

Moidart, the land and its people

1.1 General introduction

This chapter is concerned with the physical, social, economic and religious factors operating in the district of Moidart and on the two Highland estates of Lochshiel and Kinlochmoidart, in particular, in order to:

- Examine the circumstances under which people left Moidart to emigrate to Australia and Canada or to relocate to other parts of Scotland thereby providing a context within which to understand the reasons for this exodus.
- Develop a profile of the people in terms of those skills, attitudes, experiences and knowledge of the land and agriculture needed to overcome the difficulties they were forced to confront on a daily basis.

The 37 Households involved in this research lived in 14 small crofting townships or farms on the four estates of Kinlochmoidart, Glenmoidart, Moidart and Lochshiel.¹ All Households, apart from one, belonged to the crofter or cottar classes with the exception of John McIver, a teacher at Glenuig.

¹ It appears that there is discrepancy amongst writers in regard to the exact location of certain crofting townships in relation to particular Estates in the district. For example, Eilean Shona (or Island Shona) is recorded as part of the Lochshiel Estate in rental documents found in GD243 Lindsay WS, National Archives of Scotland, however Charles Macdonald, on page 255 of his book *Moidart among the Clanranalds*, records that the extreme eastern end of the Island, Shona Beg, was part of the Kinloch Estate. In another instance Roderick Balfour records Scardoish as part of the Kinlochmoidart Estate of William Robertson on page 557 of his article 'The Highland and Island Emigration Society: 1852 – 1858' rather than part of the Lochshiel Estate of Alexander McDonald. I have chosen to include both Island Shona and Scardoish as part of the Lochshiel Estate as recorded in GD243 as residents of both are recorded as having paid rents to the proprietor of the Estate. I am very grateful to Roderick Balfour for his assistance in locating the crofting townships within the appropriate Estate.

Crofters lived in ‘townships’ of between five and twenty allotments.² A typical crofting township consisted of an area of land subdivided between the tenants with each tenant holding a small, separate acreage which, in the case of the Moidart townships, was usually turned over to the cultivation of oats, bere (or bear³), a type of barley and potatoes.

According to the 1851 census, the size of the crofts in two of the townships in Moidart varied from between half an acre to twelve acres. Three of the crofts rented by tenants on the Moidart Estate of Dr Donald Martin at Glen Uig were less than six acres in size: Norman McDonald, John Cameron and John McDonald each worked five acres. Croft acreages were even less at Kylesmore on William Robertson’s Estate of Kinlochmoidart in 1851; Alexander McEachen, Alexander McDonald, Alexander McVarish, Angus McDonald and Donald McIsaac worked crofts of half an acre in size.⁴ All were inadequate in size to cultivate sufficient food for the Household for a year and to produce additional produce for sale at the same time. This fact was acknowledged in part of the testimony given at an Enquiry in 1883 into the economic and social living conditions of crofters and cottars throughout the Highlands and Islands. When questioned about the desirable size for a croft in order for a crofter to become independent Rev. Charles Macdonald quoted; ‘eight or twelve acres of arable land and about six cows with their followers... And...about fifty

² See 1851 Census, Enumeration District two, p. 3 and Enumeration District six, p. 5.

³ A. Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, Parish of Ardnamurchan, Presbytery of Mull, Synod of Argyle. Volume 7 Edinburgh and London, 1845. This document provides a broad description of each parish of Scotland in terms of its physical, social, economic and religious dimensions. Each description was prepared by the minister of the parish. The description for the Parish of Ardnamurchan was written by the Rev. Archibald Clerk in 1838. These descriptions were eventually published in seven volumes in 1845. p. 151.

⁴ See Appendix A for Households 5 (Angus and Mary McDonald), 6 (Donald and Ann McIsaac) and 7 (Alexander and Flora McEachen), 8 (Alexander and Mary McDonald) and 9 (Alexander and Mary McVarish). Surnames used here are those recorded on the 1851 Census.

sheep.’⁵

On the outskirts of this area lay the land used for grazing animals. In the case of Moidart the cattle belonged to the Argyleshire breed whilst the sheep were the black-faced breed.⁶ This area was used in common by all the tenants who were levied a rental usually based on the number of animals each tenant owned. Average rentals in the parish were one pound and fifteen shillings per head of cattle and three shillings and six pennies for each fully-grown sheep.⁷ Devine calculated the general rental cost for each tenant to use the common grazing land in the Highlands at approximately one pound sterling per cow per year.⁸

There was a limit on the number of beasts that the tenants were allowed to possess and graze on the common land. The practice of calculating the number of stock each Household could own was known as ‘souming’. The total number of stock that could be owned by a township was calculated by the Factor and this was set out in a written agreement between proprietor and tenant. Each Household was then allocated their share and this was calculated according to the amount of rent paid and the ability of the Household to provide winter fodder for a particular number of animals.⁹ Charles Macdonald refers to the existence of written transactions between the proprietor and the tenants of two club farms at Langal and Dalnabrach limiting the number of cows in each village and where the crofters made effective use of the common hill pasture. Both Hunter and Devine claim that crofting, as a form of agriculture, was never designed to make Households self sufficient by working

⁵ Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, with Appendices, British Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons, 1884. Evidence number 33161, p. 2111.

⁶ Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 150.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, p. 5.

⁹ Hunter, *The making of the crofting community*, p. 119.

the land.¹⁰ On the contrary, crofts were usually located on poorer, inhospitable land, often near the coastline, in order to force the Householders to seek additional work (and income) either in the form of kelping or fishing or agricultural work at busy times of the year from the landowner. This ensured that the landowner had a ready source of labour at his disposal and that his tenants contributed to the estate's economy through other means.

The names of the crofting townships and the number of Households who emigrated from each of the four Moidart estates in 1852 are as follows:

Kinlochmoidart Estate (a total of 14 Households emigrated out of 24 Households)

1. Kylesmore (three Households out of eight)
2. Kinloch Moidart (six Households out of eight)
3. Shona Beag (one Household out of three)
4. Ardmolich (one Household out of two)
5. Eignaig (three Households out of three)

Glenmoidart (or Lochans) Estate (One Household)

1. Lochans (one Household out of four)

Moidart (or Glenuig) Estate (Four Households)

1. Glenuig (four Households out of 15)

Lochshiel (or Dorlin) Estate (19 Households out of 67 Households)

1. Scardoish (five Households out of six)
2. Blain (three Households out of 16)
3. Dalnabreac (three Households out of ten)
4. Eilean (Island) Shona (five Households out of 20)
5. Gaskan (one Household out of two)
6. Mingarry (one Household out of 13)
7. Langall / Dorlin (one Household created by marriage in

¹⁰ See Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War*, pp. 47-48 and Hunter, *The making of the crofting community*, p. 19.

Glasgow prior to the voyage but not included in Household count)

1.2. Physical background

The district of Moidart lies within the civil parish of Ardnamurchan in the county of Inverness-shire in the Western Highlands of Scotland. The land and Estates of Moidart had traditionally belonged to the Clan McDonald of Clanranald. For 500 years the Clanranald lands and estates had extended across the outer Hebridean Islands of Lewis, North and South Uist, Barra and the inner Hebridean Islands of Tiree, Coll, Rhum and Skye. This also included lands in mainland districts such as Argyll, Morvern, Ardnamurchan, Moidart, Arisaig, Knoydart, Lochaber and Kintail.¹¹

The terrain imposed many challenges for the crofters and cottars who managed to overcome these difficulties by utilising as much of the land as possible.

According to S. Lewis in the Topographical Dictionary of Scotland, the district extended inland from the sea for some 25 miles and was approximately twelve miles wide.¹² It was further described in the same publication as having light, shallow soil with only a small portion fit for superior husbandry.¹³ According to the 1845 Statistical Account the poor condition of the soil resulted in greater numbers of cattle rather than sheep being raised in the district.¹⁴ Lewis continued to describe the land in the following way: ‘near the coast there are

¹¹ C. Macdonald, *Moidart; or Among the Clanranalds*. This book provides a comprehensive history of the district of Moidart, its people and their heritage as descendants of Macdonald of Clanranald from the thirteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. It was written by Father Charles Macdonald who was the Catholic priest of Moidart from approximately 1860 to 1892.

¹² S. Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Scotland*, Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, (written in 1851 and republished in 1989). p.70.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 150.

many farms under good cultivation, within the first ten or twelve miles; but afterwards the pasture becomes coarser.’¹⁵ These statistics indicated that only about half the district was accessible for cropping and cultivation, an important fact when considering the production of food crops to support the overcrowded population on the Lochshiel Estate in particular. The poor condition of the soils was noted as early as 1798 in the rental records for tenants at Scardosie on the Lochshiel Estate where the acreage was described as “sandy” and “being so enwashed by the sea that it is now barely 30 acres exclusive of rocks”.¹⁶ Most of the land belonging to the Lochshiel Estate in 1852 was only suitable for the pasturing of inferior sheep and cattle stock.¹⁷ Of the 7,216 acres of land that made up the Estate, 6,468 acres was used for pasture with only 218 acres under cultivation.¹⁸ In addition it contained large areas of moss land further reducing the amount of arable land for cultivation. As well as poor soil much of the district was covered in steep mountains and deep glens that also limited the land available for cultivation. The valley of Kinlochmoidart for example was described as follows:

At the head of Loch Moidart, which indents the western extremity of this district, the high bounding ranges which enclose the lake continue to run inland, and form the first part or opening of a valley, about seven or eight miles long. It is all good and productive arable, although still

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Tenants of Old Moidart, Scotland, as in the Judicial Rental of 1798, Number 452, www.moidart.org.uk (accessed 4 October 2006).

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

¹⁸ Author Unknown, ‘Contents of the Estate of Lochsheal belonging to Alexander Macdonald Esq of Lochsheal’, GD 243 Lindsays WS, GD243/4/12/29, The National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh (no date recorded).

capable of much improvement.¹⁹

The people, however, made the most of their circumstances using their skills to cultivate as much of the land as possible:

Sometimes land on the steep sides of hills is seen diligently cultivated by the small tenants, which certainly no capitalist, from motives of profit, would crop.²⁰

Difficult terrain such as steep mountain slopes was cultivated through necessity and was the result of the need of the overcrowded population to obtain as much food from the limited land, chiefly in the form of potatoes.²¹

The difficult terrain meant that, in some parts of Moidart, it was impossible to plough with the use of a horse and so the land had to be broken up with a sharp pointed spade.²² The people built 'lazy beds', creating narrow tracts of land in inhospitable places separated by ridges of earth in which they planted oats and potatoes. They were used to hard manual work often undertaken in gale force wind conditions that, apart from damaging the standing crops such as oats and barley prior to harvest in summer, also destroyed the winter grass and pasture. Loss of crops in this manner meant the loss of winter fodder for animals as well as income from the sale of excess grain.²³ A lack of winter fodder resulted in the deaths of animals thereby reducing income gained through the sale of cattle.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.125.

²⁰ Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 151.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ For a description of the type of cultivation and agriculture practised by crofters in the Highlands and Islands see Hunter, *The making of the crofting community*, pp. 113-119. 50

The strength of the winds also made travelling by sea and ocean fishing perilous. However, the physical terrain and remoteness of the district meant that the people were forced to travel frequently by sea on steamers in order to take up employment for part of the year in the south. However, it is equally clear from references to the perilous nature of the sea voyage in letters written home by Highlanders that the sea voyage was to be feared as it often took many lives. Highland newspapers such as *The Inverness Courier* published lists of births and deaths (along with the cause of death for example ‘fell overboard’) which occurred on emigrant ships. These appeared almost as a warning to intending emigrants.²⁴ The physical environment therefore placed severe constraints on the economy and this in turn heavily impacted on the lives of the people as will be demonstrated in the next section.

1.3. Economic background

The small tenants and subtenants on the various estates in Moidart and other districts contributed to the wealth accumulated by Macdonald of Clanranald. Macdonald estimates that Clanranald’s income ‘averaged from £20,000 to £25,000 per annum.’²⁵ Although industry in general was lacking in the Highlands the ocean provided another source of income in the form of the harvesting and processing of kelp (seaweed) in order to produce glass and soap amongst other products. This became widespread and lucrative for many small tenants.²⁶ In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century kelp produced

²⁴ See an extract taken from a letter received by John McDonald of Scardoish from his brother who travelled to Geelong on board the ‘Araminta’ in 1852 and which was published in *The Inverness Courier*, 21 April 1853. In this extract he lists the names and the causes of death amongst the passengers and crew of the ‘Araminta’.

²⁵ C. Macdonald, *Moidart; or Among the Clanranalds*, p. 202.

²⁶ See Hunter, *The making of a crofting community*, for a description of the emergence and importance of kelping in the society and economy of the Highlands and Islands in the early nineteenth century. pp. 16-19.

more income on average than did the sale of barrels of potatoes (at three shillings a barrel). When income from kelp sales began to diminish rapidly, estate debt levels continued to remain high. Consequently several of the Clanranald estates were sold to meet the debts incurred. Devine states that the sale of Clanranald's lands 'between 1813 and 1838 resulted in the emergence of nine separate owners in an area where there had previously been one.'²⁷ In a letter written by Hector Macdonald Buchanan to Reginald George Macdonald of Clanranald in 1810 he stated:

I have for my own exoneration written Clanranald on the subject of his expenditure and pointed out the inevitable ruin he is running fast to - no fortune can stand his Expenditure... Mr Anderson is in advance more than the kelp will bring, and 600 tons are stored that won't sell at any price.²⁸

Devine states that by 1812 Clanranald's debts had reached £100,000.²⁹ The sales of the various estates also affected the future of the tenants in Moidart. In 1812 Colonel David Robertson-Macdonald in a letter written to Robert Brown, a Trustee of Clanranald, enquired about the proposed sale of land near the Kinlochmoidart Estate which included the farms at Lochans, Island Shona and the land between the Kinlochmoidart property and Lochshiel.³⁰ Robertson-Macdonald was keen to obtain this land whilst Reginald George Macdonald

²⁷ Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War*, p. 65.

