhabitants of Easter Ross, where about 40 per cent of the entire population of Ross and Cromarty resided (including the majority of its mobile population<sup>(55)</sup>), almost certainly left the region via the town of Inverness with its direct links to Glasgow and the south. Indeed, a steamer service from Glasgow via the Caledonian Canal to Cromarty and Invergordon had been in operation since the 1830s.<sup>(56)</sup> It should be remembered that the "gravitational pull" of West Central Scotland was greater than that of the Edinburgh area with respect to both the eastern and western parishes of Inverness and Ross-shire, not only on account of the somewhat lesser

54) cf. M. Flinn (ed.), *op. cit.*, for an analysis of the origins of Highlanders in Greenock, 1700-1921, pp. 475-6.

55) cf. note (53).

56) C.L.D. Duckworth and G.E. Langmuir, *West Highland Steamers, Lancashire*, 1967, p. 4.



distance involved (shown in map A5, page 405) but also because of its larger base population and the more rapidly growing numbers of opportunities in both industry and services. By 1901 the population of the West Central counties (division V and VI in table 14) was 2,118,500; whereas that of Edinburgh, Fife, the Lothians, and Peebles was less than half as large.<sup>(57)</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that agricultural wage rates in Lanarkshire itself were relatively low (£37.10s. per annum between 1867 and 1870 for a married ploughman), although they compared favourably with those in Inverness-shire and Ross and Cromarty (£33). Agricultural wages in the surrounding counties of Ayr, Renfrew, Dunbarton, and Stirling were at a higher level, ranging from £38 to £40, roughly comparable with those in the Edinburgh area.<sup>(58)</sup> It may well have been the case that it was the latter districts, rather than Lanarkshire, which were the original destinations of agricultural workers from the eastern Highlands; although because of the limitations of the lifetime migration data this is impossible to prove conclusively.

For the various reasons already given, it seems probable that the inhabitants of west coast parishes and the islands did not comprise the majority of the natives of Ross-shire and Inverness-shire who were enumerated elsewhere in Scotland.

57) Hildebrandt, *op. cit.* Lanarkshire in this context includes Glasgow.

58) Bowley, *op. cit.*

Despite the existence since 1819 of a steamer service between Glasgow and Fort William (via the Crinan Canal) which was later extended to Inverness and during the 1820s of further services to Skye and Stornoway<sup>(59)</sup>, the evidence indicates that fewer islanders than anticipated made use of them. For instance, Francis Thompson in his book on Lewis and Harris writes that

"When in the early 1880s formal sea communications were being established between the island and ports on the west coast of Scotland, most of the islanders were of course little affected. Except for the professional classes, they had little use for the sea links provided for them. Their economy was not yet a cash economy, and travel was thus a luxury they could not afford. As the nature of local life began to change with the infiltration of some of the trappings of nineteenth century civilisation, however, they grew to depend on items brought by sea ...But there was relatively little export in return; traffic was one-way and the freight charges must pay for the double voyage. Though the fishing industry and later the Harris Tweed industry were, around the turn of the century, to do much to determine and stabilise shipping developments, both passenger and cargo services were always facing loss rather than profit."<sup>(60)</sup>

At the same time, Thompson notes that the Minch steamers served as a link with home for those islanders who did leave for the south, and that return migration (whether on a temporary or permanent basis) was not infrequent.

59) Duckworth and Langmuir, op. cit.

60) F. Thompson, Harris and Lewis, David and Charles, 1968, pp. 64-5.

So it was not the rate of emigration which necessarily distinguished western and insular parishes in the Northern Highlands from those on the east coast.<sup>(61)</sup> Insofar as there was a difference in the experience of the various divisions, this lay rather in the frequent departure of emigrant ships from the west coast and island ports, bound for overseas destinations. Yet it would again be inaccurate to associate only the western mainland and islands with a steady stream of overseas emigrants. As will be shown in Chapter 7, many Highlanders (especially from these areas) were simply not willing to leave their native territory, and the response even to assisted emigration schemes was not as great as had been expected.

Neither should it be overlooked that the natives of the eastern parts of the region also contributed to the numbers going overseas: moreover, they were traditionally amongst the instigators and pioneers of the early emigrations from the Highlands. This is consistent with the selective nature of most voluntary migration in terms not only of age but of occupation and other socio-economic considerations, discussed in Part III. The first large-scale emigration from the Highlands to North America, between 1763 and 1775, appeared to be mainly comprised of redundant tacksmen who took some of their tenants with them.<sup>(62)</sup> Once the tacksmen

61) This point is expanded in Chapter 4, notes (57) - (58), page 137. See also Chapter 7, note (18) ff, pages 243-4.

62) M.I. Adam, The Highland emigration of 1770, *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 16, no. 65, 1919, pp. 280-293.

had departed, most of the remaining "middle classes" were located in the towns and farming lands of the eastern coastal plain. In Australia, for instance, the period 1788-1850 was characterised by the "gentlemen settlers" from Britain, among whom were a number from Caithness. Between 1815 and 1832 there were twelve applications from Caithness farmers for land grants in Australia, and some of these influenced their relatives and friends to go with them.<sup>(63)</sup> The majority of emigrants to Australia prior to 1850 tended to be farmers, landholders, merchants, manufacturers and military officers. Indeed, after the Napoleonic Wars special terms were offered whereby officers could commute their commissions into land. R.A. Balfour writes that the social background of Highland emigrants to Australia

"... was similar to that of those from other parts of the country and very much representative of the upper strata of Highland society - the gentry and tacksmen. Until at least the middle of the century the free settlers going from the Highlands were drawn almost exclusively from this class."<sup>(64)</sup>

Australia was not a popular or frequent destination from Scotland during the first half of the nineteenth century, a fact which to a large extent predetermined the type of

63) D.S. Macmillan, *Scotland and Australia 1788-1850: emigration, commerce, and investment*, Oxford University Press 1967, pp. 94-109.

64) R.A. Balfour, *Emigration from the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland to Australia during the Nineteenth Century*, Edinburgh University M. Litt. thesis, 1973, p. 30. Balfour incidentally also notes that only 46 or 0.2 per cent of all convicts sent to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) between 1804 and the mid-1840s were Highlanders.

emigrant who went there. The journey was long, arduous and expensive. Australia was also to some extent associated with the transportation of convicts from Britain. In any event, the numbers of voluntary settlers there from the Northern Highlands prior to 1850 were insufficient for the "snowball effect" generated by correspondence to relatives and friends at home to have much influence on the clannish Highlanders.<sup>(65)</sup> Until at least 1853, Canada remained the main destination of emigrants from Scottish ports, and of the Highlanders among them. (Table 15).

Table 15  
Main destinations of emigrants from Scottish ports, 1825-89<sup>(66)</sup>  
(per cent of total)

<u>Destination</u>	<u>1825-53</u>	<u>1853-89</u>
U.S.A.	39.9	51.8
Canada	48.2	17.6
Australia	11.9	29.5
South Africa	-	1.0
Total = 100%	50,499	146,825

65) G. Donaldson, *the Scots Overseas*, London, 1966; D.L. Jones, *The Background and Motives of Scottish Emigration to the United States of America in the period 1815 to 1861, with special reference to emigrant correspondence*, Edinburgh University Ph.D. thesis, 1970; J.M. Cameron, *A study of the Factors that assisted and directed Scottish Emigration to Upper Canada, 1815 - 1855*, Glasgow University Ph.D. thesis, 1971.

66) Source: Flinn (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 450-1.

Because of the sporadic survival of passenger lists, it is not known what proportions of these totals were Highlanders. There is the additional problem of distinguishing Highland inhabitants from former natives who had lived elsewhere in Scotland prior to embarkation. This is an even greater difficulty later in the century, when progressively fewer ships sailed directly from local ports.<sup>(67)</sup> However, in the case of many overseas Scottish settlements, it is possible to deduce the birthplaces of the first settlers by the place name or by a well-established succession of migrants, in turn helping to differentiate between the various topographical divisions of origin. Thus, from the late eighteenth century onwards, South Uist and Barra had strong connections with Prince Edward Island; Lewis and Harris especially with Cape Breton Island; Skye, Sutherland and Wester Ross with Pictou County in Nova Scotia as well as with the Carolinas.<sup>(68)</sup> The survival of the Gaelic culture, particularly in the Canadian maritime provinces, also indicates that the majority of their early settlers originated from the western highlands and the islands. By contrast, Gaelic did not long remain a feature of the Highland communities in Australia, established as many of them were by emigrants from the east coast.<sup>(69)</sup>

67) C.J. Erickson, Who were the English and Scots emigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth century? in D.V. Glass and R. Revelle (ed.), *Population and Social Change*, Edward Arnold, 1972, pp. 347-381.

68) M.I. Adam, The causes of the Highland emigrations of 1783-1803, *S.H.R.* Vol. 17, no. 66, 1920, pp. 73-89.

69) Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 183. cf. Chapter 8, page 314-6.

## Selective aspects of migration

The decline in emigration from Scotland to Canada during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the corresponding increase in movement to Australia observed in table 15, <sup>(70)</sup> partly reflects the fact that a large proportion of Scottish emigrants after the 1845 famine, especially those from the Highlands and Islands, left the country under assisted schemes. <sup>(71)</sup> The consideration that emigration during the latter part of the century was often assisted in turn reflects the selective nature of the earlier movements. This has been effectively illustrated by Miss Adam in her examination of accounts of the exodus of 1763-75: "it must be granted that at least the leaders of the movement of the seventies were reasonably prosperous people" - usually tacksmen who by then had become "superfluous middlemen". They were accompanied by their underlings presumably because "the habits of obedience engendered for generations were not

70) According to Jones, op. cit., p. 404, Canada was chosen in preference to the United States originally because

"i. Highlanders in the Colonies has by an large remained loyal during the American War of Independence and had moved north to Canada after the American victory and ii. many Highlanders travelled with assistance either from their proprietors, emigration societies or the government. There is evidence, however, that many Highlanders did settle, eventually, in the United States."

Emigration to the U.S.A. from Europe generally increased after the American Civil War (see table 15 and note 66). At the same time, the colonisation of Canada effectively ended with the British North America Act of 1867, when Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick (and later Prince Edward Island) were granted dominion status under a federal government.

71) cf. Chapter 7, pages 256-64.

easy to overcome." (72) Long after the departure of the tacksmen, the claim that emigration continued to drain the region of its most able-bodied and skilled inhabitants continued to be made by a variety of sources, not least the opponents of the assisted schemes from the 1840s onwards. (73) Only a relatively small proportion of the "redundant population" was affected.

It was exactly this selective procedure, whether self-imposed or determined by external factors, which increasingly underlay the differing extents and directions of migration between the eastern parishes on the one hand and the western and insular districts on the other. Independent migration, whether to other parts of Scotland or overseas, implied a willingness and an ability to adapt not only to new surroundings but possibly also to a new way of life and a new culture. Assisted migration, by contrast, implied the need as perceived by external agents to alleviate the pressure imposed on limited resources by overpopulation - however that was defined - in certain areas. This was exemplified to a limited extent by the transfer of paupers from Highland areas to the Central Lowlands of Scotland by the Board of Destitution, but to a greater extent by the pattern of overseas emigration after 1845. (74) It is likely that, by the time of the 1845 famine, most of those who were in any way able and willing to leave the most congested areas

72) M.I. Adam, *The Highland emigration of 1770*, op. cit. cf. Chapter 4, note (23), page(120); and Chapter 7, notes (5) - (6), page 237.

73) Balfour, op. cit., p. 124. cf. Chapter 7, note (24), page 245.

74) Chapter 7, passim.



had already done so, at whatever cost to themselves :

"Despirited and driven to despair by bad management, crowds were now passing, emaciated with hunger, to the Eastern coast, on the report of a ship being there laden with meal. Numbers of the miserables of this country were now migrating: they wandered in a state of desperation; too poor to pay, they madly sell themselves for their passage, preferring a temporary bondage in a strange land, to starving for life in their native soil." (75)

The continued loss of the mobile elements of the population (who from this description were by no means representative of the "upper strata" of Highland society who typified the early emigrants to Australia) would account for the eventual decline in extra-regional migration already noted during the period under consideration, despite the sustained growth in numbers of the inhabitants of some areas. (76)

#### Return migration

So far it has been hypothesised that the largest single proportion of migrants from the Northern Highlands originated on the east coast. The same may be hypothesised of return migration. Table 16 illustrates the extent to which each of the three main topographical divisions contributed to the natural gains and net migration losses experienced by the Northern Highland region between 1861

75) T. Pennant, *A Tour of Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*, 1772, London, 1776, Vol. I, p. 365. Quoted by Balfour, *op. cit.*

76) Chapter 7, notes (52) - (54), pages 262-3.

and 1871.

Table 16

Proportions of natural increase and net migration totals  
by division, 1861-71<sup>(77)</sup>

<u>Division</u>	<u>% of 1861 population</u>	<u>% of nat. inc 1861-71</u>	<u>% of net mig. 1861-71</u>
East Coast	48.0	44.6	43.4
Western	28.2	22.9	33.1
Insular	<u>23.9</u>	<u>32.4</u>	<u>23.5</u>
Totals = 100%	237,542	+ 24,005	- 27,130

Not only is it clear from this table that the population of the east coast districts dominated the migration flows from the Northern Highlands; it is also clear that of all the three main topographical divisions, only the western districts were losing a disproportionate number of their inhabitants through migration; and even more strikingly, the islands were gaining a disproportionate share of the population through natural increase. Just as the eastern Highlands contributed most substantially to the regional migration losses, however, so they were the main destination of incoming settlers. It has already been observed that a decline in the rate of net out-migration was particularly marked during the decade 1871-81.<sup>(78)</sup> This decline occurred at a national as well as a regional level and was in sharp

77) Appendix 1B, pages 366-8.

78) Table 4, page 34.

contrast to the extent of emigration from Scotland, particularly to the United States, recorded in the years immediately preceding and succeeding the American Civil War of 1861-5. (79) It coincided with the major contraction of British development overseas following the end of the mid-Victorian boom in 1873. (80) Table 17 reveals the decline in emigration from the United Kingdom as a whole during the first years of the severe slump of 1873-9.

Table 17  
Emigration from the U.K., 1873-6 (81)

1873	310,612
1874	241,014
1875	173,809
1876	132,222

It has been argued (for example, by Brinley Thomas and Sir Alexander Cairncross) that the fall in prices of both agricultural and industrial products at this time caused a widespread withdrawal of overseas investment and hence a

79) Flinn (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 451. Also B. Thomas, *Migration and Economic Growth; a study of Great Britain and the Atlantic Economy*, Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 96. Some of this activity was attributed by Thomas to the transport revolution, competition among shipping companies, and the consequent reduction in fares to North America from about £20 in 1825 to £5 or less by the 1860s. cf. table 15, page 61.

80) The extent and timing of this contraction is open to debate. See, for example, S.B. Saul, *The Myth of the Great Depression 1873-1896*, Macmillan Studies in Economic History, 1972.

81) Statistical Tables relating to Emigration and Immigration from and into the United Kingdom in the year 1876, Report to the Board of Trade, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 85, 1877. Accurate emigration statistics for Scotland separately cannot be derived before 1895. This problem is discussed in Flinn (ed.), *op. cit.* pp. 448-9.

decline in employment opportunities abroad.<sup>(82)</sup> In consequence, not only did emigration from the United Kingdom substantially decline, but immigration into Britain - including the return of some previous emigrants - began to accelerate. At the same time, internal migration in Britain generally, as already noted in the Northern Highlands, increased markedly between 1871 and 1881.<sup>(83)</sup> Movement to the Northern Highland region not only intensified from the rest of Scotland, including the industrial areas, but also from England and Wales. The most likely explanation of the inflow from south of the border was the fluctuating employment levels in major industries resulting from the fall in prices<sup>(84)</sup>, and causing the return of former natives to the region in the hope of finding some means of subsistence. The increase in in-migration to the Northern Highlands, already noted from the rest of Scotland in tables 5 and 6, is demonstrated by table 18 overleaf.

It was the increase in immigration from the rest of the United Kingdom (including Scotland) and abroad, and the accompanying decline in overseas emigration, which largely accounted for the falling net migration losses from the region noted between 1871 and 1881; even though the gross migration losses from the Northern Highland counties continued to rise. It is, of course, impossible to tell from either the published or the unpublished census

82) Thomas, op. cit.; A.K. Cairncross, *Home and Foreign Investment 1870-1913*, Cambridge, 1953, pp. 209-221.

83) Thomas, op. cit., p. 124. See also tables 5 and 6, pages 35-6.

84) Saul, op. cit., pp. 14, 53-4.

Table 18

Lifetime migration to Northern Highlands from rest of  
U.K. and overseas (85)

<u>Origin</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1881</u>	<u>% increase 1871-1881</u>
England and Wales	1,520	2,028	+ 33.4
Ireland	583	602	+ 3.3
British colonies	391	496	+ 26.9
British subjects born overseas	85	121	+ 42.4
Totals	2,579	3,247	+ 25.9

data how much of the inward movement was in fact due to the return of natives of the Northern Highlands or their descendants. A person who returned to his country or parish would not have been recorded in the enumerators' books, far less the published residence/birthplace tables, as a migrant at all, however far afield he had travelled in his lifetime. Nevertheless, it seems probable that those originating from the British colonies and those described as British subjects born overseas were in many cases former Highlanders and their families, returning with the intention of settling in the region. Persons who were visitors to the country from abroad were unlikely to penetrate the far north in any numbers, unless they had connections with the region; and only those who had already stayed in Scotland throughout the winter were likely to be present there fairly early in the year, at the April census.

85) Source: census.

Return migration was a phenomenon observed with increasing regularity in Britain during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Prior to the 1870s migration back to the mother country was normally a relatively infrequent occurrence. Ships sailing east from North America were generally converted to carry timber and later grain in place of passengers.<sup>(86)</sup> Those returning to the Highlands before the onset of the Depression of 1873-96 were probably disillusioned or unsuccessful emigrants who wished to resettle in or near their former homes, however difficult it was to subsist in some areas. Those returning in the last quarter of the century - and the numbers entering British ports from North America increased markedly until 1914 - may have encountered the additional problems of being unable to obtain land or find suitable employment overseas.<sup>(87)</sup>

As expected on the basis of table 11 and the ensuing discussion of the origins of Highland emigrants, the east coast was also the destination of most of the movement into Northern Highlands from elsewhere. Movement to the burgh of Inverness comprised just under one quarter of the migration flows illustrated in table 18, in both census years. Of all immigrants to the Northern Highlands originating from outside Scotland, it was the newcomers to

86) Donaldson, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

87) Jones (*op. cit.*) states that return migration from the U.S.A. to Scotland may have been as high as 46 per cent by the end of the century, rising consistently from 1876 to 1915. A similar pattern is also apparent at both national and regional levels during the 1930s.

the region who were the most likely to have settled in the growing urban centre, partly on account of the greater possibilities for employment there and partly because of its strategic location as the "gateway" to the north. Those who went elsewhere would have found few means of subsistence without local connections. Even before the Depression, the fishing industry was beginning to decline on the east coast, and almost all of those engaged in it elsewhere in the region were native Highlanders. (88) Some opportunities may have been created on the estates for relatives and friends of the proprietors as well as those returning from regimental service. The main administrative offices of the larger estates, such as those of the houses of Sutherland and Sinclair, were usually located in the eastern coastal plain and were closely involved with the developments of planned settlements there. (89)

As with the internal movement illustrated in maps 3-4A on pages 43-6, migration into the Northern Highland region occurred on a scale roughly proportional to its migration losses, with the most pronounced movement taking place in or near the eastern settlements and the main routes to the south. The "gravitational pull" of the main east coast districts was almost as great as that of the western mainland and islands together, in terms of population alone. (90)

88) cf. Chapter 5, pages 174-90.

89) T.C. Smout, *The Landowner and the Planned Village*, in N.T. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (ed.), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement*, Edinburgh, 1970, pp. 73-106. cf. Chapter 6, pages 208-10.

90) Note (8), page 27. Also table 16, page 66.

### The theories questioned

From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that the rudimentary theories of migration outlined at the beginning of this chapter require some modification in the context of the Northern Highlands at the time of Ravenstein, as they probably also do in the context of other regions of similar remoteness and inaccessibility from main centres of population. It is moreover apparent that the extent to which the theories need to be modified varies not only from south to north between the four counties concerned, but also from east to west between the three main topographical divisions designated in this study.

For example, while the movement from Caithness to south-east Scotland may be explained in terms of the population sizes of the two respective areas, the existence of a direct sea link from Thurso and Wick to Granton, and the higher agricultural wages in the vicinity of Edinburgh, the relatively low levels of migration from the Outer Hebrides to west central Scotland cannot so readily be explained in the same terms. Theoretically such movement should have been even greater than that on the east coast. The populations of the western isles and of the counties adjoining and including Glasgow were considerably greater than those of Caithness and the Edinburgh area<sup>(91)</sup>; and both the linear distance and the means of transport were comparable in the two instances. In fact, not only was

91) cf. note (57), page 57; also Appendix 1A, pages 362-5.



there unexpectedly little movement from the Western Isles to the Central Lowlands, but the migration flows affecting the remoter parts of the west coast and insular districts of the region generally were also unexpectedly small, especially by comparison with those occurring in the eastern zone. (92)

It has been shown in this chapter that there is little difficulty in finding explanations for the main directions and dimensions of migration in the Northern Highlands in the latter part of the nineteenth century. But the explanations so far offered - opportunities, wages, transport, communications - all by definition presuppose the prevalence of a market economy and a mobile population. It is argued in Part III of this thesis that the incentives to mobility introduced during the nineteenth century in the wake of economic and social change were not strong enough to outweigh the constraints imposed by a peasant society still accustomed to a subsistence living in the remoter areas. First, however, it is necessary to determine the propensity of the inhabitants of such areas to move at all. This is attempted in the following chapter.

92) Maps 3-4A, pages 43-6; also Appendix 1B, pages 366-8.

CHAPTER 3

Natural change and mobility

## The dynamics of demographic change

Chapter 2 has shown that the eastern parishes of the Northern Highlands were both the source and the destination of the largest proportion of the regional movement noted during the period 1851 - 91. Although the western and insular districts provided a major percentage of the overseas emigrants from the region, the main directions of outward migration were to destinations in Scotland. Moreover, the fact that many of those born west of the "Highland line" went abroad rather than to settlements nearer home may itself indicate that movement in and from such areas was determined by factors other than those considered in Chapter 2.

Before such factors are investigated, it must first be demonstrated that the populations of western and insular parishes were on demographic grounds no less likely to migrate than their east coast counterparts. It will be shown in the course of the present chapter that, in some instances, the reverse was true. Two points in particular are stressed. First, the rate of natural increase among the resident population, while generally lower than that of Scotland as a whole, was higher in the islands than in the rest of the region and neither noticeably affected nor was affected by the rate of net migration loss from these districts. In some of the insular parishes, the size of family and the incidence of overcrowding, together with the numbers of young people and therefore of potential

migrants, were greater than in the region and the country respectively. Secondly, while such overcrowding and lack of spontaneous migration may have precipitated the major subsistence crises of the nineteenth century, these in turn had only a limited impact on the emigration rates from the areas which were most affected by them. Both points are to some extent illustrated by excerpts from the New Statistical Account, which is used in this chapter both to provide an historical background to the demographic statistics relating to the later nineteenth century and to show contemporary awareness - even prior to the 1845 famine - of the problem of congestion. It was a problem that became increasingly apparent during the 1820s and 1830s, and the New Statistical Account is therefore an important source of collective eyewitness commentaries on the issue.

While the net loss by migration during the later nineteenth century remained constantly higher in the Northern Highlands than in Scotland as a whole<sup>(1)</sup>, the regional natural increase rate remained correspondingly lower. The same applies to both the birth and the death rates, considered separately. (Table 19).

1) cf. Chapter 2, especially Table 1, page 29.

Table 19

Decennial birth and death rates, 1861-91 <sup>(2)</sup>

(per thousand population)

<u>County</u>	<u>Nat. inc.</u>	<u>1861-71</u>	
		<u>Births</u>	<u>Deaths</u>
Inverness	9.1	25.7	16.6
Ross & Crom.	10.6	27.3	16.7
Sutherland	6.8	21.0	14.2
Caithness	<u>12.5</u>	<u>28.9</u>	<u>16.3</u>
Region	10.0	26.4	16.4
(Scotland	13.6	36.7	23.1)
<u>1871-81</u>			
Inverness	8.8	25.7	16.9
Ross & Crom.	8.7	25.3	16.5
Sutherland	6.1	21.5	15.4
Caithness	<u>10.2</u>	<u>27.0</u>	<u>16.9</u>
Region	8.7	25.3	16.6
(Scotland	14.0	36.7	22.8
<u>1881-91</u>			
Inverness	8.5	24.1	15.6
Ross & Crom.	9.7	25.5	15.8
Sutherland	6.2	21.3	15.1
Caithness	<u>10.2</u>	<u>27.1</u>	<u>16.9</u>
Region	9.0	24.8	15.8
(Scotland	13.6	33.5	19.9)

2) Source : centennial report of the Registrar-General for Scotland, op. cit. Also Flinn (ed.), op. cit., p. 383.

A lower than average birth rate might in itself be taken as symptomatic of an ageing population, were it not that the regional death rate was also lower than the Scottish average. The pattern of natural change in the Northern Highlands as illustrated in table 19 - in which the sub-regional variations amplified below are concealed by the predominance of the population of the eastern districts - has little in common with the exceedingly high birth and death rates of an agricultural society, as instanced by Cipolla.<sup>(3)</sup> Moreover, the death rate in the Northern Highlands was considerably lower than was apparently normal in a society affected to any degree by industrial development. The natural increase rates for England and Wales were roughly comparable with those for Scotland at this time, making the Northern Highlands unusual in the Scottish and the British context alike.

The fact that both the birth and the death rates in the Northern Highlands in the later nineteenth century were lower than the Scottish averages was partly indicative of the extensive migration losses particularly from the east coast of the region, with their detrimental effect on the structure of a substantial proportion of the remaining population and hence on the birth rate. (This is illustrated in table 24 on page 97). It was additionally indicative of the lack of urbanisation within the region,

3) C.M. Cipolla, *The Economic History of World Population*, Pelican, 1962, reprinted 1972, pp. 79-88. cf. also H.J. Habakkuk, *Population Growth and Economic Development since 1750*, Leicester, 1971, pp. 7-8, for a discussion of the stages in the demographic transition to an industrial society.

reflected in the comparatively low death rate. Throughout the period under consideration, the Northern Highlands were virtually untouched by the occupational hazards endemic in nineteenth century industrial society. They were also less affected by epidemics, such as cholera and typhoid, which could usually be attributed to poor sanitation or to an infected water supply and which were thus more prevalent in urban and industrial concentrations than in rural areas.<sup>(4)</sup> These considerations probably explain why the regional death rate continued to remain considerably below even the falling Scottish average during the later nineteenth century, despite the relatively high net migration losses incurred by the four counties together.

The region was not free from its own endemic health hazards. However, the Northern Highlands were more subject to subsistence crises than to the ravages of pollution or contamination. The cholera epidemic of 1832 affected the region as a whole far less markedly than the subsequent famines. In comparing the relative impact of the two types of crisis, the different experiences of the east coast parishes on the one hand and the western and insular districts on the other become apparent. Some eastern settlements were afflicted by cholera, although only in one or two instances is the epidemic mentioned as a

4) For instance, see R.J. Morris, *Cholera 1832: the social response to an epidemic*, Croom Helm Social History series, London, 1976. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, the main cause of death in the Northern Highland counties is consistently stated to be "old age" in the Registrar-General's reports.

cause of population decline. Even the burghs of Wick and Inverness apparently escaped relatively lightly. The New Statistical Account for the latter, presumably compiled by an eyewitness, refers to it only in passing:

"... the average number of baptisms for the last ten years is 360, of deaths about 300 (though in 1832 and 1834, the ravages of cholera no doubt increased that ratio), and the marriages amount to about 106 a year." (5)

It may be, however, that the disease caused some temporary movement away from the towns to avoid infection. (6)

Conversely, the two main nineteenth century potato famines chiefly affected rural settlements (particularly on the west coast and in the islands) and resulted in some migration towards the towns and fishing communities. (7) But even they do not appear to have been as generally disastrous as has sometimes been supposed. Admittedly the New Statistical Account was largely completed prior to the famine of 1845 and in some instances even before that of 1836-7. However, the populations of certain areas where the potato was a staple food actually increased despite the two blights. (Indeed, its "easily produced abundance" has been held partly responsible for population growth in

5) N.S.A., Vol. 14, "Inverness", p. 17.

6) Such temporary migration away from the towns and coastal settlements in Caithness is described by N.M. Gunn in his novel, *The Silver Darlings*, Faber and Faber, 1941.

7) Macdonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-8.



the Western Highlands generally after 1770<sup>(8)</sup>). The numbers living in Kilmuir, Isle of Skye, rose from 3,415 in 1831 to 3,625 in 1841 before falling sharply at the 1851 census. The latter source ascribes this decline "partly to the mortality consequent on the scarcity and insufficiency of food, and partly to emigration". Far from causing long-term population decline, however, subsistence crises sometimes had the opposite effect. The New Statistical Account explains the increase in population in Kilmuir after the 1836 famine in the following terms :

"...The primary cause of the late destitution was a redundancy of population...The error of the system of management lay in the frequency of early and improvident marriages, encouraged by the introduction of the lotting system, which, in its turn, gave rise to bad husbandry...The amount of population was rapidly increasing, while the amount of the means of support for each family was, in the same ratio, diminishing." (9)

The New Statistical Account for South Uist, written three years earlier in 1837, is equally positive with regard to the reasons for the growth in numbers and in the poverty of the inhabitants of the parish :

- 8) *ibid.*, p. 6. Also M. Flinn (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 421-438. cf. Chapter 4, pages 128-35.
- 9) N.S.A., Vol. 14, "Inverness", pp. 272-3. The account of the parish of Kilmuir was written in 1840.

"...From the reports of old people in the parish, it is believed that the population must have doubled during the last century, notwithstanding the frequent emigrations which have taken place to North America since the year 1772. The increase has been owing to early and improvident marriages, the healthiness of the climate, and the facility of parents in giving their sons a portion of their lands, small enough for their own subsistence...

"In good seasons, they have abundance of bread and potatoes; but there are too many cottars and poor people who have no employment, and can find none, and are consequently a burden on the farmers, who not only supply them with patches of land for potatoes, but also support them out of their stock of provisions, when they see them in a state of destitution." (10)

This quotation helps to explain why it was the small landholders, rather than the "redundant" cottars, who took the initiative in emigrating from the region both before and after the 1845 famine. (11) Again, it is apparent from the foregoing excerpts that contemporaries saw the main problem in certain insular districts as being overcrowding due to lack of movement, even after the first major nineteenth century famine.

However, from an examination of the accounts for Kilmuir and South Uist alone, the potato blight of 1836 appears to have been both local and varying in severity. Moreover, the famine of 1845-6 is not cited by the notes to the 1851 census as a major cause of population decline throughout the region (except in isolated instances, such as that of Kilmuir

10) *ibid*, p. 189.

11) See chapter 7, pages 244-51.

previously quoted). Yet, according to the 1851 census, "extensive emigration has taken place (from the county of Inverness) since 1841, which will account for the decrease of population in various parishes, shown by the returns for this year." The frequent occurrence of the terms "poverty", "early marriages", "subdivision of lands", "bad husbandry", and the very few appearances of the word "famine", throughout the relevant volumes of the New Statistical Account, leave the impression that the emigration which did occur from many districts during this decade was due (in the majority of cases) more to generally poor living conditions rather than to any specific incident or crisis. The 1845 potato famine may not itself have been a direct cause of migration losses, so much as a catalyst whereby those who could not otherwise have afforded to do so received some assistance to leave the region.<sup>(12)</sup> To a large extent, however, this was directed at persons who were disposed to move in any case and did not greatly affect those who were arguably in greater need of such help.<sup>(13)</sup>

In several instances, the possibly misguided generosity of landlords actually aggravated the situation. For example, the whole of Tongue parish on the north coast (formerly belonging to the Reay estates) was sold to the house of Sutherland in 1828.<sup>(14)</sup> "This truly patriotic nobleman, fully alive to the evils which beset his new people...

12) *ibid.* cf. M. Gray, The highland potato famine of the 1840s, *Economic History Review*, Vol. VII, no. 3, April 1955, pp. 365-378.

13) The Highland Emigration Society is one example of this. See Chapter 7, pages 259-64.

14) Appendix 4, Map A2, page 402.

reduced the rents of the small tenants thirty per cent, and commenced a series of improvements, by opening up the country with excellent roads...and inducing public vehicles to run in several directions; by which, at once work was afforded for the people, and a stimulus given for a time to the herring-fishing." His successor cancelled all arrears of rent for the entire parish.<sup>(15)</sup> Biased though the author of this account may have been as a nominee of the Sutherland estates, there is more than a grain of truth in his comments. These beneficent deeds were to prove disastrous in the long term: with crofts too small to sustain their tenants and to follow for the introduction of such improvements in agricultural techniques as crop rotation, the soil could not support the increasing population. The author of the New Statistical Account for Tongue parish, perhaps a little optimistically, expressed the opinion that "the time will soon arrive when there will be no alternative but emigration."<sup>(16)</sup>

#### The problem of a surplus population

Having established with the help of the New Statistical Account the extent of overcrowding in the first part of the century, it should now be asked whether emigration from the Northern Highlands after the 1845 famine actually occurred on a sufficient scale to alleviate it. The variations in demographic change within the region, illustrated on a

15) N.S.A., Vol. 15, "Sutherland", pp. 185-6.

16) *ibid.*, p. 187.

county basis in tables 4 and 19 (pages 34 and 77 ), are more clearly shown on a topographical basis in table 20. (17)

Table 20

Components of demographic change in the Northern Highlands  
by main topographical division, 1861-71

<u>Division</u>	<u>1861</u> <u>pop.</u>	<u>Nat. inc.</u> <u>1861-71</u>	<u>Rate</u> <u>%</u>	<u>Net mig.</u> <u>1861-71</u>	<u>Rate</u> <u>%</u>	<u>1871</u> <u>pop.</u>
East coast	113,945	+10,710	+9.4	-11,776	-10.3	112,879
Western	66,873	+ 5,509	+8.2	- 8,973	-13.4	63,409
Insular	<u>56,724</u>	<u>+ 7,786</u>	<u>+13.7</u>	<u>- 6,381</u>	<u>-11.2</u>	<u>58,129</u>
Region	237,542	+24,005	+10.1	-27,130	-11.4	234,417

It was the western and insular districts which were particularly affected by the potato famines. Yet, allowing for the fact that table 20 refers to the decade 15 to 20 years after the blight of 1845, any significant effect on the natural increase rates through migration losses, particularly in the insular districts, is hard to discern. Moreover, despite the high rate of net loss by migration from the western districts already noted in Chapter 2, there was comparatively little difference in the low natural increase rates of the east and west mainland. As previously observed with reference to table 16 on page 66, the actual numbers leaving the eastern zone were greater than those leaving the western. In fact, the rate of natural increase in the latter districts may, to some extent, have been stimulated by the

17) cf. Appendix 1B, pages 366-8.

famine. Subsistence crises tended to destroy or drive away the weaker elements of a population, causing more vigorous growth among the remaining inhabitants to compensate for their loss.

Any marked difference in the demographic experience of eastern and western districts is probably therefore attributable to the relative scarcity of towns and settlements on the west coast at this time, which might have checked the out-migration or emigration of a significant proportion of the famine victims.<sup>(18)</sup> The only western parish in which the 1871 population exceeded that of 1861 was Lochcarron. The New Statistical Account for Lochcarron, written in 1836, again attributes the increase in population then taking place to "the division of land into lots. The village of Janetown, which at no distant period consisted of only three families contains now a population of nearly 500."<sup>(19)</sup> Lochbroom, in which Ullapool was situated, had a net migration loss between 1861 and 1871 greatly in excess of the natural increase in its population.<sup>(20)</sup> By contrast, map 2 (page 16) showed that a number of parishes on the east coast experienced an increase in their populations (due to natural gains) in this decade. The most notable were those containing towns or sizeable settlements, such as Wick, Thurso, Golspie, and Dingwall. As noted in Chapter 2, there was some movement to Inverness and its vicinity from the western parishes,

18) See Map 2, page 16.

19) N.S.A., Vol. 14, "Ross and Cromarty", p. 111.

20) See Chapter 5, pages 174-7.

perhaps as a result of the famines. The pattern was, however, not as well established at the 1851 census as it was to become by that of 1891, again possibly indicating that famine itself was not the primary cause of movement from these areas.

As for the insular districts, which were the most affected by the "lotting system" and the most dependent on the potato as a staple food, the rate of loss by migration was more than offset by the natural growth of their remaining population. This experience was shared by all the districts of Lewis, Barra, North and South Uist. In South Uist, Lochs, and Stornoway in particular, net out-migration was remarkably low between 1861 and 1871, probably due to a revival of the kelp industry in the Uists from 1860 and to the growing exploitation of the Minch fisheries. At the same time, the rate of natural increase in Lewis generally was higher even than in the other insular districts. This was especially true of the district of Lochs on the eastern side of Lewis, where the natural increase rate was 23.1 in that decade. Such a situation was due to an unusually high birth rate in the islands generally: the death rate between 1861 and 1871 for insular districts was only slightly above the regional average of 16.4 per thousand. Thus neither subsistence crises nor migration losses, whether or not these were attributable to such crises, appear to have had significant effects on the rate of growth of the island populations.

If the low regional death rate discussed in the preceding pages was at least partially due to the combination of renewed vigour in the population of western districts after the 1845 famine and to small migration losses from the islands, the low birth rates shown in table 19 (page 77) are not at first sight symptomatic of similar circumstances.<sup>(21)</sup> Moreover, in noting that fertility in the north of Scotland was roughly 25 per cent lower than the national average in 1871, even before the onset of a general decline in fertility rates throughout the country, the authors of Scottish Population History from the Seventeenth Century to the 1930s make the following points :

"Poor physical resources and an almost total absence of industrial and commercial employment raised permanent problems of feeding existing, let alone additional, mouths. And every generation of Highlanders after the 1840s knew all too well that the surplus population must leave the area. The more children born, the faster the rate of out-migration, and there was little virtue in bearing children who must leave the homeland as soon as they became adults... partly in consequence of (this consideration and) very imbalanced sex ratios, the women of the Far North and the Highland counties tended to marry relatively little and late..."

They go on to observe, however, that "there may be grounds for concluding that Highland women, once married, were not markedly less fertile than those of the industrial lowlands."<sup>(22)</sup>

21) See note (3), page 78.

22) Flinn, (ed.), op. cit., pp. 341-5.



As shown in table 19 above, the birth rate throughout the region as a whole was consistently lower than the national average during the entire period under consideration. But arguably this was not primarily due to an imbalanced sex ratio. Although the region ratio of females per 100 males was above the national average of 107.8 in 1851, it actually declined from 113 females per 100 males in mid-century to 109 per 100 by 1891. (23) The regional birth rate declined during the same period. It also had little to do with a determination to check emigration, either before or after the 1845 famine. The New Statistical Account for the parish of Kintail in Wester Ross once again provides a background note by describing the local situation in the following terms :

"Notwithstanding this state of things<sup>(24)</sup>, emigration does not prevail...the love of country prevails most strongly; and they never think of emigration, until, from poverty, they are unable to pay their passage, and, under these circumstances, emigration is out of the question." (25)

Admittedly this account was written in 1836, nearly a decade before the great famine. However, if it was an assessment of attitudes to emigration at the time of one major potato blight, it was likely to have been even more applicable at a time when destitution was still more widespread than before. From this and similar accounts, it

23) Source : census. The implications of changes in the sex ratio are considered in Chapter 6, pages 224-6.

24) i.e. the destitution attributable to the collapse of the kelp industry, fluctuations in herring catches, the famine of 1836-7. See Note (9) on page 81 and Chapters 4 and 5, passim.

25) N.S.A., Vol. 14, "Ross and Cromarty", p. 177.

does not appear that the birth rate was held in check because women feared that their children might emigrate. Moreover, as indicated in the previous chapter, it was not the "surplus population" who were the most likely to leave the region in any event. (26)

It is certainly true that "the women of the Highland counties tended to marry relatively little and late". However, while the average rate of marriage in the region as a whole may have been lower (and the average ages of women at marriage higher) than at national level, there were distinct variations from this pattern in a number of individual districts. In 1871, for example, 27.6 per cent of unmarried females in Inverness county, and 26.6 per cent in Sutherland, were still single over the age of 30, compared with only 14.3 per cent in the whole of Scotland. But in Inverness town the proportion of unmarried females over 30 was 20.1 per cent, in Caithness it was 21.0, and in Ross and Cromarty it was 19.3. The latter figure was probably decisively influenced by the proportion of the base population living in Lewis, with its high natural increase and low negative net migration rates. Indeed, the equivalent percentage for all Scottish insular districts was 20.0. (27) This was no doubt attributable to the insular tendency to "early and improvident marriages" already noted; although in the light of the small proportion of unmarried women over 30 in Scotland as a whole, more

26) cf. Chapter 7, pages 244-63.

27) Source: 1871 census. Also Flinn (ed.) op. cit., pp. 316-334.

emphasis should perhaps be placed on the improvidence than on the timing of such marriages. (28)

Moreover, despite the continued prevalence of relatively early marriages in some districts, it is not the case that even the inhabitants of these areas were any more prolific than other Scots. Table 21 shows the actual number of births registered in each county at the beginning of the first decade for which intercensal natural increase rates are calculable. (29)

Table 21

No. of births and crude birth rates by county,  
1861 (30)

<u>County</u>	<u>Estimated pop. (31)</u>	<u>No. of births</u>	<u>Rate (per 1000 pop.)</u>
Inverness	84,725	2,320	27.3
Ross & Cromarty	82,394	2,307	27.9
Sutherland	24,144	567	23.4
Caithness	<u>42,259</u>	<u>1,220</u>	<u>28.8</u>
Region	233,522	6,414	27.4
(Scotland	3,066,633	107,009	34.8)

28) cf. notes (9) and (10), pages 81-2. Flinn (ed.) notes that this tendency began to decline in some districts after 1815 (ibid., p. 328).

29) See Appendix 2, pages 369-71, for a commentary on data sources.

30) Source: Annual report of the Register-General for Scotland, 1861.

31) i.e. mid-year estimates.

It was actually Caithness, the county with the highest net migration losses between 1861 and 1871<sup>(32)</sup>, which had the highest birth rate in the region.<sup>(33)</sup> This may have been because, of all the four counties, only the population of Caithness as a whole was located in the eastern lowland zone and was therefore in a position to be more generally affected than the others by the growth of the main population centres of Scotland.<sup>(34)</sup> In other words, the rural-to-urban movement taking place between Caithness and central Scotland, together with the growth of its major towns of Wick and Thurso, caused some of the demographic effects of urbanisation to be felt throughout the county of Caithness even before they reached more southerly, but often more remote, parts of the Northern Highlands.

Nevertheless, the figures in table 21 still conceal considerable sub-regional variations. The rate of procreation in the islands, for example, was higher than elsewhere in the Northern Highland region, including Caithness. Even so, it was no higher than the national average and was usually lower. (table 22).

32) cf. table 4, page 34 and Appendix 1B, page 366.

33) See also table 19, page 77.

34) See Chapter 2, pages 51-4; also note (51), page 98.

Table 22

Crude birth rates in insular districts, 1861 <sup>(35)</sup>

<u>Island</u>	<u>Estimated pop.</u>	<u>No. of births</u>	<u>Rate (per 1000 pop.)</u>
Ross & Cromarty :			
Lewis	21,056	740	35.1
Inverness:			
All insular districts	35,668	1,059	29.6
Harris	4,183	121	28.9
N. Uist	3,959	119	30.0
S. Uist	5,358	168	31.3
Barra	1,853	63	33.9
Skye	19,748	571	28.9
Small Isles	<u>567</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>29.9</u>
Totals	56,724	1,799	31.7

Only the crude birth rates for 1861 in Barra and Lewis - the former Catholic, the latter a Protestant stronghold<sup>(36)</sup> - were roughly on a par with that for the whole of Scotland. In other words, the insular inhabitants were perhaps more prolific than those of other parts of the region but no more so than those of the main urban areas of the country<sup>(37)</sup>, with their highly mobile populations.<sup>(38)</sup> Yet a comparatively

35) Source: Annual report of the Registrar-General for Scotland, 1861.

36) See Chapter 8, pages 316-7.

37) cf. note (35). Also Flinn (ed.), op. cit., p. 340. Birth rates in the main urban areas generally remained above the national average throughout the late nineteenth century.

38) Hildebrandt, Some internal migration patterns in mid-nineteenth century Scotland, op. cit. See Chapter 6.

high birth rate in some of the islands was from at least one point of view not strictly compatible with the comparatively low rates of net migration loss noted in Barra and Lewis, among other districts.<sup>(39)</sup> According to Flinn, it might have been expected that such areas would have larger migration losses than elsewhere because of the extent of destitution and because of the proportion of young people in the population.<sup>(40)</sup> On the other hand, the relatively small migration losses from some insular districts would hardly have affected the age structure and consequently the natural increase of the remaining inhabitants, explaining their sustained high birth rate.

By contrast, Harris (which included the parish of St. Kilda), Small Isles, and all the districts of Skye experienced low rates of natural growth, probably as a result of high net migration losses. Most notable was the district of Bracadale on the west coast of Skye, which had a net migration loss of 20.2 per cent between 1861 and 1871 and a simultaneous natural gain of only 3.6 per cent (48 persons) over the same decade. However, as in Chapter 2, it should be observed that the size of the base population may have made the extent of emigration, while significant for the local inhabitants, appear disproportionately large in comparison with other areas. The populations of Small Isles and of Bracadale were the smallest of all the insular districts throughout the period 1861-91, making any changes

39) Appendix 1B, page 368.

40) See note (22), page 88 and table 25, page 99.

seem statistically more significant than perhaps more substantial fluctuations elsewhere.

References in the New Statistical Account and in other sources to a rapid proliferation of population in the Northern Highlands and especially in the Western Isles must therefore be interpreted not in the light of national averages. They should rather be taken in relation to the increasing pressure on local resources which may in turn, perhaps ironically, have acted as an impediment rather than an incentive to emigration.<sup>(41)</sup> Indeed, it may be misleading to compare demographic trends in the Northern Highland region, remote as parts of it were from the transition to industrial society taking place elsewhere, with those in the rest of Scotland, even during the later nineteenth century.

#### Family size, age structure, and propensity to migrate

Another indication that Highlanders were in reality no more prolific than the population of the country as a whole is that there was remarkably little variation in the average size of family<sup>(42)</sup> throughout Scotland. This is illustrated by table 23.

41) cf. Chapter 8, pages 325-8.

42) For a definition of a family in this context, see Appendix 2, note (7), page 374.

Table 23

No. of persons in each family, 1861 <sup>(43)</sup>

<u>Area</u>	<u>Average size of family</u>
Scotland	4.5
Mainland	4.5
Islands	4.7
Burghs/towns	4.3
Villages/rural districts	4.6

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Although the average family size in the Northern Highlands was very slightly greater (4.6 persons in 1861) than that in the whole of Scotland, it too declined - with the fall in the birth rate - to an average of 4.4 persons by 1891. <sup>(44)</sup> However, as before, there were sub-regional variations. The average family in all the insular districts of Ross and Cromarty (i.e. Lewis) consisted in 1871 of 5.4 persons, whereas the average size of family in Caithness was only 4.5. <sup>(45)</sup> The exceptionally large families in Lewis were partly a consequence of the unduly high birth rate observed in table 22 with reference to the decade 1861-71; although, as already stated, this rate was actually only marginally above the national average. They may also, like the high birth rate, have been both a cause and an effect of the relatively small migration losses from parts of the Outer Hebrides, increasing the incidence of overcrowding and the extent of dependence on external support. <sup>(46)</sup>

43) Source: 1861 census report for Scotland, p.xxv.

44) Appendix 2, table A1, page 374.

45) Source: 1871 census.

46) See Chapter 8, pages 323-8 and Appendix 1B, page 368.



The general trend of emigration from the Northern Highlands from the mid-eighteenth century onwards had an increasingly detrimental effect on the age structure of much of the remaining population. It tends to be those in the younger age groups who comprise the majority of inter-regional migrants, because such people normally have the fewest dependants and the greatest opportunities of making a living elsewhere.<sup>(47)</sup> This eventually results in a lower than average natural increase rate at the area of origin, as noted above, and an older than average population. The latter is illustrated in table 24.

Table 24

Aggregated age structure, 1871<sup>(48)</sup>  
% of total population

<u>County</u> <sup>(49)</sup>	<u>Under 25</u>	<u>25 and over</u>
Inverness	51.6	48.4
Ross & Cromarty	51.7	48.3
Sutherland	48.8	51.2
Caithness	<u>51.8</u>	<u>48.2</u>
Region	51.4	48.6
(Scotland)	55.4	44.6)

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47) cf. note (22), page 88; also Chapter 6, note (57), p.225.

48) Source: census.

49) i.e. registration counties. cf. Chapter 2, note (19), page 34.

It is apparent from this table that the inhabitants of all four counties, and especially Sutherland, were generally older than the population of Scotland as a whole. This is to be expected in view of the higher than average net migration losses from the region. It is also apparent from table 24 that the county of Caithness, with its higher than average net migration losses noted especially in the decade 1861-71<sup>(50)</sup>, nevertheless still had a substantial proportion of young people among its inhabitants in 1871. Indeed, the age structure of the population of Caithness at the 1871 census deviated marginally less from the Scottish average than that of the other three counties. As noted with reference to table 21 (page 91), it was also the county with the highest birth rate in the region; whereas Sutherland, with its lower than average net migration loss as shown in table 4 on page 34, had the smallest percentage of inhabitants under 25. Both the age structure and the rate of natural increase of the people of Caithness were largely attributable to the continuing growth of two of the main regional centres, Wick and Thurso.<sup>(51)</sup> Between them they contained 44.8 per cent of the county's population in 1861 and 47.6 per cent at the following census, by which time the total number of inhabitants of Caithness was beginning to decline.

Even so, the rate of natural increase in the registration district of Wick was lower, and the rate of out-migration higher, than in several of the insular districts. This is

50) Table 4, page 34.

51) cf. Map 2, page 16 and Chapter 6, pages 206-10.

manifested in the age structure of the populations of the latter at the 1871 census, especially in the districts of Lewis. (Table 25).

Table 25

Aggregated age structures in Lewis, Northern  
Highlands and Scotland (52)

% of total population

<u>Area</u>	<u>Under 25</u>	<u>25 and over</u>
Lewis	56.0	44.0
N.H. Region	51.4	48.6
Scotland	55.4	44.6

---

The fact that the four main registration districts of Lewis (Barvas, Lochs, Stornoway and Uig) between them had a younger population not only than that of the entire region, but also of the whole of Scotland, is another reflection of the demographic trends already noted in the islands. Even more, however, it is a reflection of the relative lack of mobility on the part of the inhabitants of the Outer Hebrides. For in theory their propensity to migrate - in demographic terms alone - was greater than that of the population of other parts of the region. These figures surely belie the suggestion that "the more children born, the faster the rate of out-migration" quoted above with reference to the effects of the 1845 famine on demographic change in the Highlands and Islands. (53)

52) Source: 1871 census.

53) cf. note (22), page 88.

In the previous chapter, it was debated to what extent migration in the later nineteenth century Highlands was determined by considerations at least relevant to a market economy, if not to a mainly industrial society. The theories of migration outlined at the beginning of Chapter 2 appeared to require progressive modification as distance, and remoteness, increased in the region from the main centres of population in Scotland. Although the extensive movement from Caithness to the south-eastern part of the country could be explained in conceptual terms, the comparative lack of movement within Scotland from areas of the north-west mainland and the outer islands could not satisfactorily be attributed to "gravitational" factors.

Neither, however, can it be explained in demographic terms. The natural increase rates and age structure of most of the inhabitants of the Outer Hebrides, together with the overcrowding manifested by an increasing average family size, should again have been conducive to extensive emigration on a scale at least comparable with that of Caithness, which was virtually equidistant from central Scotland. Indeed, of all the inhabitants of the Northern Highland region, the propensity to migrate should, in many respects, have been greater among the insular inhabitants.

By this stage in the present study, it is apparent that there were in reality two different problems affecting the Northern Highland population: out-migration and over-population. It is also apparent that by the later part of

the nineteenth century these problems were affecting different groups of inhabitants in different parts of the region. Generally speaking, it was the eastern districts and adjoining areas of the western mainland (together with certain parishes on the island of Skye) which experienced high rates of net migration loss; while the remoter parts of the north-west mainland and the Outer Hebrides manifested many of the symptoms of overcrowding. Following the two subsistence crises of 1836 and 1845, they also suffered from increasing poverty and destitution which may have acted as a deterrent rather than as a stimulus to emigration.

The latter consideration causes another difficulty in analysing migration flows in the theoretical terms outlined at the beginning of Chapter 2. Conditions such as starvation, which would amply justify either voluntary or enforced migration in the context of a market economy, did not automatically induce it in a subsistence-based society in which migration in search of an alternative form of living was exceptional rather than usual. Under these circumstances it is not migration but rather non-migration which has to be explained. An attempt at such an explanation, based on an examination of the main opportunities for movement and of the responses to them, follows in Part III.