²⁸ Letter from Hector Macdonald Buchanan dated 1 December 1810 in which he refers to the increasing debt which the present Macdonald of Clanranald is amassing and warning him not to depend on income derived from the sale of kelp to meet this debt. Hamilton Papers, NRAS 2177, Bundle 1558, NAS, 1810 November - 1810 December.

²⁹ Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War*, p. 68.

³⁰ See letter from Colonel David Robertson-Macdonald to Robert Brown of 25 October

was equally keen to sell the land expecting a large price for it as it was a sudden and unexpected sale and would assist in meeting estate debts.

Despite its proximity to both the sea and lochs, fishing was an undeveloped industry at this time:

The fisheries of cod and ling, and other fishes caught by the hook, on the north coasts of the parish, promise, at some future period, to prove a plentiful source of industry.³¹

Robert Somers made a similar comment in relation to nearby Mull and Skye when he wrote:

Fishing has in few instances been pursued as an occupation. It has been merely regarded as an occasional and partial resource, by which they might add a little variety to their miserable fare, and a few shillings to their scanty incomes.³²

The value of this industry remained largely unrecognised in the district until efforts to equip former crofters with the means to fish on a commercial basis were realised by the new manager of the Eilean Shona property when he purchased the property in 1853.³³ The 1851 census contains entries related to the fact that some residents living near the coast at Smirisary, Kylesmore and

1812. Hamilton Papers reference NRAS 2177 / Bundle 1582, NAS, October 1812.

³¹ R. Somers, *Letters from the Highlands on the Famine of 1846*, The Melvern Press, Letter XXXI, 1985. p. 154.

³² *Ibid* p. 161.

³³ See a further reference in Chapter 6, pp. 393-394.

Scardoish worked as fishermen and boat builders. These included Hugh MacPherson, Smirisary who was a fisherman, James McDonald of Kylesmore, a boat builder and the heads of two Households at Scardoish, both by the name of Alexander McDonald and who were both salmon fishermen.³⁴ The following comment, however, explains why combining farming and fishing often resulted in failure:

No two occupations can be more incompatible than farming and fishing, as the seasons which require undivided exertion in fishing are precisely those in which the greatest attention should be devoted to agriculture.³⁵

According to Somers, herring fishing was unpredictable with the herring season only lasting about three months (although people were not continuously engaged in fishing over that time). Fishing was a community act involving both crofters and cottars working together. If the catch was large enough they could earn five to six pounds overnight (the equivalent of wages received for labour on their crofts for one month). Herring fishing took place in the lochs overnight and three nights or more of successful fishing would earn enough money for cottars to pay the rent on the potato ground.³⁶ Somers points out that:

By five or six months' work, the diet of potatoes and herrings is procured, and everything made safe for the twelvemonth. Such is the

³⁴ National Archives of Scotland, *1851 Census Returns*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA 1982 and Appendix A, Households 21 and 23.

³⁵ Author unknown, 'The Crofting Problem: 1790 – 1883. The State of Agriculture in the Western Highlands and Islands at the end of the Eighteenth Century.' <<http://www.///C/WINDOWS/Desktop/LandSystem.html>> (accessed 13 August 2001). No page number recorded.

³⁶ Somers, *Letters from the Highlands on the Famine of 1846*, p. 161.

system of life among the labouring population in the distressed districts of the Highlands.³⁷

The granting of rights to fishing in rivers on the two Estates was also seen as additional but lucrative source of income. A lease signed between Mrs Margaretta Robertson - Macdonald of the Kinlochmoidart Estate and Mr James Blackwood Gemmel of Glasgow in 1843, secured for Gemmel exclusive fishing rights in Lochmoidart at Kylesbeg, Craig Ardmolich and Kinloch for salmon, grilises and sea trout for the sum of ten pounds sterling per year. The lease was operative for nineteen years and gave Gemmel the power to prosecute anyone who was caught fishing at the above locations (except for the Robertson - Macdonalds!).³⁸ Fishing rights were also granted on the Lochshiel estate as early as 1836 with fishing in the River Shiel leased at £130 per annum and shore fishing on Lochshiel leased at £20 per annum.³⁹

Agriculture remained the dominant occupation and work of the people as demonstrated through the various records kept during this time. The Statistical Account of 1791 included a detailed account of the occupations of the inhabitants at this time. There were approximately 60 farmers, one merchant, one shop-keeper, one smith, two house and boat carpenters, five male weavers and eight female weavers, one whisky house keeper, five tailors, one miller (but the mill was little used), six seamen owning five small vessels, 20 soldiers

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ M. Robertson – Macdonald, ‘Tack between Mrs Robertson - Macdonald and Mr J. B. Gemmel of salmon fishing of Lochmoidart’. J. B. Gemmel. MS. 3984, Hamilton Papers National Library of Scotland. Edinburgh, 1843.

³⁹ Lindsays WS, GD 243 Catalogue, GD243/4/15/18 The National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh.

in the army and one private teacher.⁴⁰ The list of products grown, harvested or pastured in the district of Moidart and Arisaig in 1833 and recorded in the New Statistical Account and the Statistical Account of Scotland 1791-1799 demonstrates the degree of economic dependency on agriculture.⁴¹ Wool was sold at an average price of eight shillings per stone whilst the pasturing of sheep cost two shillings and sixpence per sheep and black cattle were pastured at one pound and ten shillings per beast. The pasturing costs per sheep in 1791 were two shillings increasing by sixpence per animal 42 years later. The number of sheep recorded in the district in 1791 was approximately 12,750 but by 1833 the number had risen to 60,000 demonstrating an increase in the capacity of grazing lands as well as the effects of the formation of large sheep farms in the district.⁴² Other products grown in the district included oats, hay, timber from woods and plantations, produce from gardens and orchards and herring fishing. In 1791 the district produced 4000 barrels of potatoes compared with 50,000 barrels in 1833. Three hundred bolls of oats were produced in 1791 whilst 2,000 bolls were produced in 1833.⁴³

Sixty years later it would appear that little had changed in terms of the dependence on agriculture. According to the occupations given by heads of Households in the 1851 Census, the economy of the district of Moidart was

⁴⁰ J. Sinclair, *The Statistical Account Of Scotland, 1791-1799* William Creech, Edinburgh, 1791-1799. pp. 292-293. A copy of this document is held at the State Library of Victoria.

⁴¹ Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 155. This reference contains the average prices obtained for each product over the twenty-five years prior to 1833 as well as the average annual production.

⁴² Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 155.

⁴³ Sinclair, *The Statistical Account Of Scotland, 1791 – 1799*, p. 259 and Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 155.

largely dependent on agriculture and primary production.⁴⁴ Occupations listed for women included dairy-maid, woollen spinner, house servant, cook and dress maker while those for men included crofter, cottar, agricultural labourer, wood-cutter, ploughman, school-master, fisherman, carpenter, tailor, miller and boat builder. Occupations for children (16 years and under) were recorded as cow herder, scholar, scholar at home, herd boy, servant, house servant and ‘working at the croft.’⁴⁵

Twenty-five heads of Households involved in this research were recorded as crofter, farmer or cottar in the 1851 Census of Scotland or on the nominal passenger list of the three ships involved. The remaining heads of Households were identified as shepherd (three), agricultural labourer (one), farm servant (one), pauper (one), farm labourer (one), boat builder (one), tenant farmer (one) and two without occupations known as they married just days before their departure. Only the Household of the school master⁴⁶ fell outside of an agricultural or fishing related occupation.⁴⁷ Three heads of Households who were widows identified themselves as ‘crofter’ (two) and ‘farmer’ (one).

Although arable land was limited in the district attempts had been made for

⁴⁴ By 1861 the occupations listed in the census for the township of Dorlin on Lochshiel estate show a dramatic shift away from the predominance of crofting with only one resident crofting Household remaining out of nine dwellings. The rest were described as farmer, mariner, steward, gardener, housekeeper, road manager, and carpenter. All occupations were most likely associated with the new Dorlin House built as a new residence for the estate owner in circa 1864 according to Charles Macdonald. p. 220. This is in contrast with the 1851 census prior to emigration where the occupations of six of the eight Householders were crofters or cottars.

⁴⁵ Refer to the 1851 Census of Scotland, enumeration districts for Moidart for a complete list of the occupations for the members of each Household. A copy of this census is held at both the Genealogical Society of Victoria and the State Library of Victoria.

⁴⁶ See 1851 Census of Scotland, Enumeration District one, Household number 15, Glenuig, John and Marjory MacIver, Schoolmaster, p.6.

⁴⁷ For an extensive explanation of the structure of Highland society at the time of the potato famine in 1846, see Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*.

many years to reclaim areas of land not in use. As early as 1843 the first page of the rental records containing a list of contents of the Lochshiel Estate refers to the fact that 'The above table of Contents was framed above 30 years ago and considerable additions have since been made to the arable land.'⁴⁸ The unusable land included 515.49 acres of mosslands at Blain, Mingarry and Langall.⁴⁹ Correspondence of this time also referred to the endeavours of certain landlords to turn unproductive areas of land into land capable of being cultivated. Whilst travelling through the parish of Ardnamurchan in 1847 Robert Somers wrote of those areas of land that he viewed as unproductive. In his twenty-ninth letter, which was published in the North British *Daily Mail* in September 1847 Somers included a direct quote from *The New Statistical Account*. In this letter he described successful attempts made to turn some of this unproductive land (which consisted of three extensive moss flats which lay at the west end of Lochshiel) into arable soil for the growing of potatoes.⁵⁰

With the help of a marly shell sand found in considerable quantities in the bed of the river Shiel, at the western end of this moss, and some seaware, good crops of potatoes have been raised, although the ground was not broke up until the previous winter.⁵¹

This was part of the reclamation work undertaken by Alexander McDonald, proprietor of the Lochshiel Estate where about 30 English acres of mossland

⁴⁸ C. Macdonald 'Contents of the Estate of Lochshiel being part of the 27 merk lands of Moidart' GD243/4/14/8, Lindsays Catalogue, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1843.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Somers, *Letters from the Highlands on the Famine of 1846*, pp. 152-153.

⁵¹ Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 127.

had been brought into cultivation.⁵²

In 1838 potatoes formed the largest food item produced in the district. The potato had been introduced into Scotland in the eighteenth century and had become a staple food. Devine estimates that many families lived solely on boiled potatoes for nine months of the year after other food sources had been exhausted.⁵³ Potato planting began in March and continued until May. Somers estimates that:

The labour of a man and his wife for two months will plant a quantity sufficient, with the ordinary returns, to subsist a family of six for a year.⁵⁴

The main source of fertiliser for the crofts was seaweed which was layered with the soil. The potato seed (saved from the previous year) was sown amongst the layers. The following account of the yearly cycle of planting in the district provides clear evidence that much of the land was overworked without time to lie fallow and rejuvenate:

When the extent of their lands admits of it, small tenants, commonly after potatoes, sow their land with bear, and then oats, - the soil, after being well manured for the first, producing very good bear, and rather

⁵² Ibid. p. 153.

⁵³ For a detailed description of the causes and effects of the potato famine of 1846 refer to Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, pp 33-56 and Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War*, pp 146-176. He states in the introduction to *The Great Highland Famine* that "The primary purpose of this book is to provide an account of the potato famine in the Scottish Highlands in the middle decades of the nineteenth century through a consideration of its origins, nature and effects" Introduction, page v.

inferior oats, which last, however, constitutes the best provender for cattle.⁵⁵

The entire acreage was therefore in continuous usage all year round. Cottars with very small patches of land had no choice but to grow potatoes for food only. Remarkably, the two Accounts show that productivity in many areas was increasing indicating that the farmers and crofters were skilful in the utilisation and care of the land and, despite a falling population, were able to increase productivity. In 1784 the population was described as above 1200. By 1791 the population had fallen to approximately 712 persons and 132 families following a large emigration. Unfortunately similar population statistics were not recorded in the New Statistical Account of 1845 for Inverness-shire and Moidart. The Account, does, however, refer to the people who had emigrated earlier from Moidart. These figures included 572 individuals who emigrated to North America in 1790 and 1791, the 13 families who emigrated to Canada in approximately 1833 as well as to the 100 individuals who emigrated to New South Wales, Australia, in family groups and as single emigrants in 1837-39.⁵⁶

The Reverend Archibald Clerk recorded in his Account of 1838 that apart from the high rent and lack of capital, there were other reasons why agricultural advancement and progress was not forthcoming. The reasons he noted were:

...the injudicious distribution of the bulk of the people; the want of leases on the part of the small tenants; their holding their lands in

⁵⁴ Somers, *Letters from the Highlands on the Famine of 1846*, p. 161.