P A R T    I I I

Migration and Economic Change :  
Options and Responses

CHAPTER 4

The Agrarian Option

## The approach to the present study

It has been suggested in Part II that, in the Northern Highlands during the nineteenth century, out-migration and over-population to a large extent were two different problems. It was areas on the east coast and those of the western mainland nearest the main routes to central Scotland which contributed most substantially to the migration losses from the region, whereas remoter districts west of the "highland line" and particularly in the Outer Hebrides were more seriously affected by overcrowding. Part III expands this argument by seeking to demonstrate that the two problems not only affected different groups of parishes, but different groups of inhabitants within them. It was the crofters and other small tenants who, generally speaking, increased in number while those engaged in the majority of other occupations declined. It was also mainly the crofters who became progressively less mobile as the century continued.

Part III furthermore argues that, of the main options available to reconcile the unequal population growth already noted throughout the region with its also unequal distribution of resources or economic opportunities, many failed to achieve their objectives. This was because the differences between those most likely to emigrate and those most likely to cause congestion were not sufficiently appreciated. Moreover, in some cases - such as the development of transport and communications or the instigation of assisted



emigration schemes - the options pursued sometimes actually expedited the removal of those whom the Northern Highland could least afford to lose to the greater detriment of those who remained. Nowhere was this more marked than in the agricultural sector, where policies of eviction, although occasionally accompanied by resettlement, were increasingly adopted by proprietors who were either unable or unwilling to find other ways of augmenting the returns on their land. It was the sector in which the greatest pressure was used to urge or compel the regional inhabitants to leave their native homes, especially after the subsistence crises of 1836 and 1845; yet the eventual outcome was legislation reinforcing and confirming the existence of congestion in the very districts which had been most affected by these crises.

The current and ensuing chapters of Part III are concerned with examining the extent and nature of movement within the main sectors of the regional economy, in order to determine the relative effectiveness of some of the attempts to stimulate migration among the Northern Highland inhabitants. To demonstrate the relationship between a variety of socio-economic factors and intra-regional movement, sample data were analysed from the censuses of 1851, 1871 and 1891, by means of which it was possible to show (at regional, county, or parish level) the main characteristics of migrants and non-migrants as well as the main areas of movement. Together with information from

other sources on external migration or emigration, it was then possible to determine the efficacy of the various policies adopted by government or proprietorial agencies in order to resolve the different population problems of different parts of the Northern Highlands.

The sample census data, which were extracted on a basis of every 20th head of family (approximately 1/100 of the total population) are discussed in detail in Appendix 2 <sup>(1)</sup>. The numbers involved in the sample were necessarily small in some parishes, but they are nonetheless reasonably accurate indicators, within the confines of sampling error, of the main trends in internal economic and social changes. It is on account of the limited numbers sampled that the ensuing discussion concentrates largely on the key sectors of the regional economy.

#### Patterns of change in the agrarian sector

Throughout the whole of the nineteenth century, agriculture remained the largest single economic sector in the Northern Highlands. It was nevertheless declining in scale during the period under consideration. In 1891 50.5 per cent of the family heads sampled were engaged in agricultural occupations, compared with 55 per cent in

1) See pages 369-383.

1851. (2) The total number of persons included in the sample also declined from 2,594 in 1851 to 2,476 in 1891. Thus the agricultural sector was dwindling in the latter part of the century in both real and proportional terms.

The decline in agrarian opportunities was responsible for a substantial amount of the migration noted in Chapter 2. However, it was not entirely a negative force. New prospects were sometimes created both in agriculture and in other sectors to redeploy displaced workers. Moreover, the fall in numbers was not evenly distributed throughout the agricultural sector, nor throughout the region, as illustrated in table 26.

Table 26

Nos. engaged and rate of change in agricultural sector (3)

<u>Division</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1891</u>	Rate of change, 1851 - 91 <u>(1851 = 100.00)</u>
East Coast	535	457	- 14.6
Western	473	375	- 20.7
Insular	<u>419</u>	<u>417</u>	<u>- 0.5</u>
Totals = 100%	1,427	1,249	- 12.5

2) See Chapter 6, table 41, page 197, for the occupational distribution of all those included in the sample. Classification by occupation is discussed in Appendix 3, pages 384-99.

3) Source: sample census data.

The decline in agriculture on the east coast was particularly marked in Inverness parish, where the proportion of heads of family engaged in it declined from 16.1 per cent in 1851 to 10.8 per cent of a considerably larger population by the census of 1891. The same pattern was observed in the western parish of Kilmallie, containing the growing town of Fort William. Diminishing opportunities in agriculture were not universally synonymous with a decreasing population. In some instances it was actually a revitalisation of the primary sector<sup>(4)</sup> which stimulated both urban development and the movement of population. Agricultural opportunities in certain areas often created, and were in due course superseded by, those in other sectors.<sup>(5)</sup>

So the numbers employed in this sector in the later nineteenth century lessened especially in the vicinity of the east coast settlements and between Inverness and Fort William: in precisely those areas, in other words, where internal migration was most pronounced.<sup>(6)</sup> While the proportions contained in the sample who were engaged in agriculture in such centres as Wick, Golspie, and Dingwall actually remained fairly constant during the period under consideration, the decline was more marked in neighbouring east coast parishes. Kildonan in east Sutherland (containing the fishing village of Helmsdale<sup>(7)</sup>) experienced

4) i.e. including the fishing industry.

5) cf. chapter 6, pages 208-10.

6) Maps 3 - 4A, pages 43-6.

7) cf. Chapter 5, pages 178-80 . Helmsdale was included in the parish of Loth until the 1851 census.

a decrease from 44 per cent in 1851 to 38 per cent in 1891; while that in Halkirk (in inland Caithness), from just over 80 per cent in 1851 to only 55 per cent in 1891, was even more notable. Such parishes were among the first to be affected by agrarian reform, as well as by urban developments elsewhere in their vicinity.

By contrast, parishes on the north-west mainland sustained a growth in the proportions of their inhabitants who were employed in agriculture, even though there was a fall in the actual numbers involved concurrent with the population decline there. Most remarkable was Durness, where the percentage increased from 35.7 per cent in 1851 to 69.2 per cent in 1871 and 83.3 per cent in 1891 (although the base population was comparatively small and was decreasing in size over the same period <sup>(8)</sup>). Its adjoining parishes of Eddrachillis and Farr followed suit, together with those in north-west Ross and Cromarty. In the islands, while there were some changes in the geographical distribution of those in agriculture, the numbers sampled in 1891 (417) were virtually the same as in 1851 (419). The agricultural sector as a whole was therefore barely declining even in proportional terms, relative to the increase of population in the islands over the same period.

8) See Appendix 2, table A3, pages 381-3, for the actual numbers sampled in each parish.

Differences between the eastern, western and insular districts were marked not only by the relative rates of change among these in primary activities. Just as the proportions engaged in agriculture diminished principally in or near the eastern lowlands, they also diminished principally in those types of agrarian occupations which were most prevalent on the east coast. The distribution of occupations in the agrarian sector was determined by the size of holding and by the system of tenure, which were in turn largely determined by the type and extent of land available.<sup>(9)</sup> The distribution of holdings on a county basis throughout the Northern Highlands, by the middle of the main period under consideration, is illustrated in table 27.

Table 27

Holdings in the Northern Highlands, 1870<sup>(10)</sup>

(per cent of total)

<u>County</u>	<u>crofts under 5 acres</u>	<u>5 - 10 acres</u>	<u>10-50 acres</u>	<u>50-100 acres</u>	<u>over 100 acres</u>	<u>Total (=100%)</u>
Inverness	42.0	43.0	7.5	3.7	3.8	6,025
Ross & Crom.	69.2	18.3	5.5	2.7	4.4	6,515
Sutherland	71.7	23.2	2.3	0.9	1.9	2,338
Caithness	<u>30.6</u>	<u>42.1</u>	<u>13.7</u>	<u>6.5</u>	<u>7.2</u>	<u>2,612</u>
Region	54.4	31.0	7.0	3.4	4.3	17,490

9) Map 1A, page 12.

10) Source: Supplementary Decennial Report of the Registrar-General for Scotland, 1861-70. Also D. Turnock, *Small Farms in North Scotland: an exploration in historical geography*, Scottish Geographical Magazine, Vol. 91, no. 3, December 1975, p. 169.

From the published information, it is impossible to disaggregate the number of holdings in the Northern Highlands on an accurate topographical basis. Even so, the different size of holdings in the main divisions of the region is partially apparent from this table. The county with the greatest proportion of holdings over five acres was Caithness, lying almost entirely to the east of the "Highland line".<sup>(11)</sup> On the other hand Sutherland, with its very narrow eastern plain, was almost completely comprised of even smaller holdings. The concentration of larger holdings on the east coast and of small holdings or crofts<sup>(12)</sup> in the western and insular districts is further substantiated by the occupational distribution of those engaged in agriculture, shown in table 28 overleaf.

At all three censuses of 1851, 1871 and 1891, over 70 per cent of the crofters and cottars (including crofter-fishermen) in the sample resided on the west coast or in the Hebrides: indeed, the actual numbers sampled who were enumerated in the insular parishes increased throughout the period from 233 in 1851 to 276 in 1871 and 345 in 1891. At the same time, the numbers of those described as farmers in the sample as a whole declined from 476 in 1851 to 217 in 1891. They also became more concentrated in the east coast parishes, although the actual numbers in the farming category there fell from 162 in 1851 to 93 forty years later.

11) See Map 1, page 9.

12) A croft was first legally defined by the Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886 as a small holding valued at less than £30 annual rental. See note (14).

Table 28

Occupational distribution in agricultural sector <sup>(13)</sup>

(per cent of total)

	<u>1851</u>				<u>1891</u>			
	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>Islands</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>Islands</u>	<u>Total</u>
Crofters/cottars <sup>(14)</sup>	17.4	32.3	55.6	479	24.5	43.7	82.7	621
Farmers <sup>(15)</sup>	39.8	29.8	29.1	476	24.9	20.5	6.2	217
Estate workers <sup>(16)</sup>	<u>42.8</u>	<u>37.8</u>	<u>15.3</u>	<u>472</u>	<u>50.5</u>	<u>35.7</u>	<u>11.0</u>	<u>411</u>
Totals (= 100%)	535	473	419	1,427	457	375	417	1,249

13) Source: sample census data.

14) For the purposes of this table, crofters and cottars have been amalgamated into a single group. It is likely that the two terms may have been used interchangeably by some enumerators. The same may also have been true of farmers and crofters, especially until the Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886, which first established the legal definition of a croft. See Appendix 3, page 385.

15) *ibid.*

16) "Estate workers" in this context includes all other agricultural employees, as listed in Appendix 3, page 393.



While the number of crofters and cottars in the entire sample virtually equalled the numbers of farmers in 1851, they outnumbered the latter by almost 2 to 1 in 1871 and by nearly 3 to 1 in 1891. The difference in the pattern of landholding between east coast parishes on the one hand and the western and insular areas on the other was thus heightened as the period continued.

These changes in the farming and estates categories on the one hand and in crofting on the other, illustrated by maps 5 - 8 on pages 114-7, help to explain the different migration patterns observed in Chapter 2. Not only were those who were paid by the estate more immediately likely to lose their livelihoods than were crofters and cottars when the laird changed the pattern of land use on his property (for example by enclosure): they were also more likely to lose their homes. On the east coast, housing was tied to employment to a much greater extent than elsewhere in the region. So those who lost their livelihoods through such processes had often no alternative but to move elsewhere in search of other prospects.

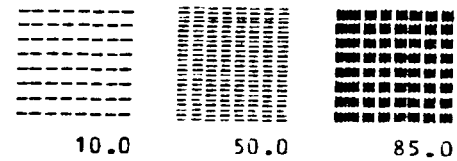
By contrast, the croft, which was the prevalent type of holding west of the "highland line", was traditionally an independent family unit passed from one generation to the next and until 1886 held by mutual agreement between landlord and tenant. (17) The difference observed by a nineteenth

17) The crofter's entitlement to his land was normally based on customary usage and not on written title deeds. cf. Chapter 8, pages 325-31.



NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 85.00  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 39.68  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 20.15  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 4

MAP 5. PERCENTAGE IN AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING CROFTING), 1851

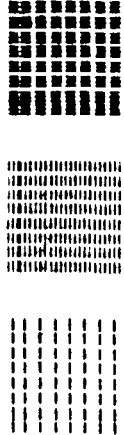


NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 6                      56                      26

NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 87.50  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 34.07  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 19.45

DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 4

MAP 6. PERCENTAGE IN AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING CROFTING), 1x91

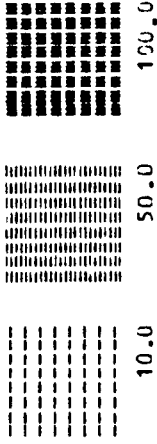


10.0  
 50.0  
 87.5  
 NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 10 62 16

NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 100.00  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 17.42  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 20.83

DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 3

MAP 7. PERCENTAGE IN CROFTING, 1851

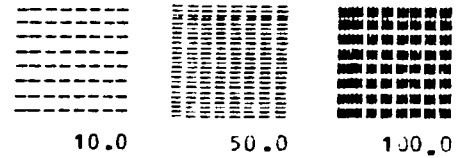


NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 45                      38                      5



NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 100.00  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 21.31  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 21.14  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 3

MAP 8 . PERCENTAGE IN CROFTING, 1891



NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 37                      41                      10

century contemporary between agricultural labourers and crofters is illustrated by the following quotation:

"It can scarcely be imagined how proudly a man feels, however small his property may be...which...binds him, by ties of interest and attachment, to the spot with which he is connected. He considers himself an independent person, placed in a station in society far above the day labourer, who has no stake in the permanency of existing circumstances, beyond the prospect of daily employment..." (18)

The crofter was thus not "employed" by the estate or farm as an agricultural worker, and so changes in the fortune of the proprietor or in the means of production did not usually rebound as rapidly on him as on his east coast counterparts. Nor, in many cases, did they reach him<sup>18</sup> so soon.

Background to migration and agrarian change: the east coast

The contrast between moderate or large farms on the east coast and small holdings or crofts elsewhere in the region was the result of the topographical disparities discussed in Chapter 1 (with particular reference to map 1A on page 12), accentuated by agrarian change. The pattern of this change was generally established between the middle of the eighteenth and the middle of the nineteenth centuries.

18) General Stewart of Garth on the Sutherland clearances, in A. Mackenzie, *History of the Highland Clearances*, op. cit., pp. 43-4.

Because of the potential of the terrain and the better communications with the farming lowlands of the north-east and other parts of Scotland, new methods of cultivation were first introduced into the eastern coastal parishes of the Northern Highland counties, gradually superseding the traditional Highland occupations of cattle raising and linen manufacture. Arable land was extended and enclosed; drainage, crop rotation, and machinery were introduced. The improvements made by Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster to his lands in Caithness in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provide a notable example of this process. (19)

Cultivable land in the east was "more extensive in relation to waste and pasture" than in the west. (20) Furthermore, taking the east coast as a whole, population growth in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries appears to have been for the most part much less rapid than elsewhere in the region. Where enclosures took place, tenants were evicted. However, in some instances (as in Easter Ross) they were immediately resettled and re-employed in such activities as fencing and drainage. (21) The very process of enclosure (involving evictions from

19) R. Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John: The Life of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster 1754-1835*, London, 1962. See also Chapter 6, pages 209-10.

20) M. Gray, *The Highland Economy 1750-1850*, Edinburgh, 1957, p. 223.

21) cf. J.D. Chambers, *Enclosure and Labour Supply in the Industrial Revolution*, *Economic History Review*, second series, Vol. 5, no. 3, 1953, pp. 319-343; G.E. Mingay, *Enclosure and the Small Farmer in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, *Studies in Economic History*, MacMillan, 1968.

the mid-eighteenth century) may have helped to stabilise demographic change and to encourage migration in the east, in contrast with the western and insular districts, where the incidence of overcrowding increased with the subdivision of crofts throughout this period. (In the early 1840s, 421 families were living on 190 crofts in one parish of Skye. (22)) When evictions eventually took place in some western parts of the region, existing congestion and lack of alternative employment often left the inhabitants with no local means of support. Moreover, the less affluent landowners, who had already incurred massive debts in the upkeep of their estates, could not afford to carry out improvements to their land, and were often forced to sell it to those better off than themselves.

Thus the gap between peasants and proprietors widened rapidly in the early nineteenth century, in both numerical and geographical terms. (23) The most striking example of the nineteenth century aristocratic minority in the Northern Highlands was found in the county of Sutherland. In 1828, the house of Sutherland purchased the Reay estates, thus gaining a virtual monopoly of the entire county. Of 2.3 million acres of land, one owner thenceforth possessed

22) N.S.A., Vol. XIV, "Inverness", p. 270.

23) There were, after 1745, very few tacksmen or members of a "middle class". The tacksmen of the clan system, who had held their often extensive lands by virtue of their consanguinity with the clan chiefs, had been among the first to emigrate when the Clan Acts were passed. This was partly due to their own ambitions overseas; partly to "the desire of the more progressive landlords to get rid of the tacksmen, who had outlived their feudal usefulness and were now a hindrance to the introduction of better farming". Macdonald, op. cit., p. 142. See Chapter 7, pages 236-7.



1.3 million, illustrated in map A2.<sup>(24)</sup> More generally, in the Highland counties, over 50 per cent of the land was usually owned by less than half a dozen people at any given time. For instance, Inverness-shire in 1800 contained 83 estates, but of these the seven largest alone accounted for well over half of the county's total rent value.<sup>(25)</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, a pattern was evident in the amalgamation of estates and the resultant changes in land use. Prior to the 1845 famine the majority of evictions and resettlement schemes had been effected in the vicinity of the east coast. The best-known and most notorious examples were in the county of Sutherland, where perhaps a quarter of the arable land was given over to sheep farming; although in some eastern districts (such as Kildonan and Strathnaver in particular) it was much greater.<sup>(26)</sup> By 1820, it was said that where hundreds of families had previously lived in Farr parish, only twenty-four remained; and in 1821 the parish of Dunnet in Caithness received about 300 evicted tenants from Assynt and Strathnaver.<sup>(27)</sup> Between 1811 and

24) E.S. Richards, *Structural Change in a Regional Economy: Sutherland and the Industrial Revolution 1780-1830*, *Economic History Review*, second series, February 1973, pp. 63-76. See Appendix 4, map A2, page 402.

25) Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 11. Also L.R. Timperley (ed.), *A Directory of Landownership in Scotland c. 1770*, *Scottish Record Society, New Series 5*, Edinburgh, 1976.

26) The immediate effect of sheep farming was that cultivated land was allowed to revert to grass, usually on an extensive basis. Sheep walks could sometimes be as large as 60 miles square. However, the impact of the sheep invasion, substantial though it undoubtedly was, was probably not as radical as contemporary observers may have believed. Much of the land given over to sheep farming had never in fact been settled or cultivated. On average, it appears that not more than 25 per cent (and generally less than 20 per cent) of arable land fell out of cultivation. Gray, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-100. Most of this was on the east coast, where most of the previously cultivated land was situated.

27) N.S.A., Vol. XV, "Caithness", p. 41.

1831, the population of Kildonan parish fell from 1,574 to 257.

One result of the early encroachment of sheep in east Sutherland was that those crofters who were affected were forced to be mobile much earlier than their counterparts on some other estates in the western and insular parts of the region. After all, clearances caused compulsory migration. However, this did not necessarily mean that the people concerned immediately left the Northern Highlands altogether. Despite the scale of many evictions and the undeniable brutality which sometimes accompanied them, they were only one part of a twofold estate plan aimed at incorporating land-extensive sheep farming with a labour-intensive coastal economy. The clearances were "allied to a deliberate policy designed to create new employment for the displaced population".<sup>(28)</sup> These plans principally consisted of the creation of fishing settlements at Helmsdale and Portgower and of the revival of a coal mine and extended salt works at Brora, together with the construction of the necessary infrastructure of roads and bridges.<sup>(29)</sup> Thomas Telford, the engineer of the Caledonian Canal, undertook surveys for new piers and harbours at various

28) Richards, *op. cit.* See also Old Statistical Account, 1792-8, Vol. VIII, pp. 381-2 (George Dempster on the creation of new settlements for evicted tenants).

29) See Appendix 4, map A3, page 403. Further details of these schemes are given in Chapters 5 and 6, *passim*. They are discussed in the context of a national movement by Smout, *The Landowner and the Planned Village in Scotland 1730-1830*, *op. cit.*

possible sites between 1805 and 1808. (30)

Although the actual formation of the Sutherland plan for a dual economy is outwith the scope of this study, the effects of that plan on patterns of settlement and migration in the Northern Highlands were still being felt during the latter part of the nineteenth century. As in other parts of the region, emigration was not considered by the Sutherland estate management to be the automatic answer to the county's economic problems for much of the century, and attempts continued to be made to resettle and redeploy evicted tenants in the east. Nor was there any sign of lack of investment in the north of Scotland by the successive heirs to the Sutherland fortune throughout the entire period, misdirected though much of it may have been on questionable projects. (31) Moreover, it should be noted that those parts of the shire which comprised the Sutherland estates during the first two decades of the century may actually have benefited from the early clearances which took place there. There was less pressure on land in such areas after the 1845 famine than in those which had more recently belonged to the house of Reay and to other estates. The parish of Tongue, which was not sold to the Sutherland estates until 1828, has already been cited in Chapter 3 as an example of a congested district in the second half of the century.

30) See Chapters 5 and 6.

31) E. Richards, *An Anatomy of the Sutherland Fortune: income, consumption, investments and returns 1780-1880*, *Business History*, Vol. XXI, no. 1, 1979, pp. 45-76. See Chapters 5 and 6.

Furthermore, although the eastern parishes of the region were not directly affected to any great extent by the two major potato famines of 1836 and 1845, simultaneous difficulties in food production there may have had a more significant effect on the mobility of the east coast inhabitants than did the more renowned crises on that of the population of the rest of the Northern Highlands. Not only was the agricultural sector becoming increasingly specialised on the east coast as a result of enclosures and other improvements. There was an additional problem in that in many eastern parishes, especially those in Easter Ross and Caithness, the local economy was based on grain production and tied to the harvest cycle. The cultivation of the potato may have sustained many inhabitants of western and insular districts until the 1845 famine, but this was not so in the eastern lowlands. The New Statistical Account for the parish of Cromarty, written in 1836, hints at impending difficulties in wheat production :

"In the universal struggle with high rents on the one hand, and very low prices on the other, all have striven to restore the balance destroyed through the reduction in the value of their produce, adding to its amount...During the last ten years every farmer in the parish has reared and exported wheat; but the inevitable effects of this over-production have already become apparent; the value of this grain is fast sinking below even that of oats and barley, and a consequent change of system must necessarily ensue." (32)

32) N.S.A., Vol. XIV, "Ross and Cromarty", p. 13.

The population of Cromarty declined from 2,901 in 1831 to 2,662 in 1841. Although it had increased again by the census of 1851, its population twenty years earlier was the maximum recorded. The resurgence between 1841 and 1851 in Cromarty and a number of neighbouring parishes may have been partly attributable to the arrival of migrants from further west in the wake of the potato famine, a trend which continued throughout the period in question. (33)

From an early date the economy of many east coast parishes was inextricably linked with that of areas further south which provided the main markets for Highland cattle and grain. The relatively good communications in the east, together with the topographical similarities with parts of lowland Scotland, allowed the infiltration of market influences to occur along the eastern seaboard at a far greater rate than elsewhere in the region, despite the development of the kelp industry at the beginning of the century, which was also entirely dependent on southern markets. (34) For instance, the 1841 census attributed the decline of population in the preceding decade in parishes such as Dingwall and Cromarty to trade depression and unemployment. According to this source, two hundred persons normally resident in Edderton were absent in search of employment, as were also significant numbers from Avoch

33) The tendency to migrate into the towns at times of famine is discussed in Chapter 3, page 80.

34) See below (pages 128 - 33 ) for a discussion of the kelp industry.

and Rosemarkie. If such people were unable to find similar employment in the region - and this was unlikely, given that local agrarian opportunities were declining - then they had little alternative but to emigrate to the south or abroad.

As improvements were made to the very system of transport which had been intended to aid local industries, the east coast agricultural situation worsened. The advent of the free trade era following the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 meant that consignments of cheap grain from North America in particular were imported into Britain, at once eliminating the demand for Highland supplies in other British markets and increasing the quantities of foreign produce sold in the Northern Highland region. Table 29 demonstrates the increase in imported wheat for the country as a whole throughout the nineteenth century.

Table 29  
Wheat imported by U.K., 1801-91 <sup>(35)</sup>  
(thousands of cwts.)

1801	1,427
1851	16,519
1871	39,390
1891	66,313

35) Source: B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, Cambridge University Press, 1962, pp. 97-8 and p. 488.

The price of wheat fell as the century progressed and reached its lowest level of 31 shillings per quarter (as compared with 119s. 6d. in 1801) during the latter years of the "Great Depression" of 1873-1896. Simultaneously the proportions engaged in agriculture on the east coast declined, as did the proportions of natives in the east coast parish populations, discussed in Chapter 2. The decline of the east coast agricultural sector during the period under particular consideration is illustrated in table 30.

Table 30

Nos. in agricultural sector on east coast,  
1851-1891 (36)

<u>Category</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Crofters (37)	93	96	112
Farmers/estate workers	<u>442</u>	<u>411</u>	<u>345</u>
Totals	535	507	457

Either many former agricultural workers from this part of the region left the Highlands altogether in search of employment, or they found alternative occupations in the growing regional centres of Dingwall and more especially Inverness. (38) Those remaining in the agricultural sector

36) Source: sample census data. See table 28, page 112 and Appendix 3, page 393.

37) The increase in the east coast crofting category, particularly in Caithness, is discussed in Chapter 5, pages 183-4.

38) cf. Chapter 6, pages 206-32.

in the eastern lowlands were increasingly persons in the older age groups. In Edderton, for instance, 4 out of 10 heads of family in the sample were under 50 in 1851, whereas the proportion had dropped to 2 out of 7 by 1891. It was noted in table 20 on page 85 that the east coast birth rate in the decade 1861-71 was below the regional as well as the national average.

Background to migration and agrarian change: the west coast and islands

By contrast with the experience of the east coast, a number of factors combined to cause the growth in numbers of the inhabitants of other parts of the region from the later eighteenth century onwards. It was a trend which became increasingly difficult to reverse as the nineteenth century progressed and was, in actual fact, deliberately encouraged during its first decades.

The underlying factor was the nature of crofting. The average croft was not capable of sustaining its occupants throughout the entire year. Nor did it allow for a specialisation of production on a scale sufficient to meet the demands of a market economy: even the east coast farms, with their relatively good communications with the main domestic markets, had difficulties in this respect. These considerations caused and compounded an individualism among the crofting population, noted by Collier in the following



terms: "individualism is to be expected in a country in which the scarcity of cultivable land is responsible for the segregation of the people in small and separate communities where the specialisation of individuals in different types of production is impracticable".<sup>(39)</sup> The eastern districts of the Northern Highlands were to a large extent suitable for specialised production. The people who were moved into them from upland and western parts of some of the larger parishes were often temperamentally or otherwise unsuited to the specialised occupations offered to them there.<sup>(40)</sup>

Malcolm Gray has suggested that crofting was fundamental to the economic and social problems of the Highlands, in that it "kept people trapped in a fatal mixture of occupations".<sup>(41)</sup> But it was not a trap entirely of the crofters' own making. Rather, the rapid increase in the numbers of inhabitants of the west coast and islands was actually encouraged in the early nineteenth century. Among other reasons,<sup>(42)</sup> this was because of the tremendous profits accruing to landlords from the manufacture of kelp, at minimal labour costs, for the duration of the Napoleonic Wars. The kelp industry was not only a good example of the

39) A. Collier, *The Crofting Problem*, Cambridge University Press, 1953, p. 7.

40) This point is discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6, *passim*.

41) M. Gray, *Crofting and Fishing in the North-west Highlands, 1890-1914*, Northern Scotland, Vol. 1, nos. 1 and 2, 1972-3, p. 90.

42) For a discussion of the opposition to emigration prior to 1815 and the efforts made to prevent it, see Chapters 6 and 7, especially pages 236-41.

"fatal mixture" of crofting and other seasonal occupations which tied small tenants to their diminutive holdings by enabling them to eke out a subsistence living. It is also an illustration of the virtually complete control enjoyed by landlords over their tenants - and of the dependence of the tenants on their landlords. Kelp was an alkaline substance, made from seaweed, and used in the manufacture of such products as glass, iodine, soda, and soap. It was a labour-intensive industry occupying the summer months, when crofting labour was in plentiful supply. By not raising crofting rents, wages could be kept to a minimum. When the import of Spanish barilla was prevented by the wars with France, the demand for Hebridean kelp reached its maximum level, with the price per ton sometimes rising to £20. By paying low wages, labour costs were maintained between £2 and £3, and other costs (such as transport) amounted to about £3 per ton.<sup>(43)</sup> The profit per ton to the landlord was thus in the region of 75 per cent of the selling price.

The "fatal mixture" of kelp and crofting affected the population of north-west Scotland, and especially that of the Hebrides, in two ways: by providing work it led to overcrowding and increased pressure on land, while by sustaining subsistence levels it discouraged emigration. The manufacture of kelp provided a reliable source of

43) Macdonald, op. cit., pp. 145-6.

crofting income for at least three months each year. At the same time, landlords were anxious not to lose the cheap labour which their tenants supplied. The Passenger Act of 1803, which raised the cost of overseas transport from Scotland while ensuring better conditions for travellers, was in part a deliberate attempt by the landed interest in Parliament to reduce emigration from impoverished districts of the Highlands and Islands.<sup>(44)</sup> Between 1755 and 1831, North and South Uist more than doubled their populations, those of Harris and Barra increased by over eighty per cent, and that of Lewis by about sixty per cent. On the north-west mainland the number of inhabitants grew by about forty-five per cent: "the ranking in terms of kelp production is almost precisely similar." But, Gray continues, "one of the symptoms of this underlying increase of population was the implacable erosion of the peasant holding capable both of maintaining a family and of providing enough cash to pay the rent."<sup>(45)</sup>

The decline of the kelp industry swiftly followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars. By 1820, a ton of kelp fetched only £3. The western and Hebridean landlords were forced to find a new source of revenue and like their counterparts on the eastern mainland, they began to turn to sheep farming, with ensuing evictions of crofters.<sup>(46)</sup> Rather than continuing to discourage emigration, landlords began

44) See Chapter 7, pages 236-41.

45) Gray, *The Highland Economy*, op. cit., p. 137.

46) I.A. Crawford, *Kelp Burning*, *Scottish Studies*, Vol. 6, no. 1, 1962, pp. 105-7.

to encourage or sometimes to compel their tenants to leave, later occasionally assisting with the payment of passages to North America and elsewhere. New Passenger Acts in the 1820s and 1830s facilitated, albeit reluctantly, this process.<sup>(47)</sup> The dilemma with which proprietors found themselves confronted by the sudden demise of the kelp industry is described in the New Statistical Account for the parish of North Uist as follows :

"Far removed from the seats of manufacture and constant employment, a great part of the time of these small tenantry is wasted, which might be more profitably applied. Early marriages, which have become habitual for ages back, increase the population in a ratio almost incredible; and the croft or lots, originally too small for the first possessor, is necessarily subdivided amongst the sons and daughters, and become totally unfit to supply them with the comfortable or even the necessary means of subsistence. In these circumstances, some means for their profitable employment must be devised, or emigration encouraged; otherwise, in years of scarcity, they must fall an intolerable burden on the proprietors, and those in better circumstances, or have recourse for relief to a generous public. Here it may be remarked, that the changes which have taken place in the incomes of the proprietor of this parish and other proprietors in the West Highlands, arising from the low prices of kelp...put it entirely out of the power of the proprietor, how generous and how liberal soever he may be, to extend relief when so largely required."<sup>(48)</sup>

- 47) J. David Wood, *Scottish Migration Overseas*, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Vol. 80, 1964, pp. 164-176. cf. Chapter 7, pages 244-51.
- 48) *N.S.A.*, Vol. XIV, "Inverness", p. 176. The *New Statistical Account* refers to the manufacture of kelp being continued during the 1820s and 1830s in a number of parishes merely to allow tenants to earn a subsistence wage.

By the time this account was written in 1837, it was clear that the damage had been done. The originally poor soil was impoverished by overuse, in turn an immediate cause of the famines of 1836-7 and 1845-6. A temporary resurgence of the kelp industry in the Uists after 1860 (due to an increase in the demand for iodine as an antiseptic) did not help the problem of overpopulation,<sup>(49)</sup> which continued in the Hebrides and parts of the north-west mainland - despite various attempts to alleviate it - until after the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>(50)</sup>

Important as the kelp industry was in the economy of western and insular districts during the first decades of the nineteenth century, it was only one ingredient in Gray's "fatal mixture" of factors that constituted the crofting "trap". There were at least four others. In the first place, the early loss of some of the most mobile elements of the population - such as tacksmen and their immediate subordinates - caused a polarisation of society more acute than that taking place in the eastern part of the region, where there was a continuing flow of incomers and

49) G.L. Davies, *The parish of North Uist, Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Vol. 72, 1956, pp. 65-80. The revival of the kelp industry in Barra and the Uists helps to explain the renewed increase of the insular population after its earlier decline in the decade 1851-61. See Appendix 1A, page 365.

50) Lewis and Shetland were similarly affected, but in these areas it was primarily the system of contract fishing rather than the kelp industry which compounded with crofting to cause over-population. The Congested Districts Board was established in 1897 with funds to alleviate conditions in all these cases, by emigration where necessary. Following the report of the Napier Commission (q.v.), negotiations were started in 1888 with the Canadian government to resettle crofters in parts of Upper Canada. cf. Report on a colonisation scheme for the Western Highlands of Scotland, 1888 and 1890. This is discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8, especially pages 268-70. See also note (77), page 148.

a consequent stimulus to migration among the native inhabitants. (51) Secondly, seasonal migration remained an integral part of the crofting life, and may to some extent have acted as a surrogate for longer term movement. This is indicated by a further extract from the New Statistical Account, this time for the parish of Kilmuir in Skye:

"Farms in this manner (i.e. through the subdivision of allotments) cut up and mutilated, cannot possibly yield what will pay the rents and support their occupiers. To effect both these ends, there is an annual efflux of men and women to the south country in quest of employment, which is but a toilsome resource, attended with no real benefit. The lands are consequently left to the management of the aged and infirm, and to children who cannot be expected to effect any improvements, even were the system acted on more adapted than it is for that purpose." (52)

In the late summer and early autumn many crofters, who might formerly have been employed in the manufacture of kelp, (53) went to help with the harvest in the lowland farming areas of Perthshire or the north-east; while earlier in the year

51) See Chapters 2 and 8, especially pages 41-9.

52) N.S.A., Vol. XIV, "Inverness", p. 278. Also T.M. Devine, Temporary migration and the Scottish Highlands in the nineteenth century, Economic History Review, Vol. XXXII, no. 3, Aug. 1979, pp. 344-359.

53) e.g. the census of 1831 reports of South Uist:  
"Since 1821, about 500 persons have emigrated from the parish...to North America, notwithstanding which the population has increased (852 persons), attributed to the subdivision of lands, temperate habits and healthful occupations. In the summer season, about 1,400 persons are employed in making kelp; but agriculture being their chief employment, they are returned accordingly."

they might join the herring fleet on the east coast or assist in ancillary tasks such as gutting or cooping. Women as well as men left their crofts in search of short-term employment which was compatible with the maintenance of their small holdings and which did not cause any major separation from family and community life. (54)

Thirdly, there was an increase in destitution as a consequence of the demise of the kelp industry and the two major famines in 1836 and 1845. This made it more and more difficult for crofters and cottars to leave their homes without financial - and sometimes forcible - assistance. (55) Fourthly, and consequently, as landlords augmented the amount of "assistance" required to encourage - or compel - their tenants to leave, many smallholders began to offer some active resistance.

#### Effects of agrarian changes on migration, 1851-91

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that the decline in the agrarian sector noted at the outset of this chapter was in fact experienced throughout the Northern Highlands. Yet it manifested itself differently in the different parts of the region. On the east coast, the options open to landlords to improve the commercial viability of their estates led from the later eighteenth

54) Gray, Crofting and fishing in the north-west highlands, op. cit. See Chapters 5 and 6, pages 163-74 and 198-206.

55) cf. Chapter 3, pages 82-4 and Chapter 7, pages 252-6.

century onwards to an increasing mobility on the part of their tenants and to an eventual decline in their numbers. In the west and the islands, agrarian reform was largely neglected at first in the interests of the more rapid returns to be obtained from the production of kelp. The consequent increase in population in turn caused further agricultural stagnation, adding to the lack of movement within the region which - in addition to the other factors considered - was compounded by the lack of space for resettlement on many estates.

In this respect the fallacy of declining numbers of crofters in the region from the 1845 famine to the 1884 Napier Report should be noted. Table 28 on page 112 and maps 5-8 (pages 114 - 7 ) showed that, of the main occupational categories in the region, only the numbers in crofting increased between 1851 and 1891; whereas the numbers in the predominantly east coast agrarian occupations declined during the same period. If the agrarian economy of many western and insular districts was stagnant at the time of the 1845 famine due to overcrowding and soil exhaustion, clearly the evictions which followed the famine did not succeed in checking the proliferation of the crofting population and in increasing the size and efficiency of the average croft. Indeed, the introduction of deer farms during the latter part of the nineteenth century as a more profitable alternative to sheep encroached still further on



the land available for crofting<sup>(56)</sup> and provided yet one more source of friction between landlord and tenant.

There is another fallacy associated with agrarian reform during these years: namely, that the 1845 famine caused extensive emigration (whether of a voluntary or an enforced nature) from the congested crofting districts. For instance, in contrast with the experience of the east coast, Richards has argued that heavy emigration subsidised by landowners from the most congested areas of western Sutherland during the years 1845-52 "helped to accentuate regional disparities." It has been estimated that approximately one-sixth of the inhabitants of Assynt, Durness and Eddrachillis were sent overseas in these seven years.<sup>(57)</sup> It was not, however, the extent of emigration from the region which marked the difference between east and west coasts, except for the fact that it was particularly concentrated from the west during that specific period. Rather, the disparity was most apparent in the extent to which emigration from western and insular districts was assisted by government and private agencies.<sup>(58)</sup> Those who were

56) The Deer Forest Commission of 1892, following the recommendations of the Napier Commission that legislation "should be framed under which croft lands should be protected against diminution for the purpose of afforestation", outlined proposals to improve the supply of land available for crofters and other small tenants from existing deer forests, grouse moors, etc. (See Appendix 4, map A6, page 406). The Congested Districts Board was established in 1897 not only to relieve extant overcrowding but also to ensure that no further subdivision of crofting lands took place.

57) E. Richards, Problems on the Cromartie Estate 1851-1853, Scottish Historical Review, Vol. 52, nos. 153-4, 1971, pp. 149-164.

58) cf. Chapter 7, pages 251-75.

forced to leave the eastern part of the region at any time during the nineteenth century only infrequently received financial or other help. Moreover, the trend of emigration from this zone, concurrent with the decline in agriculture noted above with reference to tables 29 and 31, was more continuous (if less spectacular) than from elsewhere in the Northern Highlands. That there was a relationship between the type of agricultural occupation and a propensity to migrate is illustrated by table 31.

Table 31

Migration <sup>(59)</sup> in main agricultural categories, 1851-91 <sup>(60)</sup>  
(per cent of total)

<u>Category</u>	<u>1851</u>			<u>1891</u>		
	<u>Mig.</u>	<u>Non- mig.</u>	<u>Totals = 100%</u>	<u>Mig.</u>	<u>Non- Mig.</u>	<u>Totals = 100%</u>
Crofters	20.5	79.5	497	14.7	85.3	621
Farmers	35.5	64.5	476	38.2	61.8	217
Agric./estate workers	<u>54.7</u>	<u>45.3</u>	<u>472</u>	<u>63.7</u>	<u>36.3</u>	<u>411</u>
All categories	36.8	63.2	1,427	34.9	65.1	1,249

It is clear from this table that those in the farming and estate categories, and particularly the latter, increasingly comprised the majority of the migrants in the agricultural sector. It helps to account for the fact that the inter-parish migration illustrated in maps 3 - 4A

59) i.e. inter-parish movement. cf. Maps 3-4A, pages 43-6 and table 9, page 41.

60) Source: sample census data.

(pages 43 - 6 ) was far more extensive on the east coast, where most of the farmers and estate workers were located, than elsewhere in the region. It also helps to account for the numerical decline in the agricultural sector already noted to have occurred mainly in eastern districts. As previously observed, it was the small farmers who were often forced to sell out to larger landowners. It was the agricultural labourers who found themselves with no means of support when holdings were amalgamated, machinery was introduced, and the temporary employment created by the enclosure of land came to its eventual and inevitable end. This trend, already well established by 1851, was even more marked by 1891 when 63 per cent of the agricultural or estate workers sampled were enumerated in parishes other than their place of birth.

By contrast, table 31 indicates that only a relatively small proportion (20.5 per cent) of the heads of families described as crofters or cottars were enumerated in parishes other than those of their birth in 1851, and that this minority was declining throughout the later nineteenth century. At the same time, the crofting category itself was increasing in numbers while the others were diminishing. This was why there appeared to be a slight decline in migration throughout the agricultural sector as a whole. In fact, the decreasing mobility was largely confined to the western and insular districts where crofting prevailed; although there was a corresponding increase in numbers and a decrease in migration among the crofters on the east coast as well. (Table 32).

Table 32

Migration in crofting category by topographical division (61)

(per cent of total)

<u>Division</u>	<u>Mig.</u>	<u>1851</u>		<u>1891</u>		<u>Totals</u> <u>= 100%</u>
		<u>Non-</u> <u>Mig.</u>	<u>Totals</u> <u>= 100%</u>	<u>Mig.</u>	<u>Non-</u> <u>Mig.</u>	
East Coast	36.6	63.4	93	27.7	72.3	112
Western	17.0	83.0	153	13.4	86.6	164
Insular	<u>16.3</u>	<u>83.7</u>	<u>233</u>	<u>11.0</u>	<u>89.0</u>	<u>345</u>
Totals for region	98	381	479	91	530	621

The fact that the crofting category was becoming larger and less mobile while the farming and estate categories were becoming smaller and more mobile did not mean that the prospects for crofters were better than for others engaged in agriculture. Rather, it was a reflection of the differences between crofting and other agrarian occupations. These were not merely the differences of employment status noted above; but also in the various degrees of dependence on others inherent in the different occupational categories. Thus, while the redundant agricultural worker lost his home as well as his livelihood, the redundant crofter might not only retain his home but might become a long-term burden on the landlord as well. In taking the admittedly drastic step of tackling overpopulation by eviction, proprietors perhaps presupposed mobile tenants who would be able to find an alternative and possibly a better living elsewhere. But

61) Source: sample census data.

those threatened with clearance throughout the century and especially from the 1840s onwards were in increasingly desperate circumstances and moreover could conceive of no form of existence away from their native crofts. The fact that they were not self-supporting did not concern them. (62)

So when, even before the first major nineteenth century famine of 1836-7, (63) proprietors of estates in the remoter parts of the Northern Highlands began to follow the earlier example of the house of Sutherland by evicting tenants from their holdings, it gradually became apparent that they had miscalculated both the size and the nature of the problem. That their action was not always immediately successful is substantiated by the census figures for the parishes of Wester Ross, which showed a slight increase of population in some areas between 1851 and 1861. Even the parish of Lochbroom, which included Coigach, showed the same pattern, although to a lesser extent than the more southerly districts of Lochalsh and Gairloch. That there was any increase at all among the inhabitants of Lochbroom may have been due to their resistance to the attempts of the Cromartie estate agents to remove them, described by Richards as an "historical preparation for the Crofters' War and the Napier Commission." (64)

62) See Chapter 8, pages 323-9.

63) As a result of the increase in destitution in the Highlands during the late 1830s, Parliament began to consider the possibility of relieving the situation by government-sponsored emigration, as in Ireland (cf. Chapter 7). Poverty in the Highlands and Islands also combined with the inadequacy of poor relief in industrial centres to cause a re-examination of the existing Poor Law administration (chapter 6, pages 226-8).

64) Richards, Problems on the Cromartie Estate 1851-3, op. cit.

It may also have been because the measure of eviction substantially underestimated the extent of overcrowding.

The situation in Coigach in the early 1850s, like that in Skye thirty years later, contrasted sharply with the assistance concurrently given to tenants to emigrate from the western Sutherland estates. The belatedly organised resistance to clearance by crofting tenants was not only mainly concentrated on the west coast and in certain island areas: it was also largely limited to those estates in which there had been little or no effort to offer the crofters and cottars alternative employment or to assist their removal, unsolicited though such "assistance" may often have been. It was in these areas that rents had to be raised in an attempt to make the remoter estates more economically viable. Lands continued to be sold as such efforts failed; sheep walks gave way to deer farms, which required more space and fewer employees; ownership became more concentrated; and clearances were consequently hastened. Moreover, some of the later clearances appeared all the more dramatic because proprietors tended to subscribe to emigration schemes for want of alternative settlement plans in the region, and for want of capital to implement them, in the wake of the famine.

Yet, in view of the geographical isolation of many mainland and insular districts, it is at first sight surprising that there was little effective protest against eviction prior to the Coigach rebellion of 1853. It would

not have been easy to quell. Moreover, it has been written of the attempts to suppress that particular episode that "the constables were lukewarm towards the work, and were generally sympathetic to the people".<sup>(65)</sup> Despite Richards' observation that there were at least forty potentially similar outbursts between 1800 and 1855, the fact remains that they were on the whole remarkably small-scale and ineffectual. It may perhaps be conjectured from this that those threatened with eviction throughout the first part of the century had been in fact a very small minority of a still increasing population. The same may also be suggested of the clearances in the decades following the Coigach rising. The mere fact that no formal organisation for resisting enforced migration existed prior to the founding of the Highland Land Law Reform Association in 1881 indicates, conceivably, that there was little justifiable need for it. Moreover, it is significant that the initiative in this respect was taken by external agencies, not by those crofters and cottars most at risk.<sup>(66)</sup>

The eventual legislative attempts to reform the system of landholding in crofting areas were not so much the result

65) E. Richards, How tame were the highlanders during the clearances? *Scottish Studies*, Vol. 17, no. 1, 1973, p. 37.

66) For a discussion of the role played by the Free Church after the 1843 Disruption in providing an organisational framework for resisting clearance, cf. Chapter 8, pages 317-20. the Coigach rebellion, the Wick Chamber of Commerce intervened on behalf of the crofters in a bid to retain the migrants from the west coast who provided much of the seasonal labour in the fishing industry: the herring industry was reaching its height in Wick at that time. (Richards, *Problems on the Cromartie Estate*, op. cit.).

of internal rebellions but of externally organised agencies, combined with the pressure of public opinion and the fear of a threat to national security similar to that perceived in Ireland. (67) The comparatively dramatic risings in the second half of the nineteenth century may have attracted more attention and achieved more positive results than their forerunners because the potato famine of 1845, which not only affected parts of the Scottish Highlands but much more seriously most of Ireland as well, had occasioned the commencement of extensive relief operations involving both private and government agencies. (68) Moreover, during the later nineteenth century, the social problems (namely housing and public health) which had accompanied industrial developments elsewhere in the country had of necessity begun to stimulate the interest of landowners and politicians in the living conditions of the working and peasant classes. Eric Richards writes of the Crofters' War in Skye, which resulted in the establishment of the Napier Commission in 1883, that it was partly "a victory...for the new sensibility of Victorian opinion and its growing and faintly condescending concern for lesser elements on the fringe of society. The social conscience of the British upper middle classes had changed. The Highlanders had changed hardly at all". (69)

67) C. Dewey, Celtic agrarian legislation and the Celtic revival: historicist implications of Galdstone's Irish and Scottish land acts 1870-1886, *Past and Present*, no. 64, August 1974, pp. 30-70.

68) See note (63), page 141. In addition to the revised arrangements for poor relief under the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1845, a fund for the Relief of Destitute Inhabitants of the Highlands was established, with Boards of Management in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

69) Richards, How tame were the highlanders during the clearances? *op. cit.*, p. 47.



Be that as it may, it was not the "social conscience of the upper middle classes" which manifested itself in the growing momentum for land reform in the later nineteenth century, so much as the perceived threat to law and order, summarised by the record of the parliamentary debate on the Napier report :

"...It is the duty of Her Majesty's Government to give effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission upon the conditions of the crofters and cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland that 'the mere vindication of authority and repression of resistance would not establish the relations of mutual confidence between landlord and tenant, in the absence of which the country would not truly be at peace, and all our inquiries and counsels would be expended in vain.'" (70)

In fact, there was no threat to the national security from the Northern Highlands during the later nineteenth century. Left to themselves, the participants in the Crofters' War in Skye would have had no alternative but to follow the examples of their predecessors in Kildonan, Sollas and elsewhere<sup>(71)</sup> and submit to their would-be evicters. Instead, not only was the problem wrongly perceived but wrongly tackled. The granting of security of tenure to crofters under the 1886 Crofters' Holdings Act could have no effect but to increase the numbers and

70) Hansard, 1884-85, Vol. 293, p. 1806; also Report of the Royal Commission of Enquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (Napier Commission report), Parliamentary Papers 1884, Vol. XXXII, p.1. I am grateful to Peter McAlley for drawing my attention to this passage and to the following quotation from The Times (note 76).

71) The Sollas evictions are discussed in Chapter 7, pages 254 - 6.

decrease the mobility of crofters in areas most in need of some measure of clearance. In Skye itself, the rate of population decline fell from -19.5 per cent between 1851 and 1871 to -8.7 per cent in the latter twenty-year period under consideration. Simultaneously, maps 5 - 8 on pages 114 - 7 show that while there was a decisive fall in the proportions engaged in agricultural occupations other than crofting on Skye, there was a concurrent increase in the percentage of crofters in the island during the second half of the nineteenth century. Moreover, this was in an island sufficiently near the mainland to be affected by improvements in road and rail communications there (as illustrated in maps A4 and A5<sup>(72)</sup>), and where the efforts to encourage and assist emigration without the use of force after the 1845 famine had been greater than elsewhere in the first instance.<sup>(73)</sup>

#### The agrarian option rejected

During the half century following that famine, the clearances which occurred in western and insular parts of the region had little impact on the increasing crofting population. Indeed, the Napier Commission observed that the numbers of crofters would have to be reduced by more than half in order to accommodate the needs of the remainder.<sup>(74)</sup> It was the east coast agrarian sector that

72) pages 404-5.

73) Chapter 7, pages 258-64.

74) Chapter 7, note (62), page 268.

was declining in size during this period, but the east coast excited little public attention and derived no benefit from the Crofters' Holdings Act.

It is questionable, indeed, that even those districts for which it was intended benefited from the 1886 legislation. In the first place, it did little to resolve tensions between landlords and tenants, as the following criticism of the Crofters' Commission<sup>(75)</sup> by The Times indicated in 1892:

"In the islands the painstaking care with which the Commissioners have fulfilled their task (i.e. of calculating reductions in rent and arrears) is generally acknowledged, but nobody seems to understand the methods by which they have arrived at their decisions... the inquiry...is said to have injuriously affected the pre-existing good feeling between landlords and tenants..."<sup>(76)</sup>

In the second place, the granting of security of tenure did nothing to stimulate the mobility of the crofting population, nor to relieve pressure on limited resources. Moreover, the recommendations of the Napier Commission on assisted emigration, discussed in Chapter 7, were so selective as to be totally unrealistic in the context of the destitution

75) The Crofters' Commission was established in 1886 under the Crofters' Holdings Act to administer the legislation, which stated that a crofter was not to be removed from his holding except for a breach of statutory conditions (such as rent arrears); he had the right to have a fair rent fixed by a public authority; he was to receive, on leaving his croft, compensation for any improvements which he or others had made; and he was to be entitled to bequeath his croft to a member of his family. Collier, op. cit., p. 98.

76) The Times, 25 November 1892.

they were supposedly designed to alleviate. (77)

Thereafter a spate of legislation ensued, very much on an ad hoc basis. J.P. Day describes the years from 1886 to 1914 as "a period of legislative and administrative activity," despite which "some of the pernicious influences of the previous economic changes were still unchecked." (78) In 1891 the Walpole Commission was established "to discover what industries could best be fostered and how", resulting in the granting of aid to fishermen through the 1891 Highlands and Islands Works Act. (79) The following year the Deer Forest Commission began its investigation into the possibility of purchasing and reallocating deer forests for farming purposes. The Congested Districts Board of 1897 was responsible both for the enlargement of crofts and for the creation of employment by financing the construction of roads, harbours and piers. It also had funds to assist emigration where this was both necessary and possible. Meanwhile, conditions in Lewis - possibly the most overcrowded area of all - provoked the preparation of five separate reports

77) Napier Commission report, Vol. XXXII, p. 105 :

"In the districts whence emigration is most required the crofter in average circumstances who is free of debt and able to assist himself will probably not have more than £40 or £50 of his own to start with, while it might not be desirable that he should encumber himself with a greater burden of debt than £100, even if a larger loan were available."

78) J.P. Day, Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, London, 1918, pp. 26-28.

79) According to Gray (Crofting and fishing in the north-west highlands, op. cit.), few fishermen in the western highlands actually took advantage of this scheme. See Chapter 5, pages 189-90.

between 1886 and 1906. (80) It was only too obvious, almost a century after the first Passenger Act, that the problem still inherent in large parts of the Highlands and Islands fifty years after the great famine was not depopulation but exactly the opposite.

The difference between the agrarian experience of the east coast and that of much of the region west of the "Highland line" during the period 1851-91 stemmed basically from two factors: the potential of the land for commercial exploitation and the mobility of the population. Because of the greater commercial potential of the eastern farming zone, the retention of inefficient crofting methods was discouraged there from an early date. Its inhabitants were thus forced to acquire not only a degree of mobility but also an adaptability to new techniques unknown elsewhere in the region. However, by the later nineteenth century, the period of viability was already over for many farmers and workers alike. They were thus increasingly forced to find other pursuits locally or to leave the region altogether in search of agrarian opportunities elsewhere. (81)

By contrast, the land west of the "Highland line" was largely incapable of cultivation, except on a subsistence

80) i.e. the Fraser Report on the Cottar Population of the Lews (1888), the Brand Report on the Social Conditions of the People of Lewis (1902), the Report of the Lewis Local Committee (1903), the Dittman Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Lews (1905), and the Maxwell Report on the Rating and the General Financial Position in the Outer Hebrides (1906).

81) Chapter 2, notes (50)-(58), pages 53 - 7; also Chapter 6, passim.

scale. Inefficient crofting units were allowed to exist until well into the nineteenth century because the demand for kelp presupposed a ready supply of labour and because of the fear of a loss of manpower for the armed services. Eventual attempts to exploit previously cultivated land for commercial purposes evoked occasional conflict between men and sheep (and later deer) which generally could not be assuaged by alternative settlement plans. The conflict over commercialisation developed out of all proportion to the actual numbers threatened with eviction and resulted in a virtual victory for complete economic stagnation.

There was, however, a further problem. Even if land and resources had been available for the creation of a "dual economy" in such areas as Coigach and Skye, it is extremely questionable if alternative settlement schemes could have become viable in their own right. They had already been tested in these very districts at an earlier date - and they had failed. This is illustrated by attempts to establish commercial fishing stations in various parts of the region, which are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

The Fishing Option

## Types of fishing

Apart from agriculture, the largest single economic sector for most of the period under consideration was fishing. The two categories were not mutually exclusive. The most common instance of multiple occupations in the region was that of the crofter-fisherman. Moreover, since fishing was often seasonal, it did not necessarily interfere with other pursuits. The fishing sector actually grew in size from 6.8 per cent of the family heads sampled in 1851 to 7.7 per cent in 1891, reaching a peak of 9.3 per cent in 1871. (1)

The seasonal aspect of some fishing, together with the changing location of the herring industry (the herring was once described as a "shifting ambulatory fish" (2)), meant that much of the work almost by definition presupposed a mobile labour force. As in the agricultural sector, however, certain types of fisherman were more mobile than others. There were various types of fishing in the north of Scotland, depending on the variety of fish and on the ambition and resources of the fisherman. There was inshore and deep sea fishing for both white (demersal) fish and herring. Among the native inhabitants of the region there were also two main types of fisherman: the regular fisherman and the crofter-fisherman. Both the fish and those who

1) N.B. This does not include crofter-fishermen, who were classified under agriculture. See Appendix 3, page 393. An occupational classification for the entire sample is given in table 41, page 197.

2) Hugh Rose of Nigg, Extracts of answers to the British Fisheries Society 1786-7, p. 21.



sought to catch them could, to a certain extent, be classified by their approximate geographical locations at any given time. The two groups of fishermen were, moreover, in some ways as different in nature as were the fish themselves.

Inshore fishing (including loch herring fishing) had long been a traditional activity in the Northern Highlands. This was not only true of the west coast, where the majority of the sea lochs or fiords were located, but also of the east. The New Statistical Account makes several references to localised fishing activities. For instance, "The river Brora is famous for the number and quality of its salmon, and when in proper condition, is one of the best angling streams in the north".<sup>(3)</sup> Equally well known was the river Shin near Lairg.

Another source of income to local inhabitants was lobster catching. The population of Eddrachillis, in north-west Sutherland, benefited from the interest of a London-based company "who employ a number of natives in procuring the lobsters, which they carry off in well-smacks to the Thames. This fishing commences in April, and ends in October". Despite the decline of the kelp industry after the close of the Napoleonic Wars, the residents of Eddrachillis increased from 1,024 in 1792 (the date of the Old Statistical Account for the parish) to 1,965 in 1831,

3) N.S.A., Vol. XV, "Sutherland", p. 159.

"notwithstanding that many families emigrated".<sup>(4)</sup> The parish also profited from the herring industry in that those who had large enough boats or who could afford to purchase shares in those belonging to others departed for Caithness (according to the same source) from July to September each year. During the winter months some ancillary work was generated by the need to make and repair fishing nets.

The loch herring industry was pursued, with limited success, in the north-west. However, it was the deep sea fishing (especially for herring) that was the mainstay of the regional industry. It brought outsiders into the area, it gave seasonal as well as full-time work to local inhabitants, it created a number of ancillary activities and it necessitated the radical improvement of transport and communications. In the latter respect it may, to some extent, have contributed to the long-term depopulation of the Northern Highlands.

#### Locational and seasonal aspects of fishing

The location of the fishing industry at any time was, of course, related to the location of the fisheries themselves. In the case of white fish, these were relatively stationary. Throughout the nineteenth century demersal fish were chiefly found in quite clearly defined areas off the coasts. In the west, cod was caught in the Minch, while

4) *ibid.*, pp. 128-9.

ling was usually found in "the more open and deeper waters" off north-west Sutherland or on the west side of Lewis. (5) In the east, white fishing was pursued from a number of ports, especially those in the parishes of Wick and Latheron, as well as by individual crofter-fishermen scattered throughout the region. As indicated in Chapter 4, this activity also helped support the resettled populations of Easter Ross, particularly in the Avoch and Rosemarkie areas, into the later part of the century: the proportions in fishing remained relatively high in these parishes and in fact increased between 1851 and 1891. (6) Cromarty itself was also intensively involved in the herring industry throughout the whole period.

But for the most part, the herring shoals were extremely migratory and caused the industry to change both its areas of concentration and its actual location throughout the nineteenth century. During the first half of the period under consideration, the herring industry at Wick reached its peak; but it gradually moved around the north coast, affecting in turn particularly Stromness in Orkney, Scalloway and Lerwick in Shetland, and Stornoway in Lewis. This shift is illustrated in maps 9 and 10 on the following pages. It was only at the turn of the century (between about 1890 and 1914) that Ullapool belatedly began to come into its own as a fishing port - some time after the

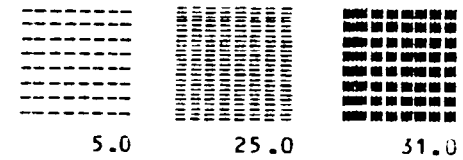
5) M. Gray, *Crofting and fishing in the north-west highlands 1890-1914*, op. cit., p. 99.

6) N.S.A., Vol. XIV, "Ross and Cromarty", pp. 66-70, 391-6. cf. maps 9 and 10, pages 156-7.



NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 31.03  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 5.22  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 8.02  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 5

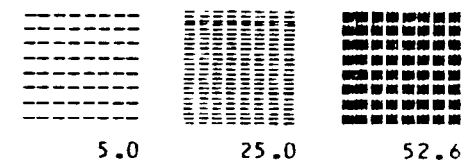
MAP 9 . PERCENTAGE IN FISHING INDUSTRY, 1851



NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 58                      27                      3

NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 52.63  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 6.41  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 9.42  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 5

MAP 10. PERCENTAGE IN FISHING INDUSTRY, 1891

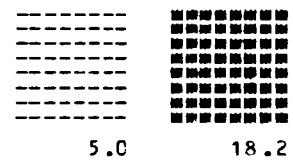


NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 50                      34                      4



NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 18.18  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 0.88  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 2.64  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 8

MAP 11. PERCENTAGE IN CROFTER-FISHING, 1951

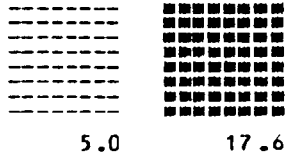


NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 83 5



NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 17.65  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 1.67  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 3.75  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 8

MAP 12. PERCENTAGE IN CROFTER-FISHING, 1891



NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 77 11

activities of the British Fisheries Society had ceased there, and not in time to check the steady depopulation of the area as a whole. Whether or not the presence of large herring shoals in the Minch at an earlier date would have made any significant difference to the long-term decline of the native populations of many western districts is in any event debatable.<sup>(7)</sup>

Herring fishing was seasonal: it lasted roughly from May to October each year, wherever it was located. White fishing could be continued throughout the whole year. While it was also based at the larger ports, it was often pursued from the crofting townships of north-west Sutherland and Wester Ross, where it was chiefly the preserve of the crofter-fisherman. Cod was usually caught by line up to about fifteen miles from the shore, so it was possible to use relatively small (20-foot) open boats which could be beached rather than anchored. It was usually possible to return home each night, so a croft could be maintained at the same time. By contrast, deep sea herring fishing demanded larger vessels (30 feet or more in length) which were slightly better equipped for longer voyages, although for most of the nineteenth century even these were undecked. They required harbour facilities, and this in turn meant that their crews often had to stay away from home (though not necessarily at sea) for days, if not for weeks, at a time.

7) See section on crofting and fishing in the islands and western mainland, pages 184-90.



Maps 9 - 12 on pages 156-9 illustrate the contrast in location between crofter-fishing and ordinary fishing activities. Crofter-fishermen, like crofters<sup>(8)</sup>, were mainly to be found in small scattered settlements, especially in the islands; while those simply described as "fishermen" in the censuses usually resided in or near the various fishing ports of the region, at least during the season. In addition, the greatest single proportion of regular fishermen throughout the latter nineteenth century were enumerated on the east coast, despite the changing location of the industry. This is illustrated by table 33.

Table 33

Types of fishermen by topographical division, 1851 - 91<sup>(9)</sup>

<u>Division</u>	<u>(per cent of total)</u>					
	<u>1851</u>		<u>1871</u>		<u>1891</u>	
	<u>Crofter- fishermen</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Crofter- fishermen</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Crofter- fishermen</u>	<u>Others</u>
East coast	32.3	57.7	33.3	40.9	9.3	48.7
Western	25.8	21.1	20.0	20.0	25.9	12.7
Insular	<u>41.9</u>	<u>21.1</u>	<u>46.7</u>	<u>39.1</u>	<u>64.8</u>	<u>38.6</u>
Totals (= 100%)	31	142	30	198	54	158

According to this table, the numbers described as fishermen were recorded at their maximum during the period under consideration in the 1871 census. By contrast, the proportions (as well as the actual numbers) of crofter-

8) For the purposes of maps 6/7 and 11/12, as for all tabulations in this study, crofter-fishermen have been segregated from crofters.

9) Source: sample census data.

fishermen in the sample increased substantially in the islands as the end of the century approached, as indeed did the numbers of crofters noted in the previous chapter: 35 out of the 54 crofter-fishermen sampled resided in the Hebrides in 1891. The number included from the west coast, although small (in 1851 there were only 6 of them), had doubled by 1891. Thus by the end of the period nearly 90 per cent of the crofter-fishermen sampled in the region were located in its western and insular divisions, as compared with about 66 per cent of a somewhat smaller total at the two earlier censuses.

The number of regular fishermen sampled who were enumerated in the islands also rose from 30 in 1851 to 78 in 1871. Although they then fell to 61 at the next census analysed, there were still twice as many in the insular parishes in 1891 as there had been in 1851. The proportions of regular fishermen on the east coast still remained comparatively high, but the actual numbers sampled declined slightly from 84 at the first census to 81 and 79 in 1871 and 1891 respectively. In the western division, as in the insular, the numbers of fishermen sampled attained their maximum level (38) in 1871 before falling to 18 twenty years later.

Maps 9 and 10, which show the percentage in the sample who were engaged in fishing or ancillary industries<sup>(10)</sup> in each parish, at the censuses of 1851

10) Including boatbuilding, cooping, gutting, curing, etc.  
See Appendix 3, page 393.

and 1891 respectively, illustrate the relative growth of fishing in the western and insular districts during this period. However, on the eastern side of the region, the predominance in the industry of Caithness and Easter Ross was maintained throughout the latter part of the century.

### Fishing and migration

Those described as crofter-fishermen at the censuses were generally less migratory than the regular fishermen, as might have been anticipated from the analysis of crofting in Chapter 4. This is substantiated by the results of the sample; although it should be observed that the crofter-fishermen were by no means confined to their native parishes to the same extent as were the crofters studied. Like the crofters in tables 31 and 32, however, their mobility declined sharply towards the end of the century. (Table 34).

Table 34

Extent of migration<sup>(11)</sup> among fishermen and crofter-fishermen

	(per cent of total)					
	<u>1851</u>		<u>1871</u>		<u>1891</u>	
	<u>Crofter-fishermen</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Crofter-fishermen</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Crofter-fishermen</u>	<u>Others</u>
Non-migrants	80.6	74.6	90.0	83.8	96.3	86.7
Migrants	<u>19.4</u>	<u>25.4</u>	<u>10.0</u>	<u>16.2</u>	<u>3.7</u>	<u>13.3</u>
Totals (= 100%)	<u>31</u>	<u>142</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>198</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>158</u>

11) i.e. inter-parish migration. cf table 9, page 41.

Amongst both types of fishermen, the incidence of inter-parish movement was greatest at the 1851 census and least at that of 1891, despite the increase in numbers in the intervening years. The census was usually taken in April, before the herring season began.<sup>(12)</sup> Nevertheless, the pattern of declining movement amongst the individuals concerned was clearly marked by the results of all three censuses analysed. (The numbers engaged in fishing as a secondary occupation also declined from 30 in 1851 to 7 in 1891). This was probably attributable on the one hand to the changing fortune of the herring industry, and on the other to the declining mobility among crofters generally which was examined in Chapter 4.<sup>(13)</sup> The figures in table 34 do not differentiate seasonal from permanent migrants, which may partly explain why the apparent mobility of the fishermen themselves (prior to the start of the season) was relatively low. Even the majority of the regular fishermen appeared from the sample to reside in the parishes in which they were born.

However, migration among crofter-fishermen tended to be confined to movements within the respective topographical divisions of enumeration (whether east coast, western, or

12) The only exception to this was in 1921, when the census was taken in June. Flinn (ed.) notes that "The day chosen has normally been in March or April to be at a time of year when there is least movement of people away from their place of normal residence for harvesting or holidays" (op. cit. p. 503). For the purposes of the present study, this makes it difficult to estimate the extent of seasonal migration, especially in the fishing industry. See also table 37, page 172.

13) cf. tables 31 and 32, pages 138 and 140.

insular); whereas the other fishermen more frequently moved between divisions and sometimes to and from the region altogether. This was in keeping both with the changing location of the herring and with the capacity of the boats used by the different types of fishermen.

Both main types of fishing were male-dominated, although in the censuses of 1871 and 1891, two females described as fisherwomen were included in the sample. However, the comparative mobility of the two groups was both cause and symptom of one significant demographic difference between them, illustrated by table 35.

Table 35  
Ages of those in fishing

	(per cent of total)					
	<u>1851</u>		<u>1871</u>		<u>1891</u>	
	<u>Crofter-</u> <u>fishermen</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Crofter-</u> <u>fishermen</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Crofter-</u> <u>fishermen</u>	<u>Others</u>
Under 45	54.8	63.4	53.6	52.5	37.0	57.6
45 +	<u>45.2</u>	<u>36.6</u>	<u>46.4</u>	<u>47.5</u>	<u>63.0</u>	<u>42.4</u>
Totals (= 100%)	<u>31</u>	<u>142</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>198</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>158</u>

Crofter-fishermen were generally somewhat older than the rest. Furthermore, the sample showed an increase of 18 per cent among those aged 45 and over by the end of the period under consideration. This may be indicative of the declining mobility already observed with regard to crofters

since, as suggested in Chapter 2, migrants tend on the whole to be in the younger age groups. However, it may also indicate that, in view of the increase in numbers of crofters generally and the lower than average ages of the insular population illustrated in table 25, crofter-fishing tended to be an alternative occupation to seasonal participation in the regular fishing industry for older men. The majority of the ordinary fishermen included in the sample were under 45 years of age. The more migratory aspect of the deep sea herring industry, together with the more arduous and often dangerous nature of the work, would probably explain the age differences between the two groups.

#### Ancillary fishing activities

There was a further important distinction between the two types of fishing in the extent of ancillary industry which they generated and therefore of their relative impact on the regional economy - and on population movements within the region. Crofter-fishing was usually organised (if it was organised at all) on a relatively small scale. It was a household or, at most, a community concern with little or no outside investment or assistance prior to the 1886 legislation. Since its basic function was to support a subsistence economy, it did not necessarily promote the development of transport and communications; although the Congested Districts Board partly existed to encourage the

building of roads and piers in the smaller crofting and fishing communities of the north-west.<sup>(14)</sup> Curing, when this was necessary, was usually done on the crofts. As already stated, the boats used for cod and ling fishing did not generally even require harbour facilities. The multiplier effects of crofter-fishing in the late nineteenth century were extremely limited, even with the additional benefit of external finance.

The main focus of regional activity, in terms of the numbers employed and of income generated, was on the actual fishing ports, which were almost completely taken over by the herring industry for about half the year. It required not only fishermen but also gutters, curers, coopers, and packers. Table 36, overleaf, demonstrates the extent of employment created by the herring industry throughout the various fishery districts of the region by the middle of the main period under consideration.

14) Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into certain matters affecting the interests of the Population of the Western Highlands and Islands (Walpole Commission), Parliamentary Papers, 1890.

Table 36

Employment in the herring industry, 1870<sup>(15)</sup>

<u>Fishery district</u>	<u>Boats</u>	<u>Fishermen and boys</u>	<u>Coopers</u>	<u>Gutters, packers</u>	<u>Labourers</u>	<u>Total employed</u>	<u>Nos. of barrels cured</u>
Cromarty	150	803	43	418	39	1,303	5,402
Helmsdale	222	1,221	80	766	69	2,136	20,607
Lybster	226	1,186	59	586	56	1,887	24,099
Wick	860	5,160	278	2,316	216	7,970	83,601½
Stornoway	1,470	7,964	299	3,255	99	11,617	159,180
Lochbroom	420	1,660	6	490	110	2,266	297
Loch Carron & Skye	140	420	7	140	-	567	817½
Ft. William	230	610	17	259	23	909	885
Totals	<u>3,718</u>	<u>19,024</u>	<u>789</u>	<u>8,230</u>	<u>612</u>	<u>28,655</u>	<u>294,889</u>

15) Report by the Commissioners for the Herring Industry of Scotland, 1870, Appendix table iii; *ibid.*, Fishery Statistics no 1.

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Each herring boat (which was not necessarily registered in the district of enumeration stated in table 36) had an average crew of 5, although in the bigger ports such as Wick and Stornoway one boat might be manned by six or more persons. A further two or three per vessel were required in the main ancillary industries, again with variations between districts. The herring industry on the north-west mainland generally (Lochbroom, Lochcarron, and Fort William) generated considerably less employment and was far less rewarding than that in the eastern division for the whole of the period in question. Herring only fetched 6 to 8 shillings a cran in these areas, compared with 14 to 16 shillings on the east coast and in the Outer Hebrides. Since the west coast industry was largely based on loch fishing, the boats used were comparatively small and carried only up to 20 nets, as opposed to the normal load of 40 carried by the east coast ships. Moreover, the loch herring tended to stay close to the shore, making the necessary manoeuvres to catch them difficult and sometimes dangerous.<sup>(16)</sup> The east coast industry was dominated by Wick, although Helmsdale was still a comparatively busy fishing port in the later nineteenth century. Even by 1870, however, the herring industry in the eastern division of the mainland was declining: Wick had only 860 boats, compared with 1,122 in 1862<sup>(17)</sup>, while the numbers employed in the

16) Gray, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-9.

17) *cf.* D. Omand (ed.), *The Caithness Book*, pp. 197-8.

Lybster district (roughly equivalent to Latheron parish) had fallen even below their 1840 level.<sup>(18)</sup> For most of the last decades of the nineteenth century, Stornoway was the main fishing port of the Northern Highland region. The total employment in the fishery district of Stornoway (which comprised the whole of the Outer Hebrides) created by the herring industry at the height of the season in 1870, for example, was greater than the census population of the parish of Stornoway itself as at April 1871.<sup>(19)</sup>

The mobility of fishermen illustrated in table 34 was the minimum level to be expected in view of the seasonal nature of the industry. However, because of the capital required for the acquisition of boats and equipment (a Loch Fyne skiff cost around £100 by the end of the century, and an auxiliary engine might cost even more<sup>(20)</sup>), the activity became increasingly specialised and denoted a commitment to fishing as a year-round livelihood. Thus herring boats fished for cod and haddock off the east coast of Caithness, Sutherland, and Easter Ross during the autumn and winter months; while many of the vessels returned to ports further down the coast, where extra support was available for white fishing throughout the entire year. For, possibly to a greater extent than fishing itself, employment in the ancillary industries

18) *ibid.*

19) Appendix table 1A, page 365.

20) Gray, *op. cit.*, p.98. Only a few fishermen actually owned their boats and equipment; for most, a system of contract fishing or a share in a particular boat bound men to certain vessels for a whole season.

(with the exception of boatbuilding) was dependent on seasonal labour, especially in the eastern division of the region. This did not require the purchase of capital equipment, nor the adaptation to a way of life alien to crofting: indeed, one problem - already observed - was that crofters often left the fishing scene to help with the harvest in the middle of the season. Additionally, as the herring industry declined on the eastern mainland, so did seasonal employment therein, since wages were better elsewhere. (21) This was particularly the case in the mid-1880s, when the price of herring fell substantially due to an over-supply from the Scottish ports generally. The simultaneous decline in agriculture in the eastern division of the region probably largely accounted for the increase in migration (both seasonal and permanent) after 1881 from this area, which was noted in previous chapters.

The extent to which ancillary employment in the fishing industry relied on seasonal labour is indicated by table 37. The fact that so few of the cases sampled were engaged in occupations such as gutting, curing, and cooping - even in the parishes of Wick and Stornoway - is indicative of one of the shortcomings of the data available. Systematic information on seasonal occupations and movements in the nineteenth century is scanty in any case: the April censuses contained little information on such activities

21) Gray, *op. cit.* Also E.J.T. Collins, *Migrant labour in British agriculture in the nineteenth century*, *Economic History Review*, Vol. 29, no. 1, 1976, pp. 38-59.

in either the agricultural or the fishing sectors.<sup>(22)</sup>  
 The absolute numbers involved at that time of year were therefore small in any case. The emphasis in table 37 should be placed on the general pattern rather than the actual numbers, which of course only represent 1/20 of the heads of family in the region and only about 1/100 of the total population.

Table 37  
Migration in ancillary fishing industries<sup>(23)</sup>  
in selected parishes

<u>Parish</u>	<u>1851</u>		<u>1871</u>		<u>1891</u>	
	<u>Mig.</u>	<u>Non-mig.</u>	<u>Mig.</u>	<u>Non-mig.</u>	<u>Mig.</u>	<u>Non-mig.</u>
Kildonan	1	-	1	-	1	2
Latheron	-	5	2	4	-	-
Wick	7	4	9	11	2	11
Lochbroom	-	-	-	1	-	-
Stornoway	1	1	-	2	1	6
Totals	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>19</u>

Despite the minute numbers, it may be stated with reasonable confidence that this table confirms the extent to which the ancillary industries, especially in the major fishing parishes on the east coast, were dependent on migrant

22) See note (12), page 164. The small numbers sampled in ancillary fishing activities may also be attributable to the sampling frame, which was based on heads of family. Seasonal workers in particular, if fortunate enough to have lodgings at all, often lodged with other families. See for example, M. Sykes: *The Migrants, History Today*, Vol. XXIX, June 1979, pp. 401 - 407.

23) See note (10), page 162.

labour for at least the first part of the period, until the herring fishing began to decline in that vicinity.

(The decline in migration towards the end of the period to and from both the Wick/Latheron and Stornoway areas was observed in maps 3 - 4A on pages 43 - 6).

At the same time, the virtual lack of cases in Lochbroom parish substantiates the previous supposition as to the limited opportunities generated by the herring industry in the north-west, at least until the arrival of rail links with the main markets at the turn of the century. The situation in Stornoway was rather different from that in the mainland fishing ports, as demonstrated below.

The proportions of both migrant fishermen and ancillary workers who came from outwith the region altogether also declined between the censuses of 1871 and 1891. While such outsiders were by no means in the majority (they comprised around 10 per cent of the fishermen sampled in the eastern division in 1851 and 1871 and a much smaller fraction of the other workers in the industry), they were nevertheless an important element in the fishing activities of the Northern Highland region for most of the nineteenth century. Indeed, as the seasonal workers, their numbers may have been under-represented in the April censuses. They were indicative of the extent to which it was often necessary to travel in search of remunerative fishing, and of "the selection by temperament of those

who desired to fish as a main form of activity".<sup>(24)</sup> On account of the cost of equipment and the dedication therefore required to recoup investment, the herring industry was not an obvious adjunct to crofting. Without the presence of individuals from other parts of the region or from the rest of Scotland, it might conceivably never have grown to the proportions exemplified in table 36, at least in certain areas. This was demonstrated by the varying degrees of success of the planned fishing settlements.

The planned settlements: incompatibility of crofting and fishing

Originally it had been hoped that the encouragement of the fishing industry would check the tide of emigration from the region in the closing years of the eighteenth century.<sup>(25)</sup> At a time when there was growing concern over national security because of Britain's involvement in wars both in Europe and in North America, the development of the herring industry and its associated infrastructure affected not only the retention of manpower but also the construction of roads and waterways which were possible aids to the defence of the country.

24) Gray, op. cit., p. 98.

25) Accounts of the development of the fishing industry in the Northern Highland region may be found in the following works: A.J. Youngson, *After the Forty Five*, op. cit.; M. Gray, *The Highland Economy 1750-1850*, op. cit.; C.A. Goodlad, *Shetland Fishing Saga*, Shetland Times Ltd., 1971.

The Caledonian Canal in Inverness-shire (like the Crinan Canal in Argyll) was specifically designed to facilitate and stimulate deep sea fishing with the simultaneous intentions of providing a safe passage for vessels between the North Sea and the Minch, and of creating work for local inhabitants. (26)

The development of commercial fishing at ports in the Northern Highlands in any case required considerable planning and investment. The construction of harbours, roads, and much later railways necessitated the provision of resources on a scale which was for the most part far beyond the means of the local inhabitants and in many instances also beyond that of their landlords. Concurrent with the policies of central government, which - like the Crofters' Commission a century later - were principally intended to secure national interests, a number of private schemes were devised by Highland proprietors from the mid-eighteenth century onwards in an effort to maintain their estates. These were encouraged by the Commissioners for Forfeited Estates, who attempted to attract the re-settlement of soldiers and sailors in the region after the Seven Years' War by offering them not only holdings but also a variety of occupations. (27) Generally, however,

26) See Chapter 6, pages 211-4.

27) These included distilling and the manufacture of linen as well as fishing. The Board of Manufacturers had established a number of linen factories in the region, for example at Spinningdale in south-east Sutherland and at Coigach in Wester Ross.

the funds for private schemes in the later eighteenth century (for example at Gairloch, Plockton, and Lochinver) were limited. In order to encourage the development of local resources, the British Fisheries Society was established in 1786. (28)

The Society promoted the establishment of two fishing settlements on the west coast of the Northern Highland region (in addition to Tobermory in Argyll): at Ullapool in 1786 and at Lochbay (in Skye) in 1795. On the east coast, after experimenting with the neighbouring harbour at Sarclet, its main focus of attention was at Wick, where it founded the adjoining settlement of Pulteneytown in 1808. In fact, of all the British Fisheries Society ventures, only that at Pulteneytown had any long-term success. The schemes at Lochbay, Tobermory, and Ullapool were abandoned respectively in 1838, 1844, and 1848. The failure of Lochbay may to some extent have been attributable to its late development - too late, in 1795, to prevent the widespread emigration from Skye which followed the famines of the previous decade. But it is doubtful whether investment in the area ten or fifteen years earlier would have made any great difference to the eventual outcome of the Lochbay effort. The herring were primarily to be found off the east coast in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

28) A detailed history of the Society has been written by Jean Dunlop, *The British Fisheries Society 1786-1893*, Edinburgh University Ph.D., 1952 (published by John Donald in 1978).



Finance was certainly important, but its supply neither presupposed the existence of fish nor of fishermen in any given area. For example, the success of the Pulteneytown settlement was mainly due to the success of the fishery itself, with the British Fisheries Society playing a generally passive role.<sup>(29)</sup> By contrast, on the west coast, remoteness from the main markets and a lack of inclination on the part of the native inhabitants appear to have combined with a scarcity of natural resources which prevented the promotion of the industry, despite the extent of investment therein. When, at the end of the nineteenth century, fishing off the west coast was encouraged and partially financed by the Crofters' and Walpole Commissions, the amount of activity actually seemed to decline.<sup>(30)</sup> Moreover, this was at a time when the Minch was at the centre of the herring industry. The availability of funds one hundred years earlier to stimulate the industry at Ullapool had been unable to compensate either for the lack of fish or of dedicated fishermen - who mainly came, as activity began to increase in the Minch, from outwith the western parishes and often from outside the region altogether.

There were further problems with the three British Fisheries Society settlements and the various private schemes on the west coast. These were, namely, the

29) *ibid.*, p. 263.

30) Gray, *Crofting and fishing in the north-west highlands 1890-1914*, pp. 89-92.

crofters' lack of commitment to the intensive offshore fishing industry, together with their tendency to participate as temporary labourers in the harvest, "which always came at the height of the herring season." Dr. Dunlop writes moreover of a "fatalistic attitude" amongst many crofters to hardship and lean times which, far from galvanising them into action on their own behalf, increased their expectations of help from their landlords and other agencies. (31)

This attitude of crofters to the development of commercial fishing, if it can be substantiated, may have been partially accountable for the eventual failure of the Sutherland estate schemes too. Helmsdale, the chosen centre of fishing activity in Sutherland after 1816, had actually been surveyed and rejected as a possible site for a port by Thomas Telford on behalf of the British Fisheries Society in 1790. (32) It was not an obvious choice for the location of a busy fishing harbour in terms either of a safe approach to a landing or of sufficient space to develop the hinterland. (33) Telford adhered to his opinion a few years later when retained by

31) Dunlop, op. cit., p. 315. See also chapter 8, pages 325-9. At the same time, it should be noted that the New Statistical Account for Lochbroom refers to "some hundreds of the parishioners away at sea, at the Caithness and deep-sea fishing" (Vol. XIV, "Ross and Cromarty", pp. 83-4); and that for Latheron mentions incoming workers during the herring season from Assynt and Lochbroom as well as from Lewis. In addition, the 1831 census notes that many persons normally resident in Glenelg parish in western Inverness-shire were absent in search of employment owing to the failure of the local herring fishing. Clearly some of the inhabitants of the west coast were able and willing to participate in the industry, if only on a seasonal basis. Indeed, it has already been argued that seasonal migration was a necessary adjunct to crofting (Chapter 4, note (52) page 134.

32) Dunlop, op. cit., p. 243.

33) See map 1, page 9.

the Sutherland estate management: he wrote that "there is at present no place of Shelter for Shipping on the East Coast of Sutherland, neither Helmsdale nor Brora are safe, or convenient".<sup>(34)</sup> Its poor siting, together with the more rapid expansion throughout the first half of the nineteenth century of Wick and the smaller harbours of Dunbeath, Lybster, and Latheron, probably contributed to the earlier decline of Helmsdale as a settlement and a fishing port - at least as far as its original inhabitants were concerned.<sup>(35)</sup>

For, in addition to the scant attention paid to Telford, the house of Sutherland may not have heeded sufficiently the words of its own factor, James Loch, as to the possible contradiction between crofting and regular fishing :

(If new allotments on the coast were too large)  
"... one great object of the arrangement would have been entirely lost: for if the people had subsisted altogether or chiefly on their lots, they never would have gone much to sea. Or if, on the other hand, they became active fishermen, their lots must have been imperfectly cultivated." (36)

- 34) R. Adam (ed.), *Sutherland Estate Management*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 4.
- 35) Helmsdale did not really begin to expand until some years after the first arrival of resettled crofters in 1818. By 1831 it had a population of only 312, but it eventually attained a maximum recorded population of 1,254 in 1861, with the arrival of fishermen from such ports as Buckie and Peterhead. Thereafter there was a steady decline in the east coast fishing. See note (17), page 169.
- 36) James Loch in I. Grimble, *The Trial of Patrick Sellar*, op. cit., pp. 23-4.

The complications perceived by Loch prior to the inception of the Helmsdale scheme were, apparently, amply justified. The acquisition of specialised skills and the ability to be mobile were characteristics of those who took to commercial fishing as a livelihood. It was impracticable to fish on a regular basis and to maintain a croft at the same time. The New Statistical Account for the parish of Clyne describes the situation in the following terms :

" Some boats have been engaged at Brora in the herring - fishing, and with tolerable success... But the other inhabitants have not taken to the sea, as was expected, and they are more inclined to occupy their time in cultivating their lands - except during the herring-fishing season, when they are all engaged in it, at Brora or Helmsdale". (37)

Alexander Mackenzie gives still another point of view in an attempt to explain the fate of Sutherland fishing schemes :

"Every conceivable means, short of the musket and the sword, were used to drive the natives from the land they loved ... and to depend ... on the uncertain produce of the sea for subsistence and that in the case of a people, who, in many instances, and especially in Sutherlandshire, were totally unacquainted with a seafaring life, and quite unfitted to contend with its perils". (38)

By contrast, in one instance at least, the British Fisheries Society set out to eliminate all possible distractions to the development of a successful commercial

37) N.S.A., Vol. XV, "Sutherland", p. 160.

38) A. Mackenzie, The Highland Clearances, op. cit., p. 21.

venture. Dr. Dunlop argues that the deliberate exclusion of crofters played an important part in the success of the Pulteneytown settlement at Wick. "The rule ... that no fisherman or cooper might own land in the town other than his own small lot...was aimed at producing a class of professional fisherman. This was a possibility in Caithness because, unlike the west, the high state of cultivation enabled food supplies to be bought cheaply .. .." (39) The "high state of cultivation" did not exist in the Helmsdale area any more than in Ullapool or Lochbay, even though the farming lands of Caithness were comparatively near Kildonan parish. As late as 1851, ten of the 27 persons sampled from Kildonan were described as crofters or cottars. Table 38 shows the main occupational structure within the primary sector of the principal parishes with planned fishing ports in 1851.

Table 38

The primary sector in parishes with planned fishing settlements

1851

<u>Category</u>	<u>Kildonan</u>	<u>Wick</u>	<u>Lochbroom</u>
Crofters/cottars	10	-	16
Farmers	-	27	3
Crofter-fishermen	-	2	2
Agricultural/estate workers	2	16	5
Fishermen	5	14	9
Fishing ancillaries	1	11	-

39) Dunlop, op. cit., p. 253.

Only in Wick did the number of fishermen in the sample exceed the number of crofters: indeed, there were few crofters in eastern Caithness in 1851. The comparatively large numbers of agricultural labourers in the parish indicate that farming and fishing activities were to a great extent, as intended by the British Fisheries Society, pursued separately.

The different policies adopted for different areas, perhaps as well as the potential of the various fisheries, is demonstrated by this table. In Helmsdale, as in other smaller ports like Brora and Portgower on the east coast of Sutherland, it was the estate's intention to resettle its tenants as joint fishermen and crofters,<sup>(40)</sup> thus (as predicted by James Loch) making their long-term adaptation to the industry in effect virtually impossible. The weakness of such a policy was attested by the 1851 census, when neither the five fishermen nor the single ancillary worker included in the sample were natives of Kildonan parish. In Wick, on the other hand, nine of the fourteen fishermen sampled were natives of the area. To sustain industry and to check emigration from the region, it was clearly not sufficient to create new employment opportunities for displaced crofters. The Helmsdale fisheries would have been considerably under-exploited had it not been for the initiative of outsiders from such areas as Banff, Buckie and Peterhead from the 1830s onwards.<sup>(41)</sup>

40) Adam, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. liv-lix.

41) See note (35), page 179.

Unlike Helmsdale, the Pulteneytown settlement at Wick was in any event not created for the redeployment of evicted crofters. In fact, in 1808, there were comparatively few crofters in the vicinity. Table 27 showed that the majority of holdings in Caithness in the last part of the nineteenth century were lands of five acres or more, and that about one quarter of the holdings in the country were over ten acres. Moreover, this was 62 years after the inauguration of the Pulteneytown scheme, at a time when the numbers of crofters in Caithness were actually increasing. It was therefore easier to distinguish inherent crofters from potential fishermen in Wick area than it would have been in either Helmsdale or Ullapool, and to encourage specialisation in the fishing industry. (42) Table 39 illustrates from the sample census data the preponderance of farmers and agricultural workers compared with crofters in Caithness throughout the period under consideration, even after the decline in "high farming" had begun.

Table 39

Agricultural occupations in Caithness

<u>Category</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Crofters/cottars	9.8	18.3	29.0
Farmers	61.1	38.7	28.5
Agricultural/ estate workers	<u>29.1</u>	<u>43.0</u>	<u>42.4</u>
Totals (= 100%)	<u>203</u>	<u>186</u>	<u>186</u>

42) See Chapter 4, table 28 and note (14), page 112. The definitions of crofters and farmers seem to have become interchangeable between censuses in the case of Latheron parish. 2 crofters and 23 farmers were included in the 1851 sample, but these proportions were reversed in the censuses of 1871 and 1891.

The later increase in the crofting category, both in Wick and in Caithness as a whole, was concurrent with the decline in the east coast fishing industry as well as in the rest of the agricultural sector, as discussed in Chapter 4. A greater proportion of the inhabitants of Caithness than of any other county in the region stated at the censuses analysed that they were principally engaged in activities connected with the fishing industry.<sup>(43)</sup> Nevertheless, as Dr. Dunlop acknowledges, it was the Wick district fisheries themselves rather than any actual policy which mainly contributed to the success of the British Fisheries Society scheme at Pulteneytown, as attested by the thriving industry which developed almost spontaneously and simultaneously at the smaller ports in the vicinity.<sup>(44)</sup>

#### Crofting and fishing in the islands and western mainland

In any event, crofting and fishing were not universally incompatible. This was strongly substantiated when the Minch fisheries began to develop from the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Although the late eighteenth century schemes of the British Fisheries Society for Ullapool and for Lochbay in Skye had ended in failure, the lack of response in these instances must to a large extent have been attributable to a lack of herring and

43) cf. map 9, page 156.

44) e.g. Whaligoe, Dunbeath, Lybster, Latheron. The activity in the fishery district of Lybster, which incorporated many of these smaller ports, was on a par with that at the planned settlement of Helmsdale (table 36, page 168).



not entirely to an ambivalence of attitude on the part of the crofting population. One hundred years later, in 1883, a private plan was propounded to resettle crofters in the parish of Barra because of the growing scarcity of land in the island, and to encourage the development of a commercial fishery at Castlebay.<sup>(45)</sup> In fact, this scheme only preceded the decline of the herring industry in the area by a few years. It nevertheless was sufficiently firmly established by 1891 to have a marked effect on the census returns for that year.<sup>(46)</sup>

Regular fishing and crofting did not appear to be mutually exclusive in the Outer Hebrides to the same extent as on the mainland. This is demonstrated especially by the experience of Stornoway. Stornoway was founded as a fishing burgh in the seventeenth century. Although it was not part of the "planned" settlement movement in the sense that Ullapool, Wick and Helmsdale were, its principal nineteenth century proprietor, Sir James Matheson, did much to stimulate its development. In 1864 he founded the Stornoway Harbour Commission, which was incorporated the following year by Act of Parliament. By about 1870, Stornoway had superseded Wick as the main herring port of the region (table 36), despite the local dependence on crofting. In 1851, 33 out of a total of 83 sampled in the parish of Stornoway were crofters or cottars, and only 8 were fishermen. In 1871 there were still twice as many

45) M.C. Storrie, Two early resettlement schemes in Barra, *Scottish Studies*, Vol. 6, no. 1, 1962, pp. 71-84.

46) cf. map 10, page 157.

crofters as fishermen in the parish, but the number of fishermen sampled had increased to 15 (out of 105 cases altogether). By 1891, after nearly twenty years as the regional centre of the industry and against the background of an ever increasing population, the crofters and cottars in the sample showed little change in number. (47) But by then 12 crofter-fishermen and 22 other fishermen enumerated in the parish were included in the sample, of a total of 124. (48) At the same time, the proportion of natives amongst the Stornoway fishermen sampled was higher than in Wick, and increased during the period in question to a greater extent than in the main east coast fishing port. (Table 40).

Table 40  
Migration among fishermen, Wick and Stornoway

	<u>1851</u>		<u>1871</u>		<u>1891</u>	
	<u>Mig.</u>	<u>Non-</u> <u>mig.</u>	<u>Mig.</u>	<u>Non-</u> <u>mig.</u>	<u>Mig.</u>	<u>Non-</u> <u>mig.</u>
Wick	5	9	5	7	3	18
Stornoway	3	5	2	13	1	21

From the cases sampled, it appears that the proportions of native fishermen in Stornoway increased roughly in proportion to the expansion in the herring industry there. Fishermen from other areas, especially from outside the

47) The proportions of crofters did, however, increase in all the other parishes of Lewis. cf. maps 7 and 8, pages 116-7.

48) The general occupational structure of the parish of Stornoway is examined in Chapter 6, table 49, and pages 228-31.

region, seem from these figures to have been less crucial to the establishment of a successful commercial enterprise than they were at Helmsdale or even at Wick. This was largely because there was a native supply of ready labour for fishing in the islands, which was increasing more rapidly than the labour force anywhere else in the Northern Highlands.<sup>(49)</sup> For many islanders seafaring was part of their way of life, to a far greater extent than was the case among their mainland counterparts. Road transport in Lewis and Harris was virtually non-existent until the Western Highlands and Islands Works Act of 1891 became effective.<sup>(50)</sup> The inhabitants of the Outer Hebrides, rather like the Shetlanders, were more akin to "fishermen with crofts" than to most of the mainland crofters.

Again, on most of the east coast - as shown in Chapter 4 - the majority of employment opportunities in the primary sector were in farming. Table 38 demonstrated that, in the parish of Wick, farmers and agricultural workers in 1851 outnumbered fishermen and ancillary labourers by almost 2 to 1, even though the fishing industry was by then nearing its height in the east. In Stornoway, however, there was a greater concentration of fishermen and ancillary employees, despite the prevalence of crofting already observed in Lewis as a whole, after the industry became established there.

49) cf. Chapter 3, especially table 22, page 93.

50) Appendix 4, Map A4, page 404.

In other words, crofting and commercial fishing were not necessarily mutually exclusive in the Outer Hebrides, to the extent that they often appeared to be on the mainland. At the same time, the development of commercial fisheries did not detract from the increase of crofter-fishing in the islands, illustrated by maps 11 and 12 on pages 158-9. This may have been because, as suggested with reference to table 35, crofter-fishing tended to be the preserve of older men.

Apart from the seafaring instincts of the islanders, the main reason for their adaption to regular fishing was probably the lack of alternative opportunities for seasonal labour in the islands. There was little farm employment in the Outer Hebrides themselves, and it became progressively less as the period continued.<sup>(51)</sup> It was observed in table 37 that there were few migrants even among the ancillary workers in Stornoway, a group which might ordinarily have been expected to be at least as mobile as the actual fishermen. Indeed, the Stornoway fishermen themselves became increasingly migratory (at least on a seasonal basis) in pursuit of the herring. Devine makes the point that natives of the outer islands comprised a substantial proportion of the seasonal migrants who travelled south and east each year to help with the fishing industry. With the advent of steam power, they were occasionally to be found fishing from the Shetland or even the East Anglian ports at the

51) See table 28, page 112.

turn of the twentieth century. (52)

But the adaption of crofters to commercial fishing seems to have been largely confined to the outer islands. For the last five years of the period under consideration, attempts were made to stimulate fishing as well as to improve crofting in north-west Scotland. The 1886 legislation provided for the granting of loans at low interest rates to facilitate the purchase of fishing boats and equipment. Moreover, the Walpole Commission recommended in 1890 that a network of railways be built on the west coast to link the major ports of the western division with their markets in the south. (53) But even this effort to revive the lagging west coast industry had little effect. Most of the loans to the region went to fishermen in Lewis and Barra. Gray has suggested that "the results of the land legislation of 1886 were somewhat ambiguous for fishing. On the one hand it fixed the system of small holdings almost irretrievably on the Highlands and tended to perpetuate the assumption that fishing was only to be pursued as a by-employment; on the other, by fixing rents it created the base for saving and for the possible accretion of investable funds". Despite the latter fact, it would seem that crofters were not natural savers. Fishing actually declined on the north-west mainland during the closing years of the

52) Devine, *op. cit.*, pp. 353-6; Gray, *op. cit.*, p.112; also Goodlad, *op. cit.*, p. 201. See note (31), page 178.

53) See Chapter 6, pages 214-5 and Appendix 4, Map A5, page 405.

century.<sup>(54)</sup> The west coast ports of Ullapool, Kyle, and Mallaig eventually began to prosper, albeit on a relatively small scale, with the opening of rail heads and the improvement of communications with the south and east from 1901 onwards.<sup>(55)</sup>

#### Reconciliation of crofting and fishing

The available evidence indicates that lack of finance was only a secondary reason for the non-participation of crofters on the mainland in the offshore herring industry. Lack of inclination was probably a more significant factor. Moreover, the increasing need to specialise in fishing in order to afford new equipment as the century progressed - steam drifters cost about £3000, or roughly three times as much as the largest sailing vessels<sup>(56)</sup> - and in order to pursue the shifting shoals considerably further afield, would have acted as another deterrent. As long as he had land, the average mainland crofter had no apparent ambition to specialise in any activity which virtually excluded crofting, particularly if this meant a long-term move from home.<sup>(57)</sup>

Chapter 4 suggested that land reform in the nineteenth century did not generally result in the displacement of the crofting population to the extent which has sometimes been

54) Gray, op. cit., pp. 90-91. cf. also table 33, page 161.

55) Note (53) above.

56) Gray, op. cit.

57) The adaptability of crofters to other occupations is discussed in Chapters 4 and 6. The reasons why many failed to adapt are considered in more detail in Chapter 8.

suggested. This chapter has sought to indicate that the creation of new opportunities in the fishing industry also stimulated less movement than might have been expected. In the eastern division, it partially and temporarily checked the long-term depopulation which would otherwise have been hastened by the declining agricultural sector. In the west it had very little success for most of the period in question. Only in the Outer Hebrides, where the rate of natural increase was already high, did the industry generate substantial activity throughout the local economy to the extent that it even affected the crofters' livelihoods. In terms of the prevailing overpopulation in the islands throughout the period under consideration, this may not necessarily have been a good thing.

The effects of the fishing industry on transport and communications, which further influenced the patterns of movement in the region, will be examined in the following chapter. There can be little doubt, however, that the problem of reconciling crofting and its inherent demographic and social problems with a profitable exploitation of natural resources was more complex than the landlords and legislators of the nineteenth century had estimated.

CHAPTER 6

Other Opportunities in a Rural Economy



## Causes of consolidation

The previous two chapters have shown that changes within the primary sector did not radically affect the movements of the majority of crofters - themselves comprising the largest single occupational category by 1891 - in the Northern Highlands. The ratio of migrants to non-migrants was on average less than 1 to 1 in the primary sector, and the number of crofters was increasing throughout the period. There must, therefore, have been other factors underlying the extensive though localised internal migration noted in Chapter 2. It is the purpose of the present chapter to attempt to relate these movements to the existence of other opportunities within the confines of the region.

To contemporaries, there appeared to be little doubt that agricultural processes combined with other circumstances to stimulate the growth of towns and major settlements. Two parishes in particular merited their attention. One was Stornoway. While the total population of the Outer Hebrides expanded at a rate of 35.4 per cent between 1851 and 1881, that of Stornoway grew even more rapidly at an overall rate of 46.4 per cent during the same period. The New Statistical Account for Stornoway reads as follows :

"The extension of arable land or moss brought into culture, and the poverty of the people in the neighbouring parishes, tend to increase the population of Stornoway. Those who cannot emigrate to foreign lands, congregate in Stornoway, for the purpose of getting work". (1)

1) N.S.A., Vol. XIV, "Ross and Cromarty", p. 127.

This account was written before the advent on a large scale of the commercial herring industry to Lewis and not many years after the collapse of the kelp industry left numerous islanders living in overcrowded, penurious conditions. In any event, Chapter 5 indicated that fishing even during the more profitable years 1851-91 did not attract migrants on a large scale to Stornoway, whether on a seasonal or a permanent basis. The emphasis in the foregoing quotation is on the expansion of the town as a result of poverty - and inability to emigrate - amongst the inhabitants of the Outer Hebrides prior to the 1845 famine. The parish of Stornoway as a whole experienced a net migration loss of only -7.1 per cent during the decade 1861-71, one of the lowest rates in the islands and indeed in the entire region. In addition to the above suggestion that poverty prevented the emigration of many inhabitants, the growth of the fishing industry may, as suggested in Chapter 5, have acted as a more positive deterrent to the out-migration of the natives of the parish.

The other parish to experience significant growth during the whole of the period was Inverness. Its rate of growth over the forty years was a comparatively slow 14.8 per cent; but this figure, which was based on a far larger population than that of Stornoway, is deceptive. It was also the only parish in the whole region with a net migration gain during the decade 1861-71, and it continued to attract migrants during the subsequent years. (2)

2) Maps 2-4A, pages 16 and 43-6, and Appendix 1B, page 367.

The New Statistical Account for the parish of Inverness is rather similar to that for Stornoway :

"The gradual increase of population (i.e. between 1791 and 1831) exceeds a little the general ratio of increase throughout the kingdom, in consequence of Inverness having been resorted to by a great number of labourers during the formation of the Caledonian Canal, and now by the poor tenants and cottagers removing to it from the country".<sup>(3)</sup>

Again, poverty (in conjunction with agrarian reform) is cited here as an explanation of rural-to-urban migration. The New Statistical Account was compiled prior to the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1845, one of the objectives of which was to discourage the movement of paupers from the countryside to the towns.<sup>(4)</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of the previous legislation lingered until well into the later part of the nineteenth century, since there were many paupers in Inverness, and since it was necessary to ascertain their native parishes in order to execute the revised Law - not always an easy matter in the light of the destruction of parish records which occurred throughout large areas of the Highlands following the Disruption of 1843.<sup>(5)</sup> In Inverness, too, urban growth was attributed by contemporary observers to the development of transport and communications in the region: in the first instance, to a waterway which had been promoted as part of the

3) N.S.A., Vol. XIV, "Inverness", p. 17.

4) Macdonald, op. cit., pp. 103-121. However, Cage (q.v.) argues that the old Poor Law did not necessarily encourage rural-to-urban migration. See note (59), page 228.

5) See Chapter 8, pages 317-20.

national effort to stimulate the fishing industry, to improve defences, and above all to discourage emigration.

It is significant that these excerpts make no reference to the development of manufacturing or services as major factors in the expansion of the two principal centres of population in the Northern Highlands. This was in direct contrast with the experience of the Central Lowlands of Scotland. The fact was that few opportunities in the region, other than those resulting from changes in the primary sector, stimulated urban growth. Manufacturing, the second largest active sector of the economy in 1851 and still the third largest (after fishing) in 1871 and 1891, was dispersed throughout the region as a whole and was not necessarily located in the towns. The occupational structure of the Northern Highland region, as determined from the sample census data, is illustrated in table 41 overleaf.

Table 41  
Occupational structure <sup>(6)</sup> of region

	(per cent of total)		
	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Agriculture	55.0	50.9	50.5
Fishing	6.8	9.3	7.7
Mining/quarrying	0.2	0.2	0.2
Construction	3.7	3.7	4.1
Transport & communications	2.7	3.0	4.4
Manufacturing <sup>(7)</sup>	8.8	8.6	7.6
Distribution	2.5	3.1	3.6
Professions	1.8	2.7	2.7
Commerce	0.2	0.2	0.4
Government & defence	0.7	0.9	1.4
Domestic service	0.8	2.1	2.1
Miscellaneous services	1.3	2.0	1.8
Independent	0.8	0.7	2.0
Dependent	10.8	7.7	7.7
Not stated	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.8</u>	<u>3.8</u>
Totals (=100%)	2,594	2,540	2,476

In fact, there were relatively few opportunities in the region as a whole apart from those in the primary sector. <sup>(8)</sup> Other than manufacturing, the only sector comprising a relatively large proportion of the sampled population at all three censuses was the dependent category, which included paupers. However, if some of

6) cf. Appendix 3, pages 384-99.

7) i.e. including textiles.

8) The small numbers in many sectors may be subject to increased sampling error. See also note (55) on page 223 and Appendix 2, pages 375-6.

the smaller economic activities are grouped together, they provide some useful information on occupational as well as physical mobility.