⁵⁵ Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 151.

common and not in separate lots; their constant practice of sharing their possessions with the married members of their families, to which no practical check has yet been given; the consequent inadequacy of the land held by each family for its support; and the miscellaneous nature of the employments by which they eke out a subsistence.⁵⁷

He was referring to the dual economy that operated in the district, with many of the young men and women leaving Moidart each year in order to supplement their family income by taking up employment in the dye-works and other industries in and near Glasgow. Clerk was sympathetic to this situation noting that the dual employment interrupted the patterns of work of the rural population. At the same time, however, he acknowledged that this was an opportunity for the young people to gain further work and income and that the situation brought out the best in family members as they worked ‘cheerfully’ to support their kindred and family.⁵⁸ It is interesting to note that Clerk recorded this information writing in the third person when referring to the people. This suggests that he did not feel part of this community. He was openly critical of the Highland practices related to the usage of land and to Highland Household values, clearly indicating that they were not part of his experience nor did he appear to understand or agree. Clerk favoured the runrig practice whereby land was held in separate lots rather than crofting. His criticism of the sharing of possessions with married members of the family clearly places him as an ‘outsider’ in this community and is difficult to

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 148-9.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 153.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

understand given that many Households included married couples and their children. Elderly crofters were dependent on the support and labour, especially of elder sons, and would not have survived without this assistance. Industrial employment or seasonal employment at harvest times on farms in the Lowlands was necessary to supplement that earned by working the croft.⁵⁹

Archibald Clerk was convinced that major changes were necessary in order to improve the economic welfare of the small tenant farmer. Firstly, the holdings of the small tenant farmers had to be enlarged to the point where the crofter would have sufficient land to work for the whole year. Secondly, he wanted to see the practices of subdividing the croft amongst family members and of families holding land in common stopped. He also argued for the introduction of leases and for the breeding of better quality stock. If these changes did not result in real improvements he suggested that the government introduce sponsored emigration of the unemployed. Finally, if all else failed, the most powerful remedy to bring about improvement in his opinion, lay in “...the increase of the means of religious instruction and education”.⁶⁰

Despite attempts to increase family income, poverty and destitution remained widespread in the district. Archibald Clerk was unable to calculate accurately the number of people in Inverness-shire receiving assistance and poor relief in 1838 as “there has not been as yet any roll of paupers, the collection at church being a mere trifle there” indicating the lack of money within Households.⁶¹ In other districts in the parish, however, he noted that the poor were supported by

⁵⁹ See reference to this situation in Scottish Registry Office, Treasury Correspondence relating to Highland Destitution, HD6/2, Letter from Mr. May to Mr. Walker, 22 March 1847 and quoted in Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, Appendices for Moidart and Arisaig, p. 321.

⁶⁰ Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 154.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 161.

church collections and fines paid to the church session, resident proprietors and friends and neighbours. He made a special reference to the fact that those paupers recorded as insane and requiring medical treatment had this treatment paid for by a voluntary contribution taken up amongst heritors (legal landowners) according to the value of the rents received from their tenants.

Devine argues that there were three distinct groups of people who were most vulnerable in times of greater poverty and destitution: widows with families, elderly spinsters and the cottar class.⁶² In his opinion this was mainly due to the weaknesses of the Poor Law as it was implemented in the Highlands because it forced these groups of people to claim relief from agencies rather than through the official Poor Law. In Scotland the Poor Law was designed to provide assistance to supplement income. The distribution of this relief was arbitrary and varied from one parish to another. There was no requirement to assess legally which families needed assistance and it often discriminated against those people who were considered to be morally unfit for such assistance, such as single mothers. According to Levitt and Smout the largest number of registered poor occurred in those parishes where legal assessment of the poor took place. The decision as to how the money for poor relief was to be raised was left up to each parish. Methods varied according to factors such as the wealth of the parish, the attitude of heritors towards the poor, the availability of work for 'poor' people, the appropriateness and attitudes held towards the acceptability of begging and the amount of money that was considered to be adequate as poor relief.⁶³ In Argyleshire, which in 1843 included Moidart, 47 per cent of parishes had voluntary assessment whilst 100 per cent had no requirement to assess legally. Only 13 per cent raised money for poor relief through voluntary contributions whilst 60 per cent raised poor relief through

⁶² Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, p. 50.

⁶³ I. Levitt and C. Smout, *The State of the Scottish Working Class in 1843*, Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1979. p. 180.

mortifications which were charges made by the parish for such things as the hire of mort cloths to cover a coffin as part of the funeral.⁶⁴

As Devine points out cottars, widows and elderly spinsters were particularly vulnerable at times of great destitution and hardship. It was common for small tenant farmers to take back land given to cottar families in order to extend their own grain cultivation. This practice contrasts greatly with notions of crofter families supporting cottar families in times of need as explained earlier.⁶⁵ In some areas land proprietors felt little obligation to support cottars who did not pay rent and who often 'squatted' on the land. The plight of Households where the inhabitants belonged to two or more of the vulnerable categories can be seen in the example of Mary and Ann McDonald, two sisters who had never married and who lived on the Lochshiel Estate. They were both listed as cottars and paupers sharing a cottage without paying rent in Lord Glossop's time as owner of the estate.⁶⁶ In 1881 they were recorded as residents of the Langall Poorhouse, Ardnamurchan with Mary aged 62 listed as Head and Ann aged 70 as her sister and residing with their 14 year old niece who was recorded as an 'idiot'.⁶⁷ Four of the six residents of the Poorhouse of marriageable age were recorded as unmarried females whilst the fifth was a widow. All residents were female. This further supports Devine's contention that the most disadvantaged group were elderly females who were unmarried and without children or extended family to care for them. This weighting of poverty amongst the population can be clearly seen in the following example of 1854. Of the 31 residents of the Lochshiel estate mentioned in the minutes of a meeting of the

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.195.

⁶⁵ See pp. 67-68 of this chapter for an explanation of the nature of the dependency of cottar Households on crofter Households generally.

⁶⁶ Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands) Return respecting CROFTERS and COTTARS on the Estate of Lochshiel in the property of Lord Howard of Glossop as at the 1st day of January ... (no year recorded although Lord Glossop bought the Estate in 1871) and reproduced in Cameron, *Go Listen To The Crofters*, p. 60.

⁶⁷ P. Higginbotham, *Census: Residents of Langall Poorhouse, Ardnamurchan, Argyll, Scotland, 1881*. <www.workhouses.org.uk> (accessed 21 June 2005).

Parochial Board of Ardnamurchan in relation to the reception of poor relief, 27 were women.⁶⁸ Amongst the Householders who emigrated to Australia were four widows with families and one cottar family.⁶⁹

1.4. Social background

As D. A. Kent observes:

The Highlanders' attachment to family was inseparable from an attachment to place and was one of the reasons, if they were obliged to emigrate, they determined to go together.⁷⁰

In 1852 society in Moidart, like the rest of the Highlands and Islands, was closely linked by kinship and land tenure and was hierarchical in its structure and organisation. This hierarchical structure was based on kinship ties and traditional loyalty shown to the Clan Chief by the other members of the structure namely the tacksmen, crofters and cottars. Under this system crofters and cottars on the Lochshiel Estate had no security of lease over their land and so the people were left at the mercy of the tenured land-owners and their Factors.⁷¹

⁶⁸ See J. Dye, "Minute of Meeting of the Parochial Board of Ardnamurchan held at Shielbridge this Eighth day of August 1854." Original held at the Highland Council Archives HCA/CA/7/2/2/CO/7/3/2, Inverness and copy obtained from <www. moidart. org. au> (accessed 5 December 2005). All females referred to in the Minute were widows, widows with children, sisters/siblings or females where their marriage status is unknown.

⁶⁹ See Appendix A for details of families 28 Mary Gillies, 25 Catherine McNeil, 23 Flora McMaster and 21 Mary McDonald and Family 20 Michael McVarish.

⁷⁰ D. A. Kent, 'A thoroughly domestic people: family migration from North West Scotland in the mid-nineteenth century', *The Royal Australian Historical Society* Volume 80 parts 1 and 2 June 1994. p. 55.

⁷¹ See page 66 for an explanation of the role of the Factor on Highland Estates.

Landowners or proprietors were at the top of the hierarchy and usually owned vast tracts of land which had remained in the family for many generations. Many of the proprietors were either absentee owners or owners who spent a great deal of time in the south of Scotland and in England. William Robertson-McDonald, proprietor of the Kinlochmoidart Estate in 1851,⁷² was an exception to the largely absentee landlord and lived on the Estate in Kinlochmoidart House (unlike his father Lieutenant Colonel David Robertson-Macdonald who spent considerable time in Edinburgh). Land-owner absenteeism meant that others were appointed to manage the Estates and to collect the rents. Known as Factors, they held considerable decision-making powers and could make decisions and implement change on behalf of the landowner.⁷³

Tacksmen were next in the hierarchical structure, leasing their land from the proprietor.⁷⁴ They were the only people to hold land under lease and were often related to the proprietor. Leases were usually 19 years in duration, however leases in neighbouring Argyll varied from seven to nineteen years.⁷⁵

The small tenant farmers or crofters followed in the descending structure. They held small acreages of land for which they paid an annual rent to the proprietor of approximately £20 either in the form of labour or as money.⁷⁶ This research

⁷² Refer to the 1851 Census of Scotland, County of Inverness, District of Moidart, parish of Ardnamurchan, Enumeration District number (not recorded), Household number 19 "Kinlochmoidart House", William Robertson, landed proprietor, p.8.

⁷³ Robert Brown was a Factor on the Hamilton Estates and a trustee to Macdonald of Clanranald. An examination of the contents of letters and other correspondence written by Brown or to Brown show that he was involved in wide ranging decision-making including the possible sale of lands belonging to the Kinlochmoidart Estate. He was also involved in meeting with business men on behalf of the owner of the Kinlochmoidart Estate, David Robertson-Macdonald. Source: electronic list of the Hamilton papers, National Register of Archives for Scotland, 2177/Bundle 1532, National Archives of Scotland.

⁷⁴ Refer to chapter four in F. J. Shaw, *The Northern and Western Islands of Scotland*, John Donald Publishers Ltd., Edinburgh, 1980 for a description of the historical development of the role and identity of the "tacksman" from the sixteenth century in this part of Scotland.

⁷⁵ Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 152.

⁷⁶ R. Balfour, 'The Highland and Island Emigration Society: 1852-1858',

is focused on the small tenant and on the following sub-tenant or cottar group.

The sub-tenants or cottars were at the bottom of the structure and, as they were landless, they were the most economically vulnerable of the four classes. Many cottars were tradesmen (carpenters, smiths, weavers and the like). As Devine explains, some cottars were given a small piece of land, “in the half-foot system by which the main tenant furnished a patch of land and seed corn”.⁷⁷ In return, the cottar provided labour and shared the harvest with the tenant farmer. In reality, many cottars were “simply members of extended families living in separate Households but gaining a living from the same small area of land”.⁷⁸ The following statement recorded in the 1841 census portrays the way in which one Enumerator understood the difference between a crofter and a cottar:

There are two classes of persons in this parish for which there are no particular instructions in the Schedule Book. I desired them to be entered as crofters and cottars. A crofter rents only a small piece of land insufficient to support himself and his family. Consequently he is obliged to take work from the farmer or the landlord to make up the rent. The cottars are mostly poor people unable to take any land. They have only a house and a garden from the farmer and take work where they can best find it.⁷⁹

It was a common practice when economic disaster struck for crofter families to share their resources with cottar family members. One example of this arrangement can be found in the cottar Household of Michael McDonald

Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, LV11 1990-92, 1993. For his definition of the term “Croft” see p. 537.

⁷⁷ Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, p. 8.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 9.

⁷⁹ 1841 Census Returns, volume 505 Ardnamurchan, Edinburgh, 1983, Enumeration District 1, County of Argyll, NAS. This statement was recorded by the person appointed by the Sheriff or provost to collect the census details. In 1841 Moidart was located within the County of Argyll.

(Household 20). Michael's occupation according to the 1841 census was 'carpenter', however, by 1851 he was recorded as a 'cottar and a carpenter'. He and his family lived next door to Mary McDonald, a crofter and head of house in the crofting township of Scardoish. Michael was the brother of Mary's deceased husband, John.⁸⁰ It is informative to follow the plight of this family over fifteen years. In 1836 Michael McVarish was a crofter paying rent of five pounds sixteen shillings and eight pence.⁸¹ By 1841 he was a carpenter and by 1851 a cottar and carpenter. As this was an unusual occurrence with most people living their entire lives within a particular class, it is important to ask how this situation may have been brought about. In the case of Michael McVarish, this change of circumstance may have been due to his inability to continue to pay rent with eight family members to support during the famine of 1838. With his rent falling into arrears, the proprietor of the Estate may have removed him from the land he was renting. This would have forced him to take up a new occupation, that of carpenter. He may also have suffered an infirmity that meant he was no longer able to work the land in the same way and with his eldest child, a daughter aged only seven years, he may have been unable to pay his rent. Michael may have also worked next door for his sister-in-law and her family and, in return, may have been given a small portion of land to work for his own purposes.

Richards argues that despite these difficulties Highland families maintained a strong identity beginning with the Clan and including the extended family as well as the immediate Household and embracing a number of diverse aspects:

They saw themselves, first as family, though perhaps in a larger than usual sense, such as the Mackays, the Macdonalds or even the Smiths;

⁸⁰ See Appendix A, families 20 (Michael and Mary McDonald) and 21 (Mary McDonald and family).