### Manufacturing

By 1891 the manufacturing sector in the Northern Highlands had not only diminished in size: it had become increasingly concentrated in certain parts of the region. Maps 13 and 14 on pages 199 - 200 show the extent of its contraction by the end of the period under consideration. Whereas in 1851 a variety of activities had been spread across the north-west mainland, forty years later they were principally concentrated on the east coast and to the north of the Great Glen. However, even in those areas where there was some marked activity, manufacturing on the whole generated relatively few new employment opportunities. Moreover, it was not the primary cause of the expansion of the main towns and settlements either on the mainland or in the islands.<sup>(9)</sup> This was because, as in the case of crofter-fishing<sup>(10)</sup>, it was usually pursued on a cottage industry basis, often in conjunction with crofting. For the most part, therefore, it did not create a great deal of corporate or ancillary activity. According to the published censuses, most people engaged as tailors,

9) Although by 1891 manufacturing was the largest single sector in the parish of Inverness (table 43), it had still not attracted as many migrants as other sectors. See pages 206 - 26.

10) cf. Chapter 5, page 166.



NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 33.33  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 8.90  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 7.03  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 9

MAP 13. PERCENTAGE IN MANUFACTURING, 1851

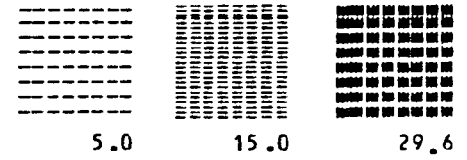


NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 30            43            15



NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 29.63  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 6.84  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 6.73  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 9

MAP 14. PERCENTAGE IN MANUFACTURING, 1891



NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 41                      39                      8



seamstresses, hosiers, and shoemakers were working on their own account.<sup>(11)</sup> The same was true of other industries, such as milling. Mills for meal were normally located on farms and estates and were operated, for home consumption and for the processing of local produce, either by specially designated millers or quite frequently by the farmer and his family themselves. The Congested Districts Board instigated the construction of a number of mills in the north-west during the 1890s in an effort to stimulate local employment.<sup>(12)</sup>

Probably the most remarkable example of a cottage industry in the Northern Highland region during the later nineteenth century was the manufacture of Harris tweed, which was mainly concentrated in the Outer Hebrides. Throughout this period the entire process was carried out by hand. The water-powered mills which were an integral part of the Borders tweed industry, developing simultaneously, were only introduced into Harris and Lewis in the early 1900s.<sup>(13)</sup> The wool was grown, washed, dyed, carded, spun, woven and waulked at home before being sold to merchants on the mainland or overseas. Depending on the size of the croft, wool often had to be ordered from merchants who might then purchase (or otherwise lay claim to) the finished web. In St. Kilda, as in Shetland, the wool used in the manufacture

11) Report to the Board of Agriculture for Scotland on Home Industries in the Highlands and Islands, 1914, pp. 204-7. Distilling, an important industry in the region in the eighteenth century, had become almost insignificant by the late nineteenth century.

12) Congested Districts (Scotland) Act, loc. cit.

13) cf. C. Gulvin, *The Tweedmakers: a history of the Scottish fancy woollen industry 1600-1914*, David and Charles, 1973.

of tweed was not dyed; and only vegetable dyes were supposed to be used in that made in the larger Hebridean islands or on the mainland.<sup>(14)</sup> The eighteenth century fulling (waulk) mills in North Uist were no longer in use at the onset of the period under consideration: indeed, the New Statistical Account makes no mention of the industry in the parish at all. There had in fact been little tweed industry in the islands generally at the time of the New Statistical Account, which reported of Harris in 1841 that

"there is no manufacture of any kind but that of kelp, in which all the population capable of manual labour is employed for two months in the year".<sup>(15)</sup>

However, during the second half of the nineteenth century, demand for Harris tweed grew. The activity which it had generated in the Outer Hebrides by 1891 is evident in map 14 (page 200). As in the case of the Borders tweed industry, the market for Harris tweed was an exclusive one: the cotton and woollen cloth mass-produced in the large industrial centres was progressively eroding smaller concerns which were unable to produce material at competitive prices. But tweed was increasingly popular with sportsmen and with estate officials in the region itself, as well as with overseas customers. Harris tweed had two main attractions to those who could afford

14) Report on Home Industries, op. cit., pp. 55-64.

15) N.S.A., Vol. XIV, "Ross and Cromarty", p. 158.

it: it was hand-made (a feature that was rapidly becoming a rarity) so that every web was unique; and the process of manufacture ensured that the wool retained its natural oils and thus its water-proof qualities. These were the characteristics that the Harris manufacturers were anxious to retain when spinning and later weaving plants were added to a carding mill in Stornoway during the first decade of the twentieth century.

The textile industry in the Northern Highlands, therefore, was based on a "putting out" system similar to that which had existed elsewhere in Britain prior to the advent of factories. For many of its participants there was no need to leave their crofts: "opportunities" were generally created and pursued at home. Indeed, as in the case of those whose primary stated occupation at the censuses was crofting, the number of heads of family in the sample whose main occupations were in the textile industry<sup>(16)</sup> became less mobile as time went on. Only 10 per cent were enumerated in areas other than their parish of birth in 1891, compared with 35 per cent in 1851.<sup>(17)</sup>

By contrast, there was a greater degree of mobility in most of the other manufacturing activities in the region.

16) i.e. carding, spinning, weaving, etc. See Appendix 3, page 395. Usually whole families were engaged in different aspects of tweed production.

17) The number of textile workers in the sample declined from 40 in 1851 to 26 in 1871 and 20 in 1891. However, as already observed with reference to maps 13 and 14, they became increasingly concentrated in the islands.

Small as they were, this was particularly true of those which were not an integral part of the crofting life and which required specialised training, equipment, and suitable locations with access both to supplies and to markets. (18) The increasing movement which such activities stimulated is illustrated in table 42.

Table 42  
Mobility in the manufacturing sector (19)

	(per cent of total)		
	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Non-migrants	50.3	49.5	48.8
Migrants	<u>49.7</u>	<u>50.5</u>	<u>51.2</u>
Totals (=100%)	189	192	168

It is apparent from maps 13 and 14 on pages 199 - 200 that the manufacturing sector, apart from textile production, was generally located by the end of the century on or near the main communications with lowland Scotland and in precisely those areas where there was a considerable amount of inter-parish migration. (20) It is also remarkable that the numbers engaged in the cottage industries (such as textiles) did not increase, with the numbers of crofts and of crofters, on the north-west mainland. (21) Although

18) e.g. tailors, tanners, jewellers, brick and tile manufacturers, engine builders etc. The complete list is given in Appendix 3 on pages 394-5.

19) i.e. excluding those in textile manufacture.

20) Maps 3 - 4A, pages 43 - 6; also Appendix 3, Maps A4 and A5, pages 404 - 5.

21) cf. maps 7 and 8, pages 116-7.

there was some tweed production there, the Harris tweed industry did not develop to any significant extent in western districts. (22) Because of the greater rate of population loss from the west coast than from the Outer Hebrides, a higher proportion of the remaining population was necessarily preoccupied with crofting. Without the rapid proliferation of population that was occurring simultaneously in the islands, there were not, in all probability, enough persons on the western mainland to spare for other pursuits. (23)

Even on the east coast, and in the vicinity of the Great Glen, where manufacturing industries were largely located by 1891, it was hard to generate any extensive industrial or factory-based activities. As indicated in Chapter 4, the attempts by the Sutherland estates to stimulate various industries at Brora in the early nineteenth century had not been an unqualified success. The manufacturing sector in the town of Inverness itself, although proportionally twice as large as in the region as a whole and the largest single economic category in the parish by 1891, chiefly consisted of small enterprises (often family concerns) with few employees. However, there was generally a greater amount of movement in the manufacturing sector in Inverness parish than in the whole of the Northern Highlands. On average, over 60 per cent of those engaged in manufacturing in Inverness had been born

22) Report on Home Industries, op. cit.

23) cf. Chapter 3, esp. tables 20 and 23, pages 85 and 96.

elsewhere: the corresponding figure for the region (including Inverness), as shown in table 42, was about 50 per cent.

This situation was not unique to manufacturing, which was by no means the most mobile sector in Inverness parish. Its population as a whole was considerably more migratory than that of the rest of the study area. In Inverness, migrants outnumbered non-migrants in the sample by a ratio of 1.8 to 1 in 1851 and by one of 2.3 to 1 in 1891. The corresponding figures for the entire region were 1 to 1.4 (migrants to non-migrants) at all three censuses analysed.

Transport and communications: the development of major settlements

Although manufacturing was the largest sector in the parish of Inverness by the end of the period under consideration, this was outweighed at the three alternate censuses by the transport and construction industries, taken together. Moreover, manufacturing was still not as significant in proportional terms in Inverness by 1891 as agriculture had been in 1851. (Table 43 overleaf).

Table 43

Occupational structure of Inverness parish

	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Agriculture & fishing	20.7	17.0	12.0
Quarrying, construction	8.9	8.8	9.5
Transport & communications	7.7	9.3	11.6
Manufacturing	15.4	14.9	16.2
Distribution/misc. services	15.4	14.5	14.1
Professions, commerce, govt. & defence	7.7	7.7	7.9
Domestic service	1.2	3.1	4.1
Independent	1.2	2.6	5.8
Dependent	13.6	9.3	7.9
Not stated	<u>8.3</u>	<u>12.9</u>	<u>10.8</u>
Totals (=100%)	169	194	241

As in the entire Northern Highland region<sup>(24)</sup>, those sampled in the transport and communications sector in Inverness parish increased in number throughout the latter part of the century. At the same time, construction (and quarrying) activities also expanded.<sup>(25)</sup> Building and contracting were often necessary adjuncts to the improvement of transport and communications: for instance, masons who were engaged in aspects of road and canal construction were included (for the purposes of the present analysis) under the heading of construction itself. The growth of contracting work was, of course, also a concomitant of the growth of population and economic activity

24) Table 41, page 197 and maps 15/16, pages 216-7.

25) The transport industry in this analysis includes road, railway, and canal labourers as well as transport officials. It also includes postmen and couriers.

generally in Inverness and its vicinity.

Yet the primary sector, even in Inverness, continued to be of importance during this period, although other activities eventually superseded it. In fact, in all the other parishes with major settlements in the region, primary occupations continued to dominate the local economy. This is illustrated by table 44.

Table 44  
The primary sector in town areas <sup>(26)</sup>

Parish (incl. <u>landward areas</u> ) <sup>(27)</sup>	(per cent of total)		
	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Inverness	20.7	17.0	12.0
Dingwall	16.1	12.0	26.9
Wick	54.0	46.8	44.8
Thurso	63.6	62.1	53.6
Stornoway	59.0	60.0	67.8
Kilmallie	41.4	41.0	14.8

In most of these cases, the primary sector principally comprised those persons employed in agriculture. Inverness did not benefit directly to any great extent from the

- 26) Source: sample census data. It should be noted that the percentage for Dingwall and Kilmallie may have been subject to greater fluctuations than those for the other parishes because of the smaller numbers sampled. See Appendix 2, page 381-2.
- 27) For the purposes of the present study, the towns are not distinguished from the landward areas in any given parish. The published census table indicate, however, that about seven per cent of all the enumerated inhabitants of the town district of Inverness itself were engaged in the primary sector at the beginning of the period, and that this proportion declined towards the end of the century.



fishing industry, with only 2.4 per cent of those sampled in 1851 and 1.2 per cent in 1891 actually engaged in fishing and ancillary activities in the parish. Its growth was, however, greatly augmented by the construction of the Caledonian Canal and other communications providing the necessary infrastructure for the development of commercial fishing in the region. In fact, of these six parishes, only Wick and later Stornoway experienced any large-scale fishing activity. Dingwall and Thurso were both located in the neighbourhood of highly cultivated land and served as market towns for the local farms. It is therefore impossible to segregate parishes with growing settlements from predominantly rural districts on the sole basis of the proportions engaged in the primary sector, especially since some towns (like Golspie) were the seats of large estates and were actively augmented in size by agricultural developments. Thurso, for example, began to expand in the late eighteenth century partly as a result of the new town planned by Sir John Sinclair to accommodate the tenants of his reorganised lands.<sup>(28)</sup> As in the case of the Sutherland estates, this was another instance of land reform not always resulting in the outright expulsion of smallholders. Within the parish of Thurso their movement from country-side to town was as much due to "pull" as to

28) N.S.A., Vol. XV, "Caithness", p. 8. Also R. Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John: the life of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster 1754-1835*, op. cit., pp. 190-1. Sinclair had also hoped to promote Thurso as a fishing port. In addition, flagstone quarries were opened in the area from 1825.

"push" factors within the same economic sector. As shown in table 44, Thurso was largely an agricultural town even in the late nineteenth century.

Rural-to-urban migration, already shown in Chapter 2 not to have been a dominant feature of population movements in the Northern Highlands, was therefore not necessarily synonymous with agrarian decline in the relatively few instances when it did occur.<sup>(29)</sup> From the experience of towns such as Wick and Thurso, it is clear that the development of urban areas was in the first instance the result of reorganisation and expansion within the primary sector. It was such changes that were principally responsible for the attraction of secondary industry to the region. The building of harbours, roads, and later of railways on both east and west coasts was hastened by the expanding fishing industry as well as by national improvements in passenger transport and mail services. In 1852 it became possible to convey by steamer from Thurso to Orkney with the construction of a pier at Scrabster. This resulted in the linking of Thurso and Wick directly with Aberdeen and Leith.<sup>(30)</sup> In 1877 the mail contract was acquired by the Sutherland and Caithness Railway Company, the Highland Railway having been extended to Thurso in 1874.<sup>(31)</sup>

29) See Chapter 2, table 1, ff, page 29 ; also Chapter 4, pages 107-8.

30) See table 13, page 53.

31) G. Donaldson, *Northwards by Sea*, Edinburgh, 1966, pp. 45-47. Also H.A. Vallance, *The Highland Railway*, third edition 1969, David and Charles, p. 37.

The expansion of Inverness burgh itself was to an even greater extent the direct result of the development of transport and communications in the region. The first section of the Highland Railway - from Inverness to Nairn - was opened to traffic in 1855. However, Inverness had been a centre of communications for the eastern Highlands for a long time. The drove roads from the north converged on the town, and even cattle from the western mainland and Outer Hebrides were sometimes herded south via Inverness to circumvent the Great Glen.<sup>(32)</sup> After the second Jacobite rebellion of 1715, General George Wade received a royal commission to help pacify and patrol the Highland region by improving its roads. Of the routes constructed in Perthshire and Inverness-shire under Wade's supervision, one ran from Inverness to Fort William on the south side of Loch Ness, and one from Inverness to Dunkeld through Drumochter Pass. At the beginning of the following century a network of roads linked the north and west Highlands with Inverness, built at the instigation of the Parliamentary Commissioners for Roads, Bridges and Harbours in Scotland.<sup>(33)</sup> Simultaneously, and for similar reasons of defence, the encouragement of commerce, and the discouragement of emigration, the Commission for the Caledonian Canal was established in 1803.

32) See Chapter 1, page 10. A description of the routes followed by the drovers and of the sites for trysts and markets is given in A.R.B. Haldane, *The Drove Roads of Scotland*, David and Charles, 1973.

33) A.R.B. Haldane, *New Ways through the Glens*, David and Charles, 1962. cf. Appendix 4, map A4, page 404.

The actual commencement of construction of the Canal is technically outwith the principal period under consideration, but for a number of reasons it is too significant to be ignored. One reason is that its impact on the local economy was an important factor in the growth of settlements and the creation of new employment opportunities at either end of the Great Glen. Quarries were opened at Corpach and at Redcastle in Easter Ross to supply rubble-stone for locks. As well as the labourers who actually built the canal, often on a seasonal basis, skilled workers such as blacksmiths and masons were required. Local costs soared. "The price of oatmeal had risen from 20s. to 38s. per boll, that of a horse in the western district from £25 to 40 or 50 guineas, that of rope from 75s. to 100s. per cwt., and that of Baltic timber from 2s 6d. to 7s. per cu. ft." (34) Furthermore, it was necessary to improve the communications to and from the Great Glen as well as along the line of the canal, in order to transport supplies and to supervise the workers. All of this added to the ultimate cost of its belated completion. (35) Nevertheless, by 1825, a steam-

34) Jean Lindsay, *The Canals of Scotland*, David and Charles, 1968, pp. 148-152.

35) The canal was first opened in October 1822. By the time of its eventual completion, it was not large enough for some of the new fishery and naval vessels of the middle years of the century and had cost more than anticipated to construct - to the extent that the tolls levied deterred many ships from using it. (N.S.A. for Kilmallie parish, Vol. XIV, "Inverness", pp. 124-5). The 1803 Act had granted £20,000 of Telford's estimated £350,000 towards the project, and a further £50,000 was granted annually. By 1812, with less than half the work completed, expenditure had risen to £343,000; and Telford was cautioned not to employ too many workers. By 1819 it had cost £780,000. The widening and deepening of the canal which continued, together with the construction of new piers, well into the second half of the century, increased the costs. In addition, there were maintenance problems and claims for damages - arising mainly from faulty locks, masonry failures, flooding, and subsidence - to be met. (Lindsay, *op. cit.*)

boat service linking Glasgow and Inverness by the Crinan and Caledonian Canals had been successfully established only two years after the latter had officially been opened for the first time. (36)

In 1845 a private company produced plans for a railway along the south side of the Caledonian Canal, but the Commissioners refused permission for it to be built. The railway, together with the existing road, would probably have bankrupted the canal, which because of the high lock charges was even failing to deter fishing boats from making the dangerous north coast passage. Passenger transport remained the most important aspect of the canal's functions throughout the nineteenth century, despite the opening in 1884 of a rail link between Inverness and Glasgow. Another attempt to build a railway through the Great Glen, this time by the Glasgow and North Western Company, was defeated in Parliament in 1883. By the 1890s the MacBrayne Steamship Company enjoyed a monopoly of the passenger trade between Inverness and Oban; and the opening of further railway branches on the West Highland Railway and the Invergarry and Fort Augustus Railway "provided a brief stimulus to goods traffic". (37)

The New Statistical Account for Kilmallie parish, in which Corpach was situated, proved to be prophetic in its

36) *ibid.*, pp. 128, 142, 177.

37) *ibid.*, pp. 168.-74. See Appendix 4, map A5, page 405.

comments on the Caledonian Canal:

"No one can yet say how successful it may prove; but already it has attracted thousands of travellers, British and foreign. The number is increasing every year..." (38)

Concurrent with the improvement in communications was the growth of tourism in the Northern Highland region on a larger scale (and in greater comfort) than had been possible in the previous century.<sup>(39)</sup> Although few could afford the comparative luxury of a sporting holiday in the remoter parts of the region, the number of visitors to Inverness rose as the century progressed. Even after the opening of the Fort Augustus railway, most travellers still preferred to make the journey from Banavie to Inverness entirely by canal.<sup>(40)</sup>

Moreover, the railway companies which had expected to profit from the increased passenger to and from Inverness had to compete not only with the Caledonian Canal but with each other. The two main companies in the area, the Highland and the North British, which had already penetrated the region, were challenged in the 1880s and 1890s by various proposals and eventually rivalled to some extent

38) N.S.A., op. cit. (note (35) above).

39) eg. the tour by James Boswell and Dr. Samuel Johnston, 1773.

40) J. Thomas, *the West Highland Railway*, David and Charles, second edition 1976, p. 117. It should be noted that visitors, like seasonal migrants, were of no great significance in a head of family sample taken from the April censuses. (cf. Chapter 5, note (12), page 164.)

by the Inverness and Fort Augustus Railway.<sup>(41)</sup> Meanwhile, the construction of the West Highland line began in 1889 under the auspices of the North British Railway Company. The Mallaig terminus was opened in 1901, giving added stimulus to the west coast fishing industry as well as bringing more tourists into the area.<sup>(42)</sup>

Over sixty per cent of those sampled at all three censuses analysed who were engaged in transport and communications in the Northern Highlands were enumerated in districts other than their parish of birth. The increase in activity, if not in actual movement, within this sector is illustrated in maps 15/16 on pages 216-7 and table 45 below.

Table 45

Mobility in transport and communications<sup>(43)</sup>

	(per cent of total)		
	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Non-migrants	36.2	38.2	38.2
Migrants	<u>63.8</u>	<u>61.8</u>	<u>61.8</u>
Totals (=100%)	69	76	110

41) Wray Vamplew, *Railway investment in the Scottish Highlands*, *Transport History*, 1970, Vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 141-153; and Neil Sinclair, *The Aviemore Line: Railway politics in the highlands 1882-98*, *ibid.*, pp. 284-300. See Appendix 4, map A5.

42) See Chapter 5, page 190.

43) See note (25), page 207.



NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 17.24  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 2.06  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 3.34

DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 10

MAP 15 . PERCENTAGE IN TRANSPORT INDUSTRY, 1851



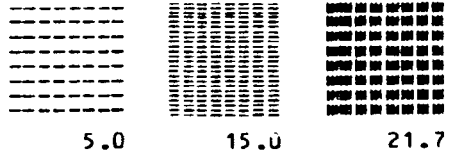
NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 73                      14                      1





NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 21.74  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 3.49  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 4.94  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 10

MAP 16. PERCENTAGE IN TRANSPORT INDUSTRY, 1991



NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 63                      22                      3

Professional and skilled workers (such as engineers and mechanics) as well as drivers, pilots, and lock-keepers were normally employed on a year-round basis by contractors or by the various transport companies. Railway and road labourers, however, were often as seasonal as those recruited to build the Caledonian Canal. The increase in opportunities for part-time and seasonal work in transport and communications is perhaps indicated by the rise in numbers of those sampled who were so engaged as a secondary occupation; from only 9 out of 180 with two occupations in 1851 to 26 out of 205 by 1891. (There was a similar increase among those with three occupations, from 3 in 1851 to 9 in 1891). The most frequent combinations in the latter year, according to the sample, were with principal employment in agriculture (10) and distribution (5). There were also several in the dependent category who were periodically engaged in the construction of communications. For example, after the 1845 famine, "destitution roads" were built in Wester Ross and north-west Sutherland at the instigation of private landowners or of government agencies. This may account for the apparently high proportions in the area shown in map 15 to have been engaged in transport at the 1851 census. The Commissioners for the Caledonian Canal deliberately employed more casual labourers than were actually required at the time. (44)

44) Lindsay, op. cit., p. 169. See also Chapter 3, note (15), page 84.

It was partly because of the numbers of seasonal workers hired for such projects that many of them, most notably the construction of the canal itself, were a great deal more costly than was first estimated, because they took a great deal longer to be completed.<sup>(45)</sup> By 1805 it was estimated that on average nine hundred men were employed on the Caledonian Canal, about five hundred of whom were based at the Inverness end and four hundred at Corpach. Like the railway workers of later years, they were generally accommodated in huts on the site of their labour, although many slept rough. The majority working in the Corpach area came from the Inner Hebrides and western Inverness-shire, while those based at Inverness chiefly originated from Caithness, Ross-shire, Aberdeen, and Moray. According to the Commissioners, in answer to criticisms voiced in Parliament and elsewhere, the Irish played a minimal part in the construction of the canal. The main problem, as with the fishing industry,<sup>(46)</sup> was the seasonal activities of the crofting labourers. The numbers employed rose to around fourteen hundred in the summer and might fall to five or six hundred in the winter, "when the Highlanders were not used to working". In addition, even at the height of the working year, "there took place fluctuations which might well try the most placid temper. Seed-time and harvest, fishing, peat-cutting

45) See note (35), page 212. Also Richards, *Anatomy of the Sutherland fortune 1780-1880*, op. cit.

46) cf. Chapter 5, pages 168-84.

and potato-lifting each in due season made its call and seldom in vain". There were further labour shortages due to the requirements of the militia service or to the press-ganging of men to fight in the Napoleonic Wars. (47)

In any event, it has to be stated that the temporary nature of such capital projects as canal and later railway construction meant that the arrangements made for accommodating the workers were generally primitive in the extreme. It was small wonder, therefore, that the attraction and retention of a labour force - even at times of severe privation - was a great deal more difficult than had apparently been anticipated. In view of the fact that many landlords were willing to alleviate the plight of their tenants on a totally voluntary basis, it was perhaps almost more remarkable that such projects were completed at all. (48)

#### Services and other sectors

As expected, the greatest concentration of those in full-time employment in the transport industry was in Inverness parish. About 25 per cent of all the cases sampled were located there by 1891. The rate of growth in the transport sector in Inverness was greater in both halves of the period 1851-91 than in any other activity. (49)

47) Haldane, *New Ways through the Glens*, op. cit., pp. 81-3.

48) Richards, op. cit. cf note (44) above; and Chapter 7, note (30), page 250.

49) table 43, page 207.

Moreover, the vast majority of these individuals were migrants from other parishes if not from outside the region altogether. Table 46 makes it clear that opportunities in transport and in other sectors in the town increasingly attracted persons from other parts of the country.

Table 46

Birthplaces of inhabitants of Inverness parish

	(per cent of total)		
<u>Area of birth</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Inverness parish	36.1	34.5	30.3
Elsewhere on east coast	16.6	16.5	14.9
Western parishes	21.9	23.7	20.7
Insular parishes	0.6	1.5	1.2
Outside region	<u>24.9</u>	<u>23.7</u>	<u>32.8</u>
Totals (=100%)	169	194	241

This table substantiates the assumption made in previous chapters, with particular reference to maps 3 - 4A, that much of the migration from parishes in the south-western part of the mainland was to Inverness and its environs, especially in the wake of the 1845 famine.<sup>(50)</sup> It also helps to substantiate the suggestion that redundant agricultural workers on the east coast often moved not into neighbouring towns but outwith the region altogether in search of further employment, often still in the agrarian

50) See Chapter 2, tables 12 (page 50 ) and 16 (page 66 ); and Chapter 3, table 20, page 85 . This is discussed further under the heading of the Poor Law, pages 226-8.

sector.<sup>(51)</sup> Although agricultural wages were perhaps slightly higher in the vicinity of Inverness than elsewhere in the Northern Highlands<sup>(52)</sup>, they were not as generous as those paid to farm labourers in east and west central Scotland.<sup>(53)</sup> Moreover, as noted in table 43, the primary sector in Inverness parish - despite its original stimulus to the growth of the town - was declining between 1851 and 1891 in absolute as well as in proportional terms. It was also the least mobile of all the categories listed in table 43, with 61.3 per cent of those sampled in agriculture and forestry in 1851, and 57.7 per cent in 1891, born elsewhere. Even so, the proportion of migrants in agriculture in Inverness parish were far higher than those in the region as a whole.<sup>(54)</sup>

The difference between the extent of migration in the Inverness area and that in other parts of the region was partly attributable to the growth of services in the town and its surrounds. The largest service sector in Inverness

51) Chapter 2, tables 12 (page 50) and 13, (page 53).

52) According to the New Statistical Account, the average daily agricultural wages for male labourers in the Inverness area ranged from 1s. to 2s. Elsewhere in the region, the minimum daily wage was about 9d. and the maximum 1s. 8d. These sums were exclusive of subsistence.

53) Chapter 2, table 14 and note (58), pages 55-7.

54) Chapter 4, table 31, page 138.

parish was dealing and distribution. (55) These activities were stimulated by the decline in agriculture in the eastern division of the region which lessened the extent of local self-sufficiency and by the improvements in transport which increased the range of markets and of supplies. 71.4 per cent of those sampled in distributive trades alone were migrants to the area, according to the 1851 census. The proportions of persons engaged in the various professions, in commerce, and in miscellaneous services were also greater in the Inverness area and in some of the other major settlements than elsewhere in the region. For example, the New Statistical Account for Kilmallie parish recorded that

"There is one bank agent at Fort William, and about twenty merchants between Fort William and Corpach. There are three medical gentlemen at Fort William, four lawyers and a Sheriff-substitute. There is a sufficient number of carpenters, masons, shoemakers and tailors, between Fort William and Corpach, to supply the wants of the parish and adjacent country". (56)

55) The proportions in distributive trades alone in Inverness were 8.3 per cent in 1851 and 10.8 per cent in 1891. The numbers sampled in these and other services were very small, and fluctuations in proportions may have been exaggerated by sampling error. In addition, the proportions engaged in distribution and in miscellaneous services apparently declined in Inverness while, according to table 41 on page 197, there was a slight increase in distributive trades in the region as a whole. This may have been due to their "clustering" in certain areas, which could have distorted their representation in the sample. (See Appendix 2, page 376). At the same time, it should be noted that these figures are based on place of residence and not on place of work. It is likely that many persons in both secondary and service sectors tended increasingly to reside at some distance from their place of work as time went on, and possibly outwith the parish boundaries altogether.

56) N.S.A., Vol. XIV, "Inverness", p. 123.

These were for the most part occupations pursued by highly mobile people, especially those in positions which involved specialised training or education which was not available in the region. Not a single professional person sampled in Inverness in 1871 was a native of that parish. The same was true of over 80 per cent of those in similar categories in the region as a whole.

The marked growth in the government sector in Inverness, from 1.5 per cent in 1871 to 4.6 per cent in 1891, denoted its increasing importance as an administrative and judicial centre. These figures were also affected by the temporary presence of soldiers in the town and of naval vessels in the harbour or on the Caledonian Canal. The parishes of Ardersier (containing Fort George) and of Boleskine and Abertarff (containing Fort Augustus) experienced similar fluctuations. The majority of individuals sampled in these categories came from outside the region.

Also noteworthy was the growth of the numbers in domestic service in Inverness, together with the proportions described as being of independent status. Both were indicative of the increasing prosperity of at least part of the local population. Almost all of those engaged in domestic service in the Northern Highlands were, predictably,



female. (57) The proportions of women family heads included in the sample increased towards the end of the century. (table 47).

Table 47

Sex distribution of heads of family sampled in  
Northern Highlands

	(per cent of total)		
	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Males	78.3	77.9	76.5
Females	<u>21.7</u>	<u>22.1</u>	<u>23.5</u>
Totals (=100%)	2594	2540	2476

Yet, despite the increase in the domestic service sector, the proportions of women sampled in Inverness parish itself had declined by 1891. (table 48).

Table 48

Sex distribution of heads of family sampled in  
Inverness parish

	(per cent of total)		
	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Males	66.3	63.9	69.7
Females	<u>33.7</u>	<u>36.1</u>	<u>30.3</u>
Totals (=100%)	169	194	241

57) It was the rapid increase in domestic service in Britain generally during the same period that caused Ravenstein to state that "females are more migratory than males", at least as far as internal migration was concerned. This was because of the variety of opportunities offered in many areas to unattached women. On the other hand, men (especially those with no dependants) were more likely to move further afield than single women and often emigrated on their own, although their relatives might subsequently join them. (Ravenstein, *op. cit.*). cf. Chapter 3, note (23), page 89.

There are a number of possible explanations for this. The most obvious is that women in domestic service did not normally rank as heads of family but were included as servants in the census returns for other families. The increasing proportion of female family heads in the region as a whole, illustrated in table 47, was indicative of the changing occupational structure of the region and particularly of the decline in agriculture on the east coast, together with the continuation of the lotting system elsewhere. The numbers of women engaged in agriculture rose slightly from 35.4 per cent in 1851 to 36.8 per cent in 1891, while the proportion of men so occupied declined from 60.4 per cent to 54.8 per cent. Yet the figures in table 48 help to explain the improving sex ratio previously noted throughout the Northern Highlands during the same period. (58) An increase in the number of male heads of household in the parish of Inverness and some other major settlements, mainly due to in-migration, and a decline in the rate of emigration from the insular districts in particular (together with the high rate of natural increase there) would account for the narrowing of the gap between females and males in the population at large during this time.

#### The Poor Law and rural-to-urban migration

Of the females sampled in Inverness, the largest single proportion in fact consisted of those who had no

58) *ibid.*

stated occupations, at least in the latter part of the period (34.3 per cent in 1871 and 32.9 per cent in 1891). However, in 1851, nearly 37 per cent of the female heads of family sampled in the parish were in the dependent category, compared with only 1.8 per cent of the males. This was to be expected in view of the number of women who were only "acting" heads of household in the absence of husbands, fathers, or brothers. But because the dependent category also included paupers, it also reflects the influence of the amended Poor Law both on migration and on the level of dependence in the northern counties generally. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1845, which removed the responsibility of providing for the poor from the parish of residence to the parish of birth (unless at least five years' residence could be proved), eventually reduced the number of paupers in Inverness and other parishes with relatively high poor rates. These tended, in rural districts, to be areas with towns or growing settlements where the assessment for contributions from the local inhabitants had been comparatively high, because poor relief in such areas could not be left to voluntary contributions. For example, the proportions described as independent were greater in Inverness than elsewhere in the region and increased markedly during the period in question. It is not surprising, therefore, to discover in the New Statistical Account that the average annual sum donated to individual paupers in Inverness ranged from £1 to £2 in the late 1830s, whereas in many parishes in other parts of the region it was often as low as 5 or 6 shillings.

At the same time, by confirming the old tradition that the able-bodied poor in Scotland did not qualify for relief, the Poor Law Amendment Act gradually but effectively lessened the level of "official" pauperism both in Inverness parish and in the Northern Highland region as a whole. (59) As already observed, after the 1845 famine those who were able were often put to work on the improvement of communications in the north and west mainland. A number of schemes were also introduced to transfer paupers from the Highlands to agricultural and industrial employment elsewhere in Scotland. (60) Such measures obviously had a more direct impact on males than on females, although by 1891 the proportion of female dependants (of all women sampled) had declined to 17.8 per cent.

The situation was somewhat different in Stornoway. In the Outer Hebrides generally and in Stornoway in particular, as indicated by the excerpt from the New Statistical Account quoted above (61), poverty played an important part in the retention and proliferation of

59) R.A. Cage, *The Scottish Poor Law 1745-1845*, Glasgow University Ph.D., 1974. Also R. Mitchison, *The Making of the Old Scottish Poor Law, Past and Present*, no. 63, May 1974, pp. 58-93; and debate by R.A. Cage and R. Mitchison, no. 69, Nov. 1975, pp. 113-121. An analysis of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law (Scotland) of 1844 is undertaken by I. Levitt and C. Smout, *The State of the Scottish Working-Class in 1843*, Scottish Academic Press, 1979.

60) Macdonald, *op. cit.* Also J. Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, Edinburgh, 1976.

61) See note (1), page 193.

population. (62) The increase in poverty in the Stornoway area is revealed in table 49.

Table 49

Occupational structure of Stornoway parish

	(per cent of total)		
	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Agriculture & fishing	59.0	60.0	67.8
Quarrying, construction	6.0	5.8	4.8
Transport & communications	7.2	-	2.4
Manufacturing	9.6	12.4	4.8
Distribution/misc. services	-	4.8	4.8
Professions, commerce, govt. & defence	3.6	2.9	2.4
Domestic service	-	-	-
Independent	2.4	1.0	-
Dependent	7.2	5.7	8.9
Not stated	<u>4.8</u>	<u>7.6</u>	<u>4.0</u>
Totals (=100%)	83	105	124

Not only were the numbers sampled in the dependent category larger in Stornoway and its vicinity in 1891 than in 1851, in contrast with the experience of Inverness (although the actual proportions were roughly comparable by the end of the period). The level of migration in all sectors was also lower in Stornoway than in Inverness and indeed than in the region as a whole. By 1891 there were more than three times as many non-migrant as migrant family heads in the sample for the parish, compared with almost equal

62) The extent to which poverty was accountable for the low rates of emigration noted especially in insular districts is examined further in Chapters 7 and 8.

numbers of both in 1851. Despite the increasing proportions engaged in the primary sector<sup>(63)</sup>, only 41 per cent of those sampled in agriculture were migrants from other parishes in 1851, and this had fallen to 18 per cent - even with an increase in the actual numbers concerned - by 1891. Agricultural wages there at the time of the New Statistical Account ranged from 1s. to 1s.6d. per day, no higher than in neighbouring parishes.<sup>(64)</sup> With the substantial decline in farming in the islands in the later nineteenth century noted in table 28 (page 112), there was little stimulus to migration into Stornoway from this source.

As in the primary sector, the proportions of dependants who were also migrants declined in Stornoway while the total number in the dependent category increased. The greatest mobility in Stornoway occurred in the smallest sectors. Only construction, distribution, professional and governmental services comprised at least equal ratios of migrants to non-migrants throughout most of the period in question. The transport industry comprised very few natives of other parishes: in fact the transport sector was relatively small in Stornoway and did not play such an influential part in urban development as in Inverness. Communications within (and of course between) the islands in the nineteenth century were predominantly by sea.<sup>(65)</sup> Moreover, a scheme

63) Table 44, page 208.

64) See note (52), page 222.

65) cf. Chapter 5, pages 187-9.

to build a light railway in Lewis and Harris failed in the late years of the century.<sup>(66)</sup> Many of these services were in any case features of a market economy, and as such were of little demand in a community still predominantly based on subsistence farming.

It has already been established that, in the region generally, there was little drift from the countryside to the towns.<sup>(67)</sup> Such rural-to-urban migration as might have been attributable to the old Poor Law was eventually reversed after the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1845. The growth of Stornoway throughout the nineteenth century was in any event primarily attributable to natural increase and not to in-migration. Not only was destitution more prevalent in the islands than on the mainland after the potato famines of the first half of the century; it was also more difficult to relieve, except by emigration schemes.<sup>(68)</sup> In view of the indications in previous chapters of an irreconcilability of crofting and other more specialised occupations, it is possible that paupers in the islands were less adaptable to different forms of employment than were those on the eastern mainland and especially those in the Inverness area. The options of different forms of employment were also far more limited.

In the later nineteenth century, urban growth (such as it was) in the Northern Highlands had two basic causes:

66) Vallance, *op. cit.*, p. 63. Also Appendix 4, map A5, page 405.

67) See note (29), page 210.

68) cf. Chapter 7.

the reorganisation of the primary sector and the secondary industries and services which were consequently attracted to the region. It was the latter group of activities which drew migrants to the towns from other parts of the north of Scotland and, more significantly, from elsewhere. While the expansion of Inverness and various smaller settlements such as Wick may thus have temporarily helped to check the depopulation of the region, Stornoway lacked an adequate service infrastructure for its growing numbers of inhabitants. This may have been partly due to its remoteness from the mainland, but was probably also attributable to the lack of movement - and to the lack of demand - from within the crofting community. The labour supply for such services was not forthcoming in the islands as it was among the more versatile workers who increasingly came, as shown in table 46<sup>(69)</sup>, from outside the region altogether. This was because the more mobile and generally the more adaptable inhabitants of the islands were, on the whole, the ones who emigrated.

69) page 221.



CHAPTER 7

The Emigration Option

## The chronology of emigration

Thus far in the present study, it has been argued that the problems of overpopulation and of losses by migration were to a large extent separate ones, both with regard to the parts of the region and to the types of person affected by them. It was for this reason that the internal changes in the regional economy had results which were virtually the reverse of those anticipated by the various agencies responsible for them. For the most part, nineteenth century developments in the various sectors already discussed did not check emigration, nor did they relieve congestion. Rather, they stimulated movement in the eastern mainland and its adjoining districts west of the "Highland line" which were already the source of most of the population losses from the region; while inadvertently inhibiting it from the impoverished remoter areas of the north-west and the Outer Hebrides. Unfortunately, because the differences between the two problems were not sufficiently understood, policies on emigration from the region further exacerbated the situation.

With the increase in the crofting population and the simultaneous decline in its occupational and geographical mobility, the attitudes of both legislators and landlords towards the question of emigration from the Northern Highlands underwent a gradual change as the nineteenth

century progressed. As shown earlier in this study, considerable effort was exerted at the beginning of the century to check movement from the region. One chapter of Thomas Telford's report on his survey of the Highlands for the Commissioners of the Treasury in 1802 was entitled "The causes of emigration and the means of preventing it". The 1803 Passenger Act, restricting the number of passengers on any transoceanic vessel to one per two tons, together with the commencement of work on the Caledonian Canal and other Highland communications, was at least partly intended to ensure that there was a continuing supply of manpower for the country's industries and defences. (1) The Highland Society was formed as early as 1784 by various interested parties anxious in the first instance to improve agricultural production. Subsequently, however, one of its main objectives was to prevent the continuation of the exodus from the region which resumed after the American War of Independence, on a scale which at first appeared to dominate emigration from other parts of Scotland but which later was superseded by that from the Central Lowlands. (2)

- 1) cf. Chapter 6. The Passenger Act of 1803 was only partially successful, since it was impossible to prevent the subsequent embarkation of passengers from unofficial ports of call throughout the highlands and islands. Efforts to curb emigration effectively hinged on cutting the profits of agents. cf. MI. Adam, *The causes of the Highland emigrations of 1783-1803*, op. cit.
- 2) *ibid.* From the date available, the exact numbers of Highland emigrants cannot be ascertained. As the nineteenth century progressed, the additional problem of distinguishing the port of embarkation from the county of origin is encountered in passenger lists. cf. Flinn (ed.), op. cit., p. 453, also Chapter 2, note (67), page 62.

The chronology of emigration from the Scottish Highlands has been classified by J.M. Cameron into three main phases prior to 1855. The first phase, when emigration was actively opposed by many landlords as well as by the government, lasted until the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The period 1815-1840 saw a gradual relaxation in emigration restrictions, as attested by a succession of modified Passenger Acts. After 1840, amendments to the Poor Law in Scotland (together with the increase in destitution caused by two major famines within the same decade) necessitated the active encouragement of emigration from areas with "redundant" populations as the only acceptable means of dealing with the able-bodied poor. (3)

Most of the early legislation on emigration prior to 1840, with the notable exception of the 1803 Passenger Act (4), was not of direct relevance to the Highland situation, which was remote from the minds of most politicians in Whitehall. However, underlying this legislative chronology was an apparent confusion about the characteristics of the population generally most likely to emigrate, whether on a voluntary or an assisted basis. The opposition to emigration from the Highlands coincided with the need to retain manpower for the kelp

3) J.M. Cameron, *The changing role of the Highland landlords relative to Scottish emigration during the first half of the nineteenth century*, *Scottish Colloquium Proceedings*, 4/5, University of Guelph, 1972, pp. 77-87.

4) See previous discussion of the kelp industry in Chapter 4, pages 129-33.

and fishing industries during the Napoleonic Wars and to provide recruits for the armed services. In fact, active resistance on the part of legislators and landlords should have begun before the first outbreak of war with the American colonies in 1775, when it was reported in the press that many of the earliest emigrants from the Highlands and Islands appeared to be people of substance and standing. Although a large number of these may have been "superfluous middlemen who farmed badly, paid inadequate rents, and by oppressive services prevented the under-tenants from attending properly to their farms",<sup>(5)</sup> the tacksmen and their families nevertheless effectively comprised the middle classes of Highland society who not only took considerable wealth with them, but who also might have had a decisive influence on those who remained.<sup>(6)</sup> While opposition to emigration might have been justified on the grounds that it adversely affected the social structure of the region, it was of doubtful relevance to the manpower argument. In fact, these early emigrations made little impact on the rapid proliferation of population in the region during the closing decades of the eighteenth century or the early years of the nineteenth.

Moreover, the preliminary efforts of some landlords to improve their estates appear to have been equally unrelated to the facts of emigration. A major crisis

5) M.I. Adam, *The highland emigration of 1770*, op. cit., p. 289.

6) See Chapter 8, especially footnote (103), page 329.

occurred with the famine of 1782, resulting in a wave of emigration which had little to do with agricultural changes. Miss Adam writes of "the significant fact that Argyllshire, which took strongly to sheep farming, provided comparatively few of the late eighteenth century emigrants, while the Hebrides, which were much less affected by sheep farming, provided many".<sup>(7)</sup> She continues in the following terms :

"The real cause of Highland distress and Highland emigration in the late eighteenth century is to be found in circumstances which the landlord did not create, and which were entirely apart from the introduction of sheep. Briefly, the Highland population was over-running its resources, and unless positive preventive measures were taken, emigration or migration on a fairly large scale was inevitable".<sup>(8)</sup>

However, those most likely to emigrate were generally not the cause of the problem. The fact was that, as already observed, overpopulation and emigration were usually attributable to different groups of people. This is demonstrated by the opposing views on emigration taken by the Malthusian school of thought on the one hand and by Adam Smith and his followers on the other. For instance, W.P. Alison wrote in his "Observations on the Famine of 1846-7" :

"When we find a population ... living chiefly on potatoes, and reduced to absolute destitution, unable to purchase other food when the potato crop fails, we have at once disclosed to us the undeniable fact, that that population is redundant".<sup>(9)</sup>

7) Adam, The causes of the Highland emigrations of 1783-1803, op. cit., pp. 81-2.

8) *ibid.*, p. 85.

9) Flinn (ed.), op. cit., p. 33.

The notion of "redundant population" originated with Thomas Malthus, emanating from the prevalent middle-class and moralistic belief that poverty among the able-bodied poor was normally voluntary and avoidable.<sup>(10)</sup> This belief was fostered by Thomas Chalmers, whose influence pervaded the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1845<sup>(11)</sup>, although he himself was strongly opposed to a policy of assisted emigration on practical and economic, as well as moral, grounds :

"Whenever emigration prevails, it is the evidence of a country where the population presses on the means of subsistence, from which pressure it seeks to be relieved by successive discharges. We believe that a regular system of emigration would certainly bring on and perpetuate such a state; and surely far more desirable, than that a people should press on the limit of their own home resources, were it, that they kept comfortably and somewhat largely within the limit ... It were better that the population should not be carried up to the extreme of what the country can bear, by the recklessness of the people; than that it should be kept down to that point by emigration".<sup>(12)</sup>

Malthus and Chalmers both believed that a system of parish relief for the able-bodied poor was merely a

- 10) T. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, 1798. Until the appearance of this work and of the first censuses of 1801 and 1811, the British population was generally believed to have been declining. Malthus himself did not advocate emigration as a solution to the problem of over-population, contenting himself only with the recommendation that the clergy should warn their parishioners of the dangers of "early and improvident marriages".
- 11) cf. R. Cage, *The Scottish Poor Law 1745-1845*, op. cit., p. iv: "Middle class attitudes towards poverty prevented their seeing the crucial link between destitution and unemployment".
- 12) T. Chalmers, *On Political Economy in connexion with the Moral State and Moral Prospects of Society*, Vol. I, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, Glasgow, 1832, pp. 384 - 5.

"premium on indolence" which "cushioned the pauper against the full consequences of his sexual irresponsibility".<sup>(13)</sup> In any event, it was generally not the paupers who were emigrating at that stage. This was recognised by those eighteenth and early nineteenth century theorists - namely Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill - who took a different view of the problem. While the attitude of Chalmers and his colleagues continued to prevail in Scotland until the late 1830s, emigration to the colonies gradually came to be advocated not only as a means of easing the growing pressure on Britain's resources, but also as a stimulus to her imperial status. The latter theory, first advanced by Adam Smith in "The Wealth of Nations" which was published concurrently with the onset of the American War of Independence in 1776 and some years ahead of Malthus' "Essay on the Principle of Population", is summarised by Johnston in these words :

"Mercantilist policy had encouraged colonial development only to the extent necessary to ensure Britain with a supply of required materials or food ... Smith did not believe that British prosperity depended upon restriction or that the mother country profited by exploiting the colony. Colonies could be envisaged as purchasers of British goods meeting the mother country in an equal and mutually beneficial trade. As their population grew, this trade would grow. Moreover, if colonies were settled by British citizens, they would be more likely to want British goods. By emigration a suppliant for public handouts in Britain could become a customer for British manufactures in the colonies. In this light the process was doubly desirable".<sup>(14)</sup>

13) H.J.M. Johnston, British Emigration Policy 1815-1830, "shovelling out paupers", Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 3.

14) *ibid.*, p. 4.



However, it was unemployed artisans and not destitute peasants whom Smith had in mind in this context. It was only after the Napoleonic Wars that his ideas began to gain support with the British government - and then it was in response to a crisis that barely affected the Northern Highlands at all.

The first phase : private action despite government opposition

Despite the views of Malthus and Chalmers on "redundant population", a policy of assisting emigration to the colonies from the Highlands in fact began to be implemented on a private basis even before the government was officially prepared to consider such a solution to the more pressing problems of unemployed handloom weavers and returning soldiers - and the still more urgent problem of the impoverished Irish. Indeed, the first private scheme, coinciding with the 1803 Passenger Act, encountered a great deal of opposition. Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk, became the proprietor of Prince Edward Island in 1803. His plan to encourage and assist emigration to the province had three main purposes : to help alleviate further suffering in Ireland after the rebellion of 1798, to divert British emigration tending towards the newly-independent United States into British North America (in accordance with the principles advocated by Adam Smith), and additionally to aid destitute Highlanders and simultaneously to found Gaelic-speaking settlements in Canada "which would be

immune to revolutionary ideas".<sup>(15)</sup>

Even this early example of assisted emigration was of limited aid to the genuinely destitute. Selkirk advanced money for the passage to those who needed it, but land in Prince Edward Island was sold to Highland settlers at the usual price (2 to 4 shillings per acre) although payment could be deferred. He also made loans in kind, for example of seeds, tools, and livestock. Some emigrants worked their way as indentured servants. All those who received assistance did so on the basis of their potential to repay the sums invested in them, though Selkirk never recouped his own outlay.<sup>(16)</sup>

Another of Selkirk's schemes again illustrated the selective nature of sponsored emigration from the region, together with a second feature which increasingly accompanied such plans: a growing resistance to emigration not only on the part of the legislators but also on the part of those whom it was theoretically intended to help. In 1811, Selkirk acquired land on the Red River in what is now Southern Manitoba. Yet despite economic recession and clearances in parts of the eastern and adjoining western parishes, the recruitment of Highlanders as well as Irish settlers met with a poor response. Hill suggests that this may have been partly due to rival propaganda disseminated by the

15) D. Hill, *Great Emigrations I: The Scots to Canada*, London, 1972, pp. 60-1.

16) *ibid.*, pp. 58-9.

Hudson's Bay and North-West Companies. It may also have been due to the fundamental lack of mobility on the part of a large element in the Highland population observed elsewhere in this study. It is interesting to note that in 1813 a further 100 newcomers to the Red River settlement out of 700 applicants (mostly Sutherlanders) were from the parish of Kildonan, and were chosen on grounds of their being a "hardy, reliable, and close-knit community" rather than on account of their desperate circumstances.<sup>(17)</sup> The Red River settlement eventually flourished notwithstanding frequent attacks from Indian tribes, "Norwester" opposition, crop failure, disease, and other privations.

This episode is a single yet striking example of the previous suggestion that much of the early (pre-1845) emigration from the Northern Highland region originated from the east coast.<sup>(18)</sup> A similar pattern has been noted with reference to other Canadian settlements in the period 1815-1855 in a study of place names by the aforementioned Cameron, who remarks on the scarcity of Gaelic names amongst the Highland colonies in central and Upper Canada :

"This lack of Gaelic names in Southern Ontario can possibly be explained by suggesting that most of the Highland Scots who emigrated ... especially in the years before the famines, were from the eastern Highlands, where Gaelic was not as strong by the early nineteenth century".<sup>(19)</sup>

17) *ibid.*, p. 68.

18) *cf.* Chapter 2, note (61) ff, pages 59-60.

19) J.M. Cameron, An introduction to the study of Scottish settlement of Southern Ontario - a comparison of place names, Ontario History, Vol. XLI, no. 3, Sept. 1969, pp. 167-172.

The survival of the Gaelic culture in parts of Canada<sup>(20)</sup> was primarily attributable to the extensive emigrations from the west coast and the islands which followed the various famines of the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. In this case, Selkirk's intentions to found Gaelic-speaking settlements "immune from revolutionary ideas" in the early part of the nineteenth century may have been somewhat optimistic, to say the least. Indeed, his Red River scheme apparently rejected the largely monoglot west-coast Gaels in favour of a partially Anglicised group of settlers from Kildonan who were felt to be more "reliable" in the long term. It was later to prove that the determination of the Red River settlers to survive compared favourably with the apparent lack of determination manifested by the settlers in specially designated crofting communities in Canada drawn from the Gaelic-speaking Hebridean population in the late 1880s.<sup>(21)</sup>

The second phase: emigration officially reconsidered

The selection process was not limited to intangible qualities such as hardiness and reliability. Cameron notes its existence in the early emigrations :

"While not denying that many emigrants arrived in Canada with little or no means, it is clear that the majority of emigrants from Scotland during this period (1815-55) were average or above average with respect to skills and material possessions".<sup>(22)</sup>

20) cf. Chapter 8, pages 304-16.

21) See notes (63)-(65), page 269.

22) J.M. Cameron, A study of the factors that assisted and directed Scottish emigration to Upper Canada 1815-1855, Glasgow University Ph.D. 1970, p. 549.

This statement, like the remarks of Miss Adam noted in Chapter 2<sup>(23)</sup>, is based mainly on local newspaper reports on the financial status of emigrants aboard various ships. Apart from their money and material possessions, they were for the most part farmers, agricultural labourers, and skilled workers - such as carpenters or coopers - who were shown in early chapters to have originated mainly from the east coast and to have had a greater propensity to migrate than the predominantly western and insular crofting population. The trend towards selective emigration was already so marked by the 1820s that it gave rise to the plea by Clanranald's factor in South Uist in 1827 that he and the local clergy be allowed to supervise the choice of those who were to be assisted to emigrate, or else

"...assistance will be given where it is not required, the most wealthy and industrious of our Population will emigrate and we will be left with the dregs". (24)

Moreover, the increasing numbers of destitute families in the Northern Highlands provided an additional incentive for others to leave, as Alexander MacGregor, the Church of Scotland licentiate at Kilmuir in Skye, observed

- 23) Adam, *The highland emigration of 1770*, op. cit., p. 283: "It must be granted that at least the leaders of the movement of the seventies were reasonably prosperous people. Knowing that they were strongly attached to their native land, and that they were not driven out by stress of poverty, the question naturally arises what induced them to go?" cf. Chapter 2, note (72), page 64.
- 24) SRO GD 201/4/10/97, Duncan Shaw to Alexander Hunter, February 25, 1827, quoted by Cameron, op. cit., p. 558.

in 1841 :

"Unless a public grant for emigration could be speedily obtained the better classes of the small tenants, seeing that the poor landless families will ever be a drawback on their exertions, will doubtless make every endeavour to leave the country while they are able, and thus will leave the poor and destitute to labour and toil in circumstances more wretched and miserable than ever". (25)

The first move towards government-sponsored emigration at national level<sup>(26)</sup> occurred in 1815, at the close of the Napoleonic Wars and following the American War of 1812. During the latter war the Canadian militia had been outnumbered by the American, a circumstance which the British government was anxious to avoid in future. Financial assistance for a new frontier settlement, though minimal, was sufficient to attract a small number of applicants from Glenelg, Glenshiel, and Fort Augustus in western and central Inverness-shire. The majority of candidates for this first military settlement at Rideau, however, were predominantly displaced handloom weavers from lowland Scotland, the north and midlands of England. (27)

- 25) A. MacGregor, On the advantages of a government grant for emigration from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Quarterly Journal of Agriculture, Vol. XI, 1840-41, p. 298. W.A. Hance in his published dissertation "The Outer Hebrides in relation to Highland Depopulation" (New York, 1949) draws attention to the eighth report of the Congested Districts Board (1906) in which it is observed that the cottar population, who comprised about one-quarter of the inhabitants of the Outer Hebrides at the time of the Napier Commission, constituted a continuing problem in many crofting communities.
- 26) i.e. during the nineteenth century. A previous settlement had been sponsored by the British Government in 1749 in Halifax in order to strengthen the British hold in Nova Scotia after the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748).
- 27) The Luddite riots of 1811 onwards were held to be largely responsible for "the vastly expanded urge to emigrate". cf. D. Hill, op. cit., p. 77.

Delays in implementing the scheme (which ended in failure) added to its expense, which the Colonial Office was anxious to minimise, and strengthened the argument that sponsored emigrants should in future be people of means :

"It had never been the intention of that department (i.e. the Colonial Office) to encourage people to emigrate who otherwise would have stayed in Britain. The traditional view of population as a national asset dictated the thinking of the Colonial Secretary (Lord Bathurst) and his Under-Secretary ... Their objective in sponsoring emigration was to strengthen British possessions overseas. They wanted self-sufficient emigrants, not paupers. The terms on which they granted assistance were designed to disqualify the indigent and the near indigent. They acted without reference to growing public concern about unemployment and over-population". (28)

In all probability, the Highlands of Scotland at that time were as remote from the thinking as they were from the geographical situation of the politicians in London. In any event, it is clear that in the minds of Adam Smith and the Colonial Office staff, starving peasants did not come under the heading of "self-sufficient emigrants". The fact was that the element of the British population which could most aptly be described as "redundant" (in the terms of Adam Smith and Lord Bathurst) owing to the combined forces of the industrial revolution and the economic recession following the close of hostilities with both France and the United States was not the destitute crofters but the unemployed, and unemployable, skilled workers.

28) Johnston, op. cit., p. 31, cf. note (14), page 240.

These were the people who, given the means, were the most likely to migrate in search of employment in any event. (They were also the least likely, in the view of some politicians, to make successful settlers in North America or elsewhere because of their lack of agricultural knowledge or experience). Both the earliest government schemes and the emigration societies which ensued from the 1820s were thus for the most part reaching only the converted and made little impact on the other "redundant population", the destitute inhabitants especially of the Scottish Highlands and Ireland. Of the two thousand or more Scots (whether from the Highlands or elsewhere) who emigrated between 1815 and 1821, few if any had been ranked as able-bodied paupers for a significant length of time.

Official attitudes towards encouraging peasant emigration became more positive when Robert Horton became colonial secretary in 1821. The Irish situation was becoming desperate by this time. The fall in the price of wheat between 1817 and 1821 which resulted from a resumption of foreign trade and from a series of good harvests in the United Kingdom generally made it progressively more difficult for many agricultural labourers to find employment, a situation which was further complicated by the effects of the 1815 Corn Law. Their plight, together with that of the crofting population, became acute in 1822 when heavy rains ruined the potato



crop. With the number of Irish immigrants to Britain already adding to the problem of unemployed British soldiers, labourers, and artisans, and with terrorism increasing among evicted Irish tenants, Horton began to implement his first schemes of parish-assisted emigration, supplemented by government loans. However, it is interesting to note that even against this background of hunger and unrest, most of the emigrants underwent an element of selection. They were also all volunteers. Of the 600 Irish sent to Canada in July 1823, all were said to be penniless, but "a majority of the men were labourers; a few were unemployed and homeless; a small number were landless farmers".<sup>(29)</sup> Most were therefore mobile with regard to their occupations and few were genuine long-term paupers. Although they all came from the south-west of Ireland, they were for these reasons barely comparable with the majority who remained behind, either in Ireland or in the north-west mainland and islands of Scotland.

Indeed, Horton's Select Committees on Emigration were specifically reminded of the various schemes implemented in the Highlands to alleviate unemployment, especially the local fishery ventures and the road and canal construction programmes. The crofting counties were thus not considered to be in need of additional aid in terms of emigration subsidies at the time. Moreover, this feeling was at least partly based on the evidence of the landlords

29) *ibid.*, p. 78.

themselves, who in 1803 had been instrumental in the formulation of the Passenger Act.

"Emigration had been under way for many years; in communities where it was popular tenants would make supreme efforts to raise the money to pay for their passages. Yet the witnesses who appeared before the Emigration Committees did not speak of this movement with much enthusiasm. The old paternalism which in the past had governed the relationship of Highland landlords with their tenants was not completely gone. There were still some landlords who put loyalty ahead of efficient management and refused to turn out tenants although sheep would bring in more income. Those who were less disinterested in income were unlikely to contribute towards emigration for other good reasons. If they had many tenants and few sheep, they were in a poor position to raise money. If the reverse condition prevailed, they had no incentive to do so. The Emigration Committee concluded that, with the exception of some of the Western Islands, life in Scotland could not be improved by emigration". (30)

There was another reason why the government-assisted emigration schemes of the 1820s had little effect in Scotland generally and in the Highlands in particular. The old Scottish Poor Law, unlike that in operation in England and Wales, made no allowance for the compulsory collection of parish rates for the relief of the able-bodied poor. (31) Horton's proposals were based on

30) *ibid.*, p. 104. Also Parl. Pap. vol. iv (404), 1826, pp. 65, 73-81; and vol. v (550), 1826-7, pp. 287-290. The island of Rhum was evacuated in 1825, at the request of its tenants. Petitions were received from Benbecula, Harris, and Skye for government assistance in emigration to Canada (cf. note (24)).

31) cf. Chapter 6, pages 226-31.

government loans to parishes on the security of the poor rates, and therefore could not be implemented in that form north of the border. (Nor, for that matter, could they have been fulfilled even after the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1845). Assisted emigrations from the Northern Highlands generally had to be postponed until the landlords were favourably disposed towards them. Even then it was not easy to obtain government support. The Select Committee on the Highlands, reporting in 1842 on the destitution caused by the famines of 1836-7, felt that sponsored emigration was too costly to be worth while.<sup>(32)</sup> The state acknowledged no obligation to assist the destitute to emigrate, any more than it acknowledged a responsibility to supervise the relief of the able-bodied poor in general. It was up to the landlords individually to make good this deficiency on both counts.

The third phase : the option encouraged

Three factors underlay the apparent gradual change in attitude suggested by Cameron on the part of some landlords to emigration as the century progressed. One was the

32) i.e. Report of the Select Committee Appointed to inquire into the Condition of the Population of the Islands and Highlands of Scotland, and into the Practicability of affording the People Relief by means of Emigration, Parl. Pap. 1841, vol. VI. It is worth noting that nevertheless there was a limited amount of government assistance for Highland inhabitants at this time. Between 1837 and 1839, 11 ships sailed for Australia from Highland ports under the so-called "Government System". Although the vast majority of their passengers were from the west coast, they mainly comprised skilled persons and not the genuinely destitute. cf. Balfour, op. cit., pp. 68-78.

problem of sustaining the increasing number of tenants in the face of economic recession and crop failure. Another was the limitations of both the old and the amended Poor Laws. In addition to the lack of provision for the able-bodied poor, the average expenditure per pauper in the century preceding the Poor Law Amendment Act was consistently lower in the four Northern Highland counties (together with Moray and Nairn) than elsewhere in Scotland. This was partly caused and encouraged by the vestiges of the paternalistic clan system and the attitudes of resignation and dependence which it often fostered;<sup>(33)</sup> partly by the tendency to provide relief in kind rather than in cash in the remoter parts of the region.<sup>(34)</sup> In many such areas, cash payments to paupers in the absence of a market economy would not have been very useful in any event.

The third factor which caused the eventual reconciliation to a policy of assisted emigration on the part of some landlords was the continued consolidation of a number of estates under the proprietorship of a very small group of individuals. Cameron observes that

33) See Chapter 8, pages 325-9.

34) Cage, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-5. There was some feeling at this time that landlords were evading their responsibilities to destitute tenants by assisting their emigration.

"... in the Lowlands the greater number of medium sized landlords meant that the financial burden of supporting the population could be shared in times of crisis while in the Highlands this burden was frequently borne by one landlord who over time became increasingly unable to meet these demands". (35)

The amalgamation of estates, necessitating as it did the renewal of attempts to maximise returns on the land by the introduction of sheep and later of deer farms, accelerated the process of clearance which reached a climax in the western mainland and insular districts in the 1840s and early 1850s - aggravated by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1845 and the effects of the famine that same year. It was not until this time, however, that the landlords themselves actually began to offer assistance towards the emigration of their tenants. Until the early 1840s they had, with a few exceptions, relied on the government to do so, with the result that only a very small number of inhabitants were enabled to leave the most critical areas. It is possible that, had the landlords been able and willing to share part of the expense prior to that time, the attitude of the Select Committee on Emigration might have been more favourable. (36) Likewise, additional government support for the landlords might have stimulated a more positive response to

35) Cameron, *Scottish Emigration to Upper Canada*, op. cit., p. 281.

36) See note (32) above. A number of witnesses stated that proprietors would be willing to pay up to one-third of the cost of sponsoring emigration if the remainder were paid by the government or from public funds.

emigration and lessened the extent of the forced evictions of the late 1840s and early 1850s. Whether either party was under any obligation to lend its support to an unprofitable venture in a laissez-faire economy is debatable. It is equally questionable whether the availability of greater funds for assisted emigration schemes at an earlier stage would in reality have evoked a more enthusiastic reception from the genuinely "redundant population".

Certainly from the late 1840s neither government nor proprietors found convincing reasons to oppose assisted emigration schemes from the Northern Highlands, although the latter had to bear the brunt of the financial burden :

"This is well illustrated by the fact that when in the 1840s destitution in the Highlands coincided with a labour shortage in Australia, the assistance the government were prepared to offer was so limited as to force the responsibility for emigration upon the landlords who, anxious to assist as many to leave as possible, chose the cheaper outlet to Canada". (37)

The notorious Sollas evictions exemplified both the lack of government funds and the desire of certain landlords to minimise their own expenditure on their tenants' behalf. According to a number of sources, however, even landlords who evicted large numbers of tenants under the guise of assisted emigration schemes may not have been acting for purely selfish motives. J.P. Day describes

37) Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

the Sollas events in the following terms :

"...grave difficulties existed even under an unselfish and generous landlord, and, therefore, the difficulties in the north-west generally cannot have been created, though they may in some cases have been aggravated, by the immediate action of the landlords. Sollas was a township consisting of 603 people. The rental of the place was supposed to be £382, but in 1849 arrears to the extent of £624 had accumulated. Since the potato famine the people had been living in great misery; they had constantly received relief from the Highland Destitution Committee or the proprietor, and at the time (May 1849) notice of eviction was served, the proprietor was supplying them with meal free of cost... Obviously such tenants were no advantage to the landlords, and the moral duty of supplying them with absolute necessities was an expense which, considering the continuous drain on his resources, he could not afford; nor, indeed, did the continuance of the population under these wretched conditions seem desirable in the interests of the people themselves". (38)

The first efforts of Lord Macdonald of North Uist and the Highland Destitution Committee to induce the crofters to emigrate to Canada met with resistance which turned to violence. Thus, while some landlords were becoming reconciled to the inevitability of assisted emigration, their task was impossible without adequate government support and without the acquiescence of their tenants. In the same passage Day notes that Lord Macdonald incurred debts on his property amounting to £200,000. Even if the Destitution Board or other public agencies had met the cost of assisted emigration in full, a number of proprietors of those estates where tenants had fallen into

38) Day, op. cit., pp. 98-100.

arrears with their rent would still not have been able to recoup their expenses, nor overcome the hostility with which their schemes were met.

Furthermore, by the late 1840s the government had every reason to encourage emigration to the colonies. The recruiting of Highlanders, among others, by private land companies<sup>(39)</sup> eventually gave rise in 1840 to the establishment of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission in London. By then the arguments of laissez-faire advocates, that assisted emigration was tantamount to state interference in the economy, were beginning to lose their force. Nevertheless there was a definite distinction drawn between the policy of actively attracting new settlers for the colonies, as promoted by Edward Gibbon Wakefield; and the policy years earlier described by Charles Buller, an opponent of Robert Horton, as "shovelling out paupers". The former involved the selection of individual applicants of apparent potential and possessions and the (limited) investment of public funds in them, with certain conditions to ensure some form of repayment. The latter appeared to be a poor basis for investment, for there was unlikely ever to be any return - if indeed evicted tenants could reasonably be expected to make one. Not until 1851 was there official sanction in Scotland for the general stratagem formulated by Horton for England and Ireland of making

39) e.g. the Hudson's Bay and North-west Companies. cf note (17), page 243.



loans available to landlords who wished to help their tenants emigrate.<sup>(40)</sup> By then, the active opposition to such schemes came not primarily from politicians or proprietors, but from the tenants themselves.<sup>(41)</sup>

Meanwhile, several landlords continued to make heavy commitments of their own resources to attempt to relieve the local destitution. Between 1844 and 1850 Sir James Matheson financed the exodus of over 2,200 persons from Lewis to Canada, at a cost of over £40,000. This, and additional expenditure on his tenants, totalled more than £100,000. Other owners of land in the western and insular districts followed suit, for instance Lord Dunmore of Harris and Macleod of Skye.<sup>(42)</sup> Colonel Gordon of Cluny "assisted" the emigration of seventeen hundred tenants from Benbecula and South Uist to Quebec and Nova Scotia between 1848 and 1851. So frantic was he to be rid of his obligations that he actually offered to sell the island of Barra to the government as a penal colony.<sup>(43)</sup>

The Emigration Advances Act of 1851 was not, however, as extensively used as had been anticipated. Cameron writes that

40) i.e. the Emigration Advances Act, 1851.

41) See Chapter 4, pages 140-6. Organised resistance to the process of clearance was manifested from this time (e.g. at Coigach)

42) Cameron, *op. cit.*, pp. 351-4.

43) Hance, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-3.

"There are perhaps three reasons for this - first, many of the proprietors were already in very poor financial circumstances and were not prepared to increase their liabilities further; second, the fact that approval for and details of the emigration had to be examined by government bodies acted as a deterrent; third, during the period 1848-52 over seven thousand persons were assisted to emigrate to the port of Quebec by Highland landlords, and as a result of several instances of forced emigration and harsh treatment by landlords a considerable anti-landlord and anti-emigration feeling developed... which tended to act as a deterrent to further landlord-assisted emigration". (44)

The combination of the continued ambivalence of both government and landlords to emigration on the one hand and the change from passive indifference to active resistance by some of their tenants on the other was perhaps most forcefully expressed by the response to the Highland Emigration Society, which between 1852 and 1857 attempted to expedite the process of assisted emigration. In 1851 the fear of the Presbytery on the island of Skye of another famine similar to that of 1845 was so great that a report was submitted to the Board of Supervision (established in 1845 to administer the amended Poor Law) by its chairman, Sir John McNeill. He recommended that additional help be given from public funds towards the alleviating of pressure on scarce resources, especially in Skye, by sponsored emigration. McNeill believed that although there appeared to be a general lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Skye inhabitants for the suggestion, there were still many people on the island and elsewhere who

44) Cameron, Scottish Emigration to Upper Canada, op. cit., pp. 317-8.

would avail themselves of the opportunity of leaving if they had the means to do so. In Coigach, for instance, where active resistance to clearance was organised only two years later, a number of people were said by McNeill to be anxious to emigrate either to North America or to Australia but could not pay the fare. (45)

The Board of Supervision was not notably more generous in its response to the McNeill report than the Destitution Board had been in aiding the proprietors a few years previously. In the words by Day,

"...The Board were firmly attached to the emigration policy and were annoyed that the proprietors' offers of assistance should have been 'met by a sullen refusal or turbulent resistance and by clamorous complaints of injustice.' They conceived the idea that, to bring home to the people the necessity for emigration, it would be useful to throw the responsibility and burden of the immediate relief of destitution on the local authorities and local resources...The Board of Supervision, impressed with the lack of success which had attended the efforts of the destitution boards, and convinced of the futility of a continuation of extraneous financial aid, had determined, to put it bluntly, to starve the people into consenting to emigrate". (46)

Because of the largely negative attitude of the Board of Supervision to assisted emigration, a voluntary organisation called the Skye Emigration Society was formed under the chairmanship of Thomas Fraser, Sheriff-Substitute of

45) McNeill Report to the Board of Supervision, Edinburgh, 1851, pp. 1035-1099.

46) Day, op. cit., pp. 101-2. See Chapter 8, note (1), page 278.

the island. It was financed by public appeals, contributions from landlords and colonial authorities. A year later it was absorbed by the Highland Emigration Society, under the patronage of Prince Albert. Its president, Sir Charles Trevelyan, who was Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, was especially keen that the Society should sponsor emigration to Australia, although its remit did not exclude Canada. At that time an acute labour shortage existed in Australia, which resulted in the substantial reduction of the cost of travel there through the support given to the scheme by the Australian authorities and landowners. Trevelyan felt that the "pastoral background" of the Highlanders would make them suitable candidates for employment on the Australian sheep farms; and he wished furthermore to discourage the "mendicant attitude" which was fostered by the landlords and to a lesser extent by the Destitution Boards following the famine. He envisaged that between 30,000 and 40,000 redundant inhabitants of the western and insular districts would be transferred with the Society's aid to gainful positions in the Antipodes. (47)

In fact, only about 5,000 persons took advantage of the facilities offered by the Society. Moreover, only 6 of the 29 vessels under contract to the Highland Emigration Society between 1852 and 1857 had a total complement of

47) Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

Highland passengers. (48) In 1855 1,390 Highlanders were selected as suitable emigrants for the new colony at Victoria. But only 158 embarked,

"the prospect of a good harvest having ostensibly induced the remainder to stay behind - a fact which merely emphasises the reluctance of Highlanders to emigrate when conditions at home showed even the least sign of improvement". (49)

In 1856 the dearth of applicants was such that Trevelyan wrote to McNeill :

"Our undertaking is apparently coming to a natural and happy termination by the people being able to live happily at home". (50)

There were at least three factors accounting for the lack of enthusiasm on the part of those whom the Highland Emigration Society was intended to help. One was the apparent disincentive of many of the most destitute west coast and insular inhabitants to move anywhere at all, which has been noted elsewhere in the present study. (51) Another was the growing reaction against landlords who sought to "clear" their tenants from their crofts on any

48) *ibid.*, p. 124. Moreover, at least one consignment of passengers never reached their destination because of an outbreak of smallpox on board ship, the *Hercules*, at Queenstown in 1852. This was despite the fact that it was a condition of acceptance by the Highland Emigration Society that all persons must be vaccinated (note (52)).

49) Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

50) Report on the Highland Emigration Society, Vol. IV, p. 84.

51) A detailed examination of this attitude is undertaken in Chapter 8. cf. Chapter 4, notes (51)-(55), pages 133-5.

pretext whatsoever. A third was, once again, the selective aspects of the scheme, which not only debarred the application of those who stood to profit most from it but also caused objections from local inhabitants and others against the "judicial picking" by the Society of those it proposed to assist. Prospective emigrants had to be able-bodied, of a certain age, and of good character. They also had to be in a position to pay a deposit (of between £1 and £2 for adults, 10s. for children) and be deemed likely to be able in due course to repay the Society the whole of the sum advanced for their passage. The following excerpt from the Society's prospectus illustrates the very limited scope of its appeal :

"Families in which there are more than two children under seven, or more than three under ten years of age; - or in which the sons outnumber the daughters; - widowers and widows with young children; - persons who intend to resort to the gold fields, to buy lands, or to invest capital in trade; - or who are in habitual receipt of parish relief; - or who have not been vaccinated, or not had the small pox, cannot be accepted".(52)

Thus the Highland Emigration Society, by refusing to sponsor the emigration of those with large families or those who because of their sex or of the untimely demise of a spouse were likely to have an adverse effect on the colonial population structure (which was notably male-

52) Society for Assisting Emigration from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, prospectus, SRO GD/64/3/117, p. 3. Quoted by Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

dominated), not only failed to make a decisive impact on the population problems of congested areas such as Skye but actually aggravated them to some extent. For the assistance given to small families capable of supporting themselves at once removed an important element in the population of particular districts and increased the dependency ratio of the remaining inhabitants. However, these dangers were not appreciated by those who were anxious to promote the scheme, as indicated by a passage in a pamphlet produced in 1851 to gain the support of the general public :

"There are many people in every part of Skye who are now desirous to emigrate, and who are kept in this country only because they have not the means of providing for their removal to another, and many others to whom, although they have not at present the wish or the ability to emigrate, removal to the Colonies would be an exchange of wretchedness and danger for comfort and independence. The disinclination alluded to arises partly from want of information on the subject, partly from distrust of the motives of those who recommend the measure, but principally from the apathy and indifference to the future which is perhaps the most melancholy of the consequences of the long continued distress which they have suffered".(53)

It was unfortunately the case that those least likely to emigrate on a voluntary basis were the most liable to be excluded from the Society's scheme. So the attempts to publicise it were not in fact aimed at those in the greatest "wretchedness and danger", who might not have been able to comprehend it in any event. (54) Indeed, it

53) *Emigration from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland to Australia*, London, 1852, p. 1; quoted by Cameron, *op. cit.*, pp. 319-20.

54) cf. Chapter 8, pages 285 - 316.

was highly improbable that persons in such a state would have been able to overcome their evident "apathy and indifference to the future" sufficiently to apply successfully for assistance, to achieve a comfortable standard of living in the colonies and to repay the Highland Emigration Society for the amount invested in their passage. There were thus fundamental contradictions in the Society's aims on the one hand and its policies on the other, although these were apparently not realised by the contemporaries who promoted it. On the one hand, its ostensible "raison d'être" was to relieve destitution in the western and insular districts of Scotland by partially assisted emigration. On the other, it was only prepared to sponsor the passage of those who were sufficiently qualified in demographic, social and economic terms to make a positive contribution on all these counts to colonial development and thus to Britain's imperial aspirations. Three quarters of a century after the publication of the "Wealth of Nations" and fifty years after the first Passenger Act, the different problems of emigration and overpopulation were still not being recognised.

#### The role of the landlords

In view of the division of opinion on the whole question of assisted emigration, discussed earlier in this chapter, it was not surprising that "distrust of motives" was cited in the last quotation as a reason for reluctance to emigrate. It was not clear whether some landlords



genuinely wished to help their tenants, whether they wished to be rid of the burden of supporting them in times of destitution<sup>(55)</sup>, whether they intended to use the opportunities offered by the Society as an excuse to remove crofters from their lands prior to the introduction of sheep farming, or whether a combination of these and possible other motives was involved.<sup>(56)</sup> Furthermore, not all landlords supported the scheme. This may have been because the owners of property from which emigrants were assisted to depart were required to pay one-third of the sum disbursed on their behalf by the Highland Emigration Society.<sup>(57)</sup> It may also have been because some proprietors did not feel an obligation to assist the paupers on their estates - which the Society did not do anyway - and others believed that the pressure on resources was attributable purely to the short-term effects of famine and would in due course be remedied by natural processes. For example, Robert Christie, agent for Skeabost in Skye, refused to contribute to the emigration fund, stating that

55) As noted in Chapter 3, some landlords cancelled all arrears of rent after the famines of 1836-7 and 1845-6. Others, such as Col. Gordon of Cluny and Lord MacDonald of North Uist, sent their tenants overseas after evicting them - albeit possibly with some provocation - from their homes. See note (38), page 255.

56) These various motives are discussed by Thomas Mulock in *The Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Socially Considered*, with reference to *Proprietors and People*, Edinburgh, 1850.

57) Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 109. Also J.P. Day, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

"I do not believe there is any obligation, either legal or moral, upon a proprietor to support the able-bodied poor upon his estate, more particularly when, as in Skeabost, these parties have been in possession of the estate for several years without paying any rent".

Moreover, there were some who still persisted in maintaining that there was no population problem at all.

Donald Ross, a Glasgow lawyer, wrote :

"Thousands besides me are satisfied, that were proprietors and people to do their duty, there is room enough, soil enough, and resources enough in the highlands of Scotland for double the population which they at present contain". (58)

The likely potential of those who departed under either private or public schemes to make good in a new environment and to repay the sums invested in them (whether voluntarily or contractually) was bound to affect the attitudes of the sponsors to some extent. Few proprietors could afford to put themselves in similar positions to the Earl of Selkirk in the early part of the century or Sir James Matheson later on, neither of whom recouped their outlays. Later still, between 1883 and 1886, Lady Gordon Cathcart of South Uist financed (partly by grant and partly by loan) the emigration of 73 local families to Canada. Only one of those sponsored ever fully repaid the loan, a record which was observed to have "discouraged further relief of this nature on the part of Lady Cathcart and other proprietors". (59) In

58) Cameron, *op. cit.*, pp. 320-22. Also Donald Ross, *Letters on the Depopulation of the Highlands*, Glasgow, 1856.

59) Hance, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

view of the fact that few (if any) of these would have emigrated without assistance, an expectation of repayment may have been unreasonable. Moreover, it was difficult for some tenants who may have intended to do so to repay their loans. A number were unable to settle or to make a living in their new surroundings. An additional charge made by contemporaries against the Highland Emigration Society is that not all its assisted emigrants to Australia did well there or adjusted to colonial life - a fact which may have accounted for some of the return migration previously noted.<sup>(60)</sup> Trevelyan, in his capacity as President of the Society, may have advocated the Highlanders on account of their "pastoral background" as potential settlers in Australia, but few if any could have had much experience of large-scale sheep farming, especially in view of the fact that some were being helped to emigrate to make way for it at home.

#### The role of the government

Between the late 1850s and the early 1880s the rate of assisted emigration slackened. This may be explained by a number of considerations, including the lack of applicants for earlier schemes, the increasing hostility to the idea of emigration between the Coigach rising of 1853 and the Crofters' War of 1882, together with the shortage of public funds and the retardation of overseas investment with the onset of the Great Depression in 1873.

60) Balfour, op. cit. cf. Chapters 2 and 8, especially pages 65-72.

The American Civil War, from 1861 to 1865, further disrupted the transatlantic traffic of passengers.

Nevertheless, many of the same criticisms which were made of the Rideau scheme in 1815 and the Highland Emigration Society between 1852 and 1857 may be made of a further attempt by the government to sponsor emigration from the region towards the end of the period under consideration. The Napier Commission (which had failed to recommend any statutory provision for security of tenure among the crofting population<sup>(61)</sup>), advocated the promotion of state-aided emigration from the congested crofting areas of the north-west mainland and the Outer Hebrides. This was based on the Commission's estimates of maximum land availability for crofting and the optimum size of a croft. Their calculations in 1884 showed that the average number of acres per head in the islands was 19.4. In the opinion of the Commissioners, even if half the existing population of the Hebrides were to emigrate, there would remain an average of only 39 acres for each croft. The minimum holding requirement for a single family was calculated to be 57 acres.<sup>(62)</sup>

A plan to assist emigration from these areas was therefore devised by the British government, between 1888 and 1890, in conjunction and cooperation with the Canadian authorities. J.P. Day describes this as "the only serious

61) cf. Chapter 4, notes (75)-(77), pages 147-8.

62) Napier Commission Report, loc. cit., Vol. XXXII, pp. 97-108 and esp. pp. 100-101.

attempt ever made by the State to emigrate the surplus crofter population".<sup>(63)</sup> Under this scheme about 500 emigrants from the north-west Highlands and outer islands were to be resettled in special crofting colonies in Canada: one in Killarney, in southern Manitoba, and the second at Saltcoats 200 miles further north.<sup>(64)</sup> In the event, both expeditions proved to be considerably more expensive than anticipated, and the Saltcoats settlement was ultimately abandoned by the crofters. Hance attributes the failure of the scheme to

"the unreasonable delay in formulating procedures, the dilatory fashion in which the first small group was handled, the people's lack of desire to emigrate, and the failure to provide sufficiently large grants to make it possible for many families to avail themselves of the opportunity".<sup>(65)</sup>

Once again, the basic problems were administrative ambivalence towards the scheme combined with its selective nature - the potential beneficiaries were expected to contribute towards the cost of their passage - and the continuing lack of positive response on the part of many crofters to the prospect of emigration. Indeed, now that the Crofters' Holdings Act had given them some measure of

63) Day, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

64) Second Report of the Commissioners appointed to carry out a Scheme of Colonisation in Canada, of crofters and cottars from the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Parl. Pap. Vol. XXIV, 1891, p. 4.

65) Hance, *op. cit.*, p. 61. Also Day, *op. cit.*, p. 124: "Loss of time in settling down to work, the inexperience and difficult character of the settlers, combined...to place the settlement (at Saltcoats) in jeopardy". cf. note (72), page 273.

security, any pressure that might have been felt by the few who responded to the campaign of the Highland Emigration Society between 1852 and 1857 to evacuate an area before they were evicted from it had disappeared. There may have been less distrust of motives in 1888 than in 1852, although even this is doubtful, in view of the strained relationships between tenants and landlords incurred by the actions of the Crofters' Commission.<sup>(66)</sup> On the other hand, the apathy towards emigration, thanks to the 1886 legislation, was if anything likely to have increased.

#### Attitudes to emigration

While both public and private assisted emigration schemes were falling far short of their objectives in the western and insular districts of the region, spontaneous emigration was continuing, especially from the east coast. In the early 1850s, the Highland regiments - about to become involved in the Crimean War - were for the first time in their history unable to fill their ranks from their usual sources of manpower and had to recruit men from elsewhere. This may have been partly due to the dearth of young men caused by a long tradition of emigration from the northern mainland (another example of the selective nature of migration), as well as to the employment boom which the war caused in munitions and textile factories in the Scottish Lowlands.<sup>(67)</sup>

66) Chapter 4, note (76), page 147.

67) Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 123. Also Prebble, *op. cit.*, pp. 318-19.

At the same time, railway companies in the United States and Canada were attracting recruits to their labour forces by advertising in papers such as the Inverness Courier and the John O'Groat Journal. (68) In addition, ships belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company sailed from London to Canada via the east coast of Scotland to engage labourers and apprentices. They regularly called at ports such as Stromness (and occasionally at Stornoway) prior to commencing their Atlantic crossing. The company also advertised the availability both of land and of jobs, as did other colonial land and trading companies, in the Highland newspapers. (69)

It would therefore appear that those with a propensity to emigrate were largely able to do so, however limited their means, either by making their own arrangements or by availing themselves of successive schemes to assist them. In this regard it should be noted that the remittances of families and friends overseas were a contributory factor - and Cameron ranks these agencies of primary importance in promoting emigration. (70) Such donations were, however, most likely to emanate from persons who had in turn been anxious to emigrate, and who had gone ahead of their relatives to arrange for their subsequent arrival. Thus the receipt of personal financial gifts or loans was itself a selective process, determined by the will and capacity of the donor as well as by the likely

68) Chapter 8, pages 285-8.

69) *ibid.*

70) Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 575. See Chapter 8, note (10), page 286.

response of the recipient to the option of emigration. In any event, those emigrating under assisted schemes were for the most part likely to have taken their families with them.

Although Cameron's thesis that assisted emigration in the nineteenth century went through a number of phases is well substantiated by the course of events<sup>(71)</sup>, it is not clear that there was any real change of attitude on the part of either private or public sponsors. The feelings of landlords and their agents on the subject remained confused, from the earliest schemes considered in this study to the last. Moreover, when a proprietor did in some way assist his tenants to emigrate, it did not necessarily imply either that he approved of the scheme or that he felt obliged to provide more than a minimal amount in support of it. The lack both of sufficient finance and planning accompanying Gordon of Cluny's "assistance" to tens of hundreds of former inhabitants of South Uist and Barra between 1848 and 1851 is but one example of this.

The same may be said of public sponsorship. Although restrictions on emigration were alleviated by a succession of Passenger Acts, and although the government itself actually formulated a number of emigration schemes from the Highlands and lent at least moral support to others, in none of the cases considered was it prepared to bear the whole of the cost. This gave the lie to the so-called

71) Note (3), page 236.



policy of "shovelling out paupers" - itself a continued matter for debate by successive governments. It also meant that the country was in effect encouraging the emigration of its abler citizens to the greater detriment of those who remained. Proposals which not only encouraged the genuinely destitute to emigrate but which also attempted to integrate them into their new surroundings might have met with a greater degree of success. As Day points out with reference to the government-sponsored crofter emigration schemes of 1888 and 1890 to Saltcoats and Killarney in Manitoba,

"It was a mistake to segregate the crofters; had they been scattered in small groups throughout the country they would have been far better able to benefit by the example and experience of others". (72)

As it was, insufficient funds made virtual nonsense of any attempts to relieve destitution by emigration and further undermined the justification by the Napier Commission, politicians, and the press that the attention paid during the 1880s to such a small proportion of the nation's population was in the interests of future national security and welfare. Those on whose behalf the legislation was passed were those with the least potential to defend the nation and stimulate its economy - by the standards of the emigration agents at any rate. They also posed little threat of revolution. Basically they wanted - for better or for worse - to be left alone.

72) Day, op. cit., p. 125.

With such mixed motives and feelings on the part of the sponsors, it is hardly surprising that the response was usually unenthusiastic if not actually apathetic. Since there was no noticeable demand for assisted emigration from most of the remaining inhabitants of the Northern Highlands, and since moreover they do not appear to have been consulted about the proposals while they were being formulated (usually by people who were not directly involved and who had no intention of emigrating themselves) it is almost more surprising that there was a response at all. In this respect the government schemes were less effective than those propounded by individual landlords. The latter at least had the opportunity of being personally acquainted with the potential emigrants and of explaining their plans to them. They also could, and sometimes did, force their tenants into acquiescence.

In fact, attitudes towards assisted emigration were at first shared by landlords and tenants alike. As long as the traditional economy could be assimilated to economic change, there was little enthusiasm for emigration schemes on the part of would-be sponsors, far less on that of the potential "beneficiaries". R.H. Campbell comments that

"As cash income dropped and cultivation remained poor and primitive only dependence on the potato enabled the increasing population of the Highlands to be maintained. In the 1840s this last remaining barrier to change collapsed...Emigration became a matter of necessity, no longer only of choice. A transformation of the Highland economy could no longer be averted". (73)

73) R.H. Campbell, *Scotland since 1707: the rise of an industrial society*, Basil Blackwell, 1971, p. 175.

At that point, the attitudes of tenants and landlords began to diverge. While the instigators of emigration schemes might have become reconciled to their necessity, it was difficult for many potential emigrants to accept this. Moreover, as long as neither government nor landlords had any obligation to accept the financial burden which such schemes imposed, it is hard to see how they could have succeeded without the active acquiescence of the evacuees concerned. Nor was cost the only factor. The shortfall if not the actual failure of the two major publicly-sponsored emigration schemes during the later nineteenth century - that of the Highland Emigration Society in the 1850s and that consequent to the Napier Commission recommendations in the late 1880s - cannot be explained solely in political, administrative, or even financial terms. Both proposals were instigated by crises which they were designed to relieve. Both failed: the former because it only attracted a fraction of the designated total number of emigrants and the latter because of the inability of many settlers to adapt to their new surroundings. In these and other instances economic adversity at home was clearly preferable to an unknown fate abroad. It remains to be investigated why this should have been the case, or if indeed it was not an entirely predictable reaction.

CHAPTER 8

The Response

## Constraints to migration

In the previous four chapters, the main options available to landlords and legislators have been discussed for reconciling population pressure with local resources in the Northern Highlands. Chapter 4, on the options in the agrarian sector, showed that the response to clearances on the one hand and to planned resettlement schemes on the other - both forms of enforced migration - was not as great as had been anticipated, in view of the circumstances in which many people lived. This was despite the fact that a certain amount of resistance might have been justified on compassionate grounds alone. An examination of the fishing industry in Chapter 5 demonstrated that, notwithstanding the precarious existence of large numbers of inhabitants throughout the region, those who arguably stood most to benefit from it did not grasp the opportunities offered them in fishing and ancillary work. In Chapter 6 the widening gap between the inhabitants of eastern and adjoining districts, who were comparatively mobile with regard to both location and occupation, and those of the more remote western and insular areas was illustrated in terms of the availability of opportunities outwith the primary sector. Finally, in Chapter 7, this theme was reiterated in the light of the possibilities for emigration throughout the nineteenth century. Again it was shown that those who possibly had most to gain actually benefited least from assisted emigration schemes.

All the foregoing chapters of Part III have in common one basic theme: a deficiency of positive response on the part of the population of the most congested crofting areas to the options offered them (if not actually forced on them) to improve their standards of living, whether in the immediate vicinity of their homes or elsewhere. It has already been argued that there was a relationship between occupation and mobility, as recorded in the censuses. The present chapter seeks to substantiate this relationship and argues that occupation (particularly crofting) in the Northern Highland context was in fact a surrogate for perhaps more fundamental locational, social and cultural considerations.

In 1918 J.P. Day described the attitude of the Highland inhabitants in the mid-nineteenth century towards emigration in terms of the findings of the McNeill report, noted in the previous chapter :

"The view taken by his Board was that emigration was the only solution, that the chief obstacle to emigration was the tenacious attachment of the people to their old homes, and that this obstacle would only be broken down by leaving the people unaided and forlorn till they too realised that to remain was simply to starve". (1)

The reason for this "tenacious attachment", according to Sir John himself, was that people believed that the relief offered them in times of privation - whether by their landlords, by the parishes, or by the Destitution

1) Day, op. cit., p. 102. cf. Chapter 7, note 46, page 259.

Board - was not charity but a rightful entitlement which they considered to be permanent. McNeill attributed this attitude to be recent legislative developments.

"Towards the close of 1845 a change in the administration of the law for the relief of the poor had made the inhabitants of the Highland districts generally aware that they possessed rights of which they had previously been ignorant, and they immediately conceived exaggerated notions of the nature and extent of these rights. These misapprehensions had not been removed when the issue of relief from the Destitution Funds commenced. The relief provided by statute for one class of destitute persons and that provided by voluntary charity for another were confounded together by the working population in remote areas". (2)

In view of the fact that neither under the old nor under the amended Poor Law did the able-bodied poor qualify for relief, this argument must be treated with some scepticism. Nevertheless, there may have been some confusion from 1845 onwards as to the origin of and reasons for various forms of relief. Certainly there were instances of navvies and seasonal labourers from the Highlands refusing offers of employment on railway construction in 1846 and returning home because "they understood that the government, on account of the distress in that part of Scotland after the failure of the potato crop, were prepared to dole out, without any strings attached, a supply of meal and other provisions". (3)

2) McNeill Report, loc. cit., p. xii.

3) J.E. Handley, *The Navvy in Scotland*, Cork University Press, 1970, pp. 27-8.

Temporary destitution payments after the famine may have helped to check the immediate severance from the land which had occurred so extensively in Ireland. It is unlikely, however, that the coincidence of administrative changes in the Poor Law and the extension of relief throughout the western Highlands and Islands after the potato blight of 1845 caused a hardening of attitude, apparent to McNeill, among the native inhabitants of the region. It is more probable that the events of 1845-6 merely confirmed a long-standing "fatalistic" tradition of dependence on others at times of need, which was attributable to deep-rooted social and cultural factors rather than to particular subsistence crises or to resultant administrative ambiguities. Miss Adam (a contemporary of Day) noted a lack of mobility among many inhabitants of the more remote parts of the Northern Highlands over half a century before the 1845 famine :

"In the Lowlands, a person who found himself without work moved off to the town to look for it, and the problem therefore never developed to an extent that attracted public attention. In the Highlands the people were to start with more prolific; the tie of kinship was sufficiently strong to allow an able-bodied man to live for some time on the charity of others, without any feeling of shame; while his attachment to the soil, and his remoteness from the manufacturing areas, increased the moral effort required of the Highlander who would leave his home in search of work". (4)

- 4) M.I. Adam, *The causes of the Highland emigrations of 1783-1803*, op. cit., p. 87. Also E. Soulsby, *An analysis of selected aspects of demographic change in the Border Counties of Scotland 1755-1961*, St. Andrews Ph.D., 1971, introduction.



Hance, writing in 1949, expressed similar ideas in trying to explain the continuing increase of population in the Outer Hebrides in the fifty years after the famine :

"It is difficult to understand fully why more people did not emigrate during this period. The factor of isolation, emphasised by the language barrier, is probably important. The failure to evolve sound schemes to assist emigration...is a second reason. But most important seems to have been, as it is today, the Islander's love for the Islands, for his family, and for his individual croft". (5)

Thus a number of scholars of Highland demographic history from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries agreed with the conclusions of McNeill that there was insufficient movement from the most congested parts of the region in relation to the available resources. Furthermore, all the sources quoted agreed that a deep-rooted "attachment" to the croft was perhaps the fundamental reason for it. Poverty itself, as suggested elsewhere in the present study, was not considered to be a basic cause of immobility. (6) In fact (especially prior to 1845) it sometimes served as an incentive to migrate, either in search of employment or of a greater measure of relief in the "assessed" parishes. As has already been shown, it was also possible even for the destitute to emigrate overseas either under indentured labour or with the later assistance of the landlords or the government,

5) Hance, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

6) esp. Chapters 6 and 7.

however ungenerous such assistance may often have been. Indeed, evidence has been presented of people boarding ships in desperation without any means of maintenance whatsoever. (7) It was almost always possible to move to another parish, to another part of the country or abroad, provided one had the incentive to do so. An understanding of the low level of response to migration opportunities both within and outside the region, despite extreme economic and social adversity at home, is therefore crucial to an attempt to explain the limited extent of population movements from parts of the Northern Highlands, and especially from the Outer Hebrides, in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The passages quoted above distinguish two main sets of factors influencing movement in the region: those regarding its location in relation to areas of expansion and those referring to the characteristics and expectations of its inhabitants. Of the latter, the most important seem to have been considerations of kinship and culture. This chapter will examine each constraint to migration insofar as it is possible to separate it from the others. Inevitably they are all inter-related to some extent, as shown below.

#### Locational factors

In Chapter 2, the extent to which the distance

7) See Chapter 2, note (75), page 65.

between any two areas is a determinant of the migration between them was discussed. The theory underlying the so-called "gravity model" was extensively modified in the context of the Northern Highland region. It was suggested that, in view of its physical features and of the existing communications network, it was often quicker and cheaper to move to an area further away from the place of origin than to an adjoining or neighbouring one. This hypothesis was exemplified with reference to both internal and external migration patterns. It was also shown that, these considerations notwithstanding, the extent of movement between some western and insular districts on the one hand and other parts of the region, of Scotland, or other countries was significantly less than might have been expected in gravitational terms. It was also less than anticipated in terms of economic "push-pull" factors. The availability of employment opportunities in the main population centres within the region - for example, in the fishing and construction industries - failed to attract many crofters and cottars in the congested areas of the north-west mainland and islands. It was almost as easy to encourage people to emigrate altogether; and as shown in Chapter 7 such schemes were of doubtful value both in terms of the response to them and in their impact on the remaining population. The difficulties involved were expressed by James Loch in the following terms :

"They deemed no comfort worth the possessing, which was to be purchased at the price of regular industry; no improvement worthy of adoption, if it was to be obtained at the expense of sacrificing the customs, or leaving the homes of their ancestors. So strongly did these feelings operate, that it cost them nearly the same effort to remove from the spot in which they were born and brought up, though the place of their new dwelling was situated on the sea-shore at the mouth of their native strath, or even in a neighbouring glen, as it cost them to make an exertion equal to transporting themselves across the Atlantic". (8)

Distance from expanding centres of employment was therefore not a fundamental obstacle to migration as far as the Highlander was concerned. An eighteenth century observer virtually pre-empted Loch by remarking, even before the first major clearances in the Northern Highlands, that "when he (i.e. the Highlander) has resolved to set out, he would as soon cross the Atlantic as he would cross an arm of the sea". (9) It has already been suggested that this attitude may have been more generally prevalent in the first part of the nineteenth century than it was in the second. After 1845 there was an apparent decline in the "resolve" to move anywhere at all, manifested by a slight fall in the net rate of migration loss in subsequent decades, by the poor response to the endeavours (albeit misdirected) of the Highland Emigration Society to attract emigrants, by the equally poor response to the efforts to stimulate commercial

8) James Loch on Sutherland clearances, in Mackenzie, *The Highland Clearances*, op. cit., p. 71.

9) *Old Statistical Account*, 1792-8, Vol. IV, p. 574.

fishing on the west coast, and by the increasing resistance to clearance in western and insular districts.

### Sources of information

But while linear distance may not itself have been a prime determinant of the extent or the directions of migration within and from the region, perceived distance such as the remoteness of parts of it - in terms of poor and erratic communications with the outside world - may have been a contributory factor. This could have had two main effects. On one hand, it might have prevented people from discovering opportunities to migrate and from exercising any degree of choice in the matter. On the other, remoteness from expanding areas could have made certain districts even more close-knit than agricultural or fishing communities generally tended to be and thus lessened still further the propensity of their inhabitants to move. It would, for instance, have served to heighten barriers of language and culture which will be discussed in the course of this chapter.

Knowledge of opportunities elsewhere was dependent in turn on two further considerations, which were only partially determined by linear distance from other areas and to a greater extent were functions of isolation and poor communications: the availability of information and the literacy rate or level of education of the local population.

In his study of the agencies that directed Scottish emigration to Upper Canada between 1815 and 1855, Cameron concludes that the three most important were friends and relatives; periodicals, books and journals; shipping and emigration agents. (10) The same agencies, and especially the first two, were likely to have been equally significant in determining migration within Scotland itself. The extent to which friends and relatives may have influenced the dimensions and directions of emigration from the Northern Highland region has already been discussed to some extent in Chapters 2 and 7. (11). Their importance was likely to have been greater in instances when individuals preceded other members of the family or of a local community to new habitations elsewhere in Scotland or abroad than in cases of assisted emigration of families or evacuation of whole settlements. It was also affected by their ability to contribute to their families' removal expenses and, in many instances, by their capacity to arouse enthusiasm by letter-writing. Clearly, this would in turn only be effective in households where at least one inhabitant was able to read. Family connections thus emphasised some of the most selective aspects of migration and do not appear to have been principal determinants of movement within or from many of the western and insular districts of the region

10) Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 576. Other agencies, in their order of importance, were the government; emigration societies and trade unions; landlords; land companies and speculators; and churches.

11) See Chapter 2, note (63) and section on return migration, pages 65-72; also Chapter 7, note (70), page 271.

during the period 1851-91. Rather, the non-movement of heads of household may have served to reinforce already static tendencies. It is because of the extent to which heads of household influenced the movement or non-movement of whole families that the sample census data on which much of the present study is based was drawn from this section of the population. (12)

A further source of information was the main offices of shipping and emigration agents, such as those of the colonial land companies, which were located in the Scottish lowlands and at the major ports of embarkation. For example, from 1827 the Canada Company established a number of main agencies in Aberdeen, Perth, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and the Borders, as well as two information offices in Inverness and Wick. (13)

The emigration agents, Duncan McLennan of Inverness and John Sutherland of Wick, who were already active in encouraging migration to Canada from these two centres in the 1830s, set up a number of joint sub-agencies throughout the north of Scotland between 1842 and 1845. Again, however, these were predominantly situated in Easter Ross, south-east Sutherland and Caithness (in addition to those in Moray, Nairn, Orkney and Shetland). Passengers were able to embark for Quebec on ships chartered by Sutherland and McLennan at Loch Laxford and Lochinver in western Sutherland. (14) However, the majority of emigrants had already boarded at Cromarty

12) See notes (87) - (89), pages 324-5, and Appendix 2, page 373.

13) Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

14) *ibid*, pp. 500-505.

and originated mainly from the east coast. The ships were of a high standard and so, it would appear, were the emigrants, as described in the John O'Groat Journal in an article summarised by Cameron as follows :

"The majority of the adults were young married couples (some of only a few weeks) who were healthy, well provided for and generally of a 'superior class'. Many of the men were busy reading emigration books and the general morale on the ship was high. The overall impression produced by this article was indeed favourable both as regards the operation of the agents and the quality of the emigrants".(15)

### Education

The availability and dissemination of information on migration opportunities naturally presupposed an ability on the part of the recipients to comprehend it. As well as having the advantages of the location in their area of these various agencies and sub-offices, the east coast inhabitants appeared to have a relatively high literacy rate a good thirty years before the 1872 Education Act. Those living in other areas were dependent on periodical advertisements (or broadsheets) as a primary source of information on the possibilities of emigration, and therefore were even more dependent than their eastern counterparts on an ability to read. Oral communications were not likely to have been sufficient in themselves to give people an adequate understanding of the wider implications of emigration. This is not to suggest that

15) *ibid.* Also John O'Groat Journal, 3 June 1842, "A Visit to an Emigrant Ship" (i.e. the Joseph Green).



the inhabitants of western and insular districts were entirely illiterate, but certainly the literacy rate was considerably lower there than on the east coast and in other parts of Scotland. On a national basis, it has been estimated that prior to the Education Acts of 1870 and 1872 in England and Scotland respectively, only a very small proportion of the adult population could be regarded as competent readers, although by 1840 perhaps three-quarters could read to some extent (and about three-fifths had some ability to write).<sup>(16)</sup> As might be expected, "the chief areas of neglect were the Highlands and the areas then undergoing the strains of industrialisation".<sup>(17)</sup> Thanks primarily to the efforts from the early eighteenth century of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, which provided education for adults as well as for children, the neglect was not as extreme as it might otherwise have been - especially after 1767, when the New Testament was printed in Gaelic for the first time.<sup>(18)</sup> Nevertheless, in a survey by the Society for the Education of the Poor in the Highlands in 1822, the following local variations were discovered:

- 16) T. Kelly, *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, Liverpool University Press, 1970, p. 147.
- 17) R.K. Webb, *Literacy among the Working Classes in nineteenth century Scotland*, *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. XXXIII, no. 2, 1954, pp. 100 - 114.
- 18) Kelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-9. Also L.C. Saunders, *Scottish Democracy 1815-1840*, Edinburgh, 1950, pp. 261-267.

"Half of all the population are unable to read; or in detail, taking all ages above eight years, those who cannot read are nearly in the following proportions: In the Hebrides, and other western parts of Inverness and Ross, 70 in the 100 cannot read. In the remaining parts of Inverness and Ross, in Nairn, the Highlands of Moray, Cromarty, Sutherland, and the inland parts of Caithness, 40 in the 100. In Argyle and the Highlands of Perth, 30 in the 100. In Orkney and Zetland, 12 in the 100. Above one-third of the whole population are more than two miles, and many thousands, more than five miles distant from the nearest schools". (19)

It is noticeable that these rates vary not so much with the linear distance but with the remoteness in terms of communications of the respective areas from the main educational and commercial centres of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The very low rates of illiteracy in Shetland, Orkney, and the coastal settlements of Caithness were attributed to developments in the fishing industry and to recruitment for the Navy and the Hudson's Bay Company which stimulated direct communications with the lowlands and elsewhere. (20) By contrast, in the mainland presbytery of Lochcarron (part of the synod of Glenelg), which in terms of distance was very much closer to all the Scottish cities than were Caithness or the north isles, 7,257 individuals out of a population of 10,937 over 8 years of age were returned as unable to read: an illiteracy rate of 66.4 per cent. In the presbytery of Skye (also included in the synod of Glenelg), the rate was 72.0 per cent. (21)

19) Moral Statistics of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Inverness, 1826, p. 27.

20) See Chapter 7, pages 270-1.

21) Moral Statistics, loc. cit., pp. 46-7.