⁸¹ See Lindsays WS GD243/4/15/18 for entry related to Michael McVarish and

second they were people of a township or a district, such as Strathnaver or Colonsay or St Kilda; then perhaps they thought of themselves as Highlanders or Islanders; they were also Scots and probably regarded themselves as British too.⁸²

The 1851 census for the district clearly shows that many Households were composed of parents or grand-parents, married children, their spouses and children, unmarried siblings, one or two servants and visitors staying with the Household. The Household of John and Margaret McDonald of Scardoish (Household 21 in the 1851 Census⁸³ and Family 17 in Appendix A) is an example of an extended family sharing the one home. John, aged 73 and Margaret, aged 65 had four sons whose ages ranged at the time of the census in 1851 from 35 to 18 and two daughters aged 24 and 22. Three generations lived under the one roof with one married son, Archibald, his wife, Catherine Corbett, and their infant son of three months. The eldest son often remained in the family home after marriage in order to work the croft with his parents. Catherine may have been the daughter of a neighbouring family by the name of Corbett who lived in the crofting township of Blain.⁸⁴ With ten family members to support Archibald also worked occasionally as a salmon 'fisher' (fisherman) thereby supplementing the diet as well as income. A young nephew of John McDonald, Allan, was also resident in the house on census night. Even in his seventies John was still working as a crofter. As will be shown later the nature of this composition changed with the decision taken by some members to emigrate to Victoria.

rental paid in 1836.

⁸² E. Richards, 'Ironies of the Highland Exodus, 1740-1900' *Journal of Australian Studies*, No. 68 2001, p. 76.

⁸³ See 1851 Census of Scotland, County of Inverness, District of Moidart, Parish of Acharacle Quoad Sacre, Enumeration District (not recorded), Household number 21, Scardoish, John and Margaret McDonald, Crofter, p. 7.

⁸⁴ Catherine may have been a member of Household six in Blain, Parish of Ardnamurchan according to the 1851 census for the district of Moidart.

Many Households also contained brothers and sisters of the head of the Household, as well as nephews and nieces and grandchildren residing in the house as a part of the extended family. The economic viability of each Household and crofting township was dependent on large family groups with two or three generations of men and women sharing the work on individual crofts as well as obtaining work outside the township or on neighbouring crofts. This organisation of labour will also be examined later in the thesis to ascertain whether or not there is evidence of any attempt to transplant this traditional Highland system to Victoria and to what extent it survived and fulfilled the needs of these Highland settlers in a new context. The structure of the Household, however, was not the only support on which these people depended. The social and spiritual network provided by the Catholic Church was also an important means of guidance, authority and comfort in these difficult times.

1.5. Religious background

The district of Moidart had traditionally been a Catholic enclave.⁸⁵ In 1791 the Catholic population of Moidart was recorded as 693 out of a total population for the district of 712. The remaining 19 people consisted of two Episcopalians and 17 members of the Established Church. There were three Catholic priests also living in the district at this time. A seminary “taught by and for Roman Catholic clergy”⁸⁶ was located at Glenuig at a place named Samalaman. The New Statistical Account stated that “in the Inverness districts there are only

⁸⁵ C Johnson, *Developments in the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland 1789-1829*, John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh, 1983. This publication comprehensively traces the history and development of the Scottish Catholic Mission between 1789 and 1829. However, the author acknowledges in the Introduction and on p. 3, that “the paucity of Highland source material has forced me to concentrate primarily on developments in the Lowland Vicariate.”

⁸⁶ Sinclair, *The Statistical Account Of Scotland, 1791 – 1799*, p. 293.

two denominations, that of the Church of Scotland, and of Rome. The former amount to 300, and the latter 2058". It went on to report that there were five Roman Catholic chapels and two priests under the jurisdiction of the bishop residing in Glasgow.⁸⁷

Catholic clergy had a long tradition of being involved in emigrations from Moidart. As J. M. Bumsted pointed out:

Roman Catholic clergymen played a major role in leading Highlanders to British North America, and the number of Catholic emigrants was always vastly disproportionate to their number in the Highland population.⁸⁸

Consequently when the potato crop failed once again in Moidart and in the neighbouring district of Knoydart in 1838-39, emigration from these two districts was supported by the Catholic clergy. In a letter written to Dr Andrew Macdonald, Bishop in Greenock in 1839, Fr. Coll Macdonald of Lochshiel, Moidart, requested that he be appointed to "superintend the Canadian Highland emigration". He continued in the same letter to outline the plight of the people in his care. Referring to the proposed emigration he stated:

I really think it would benefit those who go and those who remain, for there are too many people in various parts. In the parish of Sleat in a population of 3000, 1200 have no land, but subsist as they best may.

⁸⁷ Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 160.

⁸⁸ J. M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America 1770 – 1815*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1982. p. 95.

The parish of Glenelg is worse. In Morar North there are several hundred without land, also in Knoydart ... I think it a philanthropic duty to send them to possess good land. I think religion is not adverse to the duty. Even if compulsion is necessary, which it will be.⁸⁹

The use of the word 'compulsion' in this statement indicates that Macdonald thought that the people would be unwilling to emigrate and pressure would need to be applied. This statement also indicates that emigration was not readily acceptable to the people as a preferred remedy to their difficulties. Father Ranald Rankin of Moidart also wrote to Bishop Scott in 1839 about the destitution of the people and referred to a meeting with other priests "for the distribution of poor meal at Kenloch".⁹⁰ This reference to the importation and distribution of food in neighbouring Arisaig provides evidence of the existence of widespread hardship in several districts adjoining Moidart.

Hunter makes the point that it was virtually impossible for any crofter to provide a supply of food for a family for a year and, on neighbouring Skye, crofters were spending from eight to twelve pounds each year to buy meal, 50 years later in the early 1880s.⁹¹ A third priest, Fr Coll MacColl, wrote from the district of Arisaig in 1839 stating "I find that many of the people themselves would emigrate they being this year very scarce of potatoes and other provisions for their families."⁹² He also referred to the efforts that the people

⁸⁹ C. Macdonald, Letter OL1/29/15 to the Roman Catholic Bishop Dr Scott, West Shaw Street Greenock, Glasgow. *Oban Letters*, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh, 1839. p. 1.

⁹⁰ R. Rankin, Letter OL1/27/16 to the Roman Catholic Bishop Dr Scott, West Shaw Street Greenock, Glasgow. *Oban Letters*, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh, 1839. p. 2.

⁹¹ Hunter, *The making of the Crofting Community*, p. 114.

⁹² C. MacColl, Letter OL1/27/18 to the Roman Catholic Bishop Dr Scott, West

had made to pay their rent to the proprietor from money earned by herring fishing.

These letters strongly suggest that the Highland Catholic priests were keen for their parishioners to emigrate in order to improve their conditions. It is also important to note that the priests were keen to accompany the people. This was possibly due to a sense of duty and responsibility towards their parishioners as well as an attempt to ensure that the parishioners remained strong in their faith and didn't 'stray' once away from the influence of the clergy. Several of the emigrants did in fact marry outside the Catholic Church following their arrival in Victoria or left to join other denominations. The desire may have also related to the fact that once a significant number of people had left the district there would be little need for the clergy to remain resulting in the demise of Catholicism in Moidart.

Despite the evidence of extreme poverty in Moidart, the Catholic population was also seeking to build a new chapel at this time. Father Macdonald wrote in the same letter; "All the good people of Moidart have set their hearts on requesting your Lordship's assistance to get them a Central Meeting House, where all could be present every Sunday in the year".⁹³ This statement by Father Macdonald raises a number of issues. On one hand the statement illustrates the strength of religious feeling and commitment amongst the community following the difficult economic circumstances of 1838. Rents, for example on the Lochshiel Estate, were reduced for the majority of Households due to the famine that occurred in that year. The letter was also written

Shaw Street, Greenock, Glasgow. *Oban Letters*, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh, 1839. p. 2.
⁹³ Ibid., p. 2.

following an emigration of twelve families and a number of single people (approximately 88 people) to Australia in late 1838. This was a significant exodus from the district and the loss of so many people at the one time must have made other families question whether their future still lay in Moidart. But the sentiments expressed in the letter also strongly suggest that the remaining people did see their future in Moidart and not elsewhere, no matter how difficult the times. The building of such a public and important edifice as a meeting house, able to accommodate all the worshippers would have been seen as a symbol of stability and an investment in a future for those remaining in Moidart. If emigration had been their only recourse, would they have been so determined to build a new meeting house?

1.6. Education background

The provision of an adequate number of schools across the Highlands to meet the educational needs fell far short of what was required in 1838. Illiteracy was widespread and access to schools was an issue of great concern to the clergy of the district.

The New Statistical Account mentions only two schools in the Moidart district, Catholic and Presbyterian, one at Acharacle (an Assembly school at the church) and another at Kinlochmoidart. The Account raised the issue of the lack of schools and access to learning for scholars and stated, “It appears, therefore, that there are only seven schools on permanent foundation in the parish. Eight additional are required to render education accessible to all the inhabitants.”⁹⁴ The Account also noted that the number of children between the ages of six and fifteen in Inverness-shire in 1838 who could not read or write

totalled 416 whilst the number above 15 was recorded as 892.⁹⁵ The total number of children within these age ranges is not recorded so it is not possible to calculate the numbers attending the schools or the percentage of literate and illiterate students in the district.

The Catholic clergy also did their best to provide schools despite the difficulties in locating these schools in the most appropriate positions to enable the children of parishioners to attend. By January 1839 Ranald Rankin had established two Catholic schools in the Moidart district, one at Langal and the other near his home at Scardoish. He wanted this school moved to a more central location to allow more students to attend and was also concerned about the need to establish a school on Island Shona. Although there were 40 students in the two schools he too was greatly worried about the fact that many students were prevented from attending his schools because “the parents are miserably poor and cannot pay”, a further indication of the level of destitution existing in the parish.⁹⁶ This sense of responsibility for providing access to education for his parishioners accompanied Rankin to Victoria and resulted in personal financial contributions towards the establishment of several schools in locations where he worked.

From letters written by Rankin both English and Gaelic were taught in his schools: “They are making great progress in reading English and Gaelic.”⁹⁷ This statement suggests that students in 1839 were achieving some level of

⁹⁴ Clerk, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, p. 160.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ R. Rankin, Letter OL1/27/16 to the Roman Catholic Bishop Dr Scott, West Shaw Street, Greenock, Glasgow. *Oban Letters*, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh, 1839. p. 1.

⁹⁷ R. Rankin, Letter OL1/28/4 to the Roman Catholic Bishop Dr Scott, West Shaw Street, 75

proficiency in two languages. The fact that English was taught in a Gaelic-speaking community would seem to suggest that, for Rankin, as for his counterparts in the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), English would be an important acquisition for the future for the children of Moidart. The SSPCK was an organisation founded by the Gaelic Society of Edinburgh in 1709 to “civilise and christianise the Highlands by means of extending presbyterianism [sic] and opposing catholicism [sic].”⁹⁸

The Society was determined to eradicate the Gaelic language which it associated with backwardness and to replace Gaelic in schools with English. Rankin’s schools taught English for other reasons. He was preparing his students for a future which he believed lay outside of Scotland and where English would be necessary in order to achieve upward mobility. Despite their acquisition of English, however, the majority of school-age passengers were recorded as ‘unable to read or write’ (in English) on the passenger lists of the ships.

From correspondence written to the Catholic Bishop at Greenock in the 1830s it is clear that the priests were far more concerned about children having access to a school and education than about whether the school was supported by the Catholic Church or belonged to the Church of Scotland. Ranald Rankin reported to the Bishop in 1839 that the Assembly School at Kinlochmoidart

Greenock, Glasgow. *Oban Letters*, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh, 1839. p. 1
⁹⁸ D. Ansdell, *The People of the Great Faith - the Highland Church 1690-1900*, Stornaway, Scotland, 1998. p. 95.

was attended by five to six Catholic students and from four to five Protestant students. He described the situation for Catholic students attending this school in the following way:

The Catholic scholars are not obliged to learn by heart the protestant Catechism or psalms or paraphrases at the end of the new testament or any part of the Bible or new testament by heart or any protestant prayers. The society schoolmasters are obliged to say morning and evening prayers. Bishop Macdonald advises on that point that the Catholic scholars should say their own prayers while the protestant school master prayed in his own way.⁹⁹

Christine Johnson in her book *Developments in the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland 1789-1829* claims that this was a view held by many Catholic clergy:

Clearly, Scottish Catholic priests were happy that Catholic children should be educated in Protestant schools, so long as they could receive instruction in their faith in Sunday schools or in classes held by the priests themselves.¹⁰⁰

Johnson also makes the point that the Assembly schools were happy to enrol all students regardless of religious belief as the salary of the schoolmaster was calculated according to the number of students enrolled and was therefore dependent on sufficient numbers of students. Rankin also noted that the

⁹⁹ R. Rankin, Letter OL1/28/4 to the Roman Catholic Bishop Dr Scott, West Shaw Street, Greenock, Glasgow. *Oban Letters*, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh, 1839. P.1

¹⁰⁰ Johnson, *Developments in the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland 1789 – 1829*, p. 227.