Although the situation in this particular synod may have been further complicated by the relatively high proportion of Catholics in the local population, it was even worse in the predominantly Protestant parishes of North Uist and Harris, where the percentage of the population aged over 8 who were unable to read was 79.2. The comparable figure for Lewis, perhaps marginally less isolated than other parts of the Outer Hebrides in 1822 because of the growing importance of Stornoway, was 69.1 per cent. South Uist at the time of the survey had only one parochial school,<sup>(22)</sup> and

"it was calculated that not one but seven schools would be required to permit reasonable access to instruction. Yet it was particularly in these areas that many, if not most, were too poor to equip their children with shoes and clothes or to pay the fees, and in addition the demand for labour on croft or at fishing broke up the continuity of what teaching could be afforded".<sup>(23)</sup>

Under these circumstances it is perhaps surprising that the illiteracy rates on the western mainland and in the outer islands were not even higher than they were - although in South Uist, with a largely Catholic population, the rate was 85.2 per cent among persons over 8 years. Such outposts of Catholicism fared extremely

22) *ibid.*, pp. 48-9, p. 67. There were six schools altogether on South Uist, including those sponsored by the S.P.C.K. and Gaelic Societies, at the time of the survey. The situation in the Hebrides was compared with that in Peebles, where there were 17 parochial schools for a population of only 11,300. (The population of South Uist in 1821 was 6,038).

23) Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

badly in terms of shared resources not only by comparison with the Protestant establishment but also with the rest of the Catholic world. As in Ireland, the Catholic church in the Highlands was not endowed and had only a handful of priests to minister to its adherents. (24)

Apart from the limited number of schools in the remoter areas of the northern highlands and the religious, linguistic, and cultural difficulties affecting the provision of education in the region, the various educational agencies were under severe financial constraint themselves for most of the nineteenth century. The S.P.C.K. operated schools in the highlands of Scotland on the same basis as in Wales :

"Where a Charity School is wanted and desired, or likely to be kindly received, no pompous Preparations or costly Buildings are thought of, but a Church or Chapel, or untenanted House of convenient Situation, is fixed on; and publick Notice given immediately, that a (Welch) School is to begin there, at an appointed Time, where all sorts that desire it are to be kindly and freely taught for Three Months; (though the Schools are continued for Three Months longer, or more, when needful; and then removed to another Place where desired). The People having no Prospect of such an Opportunity, but for a limited Time, commonly resort to them at once, and keep to them as closely and diligently as they can: though some can afford to come but every other Day, or in the Night only, because the Support of themselves and Families require their Labour. The Masters are instructed, hired, and charged to devote all their Time, and with all possible Diligence, not only to teach the Poor to read, but to instruct them daily (at least twice every day) in the Principles and Duties of Religion from the Church Catechism...". (25)

- 24) Moral Statistics, loc. cit., p. 73, table no. III: "There are generally about six or eight Roman Catholic priests within the Highland limits, chiefly in the shires of Inverness and Argyle. The Roman Catholic religion prevails in the Island parishes of South Uist and Barra, and in Kilmonivaig and Kilmorack in Inverness-shire, and in Lismore in Argyle - and is professed by a population of about 12,000 persons in these districts".
- 25) Griffith Jones, Annual Report of the S.P.C.K., 1742-3, quoted by Kelly, op. cit., pp. 66-7.

The S.P.C.K. teachers were hired by the clergy of the established church and paid "according to the number and progress of their pupils". Textbooks were supplied by the Society (which printed its own Bibles and tracts) and either sold to those who could afford them or given to those who could not. (26) Since the majority of those attending S.S.P.C.K. schools in the western highlands and islands were in the latter category, there was little return on the Church's outlay. Moreover, the Society had small systematic support. The public funds at its disposal were limited, and appeals for subscriptions and donations met with more response from Lowland than from Highland proprietors. (27)

The translation of the whole Bible into Gaelic in 1802 marked the acceptance (albeit with reservations) of the Gaelic language as a teaching medium and the subsequent proliferation of educational agencies in the Northern Highlands. In 1800 the Northern Missionary Society was founded at Tain. In 1811 the Edinburgh Gaelic Society was established "with the declared object of teaching Gaelic exclusively. The Glasgow Gaelic Society, which was founded a year later, held that Gaelic should generally be the language of primary instruction but responded to the needs of the situation by conceding subsequent teaching in English as well. These metropolitan efforts were further supplemented by the itinerant missions of some Presbyterian

26) Kelly, op. cit., p. 67.

27) Saunders, op. cit., p. 264.

dissenters and Scots Baptists. In 1812 came the Inverness Bible Society, in 1818 a Society for the Education of the Poor in the Highlands, in 1821 an Association for Aiding the Education of Pious Young Men for the Ministry. By this date there had developed a considerable religious and educational propaganda in the area; in addition to the 171 parish schools, 190 schools were supported (in some fashion) by the Gaelic Societies and 134 by the S.P.C.K., and the voluntary organisations were now spending over £8,000 a year in these efforts..." (28)

A limited amount of additional help was provided by the Church of Scotland, which in 1824 created forty new quoad sacra parishes in the Highland region. However, not until 1838 was state assistance made available for the establishment of schools in these parishes. (29) The extent of government aid for Highland schools in the middle decades of the nineteenth century is illustrated by table 50.

28) *ibid.*, pp. 263-4. It is interesting that the region as a whole was little affected by Methodism, the first Protestant movement to embark on a joint programme of evangelisation and adult education, which had great influence together with the S.P.C.K. in Wales. The Methodists gained a considerable following in the fishing communities of north-east Scotland (Aberdeen, Peterhead, Buckie) and even ventured as far north as Shetland, but their impact on the western Highlands and Islands was negligible. Their primary concern from the time of John Wesley was in the areas of extensive population and industrial growth where the established Church (whether Anglican or Presbyterian) was weakest. cf. W.F. Swift, *Methodism in Scotland: the first hundred years*, Wesley Historical Society lectures, Epworth Press, 1947.

29) Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

Table 50

"No. of Schools of all sorts (approximately) in the North-Western Highlands, and the proportion of these receiving Government Aid".  
(sic) (30)

<u>Presbytery</u>	<u>Parochial</u> <sup>(31)</sup>	<u>Non-parochial,</u> <sup>(32)</sup> <u>Church of Scotland</u>	<u>Others</u> <sup>(33)</sup>	<u>Total</u>
Inverness	7	5	11	23
	6	3	14	23
Dingwall	7	5	13	25
Tain	8	8	11	27
Lochcarron	8	10	17	35
Aber	9	15	10	34
Skye	9	22	22	53
Uist	4	16	17	37
Lewes (sic)	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>31</u>
TOTAL	64	87	137	288

In receipt of Government aid, 77.

30) Source : First Report by H.M. Commissioners on Schools in Scotland (Argyll Commission), 1865, p. 390.

31) Parochial schools included "Parochial, Side, and Parliamentary schools, established by law, maintained by local assessments, and designed to be commensurate with the educational wants of the country". Argyll Commission Report, Vol. II, 1867, p. clxxiii.

32) includes Sessional schools, Assembly schools, Society schools (S.S.P.C.K.), Gaelic schools, Subscription and Endowed schools.

33) chiefly "Private Adventure" schools. Despite their number, these were in fact very small schools, supported by pupils' fees. "The teachers of this class of schools receive in general, as may be supposed, a smaller and more uncertain recompense than the others. ..the teachers give a considerable proportion of their time and labour to other occupations, they are not devoted to the business of teaching with the steadiness and zeal which it requires; their schools are exposed to the disadvantages of a frequent change of masters". First Report of Argyll Commission, loc. cit., 1865, John Gordon's evidence, p. 7. In Inverness only 292 of a total of 9,251 enrolled scholars attended "Private Adventure" schools; in Ross and Cromarty 473 out of 12,142; in Sutherland 58 out of 3,624. In Caithness, where there were fewer religious schools, the comparable figures were 1,022 of a total of 5,593 pupils. cf. Second Report of Argyll Commission, 1867, loc. cit., Appendix table II.

It is apparent from this table that the greatest concentration of schools in all three categories was in those areas with the highest illiteracy rates noted earlier in the century. The result was that there was sometimes, though not universally, a higher ratio of pupils to total population in the remoter parishes of the region than on the east coast or in other areas. (table 51).

Table 51

Ratio of pupils in attendance (including adults) to population

1867<sup>(34)</sup>

<u>Selected parishes</u> <sup>(35)</sup>	<u>Ratio of pupils to population:</u> <u>1 in</u>
East coast :	
Wick	9.5
Ardersier	5.4
Western :	
Cromdale	21.3
Lairg	9.8
Assynt (1) Kirkton	17.2
(2) Stoer	9.3
Glenelg (1) Glenelg	11.1
(2) Knoydart	11.7
(3) North Morar	36.0
Insular :	
Barra	9.7
Harris	13.9
Stornoway	7.2
Kilmuir (Skye)	21.0

In interpreting these results, the Argyll Commission recommended that "one-sixth (i.e. of the population of

34) Source : *ibid.*, Appendix table I.

35) There was no return for the parish of Inverness.



Scotland) be assumed as representing the children who ought to be on the school-roll, being those who have completed their fourth, and not yet entered their fourteenth, year". (36) From the figures in table 51, it is clear that those parishes with acceptable ratios of pupils to population were few and literally far between. Moreover, the Commission questioned the validity of some of its own findings :

"The irregularity of attendance at the schools is one of the most striking and discouraging facts to be noticed in regard to them. A glance at the roll in most cases shows that the months of November, December, January, February, March, and July are the only ones in which the school can be said to be in full operation. The roll reminds one of a meteorological table, indicating the changes of the season, and with them the variations in the causes which affect the attendance". (37)

It is, furthermore, possible that the relatively high ratio of pupils to population in some parishes was to a certain extent a result of seasonal unemployment among adults. Neither the proliferation of educational agencies and schools in the region from the early nineteenth century - which was further confused by the Disruption, discussed below - nor the number of pupils in any given area appears to have had a decisive effect on the local literacy rates in the intervening years. Rev. R. McDonald of South Uist commented that "the population of this parish

36) Second Report of Argyll Commission, 1867, loc. cit., p. clxxiii.

37) A. Nicolson, Report on the State of Education in the Hebrides, quoted in Argyll Commission Report, 1867, p. lxxii.

have been educated only to a small extent, and do not remember much of what they have learned". (38) Another witness giving evidence to the Commission noted the apparent relationship <sup>between</sup> the lack of education and immobility:

"The want of education of the people prevents them seeking emigration; they rather avoid than seek it, whereas, if they had the benefits of education for a short period, they would emigrate of themselves in large numbers. I have seen the evils... of the effect of want of education in the colonies when they go there (i.e. Australia).

"Do you mean to say that of those who emigrated, almost all were not educated? - Yes, and the same thing operates in regard to Canada.

"Do you consider emigration a good thing for these districts? - Yes, to a certain extent, that the superabundance should be drained off.

"Do you find that where they are educated they go abroad? - Very speedily; they find their way to the Low country and to the Colonies, and so far as the benefits of education have gone, to my own knowledge, the results have been most satisfactory and promising. I can trace many young men in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Greenock, and the great centres of population, and in England, and in the colonies, in very respectable situations in life". (39)

This exchange illustrates the basic difference between voluntary and assisted emigrants in terms of their educational attainments and their consequent anticipated potential to better themselves by moving. It provides a stark contrast to the journalist's impression of

38) *ibid.*, p. lxxi.

39) First Report of Argyll Commission, 1865, *loc. cit.*, evidence of Dr. M. Mackay, (Free Church, Harris), p. 363.

emigration from the east coast noted earlier in this chapter and suggests that locational factors alone did not account for the low levels of emigration from the western and insular districts. Since the provision of schools was actually greater in these divisions than on the east coast for much of the nineteenth century, the social and cultural obstacles to emigration (some of which have already been noted) become of primary importance in considering the reasons for non-emigration from congested and unproductive areas.

#### The role of periodicals and journals

Before these can be examined in greater detail, there is one further aspect of geographical location to be discussed in relation to migration: namely the circulation of newspapers and periodicals. For the few people in parts of the west coast and Hebrides who were able to read and who had the means to purchase an occasional journal, the circulation of such publications might have been their sole source of information on opportunities elsewhere and on transport timetables and fares in the absence of local emigration agencies.

As late as 1847, the counties of Argyll, Ross and Cromarty, and Sutherland had no local newspapers of their own. (40) The main papers for the region were the John

40) A. Andrews, *The History of British Journalism*, London, 1859, Vol. I. p. 292. Also R.M.W. Cowan, *The Newspaper in Scotland: a study of its first expansion*, Glasgow, 1946.

O'Groat Journal (first published in 1836 in Wick) and the Inverness Courier (established in 1817). These were both principally directed at the English-speaking inhabitants of the east coast. The Inverness Courier took the part of the landlords throughout the nineteenth century: it opposed emigration at first, but by the late 1830s it was stating

"... that while we regret that so many active men should feel it necessary to leave their own country, the Highlands will be considerably relieved of its over-plus population". (41)

By the 1840s the Courier was beginning to defend clearances occurring on Highland estates. It also carried information and advertisements especially about emigration to British North America, the destination to which proprietors preferred to assist their former tenants. By contrast, the Inverness Advertiser (founded 1849) took a more independent approach. It strongly opposed the evictions of the 1840s; and when it did begin to recognise the necessity of emigration after the famine of 1845, it stressed especially the opportunities available in gold mining in Australia - a field of activity expressly discouraged by the Highland Emigration Society. (42)

Neither these papers nor the John O'Groat Journal had any significant readership beyond the eastern mainland

41) Inverness Courier, May 30, 1838. Quoted by Cameron, op. cit.

42) Cameron, op. cit., pp. 164-5. cf. Chapter 7, note (52), page 262.

area of the north of Scotland. However, the latter was increasingly read in Orkney with the improved postal and passenger services in the second part of the nineteenth century and the Inverness publications circulated to Fort William, Oban, and Glasgow. The newspapers with the largest circulation throughout Scotland as a whole continued to be the Scotsman (established in Edinburgh in 1817), which was widely read in the east of Scotland, and the Glasgow Herald (1805) which predominated in the west. Both carried opinions and information on emigration; but, like the local weeklies, their appeal and availability to the inhabitants of the western highlands and islands was extremely limited. The Scotsman was the only daily paper north of the border at the outset of the period under consideration. The Glasgow Herald, published twice a week until 1859, when it was published daily, had in 1853 the second largest circulation in Scotland (about 4,500 per number).<sup>(43)</sup> Most of this was, of course, in the immediate vicinity of Glasgow itself and in West Central Scotland.

The abolition of stamp duty in 1855 increased the number of local papers in the country as a whole, although most of these had little appeal to the remoter parts of the northern highland region. For those who were illiterate, the extent of newspaper circulation was irrelevant. For those who could read, the greatest

43) Cameron, op. cit., pp. 164-5.

obstacle to the expansion of the press in north-west Scotland (apart from cost) was the lack of a Gaelic newspaper. By the middle of the nineteenth century when (as demonstrated below) Gaelic was still the only language understood by a large proportion of the inhabitants of the western and insular districts, there was very little Gaelic literature carrying information on emigration. The only major Gaelic work on the subject was a book by Robert McDougall, entitled Ceann-Iùil an Fhir-imrich do Dh'America mu-thuath (the Emigrant's Guide to North America). This was published in Glasgow in 1841, at the instigation of Thomas Rolph, an emigration agent for the Canadian colonial government. Cameron writes that "McDougall's work is an excellent example of a small (143 pages), reasonably priced book (1/6d) containing practical information, aimed at attracting a certain group of emigrants (Gaelic-speaking Highlanders) to Canada". This statement appears to be made with no trace of irony, although the author notes in the same paragraph that

"McDougall was very much in favour of emigration both for the person who had a small amount of money as well as for the poor man. He stated that if a man had about £100 with which to buy land and was a hard worker, thrifty and sensible, he would do very well. Any young person with a trade would find plenty of work at good wages. He added, however, that there was no work for herdsmen, weavers, fiddlers, pipers, tinkers, or beggars". (44)

Under these circumstances, there was unlikely to have been much work in Canada for any crofters either - even if

44) Cameron, op. cit., pp. 192-3.

they had been able to afford the book and plough through its mass of "practical information" in the first place.

Otherwise, there appear to have been three Gaelic publications (all periodicals) to which contributions on emigration were made especially by one Dr. Norman MacLeod of St. Columba's Church, Glasgow. These were An Teachdaire Gaelach (The Highland Messenger) 1830-32, which preceded the major subsistence crises of 1836 and 1845 and therefore made little reference to the subject; Cuairtear nan Gleann (Visitor of the Glen) 1840-43, which was partly a response to Dr. MacLeod's evidence to the Select Committee on Emigration in 1841 that

"One great object of the publication at present is, to instruct the people on the subject of emigration; they have been deceived by private adventurers..we should continue the periodical, giving emigration a prominent place; but that every article on emigration should have the signature of the editor, that is, my own, so that I should be responsible for the information".(45)

The third Gaelic periodical to be published by the mid-nineteenth century, before the mood of many crofters changed from one of passive apathy to active resistance to organised clearances and emigration schemes, was Fear-tathaich nam Beann (The Mountain Visitor) between 1848 and 1850. It was perhaps more realistic than the others in aiming explicitly at a readership of crofters and providing information on comparable cottage industries

45) Report on the Select Committee on Emigration, Parl. Pap. 1841, vol. VI, p. 333, Q919 (Dr. Norman MacLeod). Quoted by Cameron, op. cit.

in both British North America and in Australia.<sup>(46)</sup> But there can be little doubt that these publications were not widely read - indeed, that they could hardly have been read at all - by the people for whom they were supposedly intended. Their editors, like the instigators of the Highland Emigration Society, appeared to be completely unaware of the fundamental lack of incentive to migrate on the part of a large proportion of the crofting population on the one hand and of the highly selective nature of the literature itself on the other. They were more concerned with the potential of the Highland market. Perhaps the most obvious proof of their lack of success on both counts was the limited period of the existence of all three journals.

#### The Gaelic language and culture

It must now be asked whether the Gaelic language itself was a major obstacle to mobility in terms of changes both in occupation and in place of residence. Inability to understand or speak English (and perhaps also French, in the case of some settlers in Quebec and other parts of the Canadian maritime provinces), while probably no deterrent to actual movement, could have had a detrimental effect on the best-planned emigration or resettlement schemes. Not only would monoglot Gaels (if literate) have been unable to read most of the

46) Cameron, op. cit., pp. 145-8.



literature and advertisements pertaining to emigration. If they did move, they might have been unable to assimilate themselves to their new settlements and to a totally foreign culture, and might have become even more close-knit than before. (47) This in turn would have made their ability to adapt to new forms of employment even more uncertain than it was among others previously accustomed to a marginal level of subsistence from remote agricultural communities. The problem was moreover likely to have been compounded in particular reception areas, such as those noted above, where English was not the common language. Such difficulties were recognised by the Argyll Commission on Schools in Scotland, which summarised them as follows :

"The exclusive use of the Gaelic has operated most disadvantageously against the labouring poor. Having no market for their labour in their own secluded homes, they would naturally have sought employment in other districts, had they been able to converse in the only language in which they could be understood. On this subject Mr. Nicholson (48) says :-

47) cf. Chapter 7, note (72), page 273.

48) Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

'They find themselves, in fact, in the predicament of dumb persons; and their sensitivity to ridicule often exposes them to the pain of being reckoned barbarians by persons perhaps inferior to themselves in all the elements that constitute real civility, but endowed with the precious faculty of speaking some more or less intelligible form of the English language.'" (49)

Whether a command of English would itself have been sufficient to make destitute highlanders "naturally" seek employment elsewhere is debatable. Gaelic was only one of a number of closely inter-related factors (together with geographical isolation, lack of education, and illiteracy) which clearly affected the dimensions of migration from the region and from west to east within the region to a certain extent. The compulsory introduction of English as the teaching medium in all primary schools after the 1872 Education Act did nothing to alleviate the congestion in districts which required their own legislation in the subsequent decades. There were sufficient numbers of bilingual Highlanders in the region, and a sufficiently large number of monoglot Gaels who had mastered English in the Lowlands and elsewhere, to justify the assertion that when an individual wished - or was compelled - to move, the language barrier was not the chief obstacle to be overcome.

49) Argyll Commission, second report, 1867, loc. cit., p. lxvi. The Church of Scotland itself, until the translation of the New Testament into Gaelic in 1767, had encouraged the attitude that Gaelic was a "barbaric" or "heathen" language. The report of the Society for the Education of the Poor in the Highlands noted that "The members of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, and most of those who formerly took an interest in the welfare of the Highlands, long cherished the belief, that the extirpation of the Gaelic tongue was the very first step towards improvement." Moral Statistics, loc. cit., report, p. 17.

Nevertheless, there was some evidence that an inability to speak English was a contributory factor to immobility. The statistics collected by the Society for the Education of the Poor in the Highlands show a predictable relationship between those who spoke Gaelic as a first language and those who were unable to read, illustrated by table 52.

Table 52

Education of families in the Northern Highlands <sup>(50)</sup>

<u>Education of families</u>	<u>Selected Synods*</u>			
	<u>Moray</u>	<u>Ross</u>	<u>Glenelg</u>	<u>Sutherland &amp; Caithness</u>
a. Families in which no person can read (sic)	1,241	1,792	6,558	1,043
b. Do. having English best (sic)	109	121	51	158
c. Do. having Gaelic best (sic)	<u>1,132</u>	<u>1,671</u>	<u>6,507</u>	<u>885</u>
Per cent (c) of (a)	91.2	93.2	99.2	84.9

\*Synods include the following presbyteries :

Moray: Inverness, Nairn, Abernethy.

Ross : Chanonry, Dingwall, Tain.

Glenelg: Abertarff, Lochcarron, Skye, Uist, Lewis.

Sutherland and Caithness: Dornoch, Tongue, Caithness.

The statistics for the Synod of Sutherland and Caithness were affected by the population on the coast of Caithness where, as the report noted, "English is spoken exclusively".<sup>(51)</sup>

50) Source : Moral Statistics, loc. cit.

51) *ibid.*, report, p. 28.

The efforts of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Gaelic Societies from 1811 did much to improve the literacy of Gaelic speakers<sup>(52)</sup>. In 1865 it was observed that "the Gaelic language...is rapidly dying out as people get access to the Low country".<sup>(53)</sup>

Nevertheless, Gaelic was still widely spoken throughout the Northern Highland region during the period under consideration, although an increasing proportion of the population became bilingual as a result of the improvement in communications on the east coast and of the 1872 Education Act. The first official statistics on the incidence of Gaelic were not collected until the census of 1881. Even these were of limited use because the enumerators of specified districts were only instructed to ascertain whether the respondents spoke Gaelic at all, not whether Gaelic was the only language spoken. According to the 1891 census, however - in which this shortcoming was remedied - the percentage of monoglot Gaels was highest among the local inhabitants of the insular and west coast parishes and progressively decreased towards the east coast. This is illustrated by map 17 on page 309. By 1891, 24.1 per cent of the family heads sampled in the region spoke English only, and a smaller proportion (18.1 per cent) spoke solely Gaelic. By far the greatest number of the 2,476 included in the sample for that year (1,433 or 57.9 per cent) were bilingual.

52) *ibid.*, report, pp. 19-20.

53) First report of Argyll Commission, 1865, *loc. cit.*, evidence of Dr. M. Mackay, p. 366.



NUMBER OF RESULTS IS 88  
 MAXIMUM VALUE IS 73.61  
 MINIMUM VALUE IS 0.00  
 MEAN VALUE 13.57  
 STANDARD DEVIATION 18.89  
 DATA SET: RESULT NUMBER 2

MAP 17  
PERCENTAGE OF GAELIC SPEAKERS IN EACH PARISH, 1891



NUMBER OF PARISHES IN EACH GROUP  
 48                      36                      4

Table 53 attempts to show the extent to which the language spoken may have had an effect on migration in the latter part of the nineteenth century. (It should be noted that, as in all the tables based on the sample census data, these figures relate to intra-regional movement only, with a migrant defined as one who was enumerated in a parish other than that in which he was born).

Table 53

Language and intra-regional movement, 1891

(per cent of total)

<u>Language Spoken</u>	<u>Migrants</u>	<u>Non-migrants</u>	<u>Total (=100%)</u>
Gaelic only	16.8	83.2	447
Bilingual	44.9	55.1	1,433
English only	56.5	43.5	596
Total	42.6	57.4	2,476

From this table, it would appear that a propensity to migrate was indeed dependent to some extent on a knowledge of English. If this were true of movement within the Northern Highland region, where Gaelic was still prevalent, it was even more likely to be true of migration from the region to the English-speaking lowlands or overseas. The  $\chi^2$  for this table is 172.3 with 2 degrees of freedom, showing that there was a very strong probability of a systematic relationship between the two variables. (54)

54)  $\chi^2$  computes the cell frequencies which would be expected if no relationship existed between the actual row and column totals. The greater the discrepancies between the expected and actual frequencies, the larger  $\chi^2$  becomes. While small discrepancies may be due to chance, large deviations (i.e. large values of  $\chi^2$ ) are unlikely. The degrees of freedom vary with the numbers of rows and columns in any given table.

At the same time, there was an equally apparent relationship between language and occupation,<sup>(55)</sup> with almost 70 per cent of the Gaelic-speaking heads of family sampled engaged in agriculture. Fishing, which occupied a further 7.8 per cent, was only ranked third after the dependent category in terms of the numbers it employed who also spoke only Gaelic. The same ranking was observed in the case of bilingual family heads, although only slightly more than half of these were in the agricultural sector. Only in the case of those whose sole language was English was the occupational structure markedly different in that there was less concentration in the agricultural sector and a wider distribution throughout other sectors of the economy. Table 54, overleaf, based on the sample census data for the Northern Highlands, illustrates this point.

It is evident from this table that those whose only language was Gaelic were not employed to any great extent in occupations requiring either specific skills or a propensity to be mobile<sup>(56)</sup>, or both. English speakers predominated in the fishing industry, in construction, transport and communications, manufacturing, services, and the professions as well as in the small independent

55) As expected, language alone was only a partial explanation of the extent of migration or non-movement in the region, as denoted by the correlation coefficient  $r$  of .25 at the .00 level of significance. However, this relatively low degree of positive correlation may also be explained by the fact that both migration and language are nominal rather than ordinal-level variables: i.e. they have no sequential numerical value.

56) See Chapters 4-6 for a discussion of occupational structure in relation to mobility.

Table 54

Main occupation by language spoken, 1891

<u>Occupation</u>	(per cent of total)		
	<u>Gaelic only</u>	<u>Bilingual</u>	<u>English only</u>
Agriculture	69.8	51.4	33.8
Fishing	7.8	6.3	10.8
Mining/quarrying	-	0.2	0.2
Construction	1.3	4.7	4.9
Transport & communications	0.4	5.0	6.2
Manufacturing	6.1	6.6	11.1
Distribution	0.4	3.5	6.4
Professions	0.2	3.0	3.9
Commerce	-	0.1	1.2
Government & defence	-	1.2	2.9
Domestic service	1.6	2.1	2.3
Miscellaneous services	-	2.0	2.7
Independent	0.4	2.0	3.4
Dependent	8.7	8.3	5.4
Not stated	3.2	3.6	4.8
Totals (=100%)	447	1,433	596

class of property owners and those with private means. Apart from agriculture and the dependent sector, there was a greater proportion of monoglot Gaels than monolingual or bilingual English speakers only in the cottage-based textile industry. More than half the Gaels enumerated in manufacturing (3.2 per cent of the total) were engaged in textiles, corresponding with the distribution of Gaelic speakers observed in map 17.<sup>(57)</sup> This occupational

57) Page 309. See also map 14, page 200.



distribution further reduced the opportunities of many Gaels to become familiar with an alien language and culture, since neither agriculture nor the manufacture of textiles as practised on the west coast or in the islands necessitated extensive travelling nor an ability to adapt to new techniques.

The combination of language and occupation thus appears to have had a profound effect on the migration tendencies of the population of the Northern Highland region. Of the two variables, occupation was probably the more important in determining a propensity to move. (58) Many people spoke only Gaelic because a subsistence economy based on crofting did not presuppose a knowledge of English. They were therefore less likely to migrate on the two counts of occupation and language than (for example) those engaged in the manufacturing or transport industries who also spoke English. To some extent language was a surrogate for age as well as for occupation, particularly after the 1872 Education Act made primary schooling in English compulsory. However, it was a less effective surrogate in isolated crofting communities than elsewhere. Crofting was not an age-selective occupation. Moreover, the gradual encroachment of the English language into the remoter areas of the western Highlands and Islands, especially after 1872, did not induce a massive swing away

58) The  $\chi^2$  for a tabulation of occupation by migration (see table 41, page 197 and discussion) was 257.6 with 15 degrees of freedom.

from crofting any more than it caused immediate large-scale out-migration. (59)

A further example of the effect of occupation on language spoken<sup>(60)</sup> is the survival of the Gaelic culture in Canada and not in Australia. This in turn is another illustration that language itself was no barrier to voluntary emigration. As suggested in Chapters 2 and 7, Canada was the chosen destination of the majority of emigrants who left the western Highlands and Hebrides before the 1845 famine. It is not known how many of these were bilingual prior to their departure, and how many were landless labourers or engaged in small-scale manufacturing activities rather than crofting. However, Gaelic did survive (and is still spoken) in some of the small and remote farming and fishing communities first settled by Highland emigrants in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. (61)

By contrast, Gaelic did not survive to any noticeable extent in Australia. Balfour suggests that this was

- 59) With ordinal-level variables a regression analysis could be used to show the order in which independent factors (such as age, occupation, language) affected the dependent variable (i.e. migration). However, the only ordinal level variable in the census data was age. The reservations expressed in note (55) above therefore also apply to any regression procedure.
- 60) The  $X^2$  for a tabulation of language by occupation (table 54) was 268.7 with 30 degrees of freedom.
- 61) e.g. Nova Scotia (especially Cape Breton Island). cf. C.W. Dunn, *Highland Settler, a portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia*, Toronto, 1953, reprinted 1974, pp. 136-149.

because there was a smaller proportion of monolingual Highlanders, especially from the western and insular districts, among the Australian settlers than amongst the Canadians. The Highlanders were also much more widely dispersed in Australia than in Canada as a matter of deliberate settlement policy - especially those under contract to separate farmers - and mobility and communications were generally much better there than in Nova Scotia or in the Scottish Highlands. (62) In any event, bilingualism was increasing throughout the north of Scotland during the latter nineteenth century, when emigration to Australia was being encouraged. Whether the mere number of Gaelic speakers among the colonial settlers was in itself significant is doubtful. Canada was, after all, much more rapidly settled than Australia, even if there were more Gaelic-speaking Scots in the earliest Canadian colonies. The chief consideration must surely be that the crofters who emigrated to Australia under assisted schemes after 1845 were unable to resume their subsistence methods on arrival there and were thus forced to communicate with settlers from different backgrounds. (63) Those who had gone to Canada on their own account were not subject to the same constraints and were able to keep in much closer contact with their kinsmen and fellow Gaels both in the new settlements and at home.

62) Balfour, op. cit., p. 183.

63) cf. the settlement schemes of Edward Gibbon Wakefield in Australia and New Zealand, planned on a basis of "systematic colonisation". This is discussed inter alia by C.C. Eldridge, *Victorian Imperialism*, London, 1978, Part II, sections 8 and 9.

Moreover, sponsored emigrants to Canada were actually encouraged to establish settlements similar to their former crofting communities in north-west Scotland. (64)

### Religion

In addition to linguistic considerations, the effects of religion should not be omitted from a discussion of cultural aspects of migration in the Northern Highlands. It is noticeable that the net population and migration losses during the period 1851-91 were generally more extensive from the Catholic or formerly Catholic districts of Small Isles, Skye, and the western mainland of Inverness-shire than from the predominantly Protestant (Free Church) parishes of the northern Outer Hebrides. (65) There may have been a number of reasons for this, apart from the locational factors already mentioned. One was that the problem of overpopulation in the northern Inner Hebrides, especially Skye, as in Ireland, became acute earlier than in the rest of the western and insular districts. After the 1845 famine the main relief efforts, including emigration schemes, concentrated on Skye in the first instance. (66) In fact, by then Skye was no longer a stronghold of Catholicism (67); whereas Barra, South Uist,

64) e.g. the government-sponsored schemes to establish crofting communities in Canada in 1888 and 1890 (Chapter 7, notes (64) and (72), pages 269 and 273).

65) Map 2, page 16; and Appendix 1A, page 365.

66) Chapter 7, note (45) ff, page 259.

67) Catholicism, while of declining importance in Skye the nineteenth century, had been prevalent in the island during the eighteenth, when there had been a great deal of support from its inhabitants for the Jacobite cause.

and Small Isles still were. Indeed, Skye and its neighbouring islands were less affected by the overcrowding resulting from the kelp industry than were the Outer Hebrides generally, and they were actually more immediately affected by clearances. The teachings of the Catholic Church on procreation can have added little to the proliferation of population in western and insular districts, especially at a time when birth control was not widely practised in any event. Moreover, Roman Catholics in Scotland appeared on the whole to favour emigration, especially to the Empire. Individual priests both assisted emigrations and became missionaries themselves perhaps more willingly than their Church of Scotland counterparts. (68)

It is a stronger possibility that the Free Church of Scotland, created from the Disruption of 1843, acted as a deterrent to migration than that the teachings of Catholicism precipitated population crises which stimulated it. The Free Church with its rejection of secular authority and patronage - the basis of Thomas Chalmers' arguments - at

68) It should be observed that during the first quarter of the nineteenth century "almost every Church in Scotland regarded foreign missions as utopian and absurd" (Cameron, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-54). Also John Cunningham, *The Church History of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1882, Vol. 2, p. 443. In any event, the birth rate was generally not noticeably higher in the Catholic islands than in the Protestant ones and in some instances was actually lower; although this may have been a result of earlier net emigration losses and the consequent age structure of the remaining inhabitants. See Chapter 3, table 22, page 93.

first alienated many landlords<sup>(69)</sup> and may have played an important part in encouraging, passively if not actively, the growth of organised resistance to clearances and evictions. The belief that "the earth belongs to the people and not to any landlord"<sup>(70)</sup> became, according to Hunter, "the common currency of Land League politics."<sup>(71)</sup> Moreover, the ministers of the established Church of Scotland, many of whom owed their livings to proprietors and could not themselves speak Gaelic, became increasingly alienated from "na daoine" ("the men"), evangelists or catechists who were usually crofters with strong and profound convictions. Hunter accounts for the religious revival in the Highlands from the late eighteenth century onwards in terms of the demoralisation of the small tenantry and their lack of leadership following the official disintegration of the clan system and the heritable jurisdictions in 1746. The established Church was the mouthpiece of the proprietors, who appointed and paid its ministers. The new evangelical movement (which was given an added stimulus by the previously noted activities of the S.P.C.K. to propagate the Gospel in Gaelic), "created a new purpose in life and in an insecure

69) e.g. Report from the Committee on Sites for Churches (Scotland), Parl. Pap., Vol. XIII, 1847. The Committee was established to investigate complaints by the Free Church that land was not being made available for it. According to the report (p.6), the situation was particularly bad in mainland Inverness-shire, Ross and Cromarty, and the Hebrides.

70) Oban Times, 28 August 1886; quoted by Hunter (q.v.).

71) J. Hunter, The emergence of the crofting community; the religious contribution 1798-1843, Scottish Studies, Vol. 18, 1974, pp. 95-116.

world it gave some sense of security." (72) Hunter maintains that it was this earlier evangelical movement, rather than the Disruption itself, which was responsible for the rapid assimilation of the Free Church into the regional way of life. He writes :

"In the context of the history of the popular religious movement in the Highlands the Disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843 was a largely fortuitous event. The internecine conflict between Evangelicals and Moderates which led eventually to the former's secession and to the formation of the Free Church had nothing to do with Highland affairs and was, on the face of it, of little interest to the mass of the crofting population. As the ecclesiastical crisis approached, however, the Evangelical leadership made a determined effort to win popular support in the Highlands. Gaelic pamphlets were circulated; Evangelical deputations toured the region; and most important of all, the local Evangelical ministers strenuously endeavoured to win to their side the adherents of the indigenous Evangelical movement." (73)

However, Hunter's argument is considerably weakened by his conclusion that

"In the Highlands the Disruption was not just an ecclesiastical dispute. It was a class conflict. Its battle line was the line of class demarcation, the line between the small tenantry on the one hand and sheep farmers, factors, and proprietors on the other. In that fact is to be found the explanation of what is otherwise inexplicable: the intensity of proprietorial opposition to the Free Church." (74)

On the contrary, there is no difficulty in explaining this "intensity of opposition" in terms of the property rights of landlords, any more than there is any difficulty

72) *ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

73) *ibid.*, p. 109.

74) *ibid.*, p. 111. See note (69).

in explaining the earlier proprietorial opposition to emigration in terms of their attempts to maximise returns from the estates. Moreover, the evangelical revival did not change the basically obedient nature of most crofters to authority - one of the most notable legacies of the clan system (and one which does not necessarily conflict with the inability to accept the routine of regular work, remarked previously) - which was observed by Mackenzie :

"The mild nature and religious training of the Highlanders prevented a resort to that determined resistance and revenge which has repeatedly set bounds to the rapacity of landlords in Ireland. Their ignorance of the English language, and the want of natural leaders, made it impossible for them to make their grievances known to the outside world." (75)

While this statement may be carrying the argument too far in the opposite direction, it does at least emphasise the basic lack of conflict between proprietors and tenants in the Northern Highlands during the earlier part of the nineteenth century. What the Free Church did, in other words, was not to galvanise the crofters into active confrontation with their landlords but rather to provide a moral basis for their later aspirations to security of tenure. It laid the foundations for the ensuing organisation of resistance to clearance by the Land League, already suggested to have been largely the product of external forces to which the condition of the crofting inhabitants of the region was but a secondary concern. (76)

75) Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

76) *cf.* Chapter 4, note (66), page 143.



However, it is possible that a hypothetical "line of demarcation" did exist in cultural if not in "class" terms. It may shed further light on the role played by the Gaelic culture in restricting movement from the Northern Highland region. Gaelic, from the time of the translation of the entire Bible in 1802, was the tongue first of the Evangelical revivalists and later of the Free Church in the Highlands. Consequently it was the language in which the doctrine of resistance, such as it was, was preached. Moreover, the Free Church was active in educating the Highlanders - in their own language, a fact which may in turn at least partly explain why the proliferation of schools in the remoter parts of the region during the middle decades of the nineteenth century appears to have done little to expedite the relief of congestion by emigration. Table 55 shows the proportion of pupils at Free Church schools in the four counties under consideration at the time of the Argyll Commission report (1867).

Table 55

No. of pupils at Free Church and other schools, 1867<sup>(77)</sup>

<u>County</u>	(a) Total no. of pupils on all school rolls (78)	(b) No. enrolled in Free Church schools	% (b) of (a)
Inverness	9,251	5,000	54.0
Ross & Cromarty	12,142	10,414	85.8
Sutherland	3,629	3,177	87.5
Caithness	<u>5,593</u>	<u>4,020</u>	<u>71.9</u>
Totals	30,615	22,611	73.9

77) Source: Second Report of the Argyll Commission, 1867, loc. cit., table II.

78) i.e. less than one person in each family. cf. tables 23, page 96, and 51, page 296.

There may have been a further, non-theological reason for the Free Church to have discouraged emigration. Free Church ministers, unlike those of the established Church of Scotland, were dependent on their congregations for a living. A letter on the situation in Skye at the outset of the activities of the Highland Emigration Society in the early 1850s made the following observations:

"A great part of the people have been kept in ignorance of what was going on, for their Ministers, the free Church Ministers, do all they can to prevent emigration and keep the people in darkness regarding it." (79)

However, there appears to be little substantiation either that this attitude was widespread or that, where it was found, it was for any reason other than to emphasise the teaching that "the earth belongs to the people". Although Chalmers was opposed to the "successive discharges" of the poor and destitute, (80) the Free Church as a whole was certainly not opposed to emigration in principle. This was attested by the foundation of Otago, New Zealand, in 1848. (81) In the evidence to the Napier Commission of 1883-4 it was stated that "no one is authorised to say what precise doctrine on the subject of emigration represents most nearly the view of the Free Churchmen in

79) MacLeod of MacLeod Muniments, Box 36, no. 2, Edward Gibbons to Miss MacLeod, 17 June 1852; quoted by Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

80) cf. Chapter 7, note (12), page 239.

81) Cameron, *op. cit.* Otago was one of several settlements in New Zealand planned in accordance with Wakefield's principles (note (63), page 315). The other main ones were Christchurch, sponsored by the Church of England; and Wellington, where Wakefield himself was active.

the Highlands".<sup>(82)</sup> But the evidence generally indicates that the Free Church was opposed to forced emigration for the purposes of making land available for other uses, while it was felt that spontaneous or voluntary emigration (which might result from an improvement in education) would probably be beneficial to the Highlanders who stayed as well as those who emigrated.<sup>(83)</sup> To what extent the Free Church was actually prepared to teach the advantages of emigration in the face of the landed interest therein after the 1845 famine is therefore a matter of conjecture.

#### Family, kinship, and the clan system

It was suggested earlier in this chapter that considerations of kinship were of fundamental importance in understanding the extent of movement or non-movement within and from the Northern Highlands. The considerations especially mentioned in the sources quoted were the bonds of the former clan system with its tendency to generate large, close families. Miss Adam also comments that "in the Highlands the people were to start with more prolific", implying that this too was an obstacle to migration.<sup>(84)</sup>

In fact, family size in itself was no deterrent either to internal movement or to emigration - as the Irish example

82) Napier Commission report, loc. cit., Vol. XXXII, Appendix A, p. 408; quoted by Cameron, op. cit.

83) *ibid.* Also Hugh Miller, *Sutherland as it Was and Is, or, How a County May be Ruined*, Edinburgh, 1843.

84) notes (4) - (8), pages 280-4.

surely demonstrated. The whole of Scotland, with a net migration loss recorded in the censuses since 1861, had an average family size not markedly different from that of its remoter areas, as was illustrated in table 23. (85) The size of family shown in this table, although marginally larger in the islands than the national average for most of the period under consideration, was not sufficiently different from it to have a decisive effect on the migration rates. A larger than average family might have been deterred from moving on grounds of cost or accommodation arrangements, or because of disqualification under certain emigration schemes. (86) However, as noted elsewhere, migration flows were predominantly determined by the movements of heads of household or the breadwinners of the family. (87) Their removal, except possibly on a temporary or seasonal basis, would have ultimately necessitated the eventual removal of their immediate dependants, however many these were. Family size was certainly no obstacle to the voluntary transfer of whole septs (clan branches) and sometimes of entire communities to Canada after the Clan Acts of 1746. This has already been observed in the present study with regard to the influence of relatives as agencies of migration and to the survival of the Gaelic culture in British North America. (88)

Indeed, the more members of a family moved, the more were likely to move. By corollary, if a head of household did

85) See also Appendix 2, table A1, page 374.

86) e.g. that of the Highland Emigration Society. See note (89) overleaf.

87) See note (12), page 287, and Appendix 2, page 373.

88) e.g. Chapter 7, note (70) ff, page 271.

not move it was equally likely that other members of his family would remain, or would eventually return home if they ventured forth as temporary or seasonal migrants. Family size was most likely to have been an obstacle to movement in the case of the assisted schemes, when whole families were removed simultaneously.<sup>(89)</sup> It was not a deterrent to voluntary migration.

It is probable that Miss Adams' intention was not to imply that it was the rate of increase among the inhabitants of the western Highlands and Islands, but rather the rate of proliferation of smallholdings which it entailed, which was the obstacle to migration.<sup>(90)</sup> This was part of the legacy of the clan system, which recognised no tradition of primogeniture in the inheritance of a croft. It was this precedent which enabled landlords to encourage the perpetuation of the lotting system in order to retain manpower for the kelp industry at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Another aspect of the clan system was the customary dependence on kinsfolk, chief, or laird at times of need. The subdivision of crofts on the one hand and the fatalistic attitude of many crofters towards privation or destitution on the other were actually both results of the same cause: the system of landholding.<sup>(91)</sup> Prof. Smout summarises the combined attachment to the land and the reliance on the ties of kin in the following terms :

89) Large families were specifically debarred from receiving assistance from the Highland Emigration Society. cf. Chapter 7, note (52), page 262.

90) cf. Chapter 3, note (41), page 95.

91) See Chapter 4, tables 27-28 ff, pages 110-4.

"However they came about the clearances shattered at a blow the Highlander's faith in his chief. Their grievance was not that their poverty had been increased: it had not. It was that they had been evicted from land occupied from time immemorial. It passed their comprehension that the landowner could turn off men to make room for animals." (92)

This lack of comprehension manifested itself in the stunned, often completely passive, response which some observers (such as Mackenzie) noted to the earliest clearances of the nineteenth century. (93) Only as eviction succeeded eviction after the famine, as the evangelical movement found an organisational framework in the Free Church, and as the Gaelic bards and poets began to give expression to the increasing strength of popular feeling (94), did a measure of organised resistance begin to appear in the form of the Highland Land League. (95) Resistance to clearance, when it eventually took a cohesive form, was based on the erroneous but perhaps understandable belief that even a century after the Clan Acts, crofters held their land, as of right, through the jurisdiction of the former clan chief and his nineteenth century successors. Despite the fact that "the emphasis of the clan was on ties of blood linking members in an indissoluble relationship that, of itself, had nothing to do with land...

92) T.C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830*, Fontana, 1972, p. 334.

93) note (75), page 320.

94) e.g. S. Maclean, *the Poetry of the Clearances*, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, Vol. 38, 1939, pp. 293-324.

95) cf. note (76), page 320.

the clan, nevertheless, had also become imbued with some feudal characteristics... The Highland chiefs or chieftains of the late middle ages all held land by feudal charter accepted from the crown or from each other which gave virtually absolute control over their tenants and their territories." (96) In fact, the vast majority of crofters had no legal claim whatsoever to their land prior to the Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886. (97)

However, the belief that a clan "owned" a certain territory indubitably served to strengthen already formidable ties of kinship and to fuel internecine rivalry, perpetuating the foundations of a closed society and the attachment of a family or a whole community to a certain location. For under this system, as previously noted, there was no need to move away in search of better opportunities in times of adversity: to do so would indeed have been an admission of defeat to other clans or to outsiders. Whereas in the Lowlands large numbers of farm servants were discharged during the 1623 famine in order that the smallholders would not have to feed them, there was no danger of a similar situation arising among the crofters in the Highlands. To quote Prof. Smout again :

96) Smout, *op. cit.* pp. 41-2.

97) J.G. Kellas, *Modern Scotland, The Nation since 1870*, London, 1968, pp. 108-110.

"At the root of Highland clanship lay the myth that all in a given clan were descended from a common ancestor who had, in some incredibly misty period of the past, founded the tribe. From this followed two main consequences. Firstly, the head of the clan, the chief, was deserving of enormous respect and affection as the senior member of senior branch, and the heads of the septs (the main cadet branches), the chieftains, were worthy of almost as much. Secondly, since all the clansmen from the chief downwards were blood relations of each other, it followed that the chiefs were expected to feel fatherly obligations towards even the poorest and weakest, and all the clansmen were expected to give unstinted help to each other in time of crisis. It was a creed suited in many ways to a primitive society. The proprietors of land, caught in a situation always liable to slip into internecine feud, wished to call upon the strongest of all ties from their dependents; the tenants, threatened not only by violence but also by starvation from the periodic failures of crops, needed the strongest mutual bonds and the protection of powerful men feeling an unlimited obligation to come to their aid." (98)

The survival of the essence of this system long after the watershed of 1745, acknowledged by the Napier Commission report of 1884<sup>(99)</sup>, owes much to the considerations of culture and communications already discussed. It was in the remoter parts of the Northern and Western Highlands, beyond the "Highland line", that the clans had previously existed virtually unchallenged despite the changes in law and society taking place elsewhere. This is illustrated by map A7 in Appendix 4<sup>(100)</sup>. The demographic consequences

98) Smout, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

99) See note (105), page 330.

100) See page 407.



of family dependence and territorial identity were further compounded by the tradition of dividing the croft among all heirs, rather than that of primogeniture whereby only the eldest (son) stood to inherit. There was thus no incentive from within the clan or family itself for "superfluous" members to move away.<sup>(101)</sup>

The first major upheaval took place with the eviction of the tacksmen in the second half of the eighteenth century. As noted in Chapter 2, they took some of their dependants with them.<sup>(102)</sup> The increased polarisation of Highland society which resulted from this exodus<sup>(103)</sup> not only increased tensions between tenant and landlord but may actually have severed, in some cases, the connections between the most mobile and the least mobile elements of its population.<sup>(104)</sup>

101) i.e. unless they incurred the displeasure of the chief or head of family - for instance, by marrying without consent. The system of primogeniture in Scandinavia, by contrast, was believed to be a primary cause of the Viking expeditions in the early middle ages. Parts of Norway and Sweden, like the Highlands six centuries later, were becoming overpopulated, but because of the tradition of inheritance second and subsequent sons were forced to seek a living elsewhere. In fact, the fragmentation of land into smallholdings was also without legal validity in Scotland. (Kellas, op. cit.).

102) Chapter 2, note (72), pages 63-4.

103) Chapter 4, note (23), page 120. Also Smout, op. cit., pp. 335-6: "The eighteenth century landowner made what was possibly one fatal miscalculation in driving away the Highland tacksmen as though he were nothing more than a parasite interposed between a proprietor and his working tenants to suck up the rents. The tacksmen were the only people in the hierarchy who approximated at all to a middle-class position: they were also initially amenable to doing what the landlords told them, and could be expected to exert some direct pressure on the clansmen below..."

104) *ibid.* Also Chapter 7, notes (6) - (14) and note (52) ff., pages 262-4.

Ironically, it could have been the crofters' inability to prove a legal claim to the land which made them all the more tenacious (and apparently oblivious of the hardships of former times) when under pressure to evacuate it. The Napier Commission, while noting the lack of documentary evidence in support of their claim and the formal disintegration of the clan system nearly a century and a half previously, acknowledged the partial validity of "historic occupancy rights" in stating that although "men in all countries are disposed to discover motives for pride or discontent in the contemplation of the past, and the Highlanders of Scotland are certainly not less than others inclined to the indulgence of retrospective fancy", it was not possible "to exclude all reference to their social state in former times." (105) The Commission rejected the crofters' claim to individual occupancy rights on the grounds that their concession would conflict with existing property rights and that they would "in some cases simply accelerate the subdivision and exhaustion of the soil, promote the reckless increase of the people...and multiply the contingencies of destitution and famines which even now occur." (106) It was, however, prepared to recommend the perpetuation of crofting townships because these were free from individual rights, and could "confer benefits and prevent evils...which could not be prevented or conferred with the same efficacy by

105) Napier Commission Report, loc. cit., pp. 12-17.

106) *ibid.*, p. 33. There were further failures of the potato crop in the 1860s and 1870s and in 1882, immediately prior to the establishment of the Napier Commission.

dealing with individual interests apart." (107) The occupancy rights of crofters collectively were thus in fact conceded by the Napier Commission. It was left to the ensuing legislation to concede their rights as individuals. (108)

Both the Napier Commission and the Crofters' Holdings Act failed to recognise the very real strength of the legacy of the clan system one and a half centuries after its official disbandment. Certainly the difficulties of making even a partial living from a Highland croft were repeatedly stressed, but were not fully understood until attempts were made by the Board of Agriculture to resettle ex-servicemen in the region at the end of the First World War. It was then that two things became obvious: those who had been compelled by enlistment or conscription to make the break with their previous way of life found it difficult, if not impossible, to settle down again (particularly in view of the large numbers of their contemporaries who never came back); and those who were not native Highlanders were at an extreme disadvantage in both social and cultural terms in their attempts to make ends meet from the cultivation of small-holdings. Moreover, the entire economy of the region, already under grave pressure from the competition resulting from the agricultural and industrial revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was on the verge of

107) *ibid*, p. 18. cf. Dewey, *op. cit.*

108) cf. Chapter 4, note (75), page 147.

collapse in the face of the crises facing the nation in the 1920s, made more acute by the deaths of able-bodied men killed during the war. Yet those who had not been mobilised during the war years persevered in their pursuit of a means of existence which did not necessitate a removal from their individual holdings. W.R. Scott, investigating Scottish land settlements after the First World War, made the following observations about the Highlands :

"The crofter is more at the mercy of the weather than other small-holders. His geographical situation is such that climatic conditions are exceedingly unfavourable to him. A financial reserve is very rare indeed. Yet he manages to maintain himself. One explanation is the remarkable family affection. Large families are the rule, and the unmarried members who go to work in the towns contribute to the necessities of the family home, and in frequent emergencies they can be counted on up to the full extent of their capacity. And this results in the paradox that economically the Highland croft is usually in a precarious condition, yet through the closely knit family tie of the Highlands it is probably as permanent as any kind of agricultural enterprise in this country, more permanent even than the peasant properties in France." (109)

On this evidence, neither the Napier Commission of 1883 nor the instigators of the first Passenger Act eighty years earlier need have been unduly concerned that the loss of Highlanders through emigration would prevent them

109) W.R. Scott, *Scottish Land Settlement*, in D.L. Jones et al., *Rural Scotland during the War*, Oxford University Press, 1926, p. 235.

from replenishing the urban and industrial workforces or the armed services. (110) A significant proportion of the population of the Northern Highland region during most of the nineteenth century would not have left their homes on a permanent basis in any event, even to cross a parish boundary. This was the real problem faced by the Commission, and the one which it virtually overlooked in its attempts to compromise between those who feared the breakdown of law and order on the one hand and those who maintained that crofting was a viable proposition on the other. (111) The abolition of heritable jurisdictions, crises of plague and famine, the vagaries of crofting and fishing, clearances and emigration schemes, the collapse of the kelp industry at the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the increasing pressure on cottage industries throughout the nineteenth century, shook but for a long time did not entirely shatter the foundations of Highland society. Contemporaries saw migration within and from the region as first a cause and later a possible solution of Highland problems during the nineteenth century. As long as they continued to confuse the causes of migration with the causes of overpopulation, it was impossible to find a satisfactory solution to these problems.