Assembly school at Glenuig had closed despite the high population in this area but that the proprietor of the estate, Dr Martin, intended to re-establish the Assembly school saying; “Dr Martin the proprietor of that part of Moidart is a good landlord but a great bigot. I know he will exert himself to get a protestant school in Glenuig very soon.”¹⁰¹

Rankin had a Catholic teacher at Glenuig but was doubtful of his own financial ability to keep a Catholic school open. And so by 1851 the school at Glenuig had reopened with John MacIver as schoolmaster and Archibald Fleming was recorded as the schoolmaster at the school at Kinlochmoidart.¹⁰² From Rankin’s correspondence it would seem that education was much sought after by the Households and this may account for the fact that a Catholic school was opened in Belmont, Victoria in 1854.

Rankin was well aware of the impact that the depressed economic conditions in the district had on the lives of the people. How these conditions arose on the Estates and why the landowners made the decision to clear the people from their lands as their preferred remedy to solve their own economic tribulations is explored in the next section.

1.7. The economic circumstances of two Moidart estates¹⁰³

In order to understand the circumstances under which these Households emigrated to Australia it is necessary to briefly examine the ‘transformation of

¹⁰¹ R. Rankin, Letter OL1/28/4 to the Roman Catholic Bishop Dr Scott, West Shaw Street, Greenock, Glasgow. *Oban Letters*, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh, 1839. p. 2.

¹⁰² 1851 Census Enumeration district one. National Archives of Scotland. See p. 6 for details of John MacIver and his family and p. 9, Kinloch Moidart for details of Archibald Fletcher. For an abbreviated history and overview of the sales and changes of ownership of the major estates of this part of Moidart see Macdonald *Moidart; or Among the Clanranalds* pp. 238 – 264.

¹⁰³ The two estates are those of Lochshiel and Kinlochmoidart.

Gaeldom' and the impact these changes had on the Western Highlands in the mid to late eighteenth century generally.¹⁰⁴ Famine and destitution had been a part of the economic and social fabric of the Highlands for several centuries prior to this period.¹⁰⁵ Devine identifies a number of major changes that swept through the Highlands at this time and each of these changes can be observed in relation to the two estates in this study as will be demonstrated later in this chapter. These changes included the demand by landlords for increased rents as land was turned over to large-scale sheep farming to meet the market demands for wool for industry in the Lowlands and England. Secondly the crofting system of land use replaced the traditional runrig system. Strips of land were merged to create small individual holdings as distinct from the traditional communal townships. This new system of land use brought about changes in the class structure of Highland society including the removal of the tacksman class and its replacement with a middle class comprised of sheep farmers from the south or from England. Thirdly, large numbers of people were displaced and moved internally from the glens of the estates to the coastal areas as sheep moved into the Highlands. Sheep displaced cattle as a major source of income. Devine points out that the cheviot breed of sheep in particular posed a threat to cattle-raising. Cheviots needed access to both the higher shielings in summer (where the cattle were grazed away from the crops growing on the lower areas) as well as to the lower areas of land used for arable purposes in order to

¹⁰⁴ See Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War*, Chapter 3, pp.32-53 where he examines the social changes that swept through both the Highlands and Lowlands in the late eighteenth century and the effects of these changes. For an outline of the physical, social, and economic roles of the summer shielings in Highland society refer to A. Bil, *The Shieling 1600-1840*, John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh, 1990.

¹⁰⁵ See T. M. Devine, Introductory chapter in *Clearance and Improvement*, John Donald, Edinburgh, 2006, p. 3 where he lists dates from the 1690s onwards, of the so-called 'Lean Years' and 'difficult times', related to famine in Scotland.

survive the winter.¹⁰⁶

The impact of these broader changes continued to affect the economic circumstances of three of the Moidart estates in the early 1850s as is shown in this newspaper account. A report of a meeting held at the Fort William Court House and published in the *Inverness Courier* in 1851 outlined the degree of destitution that existed across approximately 16 Estates in the four parishes of Kilmallie, Kilmonivaig, Ardnamurchan and Glenelg. The meeting was called to bring together “heritors, justices of the peace, clergy, merchants and others of this district in order to take into consideration the destitute state of many of the labouring population in the district, and the best means to be adopted for their relief”.¹⁰⁷

The meeting heard from the Inspector of the Relief Operations of the Glasgow Section of the Destitution Board. Letters from Estate proprietors were also read at the meeting. Importantly for this study the number of destitute families and individuals on the three Estates of Kinlochmoidart (proprietor William Robertson), Lochshiel (proprietor Alexander Macdonald) and Moidart (proprietor Dr Martin) were recorded in the article. They were listed as follows: Kinlochmoidart 21 heads of families with 164 individual family members; Lochshiel 93 heads of families with 464 individual members and Moidart with 33 heads of families and 164 individual members. The futures of 147 families were at risk of the decision making processes of a range of people from different backgrounds. The accompanying memorial or petition that was

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Destitution in the Highlands - meeting at Fort William’ *Inverness Courier*, Inverness,

also developed at this meeting stated that the population of the district was 11,000 with 8,000 belonging to the crofter or labouring class. The number of members of the cottar class was not recorded, a further indication of their lack of status in Highland society. The petition went on to state that 4,000 people were bordering on a state of famine whilst many hundreds were actually suffering from famine. The rental of the district did not exceed £34,000, much of which was taxed at seven and a half per cent for poor relief and, even at this rate, the tax was not sufficient to meet the needs. Those who worded the petition, whilst able to recognise that the distress was not the fault of the people, could not refer to or acknowledge the financial wastage and ineptitude on the part of the Estate owners, perhaps the true cause of this situation:

...the distress under which the people suffer has not been brought on by any misconduct of their own part, but is owing to an inscrutable visitation of Providence blighting the potato crop, which was their main stay of support.¹⁰⁸

The petition also stated that this situation had existed for the last four years. The three proprietors of the Moidart Estates were not present at the meeting but sent letters expressing their support. According to the authors of the petition, the situation of the people was blamed on the failure of the potato crop and not on the deeds of the owners or on inadequate agricultural practices or land tenure arrangements existing at the time.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid 1851. p 3.

Those attending the meeting agreed that the resources of the district were inadequate to meet the needs of so many destitute families and that the government needed to act to retrieve this situation by:

...the reclaiming of waste lands, by facilitating emigration to the British colonies, by promoting works of public utility in the Highlands, or by any other means which their wisdom may seem to meet.¹⁰⁹

It was suggested that a railroad be built between Oban and the south as this would provide “work to the unemployed, and also tend to develop the resources of the country.”¹¹⁰ No doubt a new railroad would also be seen by the land owners as an important means of transporting guests and visitors to their Estates for sporting and fishing opportunities for which they received substantial amounts of money. The rental of the Mansion House of Island Shona for example, included shooting rights over a part of the property as well as “fish delivered by the tenants of the fishings.”¹¹¹

Of the three options put forward by those present at the meeting to address the hardship, the option of ‘facilitating emigration to the British Colonies’ was the one taken up by the three Estate proprietors. Removal of the people was the most expedient and “cost neutral” solution for each of these owners as all three owners failed to contribute their one third payment to the Society (see pages 230-231 for details of the unpaid costs).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ C. Macdonald, ‘Contents of the Estate of Lochshiel being part of the 27 merk lands of Moidart’, GD243/4/14/8, Lindsays Catalogue, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1843.

Two years later and despite the removal of a large section of the district's population in 1852, a meeting of the Parochial Board of Ardnamurchan held on the eighth of August 1854 was presented with a list consisting of the names of several of the poor of the parish. Of importance to this research is the fact that 25 of the names belonged to residents of the Lochshiel and Kinlochmoidart estates with 17 of these recipients residing at Moss on the Lochshiel estate where they had been forcibly moved.¹¹²

Whilst emigration may have alleviated the distress of the emigrant Households it was clearly not the solution to the ongoing distress amongst those who remained on the two estates. This general overview of the impact of social and economic change in the Western Highlands will now be examined in relation to the two Moidart estates in particular.

1.8 The Estate of Lochshiel

The lands of the Lochshiel estate lay between Loch Moidart and Lochshiel. In 1836 there were approximately 7,220 acres on the Estate of which 6,468 acres were used solely for pasture and grazing purposes. This left a mere 218 acres for the cultivation of potatoes and crops with the remaining 515 acres described as mosslands.¹¹³ In 1834 the estate's income was derived from several sources. These included rentals of farms, fishing on the River Sheal, salmon fishing from the shores of Lochshiel and wood cut from pine and oak

¹¹² See chapter 6, pp. 390-391.

¹¹³ C. McDonald, "Contents of the Estate of Lochshiel being part of 27 Merk lands of Moidart", Ref. GD243/4/14/8, Lindsays Catalogue,

plantations estimated at nearly 200 tons and leaving 400 standard oak trees of 40 years of age.

The new owner of the Lochshiel Estate, when it was first sold out of the hands of Clanranald, was Alexander MacDonald of Glenaladale. He purchased it around 1811 and spent considerable money trying to improve the Estate by attempting to create additional arable land by reclaiming moss flats near Lochshiel for his tenant farmers. In 1838 John McLean (Tacksman of the farm of Glenforslan) and Alexander Stewart (Tacksman of the farm of Glenaladale) undertook a review of the levels of rents being paid in that year by the tenants on the estate. Their report contains information of interest to this study. Allan Mcvarish and John McPherson of Langall had a lease of 14 years on their land. All other residents were recorded as 'tenants at will'. They also noted that two brothers, Alexander and Coll Macdonald who lived at Dalilea, had added an additional 30 acres of reclaimed waste-land which they had trenched and drained at an expense of £700. They had also erected additional buildings for cattle at a cost of £40. These improvements were made possible because of Coll Macdonald's income as a surgeon by profession. (He would later rent large tracts of land himself as Factor of the Estate from the proprietor, Alexander McDonald). In 1843 the Estate contained twelve crofting townships.¹¹⁴ The list of tenants in 1836 for example does not include the number of residents not paying rent so that the population living on the Estate was well in excess of the 51 Households plus that of the proprietor. Likewise the total number of individuals in each Household on the Estate is not given.

National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh. 1843.

Evidence given at the Deer Forest Commission meeting in 1892 included a detailed account of how the forebears of many of the families came to live on the Estate resulting in severe overcrowding. The enquiry took place many years after the events of 1838 and 1851 and was therefore a recollection of earlier events. Eneas R. Macdonell of Camusdarroch, Arisaig recounted to the Commissioners how, along with James Macgregor of Fort William, he was appointed a trustee of the Lochshiel Estate in the early 1850s. As a Trustee he was forced to decide the best solution for what was a very congested Estate in terms of population.

According to Macdonell, the history of this congestion had its beginnings around 1794. At that time his grandfather, Archibald Macdonald of Rudha, received rents in the form of labour from cottar families.¹¹⁵ When Archibald died around 1828 his son Gregor inherited the land. When Gregor Macdonald of Rudha was asked to increase his own rent, which had been traditionally paid to the owner of the land Macdonald of Clanranald, he was unable to pay and so the farm was taken from him.

Donaldson argues that, as the role of the Clan Chief changed from leader to landlord in the Highlands, an increased rent was often demanded from tenants as in the above case. Many tacksmen chose to emigrate rather than pay the increase forcing their small tenants to pay instead.¹¹⁶ Spiralling rents was a key emigration 'push' factor for the tacksman class in the eighteenth century.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ MacKenzie, *The History of the Highland Clearances*, pp. 271-272.

Gregor Macdonald was forced to remove all the cottar families (subtenants) whose families had worked on the land for generations. He asked his brother, Alexander Macdonald of Lochshiel, to take the 37 families to live on the Lochshiel Estate in Moidart. If this narration was correct the Estate became home to an additional 37 poor families who would not be able to pay rent or to acquire land. Together with the 51 rent paying families already living on the Estate in 1836, (and possibly other existing cottar families), it is not difficult to see how it became impossible for such a small acreage to provide sufficient food and income for the population. Once again the harvest was devastated by blight in 1838 creating a famine.

Evidence given by Colin Nisbet, a crofter at Ardtoe, appears to corroborate that given by Eneas McDonnell. Examined in Gaelic, Nisbet stated:

They were not big crofts: the people were crowded into that place at the time the sheep farms were being formed. They were sent from the other end of the country and crowded in there.¹¹⁷

Internal migration from one estate to another was only part of the migration experience of the Moidart people. Several hundred residents of the district were members of numerous emigrations organised in the late eighteenth century and were the result of several factors that operated to remove or ‘push’

¹¹⁶ See Donaldson, *The Scots Overseas*, pp. 58-9 and Harper, *Adventurers and exiles*, pp.36-7.

¹¹⁷ Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands 1892) Vol. 1. Forty-fourth sitting held at Acharacle, Ardnamurchan on 22 May, 1894. Evidence (question 38.) given by Colin Nisbet, a crofter living at Ardtoe. Nisbet was appointed by the people of the district at a public meeting to answer questions regarding the large tracts of land that were under deer or game in the district and which could have been divided up into small holdings to increase the size of crofts.

the people off the land. Extensive sheep farms began to be established in West Inverness-shire in the 1780s by amalgamating small crofts and farms into larger holdings. Conversion of land followed attempts on certain estates to convert the religion of the people. The Catholic Laird John Macdonald had earlier organised the emigration of tenants from his Glenaladale estate in Moidart taking with him Catholic tenants from South Uist who were being persecuted owing to their religion. They emigrated to Scotchfort in Prince Edward Island (PEI) Canada in 1773. He paid their passages through the sale of his estates to Alasdair-an-Oir.¹¹⁸ Gordon Donaldson, in his book *The Scots Overseas*, also refers to this particular emigration in the following way:

In 1771 John MacDonald, laird of Glenaladale in Moidart, bought land in "St. John's Island" (Prince Edward Island) for a hundred natives of South Uist, and in 1773 he sold his estate and himself joined those emigrants as leader of a party from Moidart.¹¹⁹

A priest by the name of James MacDonald accompanied them and later, another priest who was the laird's brother, also joined them establishing a strong communal settlement based on religious affiliation. Land and religious conversion therefore both acted as strong 'push' factors in the case of the Moidart population at this time. Donaldson also noted that the flow of emigrants from Moidart to North America continued into the nineteenth century:

¹¹⁸ Macdonald, *Moidart; or Among the Clanranalds*, pp. 213-214.

¹¹⁹ Donaldson, *The Scots Overseas*, p. 63.

From 1790 onwards a number of people, variously estimated at up to 700 left Moidart, Arisaig, Ardnamurchan and Sunart, and around 1812 most of the Kinlochmoidart tenants are said to have emigrated to America.¹²⁰

In July 1790 two emigrant ships left Drimindarach for PEI. The first ship 'Jane' carried members of three Moidart families: John Campbell from Island Shona, Donald Adamson of Moidart and Roderick McDonald from Glenuig. The second ship 'Lucy' carried many more families including six families from Island Shona, five from Kyles, three from Glenuig and one from Kentra. In 1830 a priest by the name of John MacDonald led a group of Catholics (including some emigrants from Ireland) to Johnston's River in PEI, however approximately 40 of the settlers disembarked in Cape Breton.¹²¹

The resettlement of the Rudha people on Lochshiel estate provides evidence of a practice by which families were forcibly relocated and illustrating the high degree of vulnerability to which cottar families in particular were exposed. Balfour points out that a similar situation also applied to small tenant farmers as it was:

...not uncommon for tenants, some the victims of eviction others seeking to escape congestion, to establish a presence on the Estate of a neighbouring proprietor with the result that one proprietor's difficulty

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 67.

¹²¹ The passenger lists for the 'Jane' and 'Lucy' are part of the Oban Papers held at the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh and are published in L. H. Campey, *"A Very Fine Class of Immigrants" Prince Edward Island's Scottish Pioneers 1770-1850*, Natural Heritage Books, Toronto, 2001. pp. 112, 114 and 147.

became his neighbour's responsibility, often with dire results.¹²²

The results of this relocation had serious consequences for the inhabitants of the Lochshiel Estate. The overcrowded estate coupled with a further period of famine in the district in 1838 resulted in the first large emigration of Moidart people to Australia in 1838-9. This emigration may have created a social and kinship network into which the 1852 arrivals were welcomed although this study has been unable to establish familial relationships between the two groups of immigrants due to the lack of civil documentation. The emigrant ship 'British King' sailed from Tobermory on 28 October 1838 and arrived in Sydney Cove on 4 March 1839.¹²³ On board were Highlanders from Moidart¹²⁴ and Ardnamurchan, Skye, Coll, Tyree, Ulva and Gometra. There were eleven Catholic families from Moidart comprising 67 individuals although there were 88 Catholics in total. In addition, there were five single males and four single females also from Moidart and Catholic in faith. All eleven families bore the surname 'McDonald'. The nominal passenger list recorded their occupations as farmer, farm labourer, house servant, shepherd, ploughman and dairy maid.¹²⁵ On their arrival in Sydney, five of the families travelled south to Nimmitabel on the Monaro Plateau in the southern Alps.¹²⁶ According to Sister Ursula

¹²² R. Balfour, Personal communication, 11 July, 2002.

¹²³ N. McDonald, *Burn to Billabong*, Portofino Design Group Pty Ltd., 1988. p. 13. This reference is a compilation of Macdonald family stories including several of the McDonald families who arrived on the 'British King' in 1839.

¹²⁴ Sr. U. Smith, Personal communication, 22 July, 2002. Letter regarding the settlement of Catholic Moidart Highlanders on the Monaro. According to this letter the Moidart people originated from Glenuig, Smissarary, Kinlochmoidart, Glen Moidart, Caolas Mor (also known as Kylesmore), Corran, Iirine, Ulgarry, Mingarry, Glenfinnan, Glenforlan and Killmallie.

¹²⁵ C.W. Paton, Nominal Passenger List of the emigrant ship 'British King' *Assisted (Bounty) Immigrants 183*, Archives Authority of New South Wales, Reel Number 1299, *Assisted (Bounty) Immigrants, 1839*, State Library of Victoria.

¹²⁶ Author or editor unknown, *Pioneers of Snowy Monaro prior to 1850*, The Snowy Monaro Family History Group. This book, now out of print, contains family lineages for the five 89

Smith,¹²⁷ the five families settled there because they were invited by a Robert Campbell to work on his property. He had been born in Scotland and had received a grant of 4,000 acres in 1825. The 1838 people were assisted 'bounty' emigrants and were brought to New South Wales under the Bounty Emigration Scheme. Under this Scheme settlers like Campbell who wanted labourers could contract agents in Britain to find suitable workers. The settler paid a 'bounty' or the fare of the labourer and his family to Australia. On arrival the immigrants were examined by a Board and, if found acceptable as workers, the settler was entitled to reclaim the fare he paid from the Government of New South Wales. Campbell met the 'British King' in order to employ Highlanders to work on his pastoral runs near Cooma.¹²⁸ This arrangement provides a clear example of the social network and structural theories of migration in operation.¹²⁹ Most of these Households remained in the district continuing to work in the sheep industry. Other McDonald families travelled north following their arrival to the Clarence River district in New South Wales where they also took up farming.

McDonald families who settled in the Nimmitabel district, on the Monaro. It also contains information about the properties they selected and the work they undertook after their arrival.

¹²⁷ Sister Ursula Smith, a member of the Sisters of Saint Joseph (a Catholic Religious Order founded by Mother Mary MacKillop) and working in Nimmitabel, has undertaken significant research in relation to the McDonald families of Moidart who arrived on the 'British King' at Sydney in 1839. Many of these families moved on to the Monaro Plain around Nimmitabel to establish farms. She, along with other residents in the district, is a descendant of one of these families.

¹²⁸ The ship 'British King', arrived in Sydney on 28 February 1839. *Assisted (Bounty) Immigrants 1839*, Vol. 15 Archives ref. No. 4/4839. Reel No. 1299, Archives Authority of New South Wales, Sydney.

¹²⁹ For a definition of the 'push-pull', 'social', 'structural' and 'involuntary' theories of emigration see Allan Borowski, Anthony Richmond, Jing Shu and Alan Simmons, 'The International Movements of People' in Adelman, H., Borowski, Allan, Burstein, Meyer and Foster, Lois, (eds), *Immigration and Refugee Policy. Australia and Canada Compared*, Volume 1, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994. Also see S. Castles and M. J. Miller, *The age of migration*, The Guilford Press, New York, 2003. This contains an outline of their macro and micro theoretical structures related to emigration.

A second emigration occurred in 1839 with the ship 'George Fyfe' arriving in Sydney on 23 January, 1840. On board were at least two Moidart families accompanied by other families from Ardnamurchan and Inverness-shire.¹³⁰

Individual Households also emigrated to Australia at different times between 1839 and 1855 adding to the Moidart community in Victoria. The Catholic marriage register for Moidart records that Archy and Ann Gillies who married in 1842 emigrated to Port Phillip in 1849. Other Households left for Victoria after 1852. The Household of Archibald and Allana McDonald and their five children from the Lochshiel estate and assisted by the HIES, sailed on the emigrant ship 'Hornet', leaving Liverpool on the 24 July 1854 and arriving at Geelong. John McDonald, Allan Stewart and Archibald McIntyre all residents of Kinloch, Moidart, signed Promissory Notes at Glasgow for loans of various amounts received from the HIES on 13 July 1854.

An examination of the records of rentals paid on crofts over a period of 20 years by the small tenants who lived in the crofting townships on the Lochshiel Estate provides background information through which the 1837-1839 emigrations to Australia can be viewed.¹³¹ It is important to note, however, that these statistics only relate to the small tenant or rent-paying residents and do not include the cottar or other non-rent-paying residents.¹³² Therefore the figures do not provide a comprehensive overview of the total population of

¹³⁰ The ship 'George Fyfe', arrived in Sydney on 23 January 1840. *Assisted (Bounty) Immigrants 1840*, Vol. 30 Archives ref No. 4/4854. Reel No 1312, Archives Authority of New South Wales, Sydney.

¹³¹ See documents in the Lindsays WS Catalogue, Reference GD 243, The National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh. (Papers were deposited in the Scottish Record Office on indefinite loan in 1963 and 1980).

¹³² When the 1841 census is compared with the 1851 census (which identified cottar and pauper families), the comparison reveals a very different picture in terms of the total numbers of people living in the townships. See page 67 for T.M. Devine's explanation of the term 'cottar'.

each township or overall movements of people, especially the movement of cottar families.

Rental records from 1834 to 1851 show an increase of residents in four townships on the Lochshiel Estate (Dalnabreck, Mingarry and Blain and Briag). This may be the result of an agreement between Coll McDonald and an un-named lessee and explained in the following way:

I have entered into a most valuable arrangement for the property... I have let Blain, Briag, Mingarry and Portavate to one tenant as a sheep walk at one hundred and eighty pounds a year, and I am arranging to place about 20 Families on this land and to give them 5 acres of it at twenty shillings and a lease of 19 years so that at the end of 19 years each of those acres will be worth from one pound to two pounds.¹³³

In the same letter Macdonald also mentions that the rents of each farm were in arrears and, although he had foregone the rent due to low prices for cattle, he intended to collect the rent in 1844 by selling the cattle owned by the tenants. Tenants lived under the constant threat of eviction and the crofting society generally was vulnerable. Whilst the population of townships such as Cliff remained relatively stable other townships fluctuated in terms of the number of residents suggesting the possible relocation of tenants. The following table shows the periods of economic difficulty as well as those townships where rents were unable to be collected. It also demonstrates an overall increase in

¹³³ Letter written by Coll McDonald to Adam (surname undecipherable) on 18 March 1844 re the current state of rents and plans for the four farms of Blain, Briag, Mingarry and Portavate. Reference GD 243/4/14/18, Lindsays WS Catalogue GD 243, The National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh.

the population across the estate with 67 Households paying rent in 1851 compared with 52 in 1836. This increase suggests that the estate was in fact overpopulated at the time of the 1849-52 famine.

Table 1.1: Numbers of Tenants paying rent on each farm/township on the Lochshiel Estate between 1834 and 1851.

Farms/Townships	1834	1836	1838	1843	1846	1851
1. Langall	*	3	*	3	3	3
2. Dalnabreak	*	10	*	6	10	11
3. Mingarry	*	8	*	8	11	13
4. Blain and Briag	*	1	*	1	*	9***
5. Cliff	*	3	*	3	3	3
6. Scardouish	*	8	*	7	8	5
7. Portavate	*	7	*	5	**	8
8. Island Shona - North	*	5	*	5	*	*
9. Island Shona – South	*	6	*	8	*	*
10. Island Shona – Total	*	*	*	*	*	8
11. Dalilea Farm	1	1	*	1	*	1
12. Dalilea tenants	*	*	*	*	*	6

- **Source:** Lindsays WS Catalogue, GD 243, NAS
- * - No breakdown of individual tenants provided. Note that 1838 was a year of destitution resulting in a large emigration to New South Wales from this district.
- ** - Portavate combined with Blain and Briag (no breakdown of individual tenants provided)
- *** - Blain and Briag were recorded as Blain Moss
- Note: Rental figures are in Scottish pounds.

From statements made by Macdonald it seems that there were no leases between the owner and small tenants on the Lochshiel Estate. Macdonald acknowledged that the difficulties experienced by the small tenants were due

to "... the pernicious practice of not giving leases".¹³⁴ Despite the good intentions expressed in the letter, however, this state of affairs continued until the Estate passed into the hands of another proprietor well into the late nineteenth century. The rental figures for Island Shona are also misleading in so far as, according to the 1851 census, most residents on this Island were cottars and so were not included in rental figures for this part of the Estate.

Provided that annual rents were paid when due (usually Martinmas and Whitsunday) it was the usual practice for the croft to remain in the hands of several generations of the same family. Records of rents paid for the family croft worked by the family of Mary McDonald (MacVarish) at Scardoish (Household 21 Appendix A) show that this croft had remained in the family for four generations. Rent payments were entered for heads of this family for 1836 - widow of John MacVarish, 1824 - Archibald MacVarish and 1748 - Katherine MacVarish.¹³⁵ In this particular case, however, attachment to family and land was not sufficiently strong for the majority of the members of this family to remain. Two older members of the Household, a brother and sister of the mother (and both with a disability), were forced to remain in Scotland as neither was suitable or eligible to emigrate. This may indicate that, although allegiance to family and strong kinship ties existed, the family's perception of the possibilities for their future proved to be a greater force, resulting in their emigration.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ I am grateful to Alasdair MacLeod, Archivist at the Highland Archives, Inverness, Scotland for obtaining this information in 1997 from the Glenalladale Papers in GD 243, Lindsays Catalogue, NAS. Pages unknown.