110) cf. Chapter 7, note (1) ff. page 235.

111) Chapter 4, note (70), page 145.

P A R T I V

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 9

The problem unsolved

## The problem restated

In 1891 the Duke of Argyll stated to Parliament: "People talk of the depopulation of the Highlands. They never think of the depopulation of the Lowlands."<sup>(1)</sup> This was despite the fact that, as demonstrated in table 1 on page 29 and by map A1 on page 401, parts of the Highlands were less prematurely and less severely affected by population decline than other parts of Scotland. The reason for the continued interest in the Highlands during the late nineteenth century is not hard to find. As indicated by the introduction to the present study, Highland society differed from that elsewhere in the country even by the end of the period under consideration in that the movement of population was still an exceptional rather than a commonplace occurrence in some areas. Much of the migration which did take place from these areas was enforced rather than voluntary, even if a still greater amount of spontaneous movement was actually occurring simultaneously in other parts of the Northern Highlands. Moreover, the assisted or enforced movement of families and sometimes of whole settlements mainly affected those districts of the region with a socio-economic and cultural identity distinct from that of the rest of the country. Out-migration or emigration from such districts during the nineteenth century was reported out of all proportion to the much more extensive removal of other Scottish inhabitants from rural to urban areas and from the main ports to overseas destinations. As with so many publicised events, it was the unusual and dramatic

1) Hansard, 1891, Vol. 354, p. 250. Quoted by Soulsby, *op. cit.*



aspect of migration that attracted attention in the Northern Highlands, not its everyday occurrence elsewhere.

The simple but significant sentences uttered by the Duke of Argyll are of direct relevance in other respects to the main findings of this thesis. First, while migration loss unquestionably was a notable characteristic of the region during the period under consideration, the problem that affected much of the Highlands throughout the nineteenth century and indeed into the twentieth was not depopulation but rather overpopulation. Depopulation is in any event too strong a word to be applicable even to the region as a whole, despite its net population losses, during the period in question; since it implies that prolonged net out-migration eventually resulted in an excess of deaths over births and in the literal demise of whole communities. While former settlements did disappear as a result of clearance or emigration, no single entire parish of the Northern Highlands became depopulated during the nineteenth century. In fact, in some areas especially of the Outer Hebrides, the net migration losses were more than offset by the natural increase of the remaining inhabitants. The establishment of a Congested Districts Board for the north of Scotland in 1898, similar to and virtually simultaneous with that established for the west of Ireland<sup>(2)</sup>, shows the

2) J.C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923*, Faber, 1966, p. 408. The Irish Congested Districts Board was established in 1891. Beckett writes that "a congested district" was defined as one in which the rateable value was less than 30s. per head of the population, and such districts were to be found in nine western counties, from Donegal to Kerry. In 1901 these districts had between then a total population of about 500,000, who might be divided, according to the Commissioners, into 'two classes, namely, the poor and the destitute'."

extent and duration of the problem. The overcrowding which occurred particularly in the north-west mainland and the western and north isles of Scotland was both caused and compounded by an apparent lack of propensity to migrate on the part of a large proportion of the resident population. This moreover had little to do with the demographic structure of the inhabitants concerned. As illustrated in Chapter 3, the population with the greatest propensity to migrate in terms of age structure was in fact the least mobile in the region. (3)

This leads to the second main conclusion of the thesis. Migration losses and overpopulation were not only two different problems occurring simultaneously in the region, but they also tended to affect different parts of the Northern Highlands. The inference of the Duke of Argyll's statement is that, in Scotland as a whole, it was the areas nearest the expanding centres of the Lowlands that were most immediately affected by net out-migration. This hypothesis is also applicable at a regional level. The communities which were remotest from the main centres of population were less immediately and less radically affected by a decline in the numbers of their inhabitants than those which were nearest to such centres. (4) This has been illustrated in the course of the present study with particular reference to the different experiences of the east coast, western, and

3) especially tables 22 and 25, pages 93 and 99.

4) Soulsby, *op. cit.* cf. Chapter 8, note (4), page 280; and Appendix 4, map A1, page 401.

insular districts of the region. In Chapter 2 it was shown that it was the eastern and the neighbouring western parishes in the vicinity of the Great Glen, and not the remoter areas of the north-west mainland and outer islands, that produced the majority of intra-regional migrants and the largest percentage of the out-migrants (including a significant proportion of the overseas emigrants) from the Northern Highlands.<sup>(5)</sup> The substantial numbers of migrants originating from these parishes were to be expected in view of the sizeable base population and the comparative ease of communication in the eastern coastal plain. Although both mainland and island parishes west of the "highland line" contributed a major proportion of those who left the region for destinations abroad, such persons by no means comprised the greatest number of all the migrants originating from Northern Highland parishes during the nineteenth century. As shown with reference to tables 7 and 8 on pages 38 - 9 and in maps 3-4A on pages 43 - 6, most movement actually occurred at a sub-regional level.

It was further suggested in Chapter 2 that the fact that a large percentage of the relatively few migrants from western and insular districts did emigrate overseas, rather than move to destinations nearer home, may itself have been indicative of the unusual nature of movement in the context of Highland society during the period in question. The factors that appeared to explain the main patterns of

5) Maps 3-4A, pages 43-6; also table 16, page 66.

movement with regard to the eastern zone of the region were apparently of little relevance in other parts of it, because of the smaller amount of movement in these areas in relation to such possible incentives as greater opportunities and higher wages elsewhere. Moreover, the western and insular districts concerned were generally those in which overcrowding was greatest and the effects of the 1845 famine most severe. It was debated in Chapter 3 whether even this crisis caused as much out-migration as has often been believed, and as might have been expected had the propensity to move been greater in the parishes worst afflicted.

#### The solutions and their limitations

Having established in Part II that out-migration and overpopulation in general affected different areas of the region and different groups of its inhabitants, Part III of this thesis concluded that most of the attempts of landlords and legislators to redress the balance between population and resources in the region, whether by eviction, resettlement, redeployment, or assisted emigration, usually resulted in stimulating the movement of the most mobile elements of the population to the greater detriment of the remainder. It was not generally understood that the policies intended to discourage migration in the first part of the century and to encourage it in the second in each case primarily affected the wrong group of inhabitants. Moreover, it was not fully realised that the very policies that stimulated population increase and immobility prior to the 1845 famine helped to

predetermine the response to the change of policy thereafter. The policies, or options pursued, on the whole were based on the presupposition of a mobile population. The responses to them could be categorised, by topographical division and by occupation, according to those Highland inhabitants who were predisposed to be mobile and those who were not.

The main examples of this were in the primary sector. The contrast between the migration experience of the east coast and that of the rest of the region was especially marked in Chapter 4, where it was noted that farmers and estate workers - the most mobile elements of the agrarian population - were mainly located east of the "Highland line". Agricultural improvements, including enclosure and the introduction of sheep farming, occurred in this zone from a relatively early date in the eighteenth century. In the opening years of the nineteenth, the Sutherland estates embarked on a policy of establishing a "dual economy" of land-extensive sheep farming with labour-intensive coastal industry. In consequence of the mobility that ensued from these and similar schemes, there was far less pressure on land during the later decades of the nineteenth century on the east coast than on the western mainland and in the islands, where the majority of crofters were located. In the latter districts, the retention of population had been actively encouraged in the first part of the century to provide manpower for strategic purposes and for the kelp industry. It was in the same areas that the dependence on

the potato as a staple crop was greatest. After the 1845 famine, therefore, the problem of destitution west of the "highland line" was not only far more serious than in the east, but on account of the earlier policies that had aggravated overcrowding it was also far more difficult to relieve. The ultimate concession of security of tenure to crofters in 1886 merely made the basic problem of over-population more intractable than ever.

It was further observed in Chapter 4 that the nature of crofting itself was an added inducement to overcrowding and immobility, because it was a subsistence occupation supported by other pursuits that may have checked movement away from the land in search of a permanent alternative living. Gray has, as previously noted, aptly observed that the major weakness of the crofting economy was that "it kept people trapped in a fatal mixture of occupations".<sup>(6)</sup> Ironically, this was a situation that was not noticeably ameliorated by the seasonal migration which was an integral part of such secondary occupations. Certainly it did not necessarily encourage longer-term migration and may actually to some extent have been a surrogate for it.<sup>(7)</sup> A study of harvest migration from Ireland to Britain, in which it was estimated that about 57,000 persons per annum were involved at the time of the 1841 census, may be of considerable relevance in the Northern Highland context :

6) Chapter 4, note (41), page 129.

7) Chapter 4, note (52), page 134.

"Harvest migration probably represented a first step in the breakdown of the subsistence economy...The immediate result of the movement was to allow many families to keep their permanent homes in areas from which they would otherwise have emigrated..." (8)

This theme was developed in Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapter 5, which is concerned with the fishing industry, it was argued that commercial fishing and crofting were mutually exclusive occupations on the mainland, because of the degree of specialisation which the former required. This was not perceived at the time of the inception of the British Fisheries Society scheme at Ullapool in 1786, and it was ignored by the Sutherland estate management when a fishing settlement was founded at Helmsdale in 1816. The British Fisheries Society venture at Wick, which specifically excluded crofters, fared considerably better (if not for that reason alone). The differences between regular fishing and crofter-fishing also showed that crofter-fishermen were less migratory than those involved in regular fishing, although the latter attracted a substantial following among the insular inhabitants. This may have had a further detrimental effect on the extant overcrowding in the Outer Hebrides.

The stimulus given by developments in primary activities to transport and communications on the east coast was discussed in Chapter 6, in which it was noted that the growth

8) J.H. Johnson, Harvest migration from nineteenth century Ireland, Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, Vol. 41, 1967, pp. 97-112 and especially p. 110. cf. Devine, op. cit.

of this sector was itself an incentive to movement, particularly in the Inverness area. The manufacturing sector, largely based on cottage industries, actually contracted throughout most of the region during the period under consideration in the face of external competition. The main exception to this was the Harris tweed industry in the islands, again perhaps checking some spontaneous movement from insular districts and adding to their congestion in the later nineteenth century.

Rural-to-urban migration, a predominant characteristic of contemporary Scotland, was not a feature of Highland society generally during the period under consideration. The limited urban growth occurring mainly in Inverness itself and in the planned settlements in the eastern part of the region was principally due to reorganisation in the primary sector, and to the secondary services (such as transport) resulting from it, for which there was little demand in the islands. It may also to some extent have been attributable to the effects of the old Scottish Poor Law prior to the Amendment Act of 1845. After that year the number of paupers declined in the Northern Highlands as a whole, particularly in the vicinity of Inverness. By contrast, they continued to increase in Stornoway. The year 1845 thus marked the heightening of the differences between the eastern and the remoter parts of the region. Not only did destitution increase sharply in the latter districts after the famine; but because of the level of overcrowding,



the lack of alternative occupations to crofting, and the traditional reliance of tenants on their landlords at times of need, it also became virtually impossible to relieve it locally.

Attention was therefore turned in Chapter 7 to emigration schemes. This chapter examined the chronology of overseas emigration from the Northern Highlands against the background of national interests and changing political attitudes. Again, it was emphasised that the legislators failed to distinguish between the causes of emigration and the causes of overpopulation during the first part of the century in making their plans for assisted emigration in the second. The two government-sponsored schemes studied were highly selective, offering assistance to those who were most likely to emigrate in any event and whose departure was liable to have an adverse effect on the demographic and socio-economic structure of the remaining population. Moreover, those responsible for formulating and executing the plans to resettle crofters from the western Highlands and Islands in Canada in 1888 could have profited from the example of the planned fishing settlements in the region earlier in the century to disperse the crofters among other settlers and to discourage the perpetuation of a crofting society abroad.

Finally, Chapter 8 attempted to account in more detail for the limited response from many of the inhabitants of the

western and insular districts to the foregoing options of alternative employment and resettlement, whether within the Northern Highlands or elsewhere, compared with that from natives of the eastern part of the region. A number of factors were considered, including locational and cultural influences on migration. The remoter areas, which were least affected by large migration losses, were the most isolated in terms of transport and communications from the main population centres in the region and elsewhere in the country. They were the last to feel the effects of agrarian and industrial changes. Their inhabitants had little occasion to receive the information and literature necessary to stimulate spontaneous movement in search of other opportunities, and because of the low levels of literacy and the difficulties of acquiring regular education their ability to respond to some of the options offered was limited. The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge from early in the century and the Free Church after 1843 did much to promote Gaelic as an educational medium, but by providing a moral basis for organised resistance to clearance, the Free Church may have helped to check some spontaneous movement more than it aided the course of assisted emigration.

Additionally, a strong relationship was apparent between the inability to speak English and non-migration, although it has been postulated that the Gaelic language was not itself an impediment to movement. Rather, it was a surrogate for the type of occupation, particularly crofting,

which typified a subsistence economy and which did not demand the acquisition of materials and skills necessitating constant contact with the outside world. Even in the late nineteenth century, the inhabitants of the region west of the "highland line" still retained many of the characteristics of a primitive society, which took a fatalistic view of hardship and which relied on the ties of kin rather than reacting to market forces at times of need. It is for this reason that the conceptual approach to migration introduced in Part II is of little relevance to much of the region during the nineteenth century. It is also for this reason that the inducements to movement investigated throughout Part III, based as they were on a presupposition of a mobile population and on a misunderstanding of the causes of the fundamental Highland problem of overpopulation, were in most instances predestined to fail.

#### The options reconsidered

Even with hindsight, it is difficult to fault the reasoning behind the policies of clearance and enforced migration investigated in this study. The fact was that congestion, already recognised as causing a major imbalance between population and resources in some parts of the region prior to 1845, was the acknowledged problem throughout western and insular districts thereafter. In some instances, such as Morvern in northern Argyll, a reduction in population through successive clearances and assisted emigration schemes from an early date in the nineteenth century - while bitterly

remembered by some long afterwards - combined with the willingness of a number of landlords to subsidise their tenants to make conditions considerably better for those who remained.<sup>(9)</sup> It is hard to see how this could have been achieved without evictions. As Gaskell writes: "The proprietors who cleared their farms for sheep were acting under severe economic pressure, and the fact that they did not suffer as the people did does not in itself make their actions wrong."<sup>(10)</sup> It has been observed elsewhere in the present study that those estates which carried through a policy of clearance at an early date were less badly affected by the famine and its aftermath than those which encouraged the perpetuation of the lotting system.<sup>(11)</sup> The way in which the policy was sometimes executed is perhaps more deserving of condemnation than the clearances themselves, accompanied as these often were by resettlement or assisted migration schemes.

Indeed, if landlords are to be indicted for the eviction of their tenants from overcrowded areas in the 1840s and afterwards, they are all the more to be indicted for encouraging the problem of congestion to occur in the first place. Alternatively, they cannot reasonably be condemned for clearance in the wake of famine and destitution if earlier spontaneous movement would have prevented these problems from arising. The questions must therefore be asked: were any options other than those already explored

9) Gaskell, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

10) *ibid.*, p. 25.

11) Chapter 4, note (64) ff., pages 141-2.

open to either landlords or legislators, and could they have evoked a different response from the section of the population most concerned? Were eviction and resettlement the only means of redressing the balance between population and resources throughout extensive areas of the Northern Highlands during the nineteenth century?

Arguably the answer to the last question is affirmative. Changes in agricultural techniques were rendering the smallholding - always a marginal unit in most of the region - increasingly unviable. While smallholdings could be amalgamated into larger farms on the east coast to keep pace with progress in the primary sector, and their tenants to some extent redeployed within the same or related activities at least in the short term, this was largely impossible west of the "Highland line" on topographical grounds alone.<sup>(12)</sup> At the same time, the increasing population in the remoter districts could not be sustained solely by crofting, even without the subdivision of lots that the increase entailed.

At first sight, therefore, the 1803 Passenger Act and the various other attempts to discourage emigration by providing employment in the region in the early years of the nineteenth century<sup>(13)</sup> appear to have been miscalculations. Yet the legislators miscalculated only the types

12) Map 1A, page 12.

13) Chapters 6 and 7, *passim*.

of people, not the actual numbers, leaving the region. There was certainly an emigration problem in the Northern Highlands by 1803. The government was right to attempt to check it, but its attempts were directed at the wrong section of the population and for the wrong reasons. Those most likely to supply the bulk of the manpower for the regional militia quota or for the kelp industry were in many cases the least likely to emigrate. By contrast, those who had earlier been encouraged to leave were those whom the region could least afford to lose. Had sufficient numbers of tacksmen remained after the "purges" of the eighteenth century, they might have had a decisive influence on their less motivated and less mobile clansmen in the early nineteenth. (14)

An even more serious miscalculation at that time was the encouragement of population increase through the lotting system. Had this been prohibited, some movement from the most congested areas must surely have occurred. Arguably this need not even have affected the exorbitant profits from the kelp industry to an extent which could not have been counterbalanced by an increase in rent derived from the slightly improved living standards of the remaining tenants. The combined practices of subdividing lots and keeping rents artificially low during the Napoleonic Wars were to prove damaging both to landlords and to tenants in the long term.

14) Chapter 8, note (103), page 329.

They hastened the enforced sale of the smaller, less viable estates to larger, more remote proprietors while entrenching the attachment of smallholders or cottars to their particular patch of land and their ultimate dependence on their landlords. Conceivably the prohibition of lotting would have been a more humane form of eviction than the clearances which subsequently had to take place. Conceivably, also, this policy could have been combined with the 1803 legislation to force former inhabitants of western or insular areas to devote their energies to alternative forms of employment, such as the east coast fishing industry, then available within the region itself. As it was, the poverty already endemic in many of these areas by 1803, if encouraged to breed, could breed nothing but destitution. The excerpts from the New Statistical Account quoted in Chapter 3 show a marked contemporary awareness of the fallacies of the early policies.

The most important consideration, often neglected in resettlement schemes, was the need to discourage the perpetuation of close-knit crofting communities which appeared to be self-contained but which were in fact far from it. This was a major shortcoming in the Sutherland estates' plan for Helmsdale, despite the fact that the precedent set by the British Fisheries Society at Wick a few years previously, in 1809, showed the desirability of discouraging crofting within the designated area and of encouraging specialisation in the fishing industry.<sup>(15)</sup>

15) Chapter 5, notes (36)-(43), pages 179-84.

It was also a major shortcoming of the government-sponsored emigration scheme to Upper Canada over seventy years later.<sup>(16)</sup> Although by the last decade of the nineteenth century the problem of overpopulation had been officially recognised for more than forty years, the emigration policies devised in an attempt to alleviate it fell far short of their objectives both in terms of the numbers helped to emigrate and of their wellbeing after emigration. Overcrowding and losses through emigration might by then have been acknowledged as separate problems, but one could not necessarily be solved by the other, especially if it resulted in the probable continuation of a congested small tenantry elsewhere.

Overpopulation and emigration within the same section of Highland society were, in fact, mutually exclusive. A state of congestion within one section of that society might accelerate the out-migration of other groups with some propensity to migrate, but by its very nature it could never do so amongst those causing the problem of overpopulation in the first place. The only way in which the latter problem could have been effectively solved was by a natural decrease in the population, described by Malthus as a "positive check", and such an eventuality - which might have been evoked by, for instance, total non-intervention at times of famine - would not have been condoned by contemporaries and would hardly be regarded by most historians as a more satisfactory

16) Chapter 7, note (72), page 273.



solution than the measures that were adopted. Even had such a policy been implemented, it is also very unlikely that it could have succeeded in the nineteenth century Highlands, since some means of sustenance was almost always accessible even in the remotest areas. Only the high death rate among able-bodied men resulting from the First World War was sufficient to cause an absolute decrease in the population of the most congested districts, and then only because of the demographic imbalance which ensued. After 1918 it became impossible for these districts to attain a renewed rate of increase. The problem subsequently faced by such communities is summarised by Charles MacLean, describing the course of events leading to the evacuation of St. Kilda in 1930:

"In the past the remoteness of the island had been an important factor in the survival of the community, but when communications with the mainland improved enough to destroy its independence, though not sufficiently to bring St. Kilda into the swing of things, isolation became the chief obstacle to its continued existence." (17)

Moreover, St. Kilda - remote as it was from the kelp industry and the lotting system - had remained free from the worst excesses of overpopulation, and its inhabitants had long been relatively migratory. From the middle of the nineteenth century, in fact, the population of St. Kilda had usually been below the estimated "critical level" of 100 persons.<sup>(18)</sup> Nevertheless, not until the 1920s did it

17) C. Maclean, *Island on the Edge of the World: utopian St. Kilda and its passing*, London, 1972, p. 136.

18) T. Steel, *The Life and Death of St. Kilda*, Fontana, 1975, p. 140.

fall below its minimum survival threshold. About the same time that threshold was also passed in previously congested districts, as a result of exogenous circumstances and not of governmental or proprietorial policy. In the space of two decades, the twin Highland problems of emigration and over-population had merged. For the next forty years the general regional problem was to become that of depopulation.

### The implications of the present study

During the period 1851-91, the different patterns of population change experienced by different parts of the Northern Highlands were largely the result of the policies devised for them over the preceding hundred years. It is often far easier to perceive the long-term implications of such decisions with the wisdom of hindsight than at the critical time. Apart from the fact that any given policy (whether a form of compulsory migration or of encouragement to proliferation) may take years to have a measurable effect, it was impossible to study many aspects of migration generally until more data relating to the subject began to be collected comparatively late in the twentieth century. It was only then that the possible effectiveness of growth centres as a means of checking emigration and of encouraging return migration was realised in the light of considerable regional research. This policy, when applied to the Highlands from 1965, almost immediately achieved positive results.

Yet, even without specific data, the implications of the earlier trends could have been and indeed sometimes were perceived at the time. The distinction between emigration and overpopulation was succinctly if patronisingly summarised in the previously quoted statement by Clanranald's factor in South Uist as early as 1827: "...the most wealthy and industrious of our Population will emigrate and we will be left with the dregs."<sup>(19)</sup> However, when the main problem appeared to be pressure on resources, and when famines occurred with depressing regularity, the most obvious solution was to seek to relieve that pressure in numerical terms without much regard to its selective consequences.

There was, nevertheless, more than a grain of truth in the finding of the Select Committee on the Highlands and Islands in 1841 that sponsored emigration was too costly to be worth while.<sup>(20)</sup> The assisted emigration schemes adopted later in the century tended to make the situation at home even more intractable than before; while not nearly sufficient funds were invested to make it viable overseas. Besides, since the problem of overpopulation was not universal throughout the entire region, a policy aimed at redistributing the existing population within the Northern Highlands, based on growth centres, might have been more successful and less expensive. Again,

19) Chapter 7, note (24), page 245.

20) Chapter 7, note (32), page 251.

this was in effect realised by such contemporaries as the agents of the Countess of Sutherland. The difficulty was that the Highland problems throughout most of the nineteenth century were approached on an ad hoc and piecemeal basis, often by individual landlords or agencies with limited perspectives and sometimes with conflicting interests. But that was no more true of the Highlands than it was of other regions of Britain, whether rural or urban. The evolution of cohesive regional planning was an integral part of the gradual transition from a laissez-faire philosophy to state intervention in social and economic affairs at both national and local levels. It was a transition which lasted for a full century after the 1845 famine and the consequent repeal of the Corn Laws.

Not only did the Highlands thus receive no less government attention than other parts of the country: in actual fact its inhabitants were well placed to receive more. Geographically remote from Westminster and numerically only a tiny percentage of the nation's population, these were the very factors that helped to attract attention to the region at times of crisis. The needs of the Northern Highland population during the famines of 1836-7 and 1845-6 and after the Crofters' War of 1882 appeared to arouse proportionately far more immediate concern than, for example, those of the inhabitants of the cities afflicted by cholera in 1832 or by generally poor living and working conditions. The gap between tenants, landlords and

legislators - despite the fact that it widened in terms both of numbers and of needs during the nineteenth century - was generally less great than in the Lowlands, and was partly bridged by the traditional interdependence of the various groups within the former clan system. It was only with the virtual dissolution of the traditional Highland economy after 1845 that the former relationships finally dissolved as well. (21) So the period 1851-91 was significant not only in terms of the attempts made to reverse earlier policies but also in terms of the formulation of a new, more formal relationship between tenant and landlord, in which the ties of kin were finally superseded by legal contract.

Given the increased inflexibility in tenant-landlord relations on the one hand and the frequent lack of mutual support between landlords and government on the other, it is not surprising that the later nineteenth century witnessed the growing intractability of the problems of overcrowding and lack of mobility on the part of the crofting population. On the contrary, it should be observed of all three groups that the tensions which arose between them never reached the proportions they attained in Ireland. But in Ireland the relationship between British landlord and Irish tenant had never been that of blood kinsmen. It was probably at least partly due to the more positive attributes of the old clan system as well as to the localised nature of the

21) Chapter 7, note (73), page 274.

existing friction that there was never any real threat to the national security from the Highland inhabitants. At the same time, it must be noted that it was in the light of a perceived threat from this source that the 1886 legislation - with its implications for further discouraging mobility - was passed. So, while the comparisons between the nineteenth century Highlands and Ireland are limited in some respects, events in Ireland undoubtedly influenced the response of British politicians to the situation in north-west Scotland. There was moreover one basic similarity between the two areas. Both shared, albeit not to the same extent, the twin problems of overcrowding and destitution after the 1845 famine, unrelieved by the emigration occurring within the less destitute sectors of society.

This thesis has not intended to minimise the extent of migration losses from the Northern Highlands throughout most of the nineteenth century. Nor has it sought to vindicate the landlords who turned families out of their homes, whether or not they were resettled elsewhere, or to disparage the sufferings of those who were evicted. It has attempted to show some of the problems faced by politicians, proprietors, and tenants alike in a situation where population and resources were clearly imbalanced. More generally, this study presents an interpretation of nineteenth century Highland history which differs substantially from most of the accepted accounts. It argues that too often the sub-regional patterns of population change in the Highlands and

Islands have been overlooked. For example many, like Professor Campbell, have sought to explain migration in the decades following the Napoleonic Wars from the region as a whole in the following terms :

"Lack of capital, intensified by the fall in money incomes after the war, inhibited any form of improvement and a high degree of correlation may be postulated between the extent to which internal reforms in various districts met the challenge and the lesser degree of emigration from them. The greatest contribution to emigration came from the problem areas of the north and west, where natural endowments were inferior and population pressure greater." (22)

The arguments presented in this thesis indicate that the above explanation rests on three mistaken premises. First, emigration in this context cannot be interpreted solely as an overseas movement. The largest migration flows from the region were principally to other parts of Scotland. Secondly, the implicit assumption is that the highest population losses occurred from areas least affected by improvement and reform. In contrast, it is the substance of this study that the "high degree of correlation" postulated by Campbell actually lay between the internal reforms and the most extensive outward movement of population, for precisely the reason that the improvements themselves actually generated much of that movement. Moreover, the area most affected was the eastern zone, and not the remoter parishes assumed in the quotation. The third

22) Campbell, op. cit., p. 175.

fallacy has been that population pressure led directly to emigration. This thesis has demonstrated that the two were not necessarily causally linked. The distinction between areas of congestion and areas of emigration was at the heart of the dilemma which confronted landlords and tenants alike in the nineteenth century, and which, all too often, they failed to resolve.

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A P P E N D I C E S

Appendix IA

Population <sup>(1)</sup> of Parishes, in Counties and Topographical Divisions  
(parish nos. correspond with those on Map 2), page 16).

	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>
<u>East Coast Parishes</u> <sup>(2)</sup>					
CAITHNESS :					
1. Bower	1,658	1,746	1,700	1,608	1,506
2. Canisbay	2,437	2,730	2,729	2,626	2,392
3. Dunnet	1,868	1,861	1,661	1,607	1,488
4. Halkirk	2,918	2,864	2,664	2,705	2,564
5. Latheron	8,224	8,571	7,400	6,675	5,875
6. Olrick	1,873	2,059	2,028	2,002	1,837
7. Reay (pt.) <sup>(3)</sup>	1,433	1,387	1,312	1,197	1,182
8. Thurso	5,096	5,561	5,754	6,217	5,838
9. Watten	1,351	1,491	1,453	1,406	1,390
10. Wick	11,851	12,841	13,291	12,822	13,105
SUTHERLAND :					
7. Reay (pt.) <sup>(3)</sup>	1,073	1,089	1,019	994	893
12. Clyne	1,933	1,886	1,733	1,812	1,713
13. Creich	2,714	2,521	2,524	2,223	2,013
14. Dornoch	2,981	2,885	2,764	2,525	2,404
18. Golspie	1,529	1,615	1,804	1,556	1,451
19. Kildonan	2,288	2,132	1,916	1,942	1,828
21. Loth	640	610	583	584	528
ROSS & CROMARTY :					
24. Alness	1,240	1,178	1,053	1,033	1,039
26. Avoch	2,029	1,788	1,828	1,691	1,817
28. Cromarty	2,727	2,300	2,180	2,009	2,007
29. Dingwall	2,364	2,412	2,443	2,220	2,607
30. Edderton	890	836	860	789	642
31. Fearn	2,122	2,083	2,135	2,135	1,900
32. Fodderty	2,342	2,247	2,121	2,047	2,000
35. Killiernan	1,794	1,494	1,272	1,059	920
36. Kilmuir Easter	1,437	1,295	1,281	1,146	1,024
37. Kiltearn	1,538	1,634	1,496	1,182	1,301
40. Knockbain	3,005	2,485	2,155	1,866	1,698
44. Logie Easter	965	932	912	827	870
45. Nigg	1,457	1,253	1,201	1,000	930
46. Resolis (Kirkmichael)	1,551	1,568	1,527	1,424	1,339
47. Rosemarkie	1,776	1,545	1,441	1,357	1,343
48. Rosskeen	3,699	3,766	3,808	3,773	3,480
49. Tain	3,574	3,294	3,221	3,009	2,818
50. Tarbat	2,151	2,269	2,182	1,878	1,703
51. Urquhart & Logie Wester (pt.) <sup>(4)</sup>	2,109	2,158	1,755	1,639	1,536

Appendix IA (Cont'd)

	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>
INVERNESS-SHIRE :					
59. Ardersier <sup>(5)</sup>	1,241	1,239	1,099	2,086	1,914
61. Daviot & Dunlichity (pt.)	1,674	1,565	1,487	1,133	966
64. Inverness	16,496	16,162	18,504	21,725	23,895
69. Petty	1,707	1,671	1,496	1,488	1,254
75. Kirkhill	1,730	1,757	1,582	1,480	1,307
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
EAST COAST TOTALS	113,485	112,780	111,374	110,497	108,317

Notes :

1. These figures include those noted as not normally resident in the parish, e.g. enumerated on board ship or in a military establishment, who comprised the basis of the sample population. They are therefore, not necessarily identical with the published census totals.
2. i.e. defined as those parishes lying wholly or mainly east of the "Highland Line" (see map 1), or having at least one major settlement within the Lowland zone (e.g. Kildonan, Creich).
3. The whole of Reay parish is included for computer mapping purposes in the county of Caithness.
4. The remainder of the parish of Urquhart and Logie Wester belonged to the county of Nairn until 1892.
5. Including over 900 persons in Fort George in both 1881 and 1891 (see note 1).

## Appendix 1A (cont'd.)

<u>Western Parishes</u> <sup>(6)</sup>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>
<b>SUTHERLAND :</b>					
11. Assynt	2,989	3,178	3,006	2,781	2,551
15. Durness	1,152	1,109	1,049	987	960
16. Eddrachillis	1,576	1,641	1,530	1,525	1,409
17. Farr	2,203	2,103	2,019	1,930	1,857
20. Lairg	1,162	961	978	1,355	1,169
22. Rogart	1,535	1,439	1,341	1,227	1,195
23. Tongue	2,018	2,077	2,051	1,929	1,925
<b>ROSS &amp; CROMARTY :</b>					
25. Applecross	2,709	2,544	2,470	2,239	2,038
27. Contin	1,562	1,509	1,550	1,422	1,298
33. Gairloch	5,162	5,449	5,048	4,594	4,181
34. Glenshiel	573	485	463	424	394
38. Kincardine	1,896	1,746	1,685	1,472	1,417
39. Kintail	1,009	890	753	688	588
41. Lochalsh	2,299	2,413	2,319	2,050	1,868
42. Lochbroom	4,803	4,862	4,406	4,191	3,910
43. Lochcarron	1,612	1,592	1,629	1,456	1,390
52. Urray (pt.)	2,591	2,323	2,278	2,440	2,162
<b>INVERNESS-SHIRE :</b>					
52. Urray (remainder)	30	32	30	34	38
57. Abernethy & Kincardine <sup>(7)</sup>	785	787	1,752	1,530	1,354
58. Alvie	914	833	882	707	656
60. Boleskine & Abertarff	1,997	1,743	1,550	1,448	1,429
(Cawdor (pt.))	161	234	140	111	113)
(Cromdale (pt.)) <sup>(7)</sup>	3,428	3,377	—	442	437)
(Croy <sup>(8)</sup> )	1,058	1,182	1,151	1,075	937)
62. Dores	1,650	1,506	1,393	1,148	932
63. Duthel & Rothiemurchus (pt.) <sup>(7)</sup>	380	319	1,872	1,664	1,994
65. Kilmonivaig	2,583	2,276	1,956	1,928	2,205
66. Kingussie & Insh	2,201	2,033	2,101	1,987	1,948
67. Laggan	1,223	986	950	917	850
68. Moy & Dalarossie (pt.)	1,005	1,026	980	803	730
70. Ardnamurchan (pt.) <sup>(9)</sup>	2,333	2,013	1,812	1,836	1,612
71. Glenelg (incl. Raasay)	2,470	1,843	1,645	1,601	1,503
72. Kilmallie (pt.) <sup>(9)</sup>	2,835	2,380	2,388	2,716	2,908
73. Kilmorack	3,007	2,852	2,728	2,618	2,224
74. Kiltarlity	2,965	2,839	2,537	2,134	1,878
76. Urquhart & Glenmoriston	3,280	2,911	2,769	2,438	2,040
<b>WESTERN TOTALS</b>	<b>71,166</b>	<b>67,493</b>	<b>63,211</b>	<b>59,847</b>	<b>56,100</b>

Appendix 1A (cont'd.)

Notes :

6. Defined as those mainland parishes lying west of the "Highland Line" (see map 1, page 9).
7. The parishes of Abernethy and Cromdale were transferred in their entirety to the county of Elgin (Moray) in 1870 under Act 33 and 34 Vict. cap. 16. The same act transferred the parish of Duthel from Elgin to Inverness-shire. (see also note (8)).
8. The parishes of Cawdor, Cromdale, and Croy have been included in the analysis but omitted from the computer maps (3-17 incl.), since their current boundaries (as delimited by CAMAP) both outwith the region considered in this study. See Appendix 2, page 380.
9. Parts of the parishes of Ardnamurchan and Kilmallie are in the county of Argyll.

<u>Insular Parishes</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>
ROSS AND CROMARTY :					
Lewis :					
53. Barvas	4,189	4,609	4,950	5,325	5,699
54. Lochs	4,256	4,901	5,880	6,284	6,432
55. Stornoway	8,057	8,668	9,510	10,389	11,799
56. Uig	3,209	2,878	3,143	3,489	3,660
INVERNESS :					
77. Barra	1,873	1,853	1,997	2,161	2,365
78. Harris	4,250	4,183	4,120	4,814	5,024
79. Small Isles (Eigg)	461	309	282	291	233
Skye :					
80. Bracadale)	1,597	1,335	1,113	929	920
81. Duirinish)	5,330	4,775	4,422	4,319	3,933
82. Kilmuir )	3,177	2,846	2,567	2,562	2,394
83. Portree )	3,557	3,159	2,928	3,191	3,176
84. Sleat )	2,531	2,330	2,233	2,060	1,850
85. Snizort )	3,101	2,639	2,326	2,120	1,908
86. Strath )	3,243	2,664	2,562	2,616	2,392
87. Uist, North	3,918	3,959	4,107	4,264	4,187
88. Uist, South	6,173	5,358	5,749	6,078	5,821
INSULAR TOTALS	58,922	56,466	57,889	60,892	61,793

APPENDIX 1B

COMPONENTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE  
BY REGISTRATION DISTRICT, (1) 1861-1871

	1861 <u>pop.</u>	Nat. inc. <u>1861-71</u>	Rate <u>%</u>	Net.Mig. <u>1861-71</u>	Rate <u>%</u>	1871 <u>pop.</u>
<u>East Coast Districts</u>						
CAITHNESS :						
1. Bower	1,746	+218	+12.5	-264	-15.1	1,700
2. Canisbay	2,730	+476	+17.4	-477	-17.5	2,729
3. Dunnet	1,861	+194	+10.4	-394	-21.2	1,661
4. Halkirk	2,864	+284	+9.9	-484	-16.9	2,664
5. Latheron	8,571	+946	+11.0	-2,117	-24.7	7,400
6. Olrick	2,059	+249	+12.1	-280	-13.6	2,028
7. Reay (both pts)	2,476	+240	+9.7	-385	-15.5	2,331
8. Thurso	5,561	+499	+9.0	-306	-5.5	5,754
9. Watten	1,491	+182	+12.2	-220	-14.8	1,453
10. Wick	12,841	+1,856	+14.5	-1,406	-11.0	13,291
SUTHERLAND :						
12. Clyne	1,886	+82	+4.4	-235	-12.5	1,733
13. Creich	2,521	+137	+5.4	-134	-5.3	2,524
14. Dornoch	2,885	+203	+7.0	-324	-11.2	2,764
18. Golspie	1,615	+217	+13.4	-28	-1.7	1,804
19. Kildonan	2,132	+149	+7.0	-365	-17.1	1,916
21. Loth	610	+39	+6.4	-66	-10.8	583
ROSS & CROMARTY :						
24. Alness	1,178	+71	+6.0	-196	-16.6	1,053
26. Avoch	1,788	+250	+14.0	-210	-11.7	1,828
28. Cromarty	2,300	+242	+10.5	-362	-15.7	2,180
29. Dingwall	2,412	+182	+7.5	-151	-6.3	2,443
30. Edderton	836	+112	+13.4	-88	-10.5	860
31. Fearn	2,083	+238	+11.4	-186	-8.9	2,135
32. Fodderty	2,247	+162	+7.2	-288	-12.8	2,121
35. Killiernan	1,494	+56	+3.8	-278	-18.6	1,272
36. Kilmuir Easter	1,295	+108	+8.3	-122	-9.4	1,281
37. Kiltearn	1,634	+108	+6.6	-246	-15.1	1,496
40. Knockbain	2,485	+133	+5.4	-463	-18.6	2,155
44. Logie Easter	932	+110	+11.8	-130	-13.9	912
45. Nigg	1,253	+63	+5.0	-115	-9.2	1,201
46. Resolis	1,568	+78	+5.0	-119	-7.6	1,527
47. Rosemarkie	1,545	+18	+1.2	-122	-7.9	1,441
48. Rosskeen	3,766	+414	+11.0	-372	-9.9	3,808
49. Tain	3,294	+173	+5.3	-246	-7.5	3,221
50. Tarbat	2,269	+275	+12.1	-362	-16.0	2,182
51. Urquhart & L.W.	3,147	+157	+5.0	-441	-14.0	2,863

Note : 1) For a discussion of the differences between parishes and registration districts, see Chapter 2, note 19, page 34.

Appendix 1B (Cont'd.)

<u>East Coast Districts</u>	<u>1861 pop.</u>	<u>Nat.inc. 1861-71</u>	<u>Rate %</u>	<u>Net.Mig. 1861-71</u>	<u>Rate %</u>	<u>1871 pop.</u>
INVERNESS-SHIRE :						
59. Ardersier	1,239	+104	+8.4	- 59	- 4.8	1,284
61. Daviot & Dunlichity	1,741	+156	+9.0	- 299	-17.2	1,598
64. Inverness	16,162	+1,213	+7.5	+1,177	+7.3	18,552
69. Petty	1,671	+202	+12.1	- 324	-19.4	1,549
75. Kirkhill	1,757	+114	+6.5	- 289	-16.5	1,582
<b>EAST COAST TOTALS</b>	<b>113,945</b>	<b>+10,710</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>-11,776</b>	<b>- 10.3</b>	<b>112,879</b>

Western Districts

SUTHERLAND :

11. Assynt	3,178	+ 239	+7.5	- 411	-12.9	3,006
15. Durness	1,109	+ 95	+8.6	- 155	-14.0	1,049
16. Eddrachillis	1,641	+144	+8.8	- 255	-15.5	1,530
17. Farr	2,103	+136	+6.5	- 220	-10.5	2,019
20. Lairg	961	+ 35	+3.6	- 18	- 1.9	978
22. Rogart	1,439	+ 58	+4.0	-156	-10.8	1,341
23. Tongue	2,077	+178	+8.6	- 204	- 9.8	2,051

ROSS & CROMARTY :

25. Applecross	2,544	+148	+5.8	- 222	- 8.7	2,470
27. Contin	1,509	+116	+7.7	- 75	- 5.0	1,550
33. Gairloch	5,449	+437	+8.0	- 838	-15.4	5,048
34. Glenshiel	485	+ 37	+7.6	- 59	-12.2	463
38. Kincardine	1,746	+120	+6.9	-181	-10.4	1,685
39. Kintail	890	+ 29	+3.3	-166	-18.7	753
41. Lochalsh	2,413	+175	+7.3	-269	-11.1	2,319
42. Lochbroom	4,862	+337	+6.9	- 793	-16.3	4,406
43. Lochcarron	1,592	+ 67	+4.2	- 30	- 1.9	1,629
52. Urray	2,355	+205	+8.7	-252	-10.7	2,308

INVERNESS-SHIRE :

57. Abernethy & Kin.	1,928	+198	+10.3	- 374	-19.4	1,752
58. Alvie	833	+ 82	+ 9.8	- 93	-11.2	822
60. Boleskine & Ab. (Cawdor (2)	1,743	+132	+ 7.6	-297	-17.0	1,578
Cromdale (2)	-	-	-	-	-	- )
Croy (2)	3,943	+465	+11.8	- 591	-15.0	3,817
62. Dores	1,873	+248	+13.2	- 280	-14.9	1,841
63. Duthel & Roth.	1,506	+135	+ 9.0	- 240	-15.9	1,401
65. Kilmonivaig	1,928	+273	+14.2	- 329	-17.1	1,872
66. Kingussie & Insh	2,276	+157	+ 6.9	-466	-20.5	1,967
67. Laggan	2,033	+233	+11.5	-165	- 8.1	2,101
	986	+79	+ 8.0	-115	-11.7	950

Appendix 1B (Cont'd.)

<u>Western Districts</u>	<u>1861 pop.</u>	<u>Nat.inc. 1861-71</u>	<u>Rate %</u>	<u>Net.Mig. 1861-71</u>	<u>Rate %</u>	<u>1871 pop.</u>
<b>INVERNESS-SHIRE :</b>						
68. Moy & Dalarossie	1,026	+ 74	+ 7.2	- 95	- 9.3	1,005
(70. Ardnamurchan (2)	-	-	-	-	-	- )
71. Glenelg	1,843	+181	+ 9.8	-371	-20.1	1,653
(72. Kilmallie (2)	-	-	-	-	-	- )
73. Kilmorack	2,852	+152	+ 5.3	-276	- 9.7	2,728
74. Kiltarlity	2,839	+264	+ 9.3	-566	-19.9	2,537
76. Urquhart & Glenmoriston	<u>2,911</u>	<u>+280</u>	<u>+ 9.6</u>	<u>-411</u>	<u>-14.1</u>	<u>2,780</u>
<b>WESTERN TOTALS</b>	<b>66,873</b>	<b>+ 5,509</b>	<b>+ 8.2</b>	<b>- 8,973</b>	<b>-13.4</b>	<b>63,409</b>
 <u>Insular Districts</u>						
<b>ROSS &amp; CROMARTY :</b>						
53. Barvas	6,813	+1,387	+20.4	-548	- 8.0	7,652
54. Lochs	3,568	+823	+23.1	-229	- 6.4	4,162
55. Stornoway	8,668	+1,456	+16.8	-614	- 7.1	9,510
56. Uig	2,007	+317	+15.8	-165	- 8.2	2,159
 <b>INVERNESS :</b>						
77. Barra	1,853	+298	+16.1	-154	- 8.3	1,997
78. Harris	4,183	+590	+14.1	-653	-15.6	4,120
79. Small Isles	567	+51	+ 9.0	- 96	-16.9	522
<b>Skye :</b>						
80. Bracadale	1,335	+48	+ 3.6	-270	-20.2	1,113
81. Duirinish	4,775	+434	+ 9.1	-787	-16.5	4,422
82. Kilmuir	2,872	+196	+ 6.8	-478	-16.6	2,590
83. Portree	3,159	+330	+10.5	-561	-17.6	2,928
84. Sleat	2,330	+219	+ 9.4	-316	-13.6	2,233
85. Snizort	2,613	+178	+ 6.8	-488	-18.7	2,303
86. Strath	2,664	+233	+ 8.8	-335	-12.6	2,562
87. Uist, North	3,959	+554	+14.0	-406	-10.3	4,107
88. Uist, South	<u>5,358</u>	<u>+672</u>	<u>+12.5</u>	<u>-281</u>	<u>- 5.2</u>	<u>5,749</u>
<b>INSULAR TOTALS</b>	<b>56,724</b>	<b>+ 7,786</b>	<b>+13.7</b>	<b>- 6,381</b>	<b>-11.2</b>	<b>58,129</b>

Note : 2) *ibid.*



THE COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF CENSUS DATA

Sources of migration data

For the purposes of this study, migration is defined as including all individual changes of address, irrespective of their duration, recorded in the censuses from 1851 to 1891. The distance covered was also immaterial, provided that the move involved the crossing of a parish boundary. Although it is sometimes possible to distinguish seasonal migrants and visitors from permanent residents, the late nineteenth century censuses (which were normally taken in April) give little indication of the real extent of such temporary moves.<sup>(1)</sup> Nor do they give any indication of return migration.<sup>(2)</sup> Migration research in Britain was somewhat limited to the 1960s: partly because, as an interdisciplinary subject, it took a considerable time to be developed, and partly for lack of data relating specifically to population movements before the 1961 census.<sup>(3)</sup>

A major source of information for this study is comprised of the reports of the Registrar-General for Scotland, published annually since the introduction of compulsory civil registration in 1855. These contain statistics at registration district level of births,

1) cf. Chapter 5, note (12), page 164.

2) Chapter 2, table 18 ff, page 69.

3) Ruth L. Welch, *Migration Research and Migration in Britain*, University of Birmingham, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Occasional Paper No. 14, 1970, p. 7.

deaths and marriages, based on quarterly returns. Using these in conjunction with the censuses, it is possible to estimate both the natural change and the migration components of population growth or decline in individual districts.<sup>(4)</sup> Prior to 1855, such information was only available in ecclesiastical parish registers (where these were kept), many of which disappeared during the Disruption in 1843 in the Church of Scotland. This event had extensive repercussions throughout the Northern Highland region<sup>(5)</sup>, where parish registration statistics were relatively scarce until the Civil Registration Act came into effect.

Apart from individual estate and parish records, the main sources for internal migration studies in this country until 1961 are the residence/birthplace information in the censuses from 1851, and the National Insurance (subsequently the National Health) Register from 1939.<sup>(6)</sup> As indicated in Chapter 1, the present work is mainly concerned with a study of the forty years from the potato famine of 1845-6 to the passing of the Crofters' Holdings Act in 1886. However, 1851 and 1891 were in fact the effective terminal dates for much of the thesis, since for the five inclusive censuses the enumerators' books (which contain information on parish of birth) are accessible in New Register House,

4) Chapter 3 and Appendix 1B, pages 366-8.

5) cf. Chapter 8, pages 317-20.

6) For an example of a migration study based on the National Health Register, see T.H. Hollingsworth, *Migration: a Study based on Scottish Experience between 1939 and 1964*, University of Glasgow Social and Economic Studies, Occasional Papers No. 12, Oliver and Boyd, 1970.

Edinburgh. This is the sole systematic source of information on inter-parish movements in the nineteenth century. The published census reports only give the total numbers born in one county and enumerated in another. In the 1841 census respondents were asked whether they were born in the county in which they resided. If not, they were asked whether they were born in Scotland or elsewhere in the United Kingdom. No systematic studies of intra-regional migration in Scotland are therefore possible before 1851. After 1891 the original census records are closed, for reasons of confidentiality, until the year 2001.

#### Limitations of the data

It should be observed that the birthplace information in the censuses from 1841 to 1961, when a specific question on migration was included, does not necessarily give either a complete or an accurate account of movement between districts. Strictly speaking, it represents long-term migration only. A question on place of birth does not, for example, yield any information relating to intermediate moves or to the time of moving. The ages of those included in the published residence/birthplace tables from 1851 onwards apply to the time of enumeration and not to the date of removal: the same is of course true of the unpublished material in the enumerators' books. It should also be remarked that this source does not indicate the extent of internal migration within any given parish. In the case of large districts, especially those within the

boundaries of which resettlement schemes were sited, such movement may have been considerable. Nevertheless, provided that these limitations are noted, the place of birth responses in the censuses from 1851 reveal some of the major patterns in population movements during the nineteenth century.

The published censuses for the period 1851-91 contain, among other data, details of the age and sex structure of any given parish population, crude occupational classification, numbers of families, numbers of houses, and (from 1881) numbers of Gaelic speakers. They also include tabulations of county of birth by county of enumeration. Although a great deal may be extracted from these statistics, it is not possible to examine the relationships between different variables in individual cases (e.g. to cross-tabulate occupation by age etc.), nor to determine the extent of movement between parishes within any given county. For these reasons it was necessary to revert to the original enumerators' books to obtain much of the relevant information for the present study.

### The Sample

The question of the appropriate sample size and sampling method therefore had to be resolved. In the four counties of Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty and Inverness, the total population enumerated during the five censuses 1851-91 amounted to 1,169,964 individuals.

A one hundred per cent case study was obviously impracticable and unnecessary. The published sources in any event contain sufficient information to determine a general profile of the entire population. What was essential in the current context was to select that element most likely to have been directly affected by economic and social changes in the regional economy: the heads of families, whose movements also determined those of other members of their households to a large extent.

The study could not be confined to migrants only, since as much emphasis was to be given to those who did not move as to those who did. Nor could it be restricted to those of "economically active" ages: in a primarily agricultural society, a substantial proportion of the working population belonged to age groups outside the usual limits, which in any case were much harder to define in the late nineteenth century than now. For the same reasons, it could not concentrate exclusively on adult males. However, the decision to select family heads for case study purposes immediately reduced the population to be sampled from 1.17 millions to 257,613, about one-fifth of the total. The average size of family in the region throughout the period was approximately 4.5 persons

(table A1).<sup>(7)</sup>

It should incidentally be noted that there is a distinction between the total numbers of families and of houses in the region. The latter amounted to 226,857 over all five censuses, indicating that in some instances there was more than one family per house.

Table A1  
Families and average family size, 1851-91<sup>(8)</sup>

Nos. of families :	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>
Inverness	N.A.	19,556	19,398	19,836	19,836
Ross & Cromarty	"	17,976	17,961	17,524	17,595
Sutherland	"	5,382	5,298	5,220	5,109
Caithness	"	8,952	8,825	8,731	8,414
Totals	N.A.	51,866	51,482	51,311	50,954
Total Population	243,709	236,024	232,795	231,236	226,200
Average family size	N.A.	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.4

It remained to determine the optimum size of the sample to be taken. The main consideration in this respect was time (including both the collection and the processing

7) including servants, lodgers, etc. The census definition of a family was virtually interchangeable with the contemporary concept of a household. A full description of the enumerators' schedules and books is given by W.A. Armstrong, *Social structure from the early census returns*, in E.A. Wrigley (ed.), *An Introduction to English Historical Demography*, Cambridge, 1966, pp. 209-37. See also M. Anderson, *Standard tabulation procedures for the census enumerators' books 1851-91*, in E.A. Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Society: essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data*, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 134-45. cf. Chapter 3, table 23, page 96.

8) Source : census.

of the data). One week's pilot study in Edinburgh, during March 1974, showed that about 400 cases could be recorded in a single working day. However, the procedure at that time was hindered by the lack of prepared coding sheets, by the collection of superfluous information (such as name and address), and by the need to note all details in full in order to standardise abbreviations for future use. The preparation of standardised coding sheets and abbreviations meant that the number of cases recorded during one working day could be increased to around 800. Three weeks (i.e. fifteen days) would thus produce a sample of approximately 12,000 family heads, about 1 in 20 of the total, including data for 1861 and 1881 which was extracted but in the event not processed.

A sample of this size was more than adequate for determining the main characteristics of the population at risk. Allowing for a permissible level of error of 0.01, the minimum sample size could be predetermined by the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

where  $e$  is the level of error and  $N$  is the population at risk (i.e. 257,613 family heads). On this basis, a sample of 9,627 cases for all five censuses would have been sufficient.<sup>(9)</sup>

9) H.J. Dyos and A.B.M. Baker, The possibilities of computerising census data, in H.J. Dyos (ed.), The Study of Urban History, London, 1971, p. 109.