An examination of rents paid by Households in the years prior to emigration provides an insight into rental fluctuations according to economic circumstances and demonstrating the degree of difficulty for Households to hold onto their land in times of hardship. The following table provides an overview of the fluctuations of the annual rents paid by seven Households in the years prior to their emigration to Australia in 1852. Rents paid in Scardouish decreased between 1843 and 1851 as the community moved out of reasonably prosperous times into famine. This is also the case with Island Shona residents. In two other instances the rents paid by the two widows Catherine Kennedy (Household 25) and Flora McMaster (Household 23) differed from those paid by the other Households. It is not clear, however, what percentage of income this amount of rent represented in the case of the two widows and whether or not it is indicative of a more compassionate approach towards these two Households on the part of the Factor and proprietor.

Table 1.2: Examples of rents paid by individual Households living in crofting townships on the Lochshiel Estate between 1834 and 1851.

Farm / Township and Family	1834 £	1836 £	1838 £	1843 £	1846 £	1851 £
1. Dalnabreak – Angus McNeil. Family no. 26**	*	4.0.0 Michael McNeil	8.0.0	8.0.0	*	4.0.0
2. Dalnabreak – Catherine Kennedy – Widow of Angus Kennedy of Moss. Family no. 25**	*	*	*	*	*	2.10.0
3. Mingarry – Flora McMaster – widow of John McMaster. Family no. 23**	*	7.0.0	6.0.0	*	6.0.0	3.10.0
4. Island Shona – South side. John McDonald. Family no. 14**	*	8.11.0	*	6.6.0	*	5.5.0

5.Island Shona – South side. Angus McDonald. Family no. 15**	*	11.8.0	*	6.6.0	*	5.5.0
6.Scardouish – Mary McDonald and family. Family no. 21**	*	5.16.8	*	8.0.0	*	6.0.0
7.Scardouish – John McIsaac and son. Family no. 17**	*	5.16.8	*	8.0.0	*	6.0.0

Source: Lindsays WS Catalogue, GD243, NAS.

* No individual family rents listed for the year.

** Family numbers correspond to numbering system used in Appendix A.

The fact that few rents are recorded for 1838 may indicate that the Households were too poor to pay rent or the result of a significant emigration of Moidart families to Australia due to severe famine and thereby removing many of the rent paying Households from these townships.¹³⁶ By 1851, however, the Households were able to pay a reduced rent approximately twelve months prior to their departure as the economy of the Highlands began to slowly improve. Table 2.3 shows the combined rents paid by the small tenants on the Lochshiel Estate over a period of 17 years. From these figures it can again be seen that rent totals underwent large fluctuations in some townships. Most notable are the townships of Mingarry, Blain and Briag, Scardouish and Portavate. Mingarry and Scardouish both show a severe decrease in rent totals in 1838. By 1838 rents were difficult to pay owing to the fall in cattle prices and a famine brought destitution to the families on the Estate. In response, it was suggested by the two tacksmen of the Estate that rents needed to be reduced. In the report prepared by McLean and Stewart it was suggested that, for example, the tenants at Mingarry (who were recorded as “Tenants at Will”) should have their rents reduced from seven pounds to six “owing to the fall in price of

¹³⁶ See chapter one, pp. 89-91 for further details regarding this particular emigration to the Colony of New South Wales.

cattle”.¹³⁷ Similarly, the Tenants at Langal who had agreed to pay £40 combined rent for the first seven years then £50 for the remaining seven years, should have their rent reduced back to £40. Similar recommendations were made for all the other townships on the Estate.

In the relatively prosperous years of 1843-46, the rent totals in these two townships again climbed but decreased again during the period of the next famine of 1850-52.

Table 1.3: Total of rents paid by each township on Lochshiel Estate (plus other sources of rent received) between 1834 and 1851.

Farms/townships	1834 £	1836 £	1838 £	1843 £	1846 £	1851 £
1. Langall	-	45	40	45	45	40
2. Dalnabreak	40	35.10.0	32.5.0	37	37	36
3. Mingarry	60	56	48	52.10.0	52.10.0	46.5.0
4. Blain and Briag	72	72.19.6	72.19.6	70	120**	50.29.6
5. Cliff	15	15.10.0	12	15.10.0	15.10.0	16.10.0
6. Scardouish	60	59.10.0	48	65.5.0	65.5.0	35.00.0* **
7. Portavate	60	60	45	50	*	34
8. Island Shona House	*	120	112	120		
9. Island Shona – North	*	47.06.0	*	42	150	45.08.0
10. Island Shona – South	*	64.11.0	*	52.08.0		
11. Island Shona	150	*	*	*	*	*
12. Fishing in the river Shiel	100	130	75	130	130	130

Source: Lindsays WS Catalogue, GD 243, NAS.

* - No amounts provided

** - Included rents from Portavate

*** - Included 10 from Dorlin in 1851

Rental amounts also appear to be disproportionate between the total amounts

¹³⁷ Ibid.

paid and the total number of tenants contributing. This is demonstrated in the following table showing the total rental amounts paid by the group of tenants in each of three townships, on the Lochshiel Estate:

Table 1.4: Examples of the range of rents paid between townships / farms on the Lochshiel Estate in 1850-1

Township / Farm	No. of tenants paying rent	Total rent paid per annum
1.Langal	3	£40
2.Dalnabreck	11	£36
3.Mingarry	12	£46.05.00

Source: Lindsays WS Catalogue, GD 243/4/14/29, NAS.

The difference in the rents might be explained by examining the amount of arable land and pasture available on each farm. Rents at Langal for example may have been higher due to the fact that the tenants rented approximately 718 acres of pasture in addition to 35 acres of arable land. One tenant paid £20 whilst the other two tenants paid ten pounds each. Mingarry also had 300 acres of pasture to rent plus a large number of tenants although nine out of the twelve tenants were paying the smaller rent of three pounds ten shillings in annual rent. Two tenants each paid seven pounds possibly indicating a larger holding whilst the remaining tenant paid one pound five shillings. Mingarry farm also contained 44 acres of unproductive moss land reducing the area of cultivated land. Pasture had to be shared amongst twelve tenants compared with three tenants at Langal.

Small arable acreages like these meant firstly that all available land was used to grow enough food to support the Households. Therefore there was little of the harvest left to sell for income. Secondly, small acreages usually meant that the whole acreage was in use all year round. There was no opportunity to rest the land in order for it to rejuvenate. Over-utilised land (even using seaweed as fertiliser) produced poor harvests resulting in food shortages often putting

Households at risk of starvation. Thirdly, small acreages meant that there was not enough work available to engage all the members of the Household. The crofts were worked largely by the head of house with the eldest son. It was therefore common practice for other members of the Household to look elsewhere for work at certain times of the year.

Proprietors and their Factors were always ready to maximise the income of the Estate by taking advantage of any improvements made by the tenants. Tenants who made improvements to their homes or holdings were often penalised through an increase in rent or by ensuring that any improvements made would eventually revert to the Estate. Coll Macdonald, in a letter written in 1843, stated that Allan McVarish and sons who had rented their land at Langal for fifty years and “have improved it considerably”¹³⁸, would receive an increase in their rent of five pounds at Whitsunday. Similarly, two tenants at Scardofsie (Scardoish) had built a home which, at the end of the lease, would revert to the Estate. Consequently, the combined rent of all the crofters at Scardofsie was increased by six pounds. The three tenants at Dalnabreck had their rents raised from 25 shillings to two pounds because they each had a cow and stock.¹³⁹

Increasing the rents of the small tenants was not the only way of increasing income on Lochshiel. As referred to on page 92 of this study Coll Macdonald had entered into a “most valuable arrangement for the property”.¹⁴⁰ He had let the four townships of Blain, Briag, Mingarry and Portavate to a tenant as a

¹³⁸ C. Macdonald, ‘Letter to Dr. Macdonald’ *Messrs Lindsays Catalogue WS*, Ref. GD243/4/14/4, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh, 6 March 1843.

See letter which refers to changes to rents on Lochshiel Estate, the overcrowded conditions in the Highlands and a possible emigration to America of tenants from the Estate.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ C. Macdonald Ref. GD243/4/14/18, Lindsays WS, NAS, Edinburgh, 1844. See letter which refers to the leasing of townships as a sheep run and the offering of leases for tenants following their agreed relocation to another part of the Estate.

sheep walk for £180 per year. He also wished to place 20 families on this same land and to give each family five acres to rent with a 19 year lease, at 20 shillings per year. His aim was to ensure that:

... in a few years every small tenant on the property will be on this land which the want of a proper tenure has hitherto made useless.¹⁴¹

The crofters would also be able to gather and sell seaware (kelp). This arrangement was one way of forcing the people to move towards the shoreline on part of the Estate in order to use the arable land more profitably for the grazing of sheep. The people, who had been without leases, would most likely have agreed to relocate in order to take up the land with the additional incentive of a nineteen-year lease. Under this arrangement the proprietor received two sources of income from the land; the rents of the crofters relocated to the newly leased land as well as the rent from the tenant who had leased the four farms as a sheep run. This arrangement provides a further example of the ways in which the vulnerable people without the security of a lease over their land were left to the discretion of the proprietors.

Finally, it is worth noting that income levels for the proprietor of Lochshiel did not vary greatly between 1834 and 1851, despite a decreased population due to the 1838 emigration and the economic difficulties faced by those who remained. The degree to which poverty remained entrenched amongst the residents on the Lochshiel estate, despite the clearance of a large proportion of

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

the population in 1852, can be seen in the township of Moss. It serves as one example where destitution continued well into the nineteenth century caused by relocation to inferior quality land and despite the efforts of successive owners. Nine years after the 1852 emigration the 1861 census recorded Moss as consisting of 15 Households of which six contained members who were officially recorded as a 'pauper'. Of these six Households individual members of four of the same Households were recorded as recipients of Poor Relief back in 1854.¹⁴² Two owners of the estate, Mr Hope Scott and Lord Howard of Glossop who arrived later in 1871, both spent considerable money on the estate to try to improve the conditions by expanding the amount of arable land for use by the tenants. Despite these efforts, the plight of the tenants at Moss was referred to once again by Macdonald at the 1884 Enquiry when he testified that:

There is one part called Moss, and the people of that place are in an inferior position. I think they were drafted from other parts of the estate and put into Moss, for they were in very poor circumstances and had very little land...and since that they have extended, and their arable land has been much improved...but they have no hill pasture.¹⁴³

And so emigration was to be the answer to overcrowding on the Estate. At the

¹⁴² See an extract of the 1861 Census of Scotland (Census of Fort William) compiled by John Dye (date unknown) for the Moidart Local History Group at <www.moidart.org.uk/justus/restricteddataset/1861.htm> (accessed 5 April 2005) pp. 1-20 and John Dye, (date unknown). 'Minute of Meeting of the Parochial Board of Ardnamurchan held at Shielbridge this Eighth day of August 1854'. Original held at the Highland Council Archives HCA/CA/7/2/2/CO/7/3/2, Inverness and copy obtained from <www.moidart.org.uk> (accessed 5 December 2005).

¹⁴³ Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, with Appendices, British Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons. 1884. Evidence number 33163, p. 2111. 101

same time emigration was also seen as a means of assisting those to benefit by sub-dividing the crofts and redistributing the land to enlarge their holdings.

Although they were tenants at will Coll Macdonald acknowledged that forebears of the people had lived on the estate for several generations, however this was not sufficient to entitle them to any tenure over their land. This also strongly suggests that the estate owners and Factors felt very little compunction to address issues of tenure or overpopulation. Emigration was viewed favourably by this class however, as it released the owners from any need to resolve these issues:

The people renting lots and crofts as in the case all over the Highlands are Tenants at will, some of whom are on those farms for from one to two hundred years, very few of them being strangers. They are becoming too numerous over the Highlands, ... There are some families to leave Moidart alas, which will enable the proprietor to increase the holdings of those who remain, as the population are increasing too much.¹⁴⁴

Macdonald recorded that he had permitted 60 people from the property to sign up for emigration to America. Again he was appeasing his own conscience by relying on the adequacy of the social networks already established in America as a means of supporting those who left and ensuring that they would do well. It would also appear from his letter that land left by those who emigrated was redistributed amongst those who remained:

... as they have relations in America, they will no doubt do well there,

and it will enable me to enlarge the holdings of some others.¹⁴⁵

According to Father Charles Macdonald, Alexander Macdonald, the owner of the Lochshiel Estate, was not able to maintain the Estate as a self supporting enterprise and various ideas were put forward to try to save the Estate culminating in the decision of 1852:

...to remove most of the population, and to place their holdings under sheep. In this way Dorlin, Scardoish, Portabhata, Braig and Mingarry were swept clean, the majority of the crofters being sent away to Australia, while a few migrated to the south, or got the offer of settling down in less favourable localities of the Estate.¹⁴⁶

1.9 The Estate of Kinlochmoidart

The economic situation of the Kinlochmoidart Estate in 1852 was similar to that of Lochshiel. The boundaries of this Estate included four crofting townships from where twelve Households emigrated. An early owner of this Estate was Mrs Margaretta Robertson-Macdonald, according to information and signatures contained in leases drawn up between the owner and tenants wanting to lease land on the Estate. Her husband was Lieutenant Colonel David Robertson-Macdonald. Their eldest son, William, was the owner of the Estate at the time of the 1852 emigration.

¹⁴⁴ In C. Macdonald, op.cit. p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ C. Macdonald, *Moidart; or Among the Clanranalds*, p. 261.

As early as 1806-7, there are references to the fact that David Robertson Macdonald was reviewing the economic situation of the Estate and looking at ways to increase his income, possibly by renting the Estate to the highest bidder. At this time Estate Factors had a role in determining the value of the Estate in terms of the anticipated rent that might be obtained by leasing arrangements. In this case the Factor in 1806, Robert Brown, was determined to proceed with negotiations to lease the Estate without reference to the owner. In a letter written to Robert Brown, Robertson-Macdonald expressed his disappointment because Brown had not contacted him to discuss offers for the farms on the Estate:

...and the whole Rent of the Estate if let to the highest offers would fall very short of what you calculated it should amount to... The offers are as yet entirely from the old set who will wish to keep strangers at a distance in hopes of getting [Reginald George Macdonald of] Clanranald's lands and mine at a very low rent.¹⁴⁷

Robertson-Macdonald was also interested in providing employment on his Estate. In a letter written in 1811 to Reginald George Macdonald to discuss “converting road money into labour at so much per day” he expressed his disappointment at not being able to meet with him.¹⁴⁸ He had hoped that the road money for his Estate, and for the neighbouring Clanranald Estate, might be used to employ the small tenants to build a new road for the mutual benefit of both Estates.

¹⁴⁷ See electronic list of the Hamilton Papers, NRAS 2177/ Bundle 1532. Letter from Colonel David Robertson-Macdonald to Robert Brown dated 8 July, 1806, NAS.

1.10 Leaving Moidart

Famine brought destitution to the Moidart district once again in 1847 and emigration was seen to be the answer being keenly supported by those in authority. In a strongly worded letter to the Catholic bishop written in January 1851, Eneas McDonell (a Trustee of the Lochshiel Estate) pointed out that he had received a letter from Father Ranald Rankin who requested that Eneas impress upon the bishop the need to organise a mass emigration to Upper Canada in order to alleviate the distress of the people of Moidart. Macdonell argued in his letter that emigration was:

...the only probable means of preserving human life threatened by famine and want in that impoverished and overpopulated district of the Highlands.¹⁴⁹

Macdonell also tried to describe to the bishop the deplorable conditions under which the people were living at this time owing to the failure of the potato crop in the autumn of the previous year:

When I tell your Lordship that the entire crop upon which the people depended failed in a most melancholy and complete manner last Autumn - that there are no resources in the district to feed the populations - that remunerative employment is not to be constantly

¹⁴⁸ Letter written by Colonel David Robertson-Macdonald dated 7 September, 1811, Hamilton Papers reference NRAS 2177 / Bundle 1567, September 1811, NAS.

¹⁴⁹ E. Macdonell, Letter OL1/45/1. Written to the Catholic Bishop at Greenock, Glasgow dated 26 January, 1851. *Oban Letters*. The content of this letter seems to indicate that it was written to support the request by Ranald Rankin to be allowed to accompany if not emigrate with his people in order to provide the people with a leader in whom they would have confidence and trust.

obtained, that there is not sufficient arable land to support so large a population - that for these and many other reasons it is evident that emigration alone is the only remedy in the present situation of the Highlands.¹⁵⁰

Unfortunately the bishop's response to Macdonell's letter is not known. It seemed, however, that he declined Rankin's request to emigrate with the people to Upper Canada as Rankin wrote again on 4 March 1852 to "cheerfully volunteer my service to those I pity".¹⁵¹ This time Rankin offered to emigrate to the Colony of Port Phillip, Australia, with the Moidart people. In this letter he stated that "Aneas McDonell and Mr Robertson [of the Kinlochmoidart Estate] are assisting families who have not the means themselves".¹⁵² This was most likely a reference to the financial support which proprietors were obliged to pledge as their contribution to the work of the HIES. Rankin, however, was not convinced about the true purpose of the actions on the part of the proprietors. Referring to the actions of the Estate proprietors he claimed:

It is now the grand maxim and panacea of Highland proprietors to clear the land of the poor people. The fare to Australia is now so cheap that they will do their utmost to take advantage of it. They will not send them to America as the passage money would come to three times the amount.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ E. Macdonell, Letter OL1/45/1. Written to the Catholic Bishop at Greenock,

Glasgow on 26 January, 1851. *Oban Letters*, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh.

¹⁵¹ R. Rankin, Letter OL1/45/8. Written to the Catholic Bishop at Greenock, Glasgow on 4 March, 1852. *Oban Letters*, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

This statement leaves little doubt that the choice of destination was primarily determined by economic and financial considerations and based on the cheapest fares available. In 1852 Australia received 44,763 immigrants from Britain which included the Moidart immigrants.¹⁵⁴ Between 1851 and 1855, following the discovery of gold and the proliferation of emigration schemes offering assisted passages, 175, 078 immigrants from Britain arrived in Victoria compared with 18, 206 for the period 1846 to 1850.¹⁵⁵

The destinations of many of the Moidart emigrants were recorded by Father Rankin alongside their names in the Register of Marriages in the Parish of Moidart prior to his own departure for Australia in 1854. These entries show that at least 38 couples married between 1830 and 1852 (and their families), settled overseas either in Australia or North America or remained in Scotland but migrated internally to Fort William, Glasgow, Uist and Beaulieu.¹⁵⁶ The majority who emigrated overseas travelled to Australia either in 1838-9 or 1852. Malcolm Prentis, in his study of Eastern Australia states that; "In summary, the bulk of Scots assisted immigrants came from the industrialised Lowland areas such as Glasgow and Clydeside, Edinburgh, Dundee, West Lothian, Fife and Stirlingshire."¹⁵⁷ In the case of Victoria however; "a slightly higher proportion came from the Highlands" [than in the case of New South Wales and Queensland].¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ R. F. Haines, 'Nineteenth century government assisted immigrants from the United Kingdom to Australia: Schemes, regulations and arrivals, 1831-1900 and some vital statistics 1834-1860', *Occasional Papers in Economic History Number 3*, Flinders University, Adelaide. 1995. p. 47.

¹⁵⁵ Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, p. 261.

¹⁵⁶ R. Rankin, *Marriage Register of the Catholic Parish of Moidart, Mingarry, Acharacle, Argyll*. Entries were obtained from the parish priest of Our Lady of the Angels Catholic Church, Mingarry, Acharacle, Argyll. The original document is held in the NAS, RH21/48/2 Moidart Marriage Register, 1830-1854.

¹⁵⁷ Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, p. 75.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 75.

R. A. Cage accounts for the large numbers of immigrants arriving in Australia from the industrialised Lowlands of Scotland by claiming that most of the growth in the Scottish urban population was the result of internal movement from the Highlands to Glasgow and other urban centres in the early nineteenth century. This internal migration coincided with an increase in immigration from Ireland.¹⁵⁹ As the cotton textile industry was concentrated in Glasgow at this time and the industry was expanding rapidly in this period, Glasgow's population doubled between 1801 and 1821 and doubled again by 1841. By the 1840s the cotton industry began to decline with the development of the steam engine and was replaced by light metal and machinery tool production which required fewer workers. This internal migration of workers from the Highlands to the south makes it difficult to accurately determine the geographic origins of Scottish emigrants. Many of the emigrants who had shifted earlier from the Highlands later emigrated from the south thus possibly inflating the overall proportion of emigrants calculated as originally from the south. The Moidart marriage register entries demonstrate that the permanent relocation of people from Moidart to the south was not a common practice and that the first place of settlement in Scotland for those people who left Moidart but who did not emigrate at this time, remained another Highland location.

The decision to emigrate resulted in an enforced change to the composition of the Household membership. Some members were either not eligible to emigrate or chose not to leave due to advanced age and infirmity. This resulted in the need for their children to make difficult decisions in terms of who should stay behind to care for these people and who should be free to leave the Household. Migration became the impetus for the creation of new Households. Father Rankin accompanied the group of emigrants who sailed on the

¹⁵⁹ R. A. Cage 'The condition of Scotland 1788-1860' in J. Jupp (ed), *The Australian People; An Encyclopedia of the Nation, its People and their origins*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1988. See also 'The Settlers: The Scots' by M. D. Prentis in the same publication. p. 760.

'Araminta' at least as far as Glasgow where he married Donald Macdonald and Ketty (Catherine) Macdonald both of Scardoish on 15 June 1852 just five days before the ship 'Araminta' left Birkenhead. Donald and Ketty along with the two witnesses, brothers Ewen and Archibald Macdonald of Scardoish, were listed as passengers. The Moidart people became victims of the financial debts carried by the two estates and which had become 'push' factors whilst the financially cheap fares to Australia determined the country of destination.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has examined a range of factors which culminated in the forced removal of 37 Households from Scotland in 1852 and has categorised these under four broad headings; physical, economic, social and spiritual. The physical factors included insufficient acreages of cultivatable land to support a Household containing five to seven members plus servants resulting in small plots of land being overworked and incapable of producing the volume of food necessary for the survival of both the family and stock. The regularity of the occurrence of famine brought sickness, death and economic hardship and the unpredictable climate also contributed to poor harvests in certain years.

Downward market prices for black cattle created substantial economic hardship in the late 1840s. Monies received from the sale of these animals was used to pay the annual rent due to the proprietor for the croft meant that often payments could not be met and were insufficient in value to meet the large debts which encumbered many of the Highland Estates at this time. Tenants were dependent on the goodwill of their proprietor in times of destitution in order to maintain occupation of their crofts. Increasing prices paid for wool

required to meet the industrial needs of the factories of Scotland resulted in an increase in the value of land for the grazing of large flocks of sheep and therefore as a rental commodity. Large tracts of the already limited areas of land were required for sheep and so the people had to be removed from both the cultivated and grazing areas of the townships and farms to enable this arrangement to occur. Rents paid for grazing sheep far outstripped those obtained from the tenant farmers.

Although the Trustees of the Lochshiel Estate were not unsympathetic to the plight of the small tenants, they found themselves in a situation where they needed to make a decision about the economic future of the Estate. This decision had major social, economic and physical implications for the future of the tenants and sub-tenants. The Estate was clearly overcrowded with small tenants partly created by poor decision making on the part of earlier landlords whilst the Kinlochmoidart Estate contained a large number of cottar families particularly on Eilean Shona. Whilst the presence of the cottars may have provided additional labour this situation would have resulted in a shortfall in rent to the landowner further compounding the debts of the Estate.

The guidance and advice provided by the Catholic priests in the district regarding emigration played an important role in helping to sway the people towards accepting emigration as the only realistic option. From evidence provided by Eneas Macdonnell at the Deer Forest Commission Hearing in 1892 it appeared that Father Ranald Rankin also provided much needed

‘material support’ to the families to assist them to emigrate at the time.¹⁶⁰

However, the nature of his support is unclear. It may have taken the form of financial assistance provided to help defray the costs of fares to Australia or possibly to Birkenhead, Liverpool. If this was the case Rankin may have approached a wealthy patron to obtain these funds as it would appear that the parish would be unable to provide this amount of money from its own resources. By providing spiritual and material support Rankin contributed to their eventual emigration and, ironically, became a ‘push factor’ himself.

The census returns for the decennial period of 1851 to 1861 for the Parish of Ardnamurchan within the Civil County of Inverness (which includes the district of Moidart) partly shows the demographic impact of emigration on this community. From a total population of 2,333 persons (1,108 males and 1,225 females) living in 396 inhabited houses in 1851 the population decreased to 1,917 persons (950 males and 967 females) living in 326 homes in 1861.¹⁶¹ The male population decreased by 158 and the female population by 258. This decrease within the female population might be explained by examining the nature of the gender imbalance in the Colony according to the 1852 immigration figures. The resulting outcomes of the determination of the Colonial Immigration Agent, Edward Grimes, to remove the obstacles preventing single women of marriageable age from immigrating, is reflected in the gender composition of single immigrants arriving on the “Marco Polo” (see pages 180-190 for an overview of the gender imbalance and the concerns of Grimes).

¹⁶⁰ MacKenzie, *The History of the Highland Clearances*, p. 273.

¹⁶¹ *Census of Scotland 1861, Population Tables and Report*. Civil County of Inverness,

The evidence leaves little doubt that the Households involved had little opportunity to change the circumstances under which they lived. The hardship imposed on their lives by the terrain, climate, repeated cycles of famine, the depressed economy and the stratification of Highland society were all too impenetrable. Many left the Highlands generally at this time under duress possibly taking with them feelings of great antipathy towards their proprietor as a result of their enforced removal, although not all Moidart emigrants left under these conditions.¹⁶² Charles Macdonald suggests that these feelings were present, however, in the case of individual Moidart emigrants who he claims, "...left the old country against their will."¹⁶³ The next chapter examines this emigration both in the context of overall British emigration to Australia as well as the circumstances surrounding the voyage of each group. The impact of this emigration on the district thirty years later is examined in further detail in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Edinburgh, 1862. p. 16.

¹⁶² See Macdonald, *Moidart; or Among the Clanranalds*, p. 261 where he records that both the Glenuig and Caolas residents left of their own accord taking advantage of the opportunity to emigrate with others.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, p.262.