However, the formula for finite population correction<sup>(10)</sup> indicates the advantage of a rather larger sample. According to the formula

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + (n_0/N)}$$

where  $n_0$  is the estimated sample size (c. 12,000), the optimum sample would include 11, 173 cases. The somewhat larger actual sample of 12,454 allowed for the possibility of rejecting any which proved to be unsuitable for coding purposes. In the event, such selection was unnecessary.

Because of the format of the enumerators' books, in which cases were not always numbered and in which no form of marking was possible, a method of systematic sampling was chosen to facilitate the selection procedure. The main disadvantage of systematic sampling - that a bias might result from cases being listed in a certain order - appeared not to be a serious one in this study. Each enumerator determined his own route around his district; enumerators were not necessarily the same from one census to the next (and certainly not throughout all five censuses); moreover, the enumeration district boundaries were frequently changed between censuses. Thus the risk of obtaining a sample of one particular socio-economic group, or of selecting the same persons in all five censuses, was minimal.

10) R.S. Schofield, Sampling in historical research, in Wrigley (ed.), Nineteenth Century Society, op. cit., pp. 146-190.



Besides, the published figures alone indicated extensive population changes in many parishes between censuses (see Chapter 2 and Appendix 1A). Accordingly the sample was taken on the basis of every 20th family head (the first person listed below the dividing line drawn by the enumerator to distinguish between individual households in his book). Table A2 shows the numbers sampled in each county at the three alternate censuses analysed.

Table A2

Actual size of sample population  
(nos. of family heads)

<u>County</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
Inverness	971	932	936
Ross & Cromarty	895	911	864
Sutherland	297	263	264
Caithness	<u>431</u>	<u>434</u>	<u>412</u>
Totals	2,594	2,540	2,476

In both Ross and Cromarty and Caithness, the size of the sample increased between 1851 and 1871, although the actual number of families shown in table A1 declined. However, both increases were slight (especially in Caithness) and may be attributed to the declining average family size or to sampling error. The fact that there was little difference in the number of family heads sampled in Inverness-shire between 1871 and 1891, despite the increase in the numbers of families there, is also of little significance. Again, probably because of sampling error, 1 in

every 21.2 families were sampled in 1891, compared with 1 in 20.8 in 1871.

In each case, the person's age, sex, occupation(s), and place of birth were noted. The latter included the actual parish of birth if born within the Northern Highland region; if not, it comprised the county of birth for native Scots and the country for others. In 1881 and 1891 the language spoken was also stated. In 1881 it was only remarked whether or not an individual spoke Gaelic, whereas in 1891 those who spoke Gaelic only were distinguished from those who were bilingual. The final classification of occupation is discussed in Appendix 3.

#### Analysis of the data

The resulting sample of cases for 1851, 1871 and 1891 was then transferred to punching sheets to facilitate computer processing. Each case was allocated a number consisting of up to three digits to allow for those instances (namely in Inverness, Wick and Stornoway) where the numbers sampled amounted to more than 99 in any given parish and year. Thus the first 8 columns on every card represented the year of enumeration (6, 7 or 9), county of enumeration (e.g. CS=01), parish of enumeration (01...93) and the case number (001 etc). The next four columns showed the individual's sex (M=1, F=2) and age (up to three digits, since several centenarians were

included in the sample). This was followed by three groups of three columns each for the coding of occupations and combinations thereof. The last five columns for each case gave details of county, and parish of birth and of language spoken (declared as a missing variable in 1851 and 1871, as the coding scheme followed a fixed format in all three censuses ).

Because of the large number of cases, three cases were punched per card so that there would be fewer cards to handle, minimising the risk of losing or disordering them. The cards were then automatically read onto magnetic tape and the variables recoded, so that each case appeared in numerical form on a separate sequential row. Consistency checks were applied to ensure that errors were minimised. Those mistakes that occurred were mainly due to the following: misinterpretation (due to illegibility etc.) of certain enumerators' records, incorrect coding of data for punching, inaccurate punching. It was, of course, impossible to eliminate every problem. But it was feasible to check all the constants and certain of the variables for each case. Any further errors that could be detected in the course of the analysis were rectified individually.

An SPSS "saved file" was created from the data. Thus it was possible, using computer programmes available in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, to analyse the material in a variety of ways: as a complete data set

for each separate census year, by individual parish, by selected parishes, and by groups of parishes. Moreover, by linking SPSS programmes to the parish mapping package CAMAP (devised by Mr. J. Hotson at Edinburgh University), it became possible to illustrate some of the results by computer-drawn maps. Since data cannot be manipulated within the package itself, the use of computer mapping in this study was confined to simple percentage distribution on a parish basis. (11)

- 11) The CAMAP parish boundaries, which are based on contemporary parishes, are not strictly comparable with the nineteenth century ones. Fortunately, in the Northern Highland region, few parishes were radically affected by the work of the various boundary commissions since 1892. However, the parishes of Cawdor and Croy, formerly in Inverness-shire, now belong to Nairn; and Cromdale is part of Moray. These parishes have therefore been omitted from the CAMAP illustrations. In addition, the two parts of Reay (in Caithness and Sutherland respectively) and of Urray (in Ross and Cromarty and Inverness-shire), were merged to form a single parish in each instance. See Appendix 1A, pages 362-5.

TABLE A3

NUMBER OF CASES SAMPLED IN EACH PARISH

<u>No. on Map 2 (page 16)</u>	<u>Parish</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
	<b>CAITHNESS :</b>			
1	Bower	23	16	15
2	Canisbay	29	30	24
3	Dunnet	22	19	16
4	Halkirk	31	29	29
5	Latheron	89	77	70
6	Olrick	25	25	23
7	Reay (pt.)	12	16	14
8	Thurso	57	61	60
9	Watten	15	18	16
10	Wick	128	143	145
	<b>SUTHERLAND :</b>			
11	Assynt	34	33	30
12	Clyne	20	20	22
13	Creich	33	29	28
14	Dornoch	35	30	26
15	Durness	14	13	12
16	Eddrachillis	17	19	17
17	Farr	25	26	21
18	Golspie	17	19	16
19	Kildonan	27	22	21
20	Lairg	16	12	16
21	Loth	8	7	7
7	Reay (pt.)	11	9	10
22	Rogart <sub>1</sub>	17	15	15
23	Tongue	23	9	23
	<b>ROSS &amp; CROMARTY :</b>			
24	Alness	13	13	10
25	Applecross	30	31	27
26	Avoch	22	20	19
27	Contin	21	18	10
28	Cromarty	29	24	23
29	Dingwall	31	25	26
30	Edderton	10	9	7
31	Fearn	22	24	21
32	Fodderty	27	24	21
33	Gairloch	55	60	46
34	Glenshiel	8	7	4
35	Killiernan	22	14	10
36	Kilmuir Easter	17	14	11
37	Kiltearn	17	16	17
38	Kincardine	22	15	14

Table A3 (continued)

<u>No. on Map 2</u>	<u>Parish</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
39	Kintail	12	8	7
40	Knockbain	37	23	21
41	Lochalsh	28	29	22
42	Lochbroom	47	53	45
43	Lochcarron	20	21	18
44	Logie Easter	10	11	10
45	Nigg	15	12	9
46	Resolis (Kirkmichael)	17	17	15
47	Rosemarkie	22	16	16
48	Rosskeen	40	43	40
49	Tain	29	37	30
50	Tarbat	26	26	20
51	Urquhart & Logie W.	18	32	28
52	Urray (pt.)	31	24	23
53	Barvas	39	53	59
54	Lochs	41	63	71
55	Stornoway	83	105	124
56	Uig	34	24	40
INVERNESS-SHIRE :				
57	Abernethy and Kincardine <sup>2</sup>	7	19	14
58	Alvie	10	10	8
59	Ardersier	10	9	9
60	Boleskine and Abertarff	19	23	16
	Cawdor (pt.) )	2	1	2
	Cromdale (pt.)) <sup>2</sup>	34	-	2
	Croy (pt.) )	12	11	10
61	Daviot & Dunlichity	17	16	12
62	Dores	16	17	10
63	Duthel and Rothiemurchus <sup>2</sup>	3	18	23
64	Inverness	169	194	241
65	Kilmonivaig	24	25	28
66	Kingussie & Insh	23	23	23
67	Laggan	13	9	9
68	Moy & Dalarossie (pt.)	8	11	8
69	Petty (pt.)	15	17	14
70	Ardnamurchan (pt.)	21	27	12
71	Glenelg <sup>1</sup>	27	9	16
72	Kilmallie (pt.)	29	22	27
73	Kilmorack	28	30	25
74	Kiltarlity	29	25	22
75	Kirkhill	17	17	14
76	Urquhart and Glenmoriston	33	31	23
52	Urray (pt.)	1	1	-

Table A3 (continued)

<u>No. on Map 2</u>	<u>Parish</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1891</u>
77	Barra	17	24	29
78	Harris	41	40	52
79	Small Isles	5	3	2
80	Bracadale	17	14	10
81	Duirinish	56	48	39
82	Kilmuir	19	17	14
83	Portree	46	28	30
84	Sleat	27	25	22
85	Snizort	45	27	24
86	Strath	33	32	28
87	Uist, North	36	48	46
88	Uist, South	62	61	72
	Totals	<u>2,594</u>	<u>2,540</u>	<u>2,476</u>

## NOTES :

- 1) Certain enumerators' books were not available for the parishes of Tongue and Glenelg at the time that the sample was taken.
- 2) Affected by boundary changes. See Appendix 1A, pages 362-5.

A NOTE ON OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION

It was not necessarily an objective of this thesis to devise an occupational classification which was strictly comparable with those used in other studies and which might be applicable to them. Such a classification would require far more detailed attention than has been possible to devote to it in the course of the present research. The grouping of occupation has been the subject of considerable interest and importance amongst both historians and social scientists from a variety of disciplines.<sup>(1)</sup> A useful introduction to Booth's nineteenth century classification has been written by W.A. Armstrong.<sup>(2)</sup> For the purposes of the present study it was primarily essential to determine a scheme which retained as much detail and simultaneously as much flexibility as possible. It was also important to emphasise those occupations which predominated in a rural economy. This alone made the exact reproduction of other nineteenth or twentieth century classifications, based as they are on a largely urban and industrialised society, a superfluous if not impracticable exercise.

- 1) e.g. C. Booth, Occupations of the people of the United Kingdom, 1801-1881, Journal of the Statistical Society, Vol. 49, 1886, pp. 314-444; General Report of the 1911 Census (Occupations and Industries); Standard Industrial Classification, H.M.S.O., 1948, revised 1968; Occupational Classification, H.M.S.O., 1970.
- 2) W.A. Armstrong, The use of information about occupation, in E.A. Wrigley (ed.), Nineteenth Century Society, essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 191-310.



Moreover, no attempt has been made to group individuals into social classes. This is an even more complicated procedure than that of grouping them by occupation, involving the use of additional variables such as size of family and type of house, numbers of servants, location and possibly even address of residence. Because the basis of this study was provided by a sample of family heads only, as described in Appendix 2, much of the information relevant to a social classification was not acquired. There seemed to be little purpose in the introduction of a further classification for a population which was in any event largely dominated by a peasant society.<sup>(3)</sup> An additional problem was sometimes posed by attempting to differentiate between farmers, crofters, and cottars.<sup>(4)</sup> Neither the size of holding nor the numbers of employees - both of which were noted in the enumerators' books - was necessarily an accurate indication of an individual's social status. In addition, the terms sometimes appear to have been used interchangeably by the enumerators, with local variations.<sup>(5)</sup> Prior to the Napier Commission report of 1884, the customary distinction between crofters and cottars was that the location and boundaries of the crofters' land was permanently fixed. Cottars (cottagers) either held no land at all, or their holdings were subject to occasional reallocation. Both crofters and cottars, however, had grazing rights for their livestock.

3) See Chapter 1, pages 13-4.

4) Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

5) See Chapter 4, page 112.

Since the main purpose of the thesis was to assess the extent of migration in the Northern Highland region and its relationship with general economic changes, family heads were grouped by occupation into industrial rather than occupational categories.<sup>(6)</sup> These were as follows :

Category

Agriculture and forestry  
Fishing (incl. boatbuilding)  
Mining and quarrying  
Building and contracting  
Manufacturing  
Transport and communications  
Dealing, distribution  
Professions  
Commerce and finance  
Public administration and defence  
Domestic service  
Miscellaneous services  
Property owning, independent  
Indefinite, dependent

By contrast, Booth used a rather more limited classification, consisting of nine sectors, for the censuses of 1841-81.<sup>(7)</sup> These were :

- 6) Classification by industry is defined by Armstrong as follows :  
"An individual may be a clerk (occupation), but conceivably may be employed in an extremely wide range of manufacturing or service industries, or in local or central government. For many types of economic analysis it is the latter role that is important."  
op. cit., p. 192. In fact, in the Northern Highland region, there was little difference between an occupational and an industrial classification because of the small number of clerical and support staff in most sectors.
- 7) i.e. Booth's manuscript volume, compressed in his 1886 article. His full list of headings and sub-categories is reproduced as an appendix to Armstrong's article (op. cit.).

Sector

Agricultural

Mining

Building

Manufacture

Transport

Dealing

Industrial service

Public service and professional

Domestic service

These comprised the "occupied population". In addition, there were three sectors for the "residual population" :

- I Property owning, independent
- II Indefinite
- III Dependent class

The indefinite group in both schemes includes individuals described as paupers, unemployed, vagrants, and so on. Booth summarised the coverage of this sector in his 1886 article thus : "All males under 20, and all females who are not returned as occupied, have been considered as dependents." Likewise, in the Northern Highland sample, such persons who were also defined as heads of family (e.g. in the absence of husband, father etc.) were classified under the indefinite or dependent category.

The indefinite class also included, in both cases, those who were retired: although until 1881 they were

numbered with their respective former trades in the published census volumes. To facilitate interpretation, those described as annuitants or pensioners were also allocated to this last category in the Northern Highland sample. It is arguable that they could equally well have been included with those of independent means, to be compatible with Booth's definitions. A pensioner was not always, however, a person of independent means, and there was a good chance that he or she may also have been retired.

With regard to the "occupied population" in both schemes, the most obvious difference between them is the number of headings. For example, Booth's agricultural sector included those engaged in fishing, although coopers were classified under manufacture. In the Northern Highland study, the fishing industry formed a separate category which included all ancillary occupations, such as gutting and cooping. This not only accorded with the regional requirements of an industrial classification (which, as already noted, was likely to have differed in some respects from one designed for the whole of Great Britain), but it also meant that the fishing industry could be studied as a whole. However, the crofter-fishermen were assigned to the agricultural sector, on the assumption that persons so described were basically crofters to whom fishing was a secondary pursuit.<sup>(8)</sup> Because this description occurred with great

8) See Chapter 5, esp. page 161.

frequency in some areas, and because crofting by definition implied the need for alternative seasonal occupations, crofter-fishermen were deemed to be a single sub-group and hence were not noted as having two distinct sources of employment. (9)

Mining and quarrying formed the next category in both schemes. In the Northern Highlands this was a very small sector, of which quarrying was the more significant part. (10) Brickmaking, which Booth included under this heading, was grouped with manufacturing for the purposes of the present study. As noted in Chapter 4, the salt works in Brora .. ceased to operate early in the nineteenth century; although the coal mine there continued in production until the 1970s.

Building and contracting were by contrast quite widespread activities throughout the Northern Highland region, and as observed in Chapter 6 were closely associated with the development of transport and communications. In both schemes this category included all aspects of indoor and outdoor labour, in addition to professional and skilled work performed by civil engineers, surveyors, and architects. The three latter groups were virtually the only professions (apart from mechanical engineering) which could be classified

9) In this scheme, family heads are classified under their main occupation (normally the first to be entered in the enumerators' books). Where individuals were described as having two or more occupations, this has been noted at the appropriate points in the main text. cf. Chapter 6, page 218.

10) See Chapter 6, esp. page 212.

with a specific industry rather than under the general professional heading. This included artists and writers as well as ministers, doctors, teachers, lawyers and their pertinent clerical staff.

In the manufacturing sector, the Northern Highland scheme, like Booth's classification, had only one very large division. Shipbuilding and textile production conceivable occurred with sufficient frequency in the north of Scotland to merit their own categories. It was arguable, however, that the two activities overlapped with other sectors: textiles with agriculture (woollen manufacturing - i.e. spinning, dyeing, weaving - was predominantly a cottage industry in the region), and shipbuilding (which included ship repairs) with construction, transport, and fishing. While textile production was beginning to develop into a significant manufacturing activity during the period under consideration<sup>(11)</sup> and was therefore included in this sector, shipbuilding in the region was almost entirely associated with the fishing industry and has been treated accordingly throughout the present study.

Booth's industrial service sector - comprising bankers, accountants, insurance and commercial agents - is compatible with the commercial and financial grouping used in the Northern Highland classification. His public

11) Chapter 6, pages 201-3.

service and professional category is equivalent to two separate groups in the latter scheme: professional, and public administration and defence. A division was made between them since those in the last class were, then as now, paid from central funds and therefore employed in the "public sector". Furthermore, such persons - especially those in the army and navy - tended to be more mobile than the native population; indeed, they were not necessarily drawn from it to any great extent. (It should be noted that members of the merchant navy were classified under transport and communications in both schemes: in the late nineteenth century merchant seamen were normally engaged by the private sector). On the other hand doctors, teachers, lawyers, writers, and artists were frequently of local origin and locally if not privately or self employed. Justices of the Peace were government appointees and therefore included with other public officers such as policemen, county officials, poorhouse and prison governors and so on, although they performed a legal function and were often local dignitaries.

The domestic service sector devised by Booth comprised both indoor and outdoor activities: coachmen, gardeners and gamekeepers. The two latter were normally employed by estates in the Northern Highland region and were added to the agriculture and forestry category in this scheme, as were also lodge and gate keepers. Domestic service in this case denoted either personal or family servants

(including ghillies), who by implication resided at their place of work (although perhaps in a detached house or cottage). It did not include, as in Booth's scheme, hairdressers, launderers, office workers not elsewhere specified and hotel employees. These comprised the miscellaneous services group in the Northern Highland classification, equivalent to that used in the contemporary Standard Industrial Classification. Persons so engaged generally provided their services to the public; those in domestic service were employed by private individuals.

A detailed list of the classifications used in this study, showing both the main category and the various sub-groups, is attached to this appendix.



OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION FOR THE NORTHERN HIGHLAND  
REGION, 1851-91

Agriculture and forestry

Crofter  
Cottar  
Farmer  
Sheep farmer  
Poultry farmer  
Crofter-fisherman  
Agricultural labourer  
Estate manager  
Grieve  
Deer forester  
Gamekeeper  
Gardener  
Lodge keeper  
Shepherd  
Cowherd  
Wood forester  
Tacksman  
Dyker, fencer  
Other

Fishing

Fisherman, fisherwoman  
Fish curer  
Fish gutter  
Cooper  
Net maker  
Rope maker  
Ship, boat builder  
Boat carpenter  
Sailmaker

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION (cont'd.)

Mining and quarrying

Quarry labourer  
Stone cutter

Building and contracting

Mason, builder  
Joiner, carpenter  
Plumber  
Painter, decorator  
Jobber  
Slater, thatcher  
Surveyor  
Architect, draughtsman

Manufacturing

Production of food and drink

Dairy worker  
Corn/meal miller  
Distiller  
Brewer  
Baker, confectioner  
Other (e.g. tobacco producer)

Production of clothing and footwear

Tailor, seamstress, dressmaker  
Shoemaker  
Hosier, stocking knitter  
Shirtmaker  
Milliner

Brick, tile manufacture

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION (cont'd.)

Printing, bookbinding

Newspaper editor

Publisher, agent

Bookbinder

Compositor, printer

Wood and metal manufacture

Blacksmith

Wood/metal manufacturer, turner

Ironmonger

Coach and engine building

Coach builder

Engine fitter

(cart)wright

Mechanical engineer

Leather worker, tanner, saddler

Gas, water worker

Miscellaneous

Jeweller, watchmaker

Basket maker

Upholsterer

Textiles

Spinner (wool)

Weaver (wool)

Dyer

Finisher

Flax spinner

Hemp spinner

Woollen manufacturer

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION (cont'd.)

Transport and communications

Vehicle owner (e.g. engine proprietor)  
Carter, carrier  
Engine driver, fireman, guard  
Railway official  
Ferryman  
Lighthouse keeper  
Cab driver  
Pilot  
Toll collector  
Harbour master  
Porter  
Dock labourer  
Lock keeper  
Steamer agent  
Other  
Captain, ship owner  
Seaman (merchant service)  
Postmaster, postman  
Letter courier  
Messenger  
Road contractor, labourer  
Rail contractor, labourer  
Canal builder  
Civil engineer

Dealing, distribution

General merchant, auctioneer  
Grocer  
Wine & spirit dealer, vintner  
Grocer & wine merchant  
Wood merchant  
Draper, clothier  
Cattle dealer

Sheep dealer  
Pig dealer  
Fish seller  
(Travelling) agent, salesman  
Butcher, flesher  
Grocer/draper  
Bookseller, stationer  
Meal dealer  
Tobacconist  
Coal merchant  
Leather merchant  
Other merchant

Professional

Minister, priest  
Teacher  
Doctor, surgeon  
Dentist  
Veterinary surgeon  
Lawyer, solicitor, barrister  
(Legal) clerk  
Nurse  
Midwife  
Church officer, catechist  
Druggist, apothecary  
Writer, journalist  
Artist, sculptor

Commercial, financial

Accountant  
Banker, bank agent  
Bank clerk  
Broker

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION (cont'd.)

Public administration and defence

Poor inspector  
Poorhouse governor/official  
Prison governor/official  
Tax inspector, procurator  
Customs officer  
Justice of the Peace  
Sheriff, bailiff, magistrate  
Police officer  
Burgh, county official, registrar  
Fishery officer  
School officer  
Government commissioner  
Army officer  
Naval officer  
Private  
Sailor

Domestic service

General (domestic) servant  
Butler  
Coachman, groom  
Butler/coachman  
Housekeeper  
Charwoman  
Ghillie

Miscellaneous services

Hairdresser  
Laundry worker, washerwoman  
Undertaker  
Office worker n.e.s.

Property owning, independent

Land owner

Private means

House proprietor

Housewife

Gentleman

Indefinite, dependent

Pauper

Retired

Unemployed

Dependent

Annuitant, pensioner

Tenant, feu holder

Tinker, rag merchant, scavenger, beggar

Hawker

Other

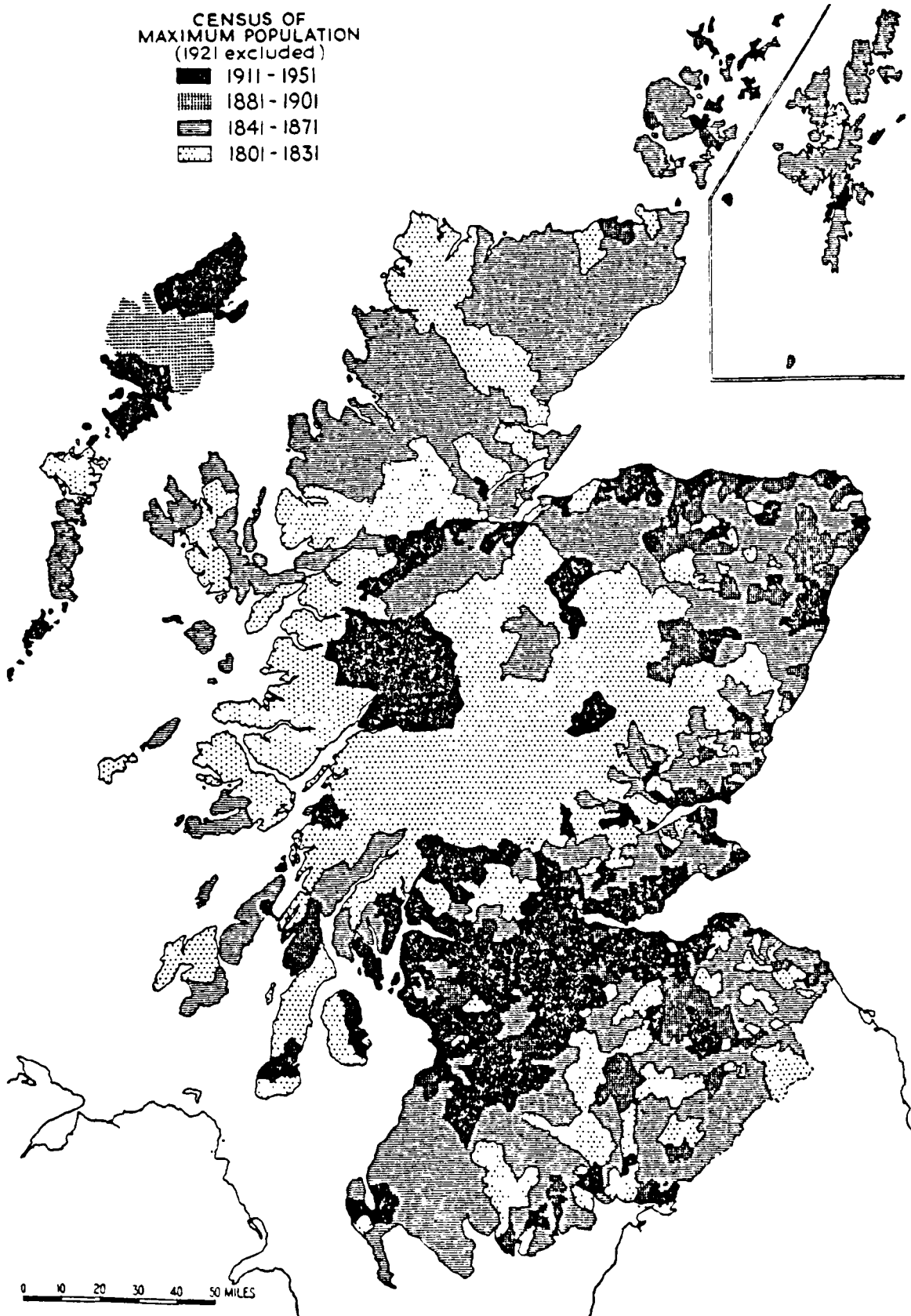
Occupation not stated

APPENDIX 4

Illustrations from other sources

<u>Map</u>	<u>Title and source</u>	<u>Page</u>
A1	Maximum population by parishes in Scotland, 1801-1951 (O'Dell and Walton, op. cit., p. 158)	401
A2	Marquis of Stafford's estates in Sutherland (D. Forbes, The Sutherland Clearances 1806-1820, Craigie College of Education, 1976, p. 4)	402
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A4	State road construction in Scotland by 1821 (O'Dell and Walton, op. cit., p. 129)	404
A5	Northern railways, constructed or projected, 1831-1914 (O'Dell and Walton, op. cit., p. 206)	405
A6	Potential crofting land extension, 1892 (O'Dell and Walton, op. cit., p. 145)	406
A7	Clans and proprietors in the Highlands in the late sixteenth century (O'Dell and Walton, op. cit., p. 103)	407






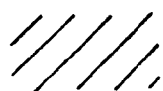
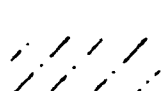
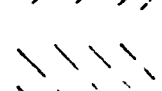
*Fig. 43* MAXIMUM POPULATION BY PARISHES 1801-1951. The year 1921 has been ignored owing to the later month of this census leading to complications over holidays. The influence of hydro-electric schemes and the occasional burgh which is still growing disturbs the otherwise monotonous view of a nineteenth-century population maximum in the Highlands and Islands. Islands for which the population trend is known are differentiated where the trend differs from the rest of the parish. Towns such as Oban, Fort William, and Inverness have a growth which exceeds any loss in their landward areas.

Source: Table 5 in County parts of Report on 15th Census of Scotland.

MARQUIS OF STAFFORD'S ESTATES

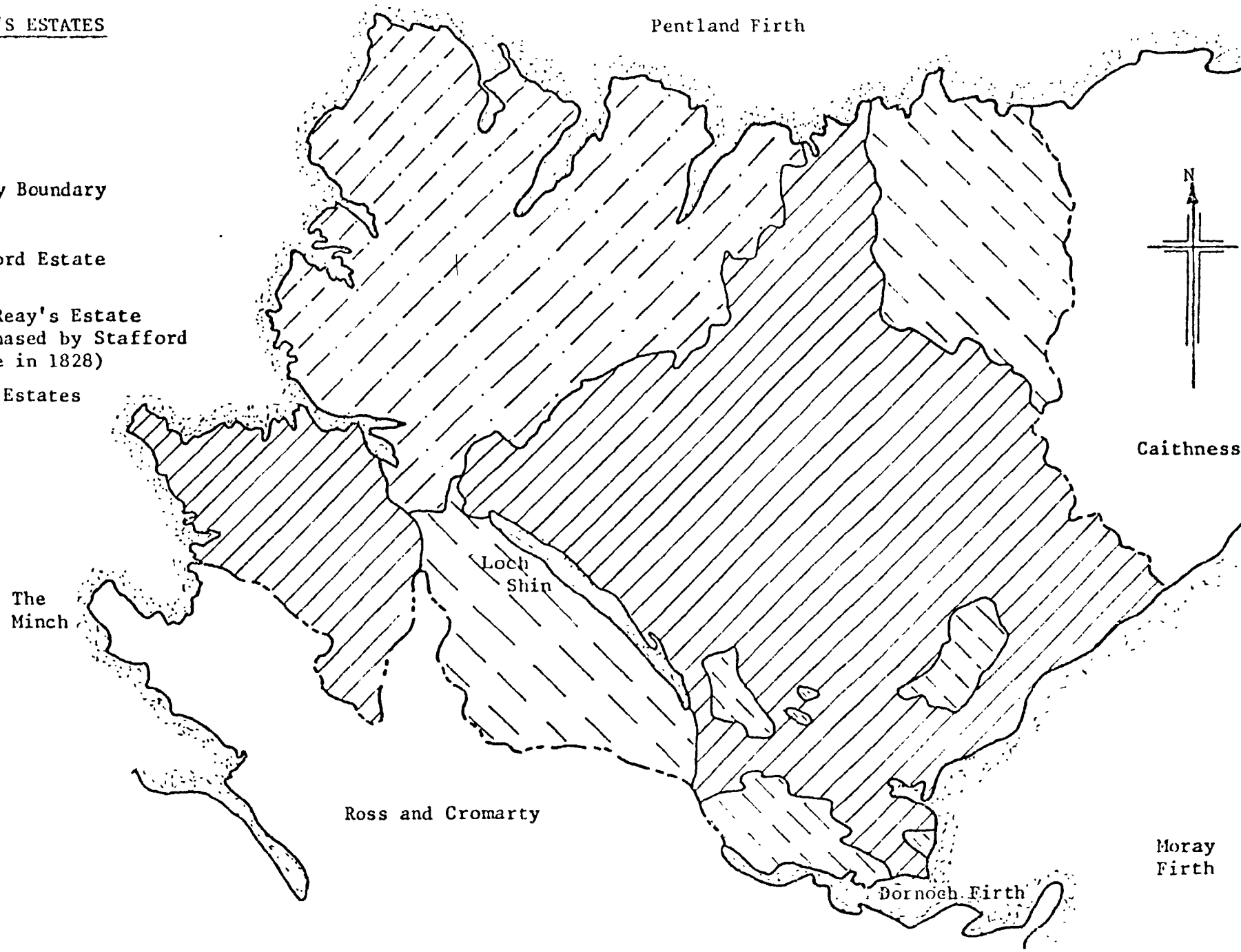
IN SUTHERLAND.

LEGEND

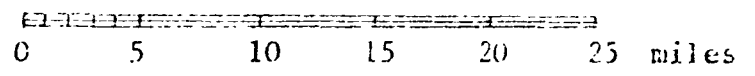
-  County Boundary
-  Stafford Estate
-  Lord Reay's Estate  
(Purchased by Stafford  
Estate in 1828)
-  Other Estates

402

Map A2



Scale



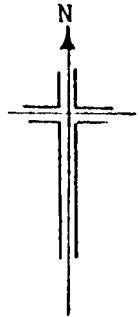
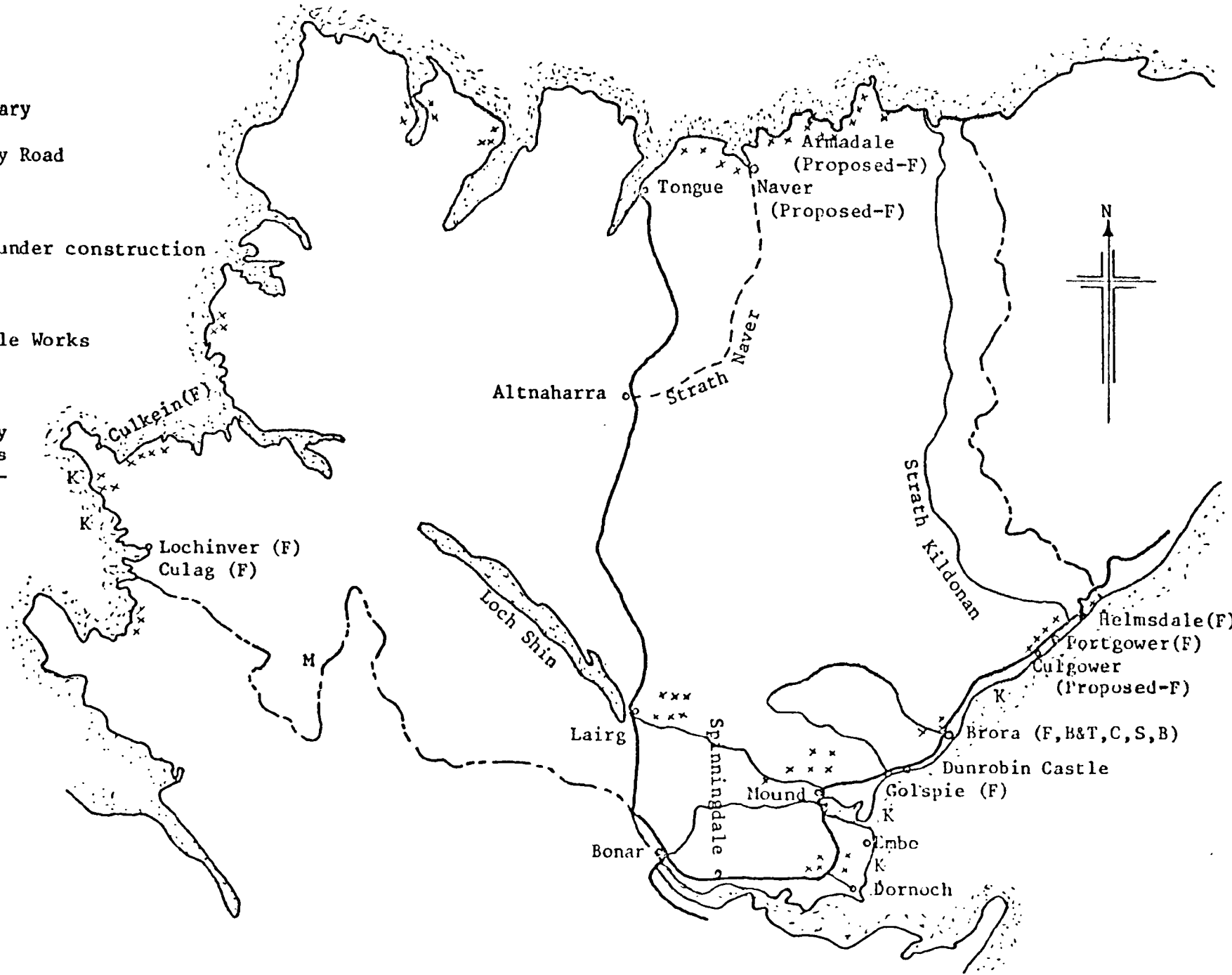
Source - Loch, op. cit.

THE IMPROVEMENTS

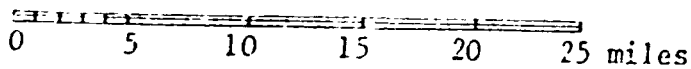
LEGEND

- County Boundary
- Parliamentary Road
- Estate Road
- - - - - Estate Road under construction

- F Fishing
- K Kelp
- B & T Brick and Tile Works
- C Coal Mine
- S Saltworks
- B Brewery
- M Marble Quarry
- xx Smallholdings and resettlement areas.



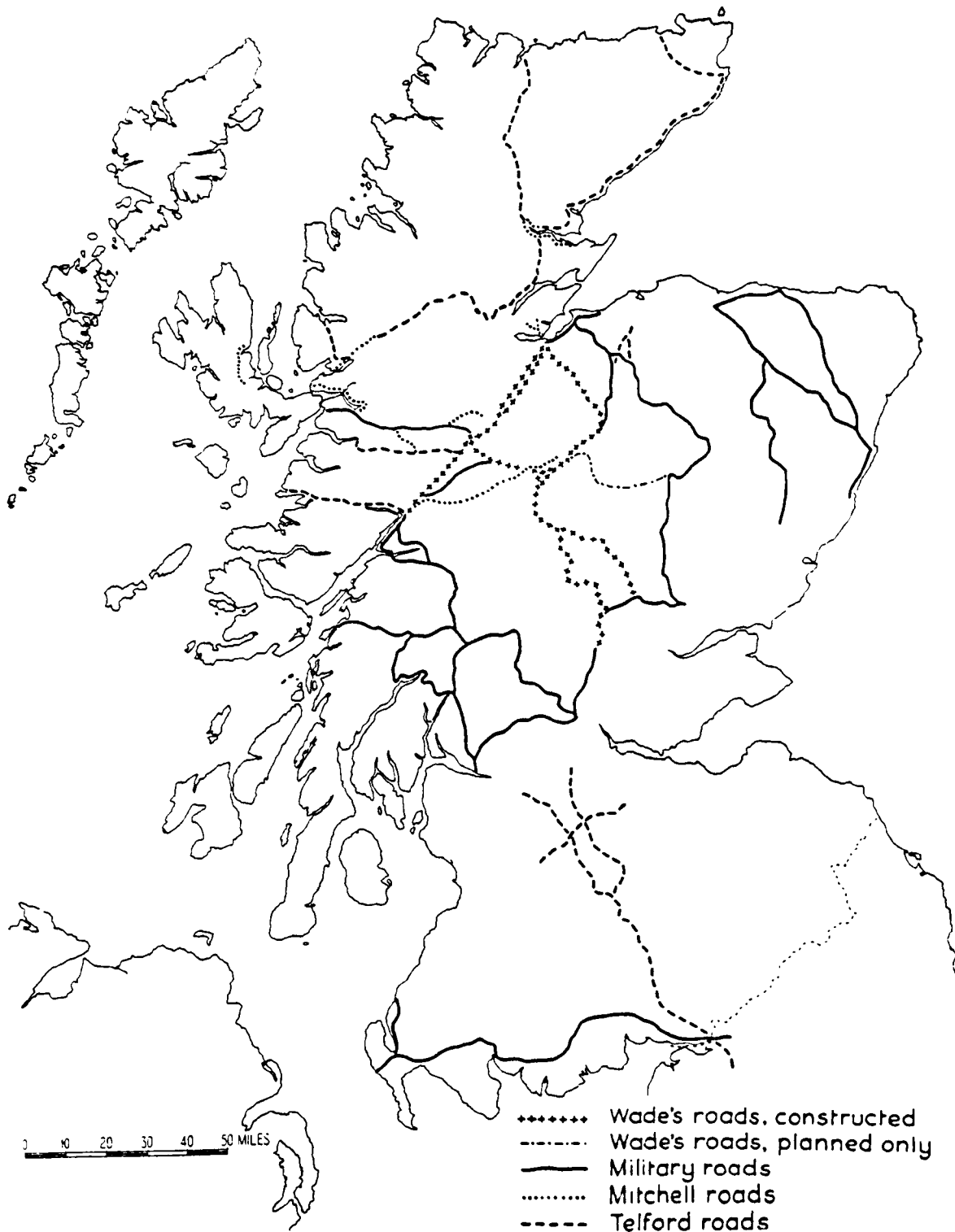
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Source - James Loch, op.cit.

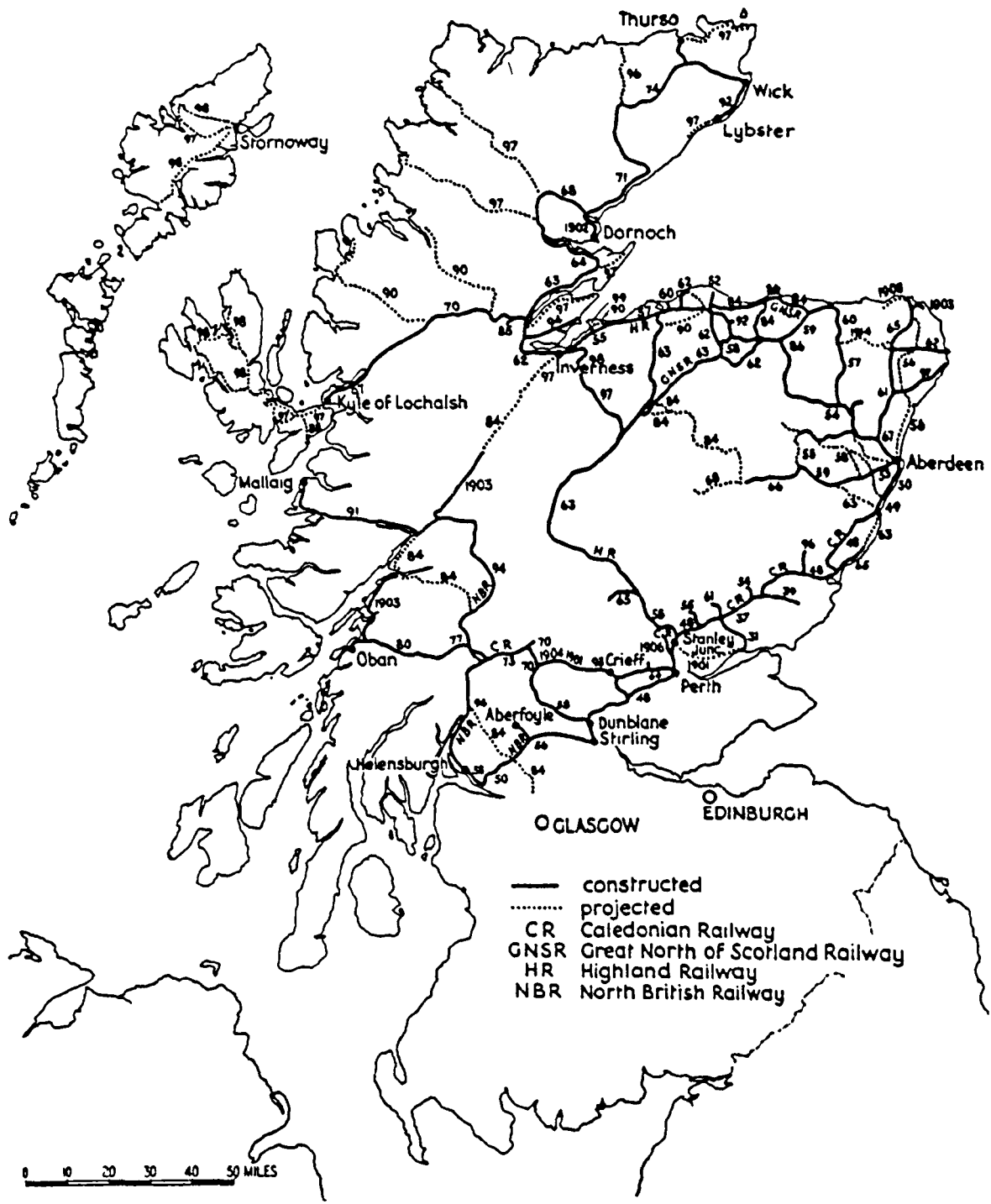
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Map A3

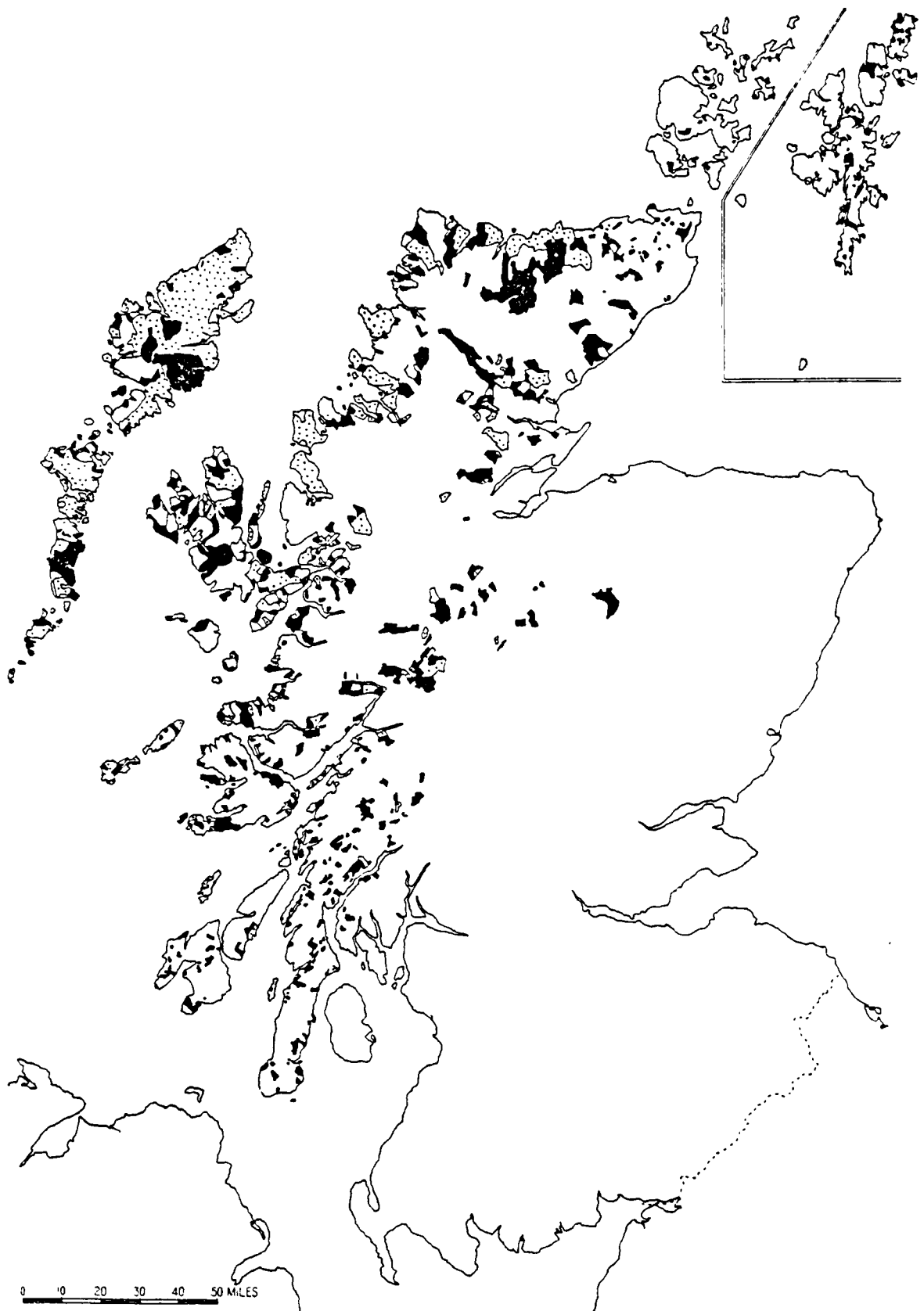


**Fig. 36 STATE ROAD CONSTRUCTION IN SCOTLAND BY 1821.** For military control and civil development numerous state roads were built in the hundred years preceding 1821. The traditional control points of Dumbarton, Stirling, and Perth were the foci of these routes, which traversed the Grampians to the Great Glen and beyond. Sections have since been abandoned, but the essential framework can be seen in the modern road pattern.

Sources: J. B. Salmond, *Wade in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1934).  
 Reports of the Commissioners of Highland Roads and Bridges, 1804-21.



**Fig. 59 NORTHERN RAILWAYS, CONSTRUCTED OR PROJECTED.** The dates, which extend from 1831 to 1914, are given as 31 to 99 and 1900 to 1914. The great number of proposals were fortunately not implemented, as traffic potential was grossly inadequate even with 'light railway' standards of operating. Rivalry between the Highland Railway and the Great North of Scotland Railway Companies was responsible for many projects. The southwest was served by the Caledonian Railway and North British Railway Companies, and their rivalry was responsible for no service connection being provided at Tyndrum-Crianlarich.



*Fig. 39* POTENTIAL CROFTING LAND EXTENSION 1892. Stipple indicates existing crofting holdings with adjacent land suitable for extension; solid black indicates areas considered suitable for new crofting holdings.  
 Source: Maps to accompany Report of the Royal Commission Highlands and Islands 1892 (Edinburgh, 1895).

THE REGION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

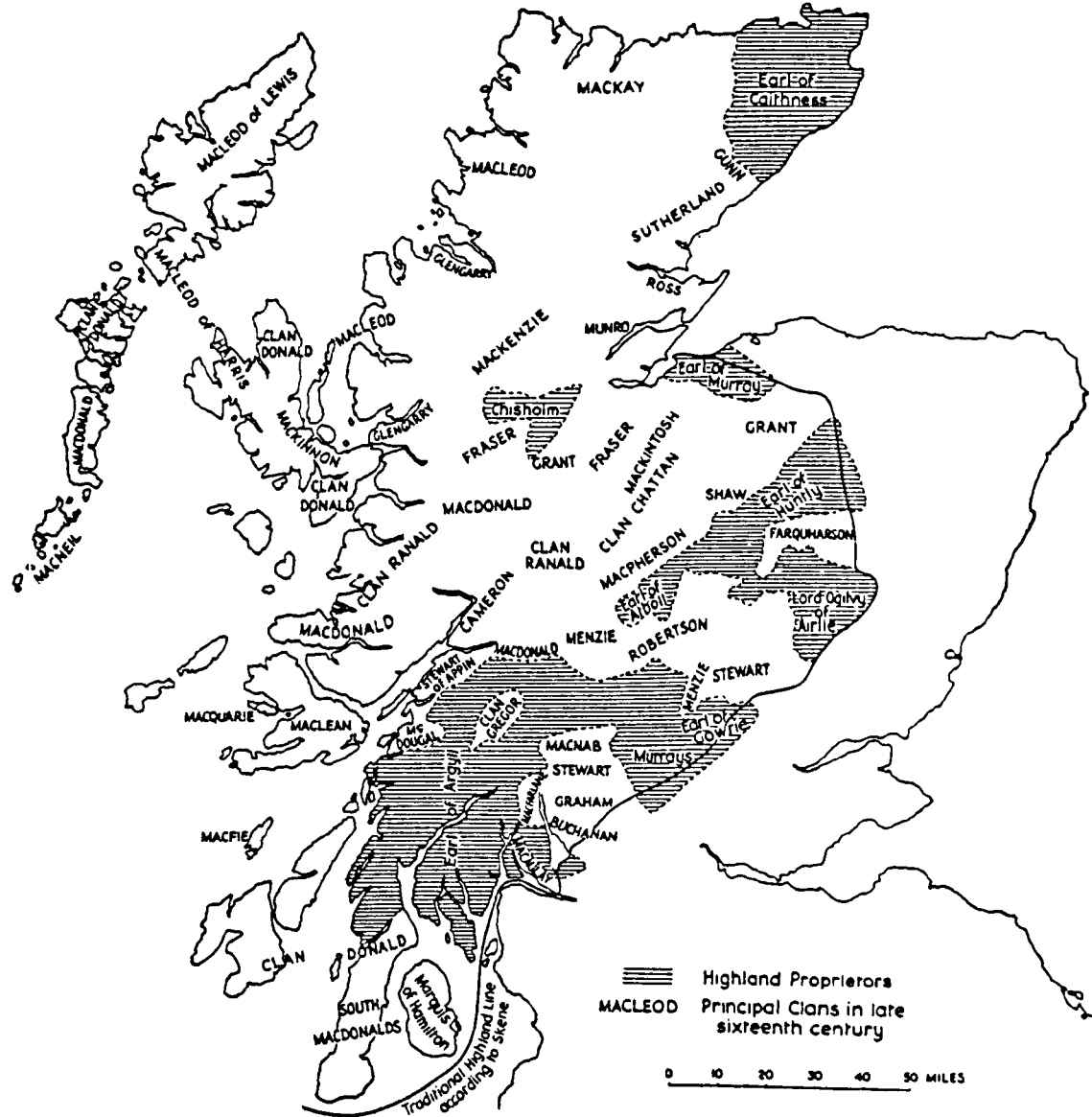


Fig. 29 CLANS AND PROPRIETORS IN THE HIGHLANDS IN THE LATE SIXTEENTH CENTURY. The map gives the principal clan areas as enumerated in Acts of Parliament of Scotland in 1587 and 1594 and landlords as appended to an Act of 1587. Territory within the traditional Highland Line was under the ownership of these proprietors. Source: T. B. Johnston and J. A. Robertson, *The Historical Geography of the Clans of Scotland* (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1873).

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