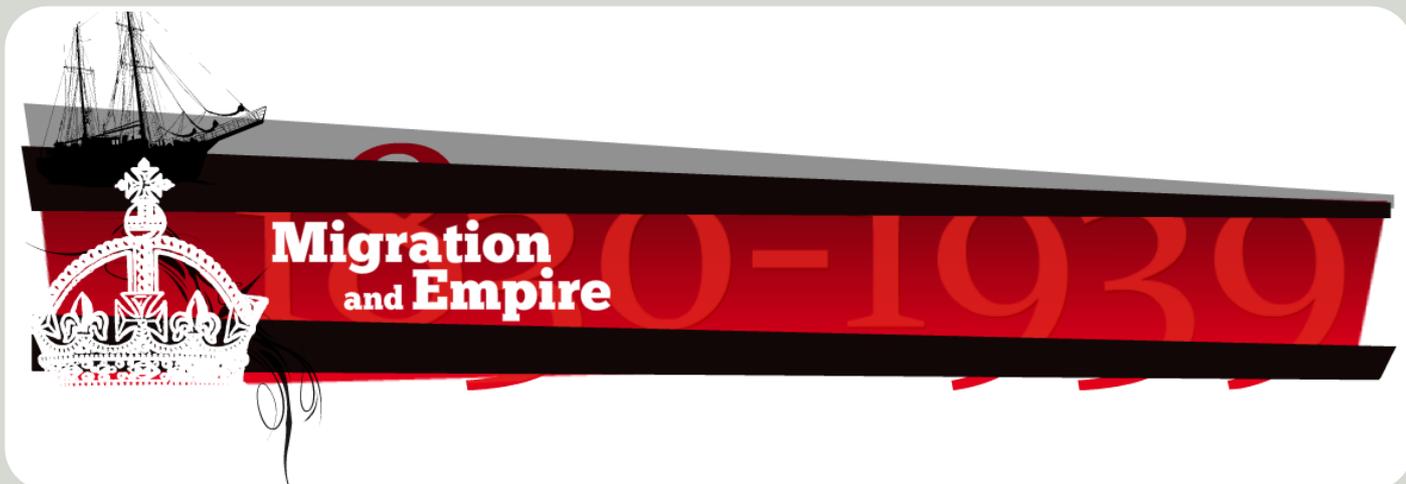


# HIGHER HISTORY

## Introduction and Background

**The Gordon Schools Huntly.**

MR DAVIDSON



## MIGRATION & EMPIRE 1830-1939

**Background: The Social Effects of the development of the Scottish Economy: Industrialisation and urbanisation; the imperial context.**

In terms of industrialisation, Scotland was a late starter compared to England. However, from 1830, the country experienced a massive surge in the expansion of an interlocking economy based on heavy industry - that is coal, iron, engineering and shipbuilding.

In a very short space of time, Scotland became more industrialised than the rest of Britain; indeed, it became the workshop of the world. The main ingredients in the creation of this powerhouse economy were cheap and plentiful supplies of raw materials and energy, a vast reservoir of low cost but reasonably well-educated labour, entrepreneurial dynamism and a university system that developed close links with industry.

Rapid industrial growth led to the mass migration of labour to the cities in search of work and accommodation. Such a movement of peoples saw Scotland rise from fourth place in the world urban league in 1800, to second only to England and Wales by 1850. However, the unplanned growth of the cities and towns

created squalor and over-crowding on a massive scale.

Even as late as 1911, two-thirds of Scots were living in one- or two-roomed houses compared with only 7% in England. Poverty was widespread, wages were low in comparison with other parts of the UK and infant mortality rates were alarmingly high.

Furthermore, these social problems in a pre-welfare society were intensified in times of economic depression. Scotland's economy was based on exports, mainly to the British Empire, thus, boom and bust were core elements in the economic story of its development.

This culminated in the late 1920s and early 1930s in a catastrophic economic collapse which saw around a quarter of the working population of the west of Scotland unemployed. One of the ways out of the economic and social problems in which many Scots found themselves trapped was migration.



**The Forth Rail Bridge**  
One of the first steel bridges to be built in Britain - 1890.

# BACKGROUND INFO

## Scotland before 1830

Scotland had a largely rural community before 1830.

After this time as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution there was a huge shift in this trend. With the growth of the mills, chiefly through the cotton mills and with the growth in.

## A Moving Trend

From the mid-19th century there has been a shifting population in Scotland. This trend saw a huge outpouring of the population south of the border to England as well as further afield to parts of the British Empire.

Generally this loss of population arose as many sought to find a better standard of living in Australia, Canada, the USA and parts of the British Empire.

The majority of those who left Scottish shores were young – the future generations, taking their skills with them.

## Why did they leave?

Historians debate that the desire to emigrate arose from the dire living conditions in rural areas in addition to the Highland Clearances.

Furthermore, as industry changed, some historians state that a substantial group from urban areas made this shift too.

What is agreed by many historians and social commentators is that an extensive emigration programme (through Government planning or assisted packages) provided a solution to the many economic issues of the day, such as rising unemployment, poor housing and increased dependency on the poor law.

Finally, some argue that emigration was beneficial to some Scots as it allowed them to become entrepreneurs and allowed them to build on their skills and establish businesses and ideas.

## The Scottish Attraction?

There have been many nationalities who were attracted to the Scottish nation between 1830 and 1939.

Scotland became the focus for many who were experiencing difficulties in their own lands. It is therefore accepted that many were looking for some kind of escape, and Scotland was not their destination of choice.

## The New Arrivals

The Irish arrived in Scotland to flee a terrible famine and abject poverty.



Others, such as the Jews and some eastern Europeans, were fleeing religious and/or political persecution.

Historians note that Scotland was seen as a stopping-off place until passage could be secured for America or some other land of opportunity.

Those that settled in Scotland only did so as they lacked the finance to go further afield.

Some groups, such as the Polish and Lithuanians were fooled into believing that Scotland was a prosperous land offering a wealth of opportunities.

## An Introduction to Migration and Empire.

Since the 19th century, Scotland has experienced a large outflow of its population in search of a better life in England and overseas in Australia, Canada and parts of the British Empire. Many of these emigrants were young. Although the origins of this dispersal have been popularly thought to have been rural, a result of the Highland Clearances, there has also been a substantial movement of population away from urban areas.

Emigration played a significant role in 19th-century Scottish society as it provided an inexpensive solution to unemployment and other social problems, such as poor housing. Arguably, it also offered more opportunities for the enterprising and talented Scots to flourish than could be found in their home country.

In addition to the large outflow of Scots, there were others from foreign lands who found themselves on Scottish soil. The most notable and numerous immigrants were from Ireland. There were many more nationalities, including the English

and the peoples of eastern Europe, who were attracted to Scotland. Some came by choice, others came to flee such atrocities as famine, poverty and persecution. For many, Scotland should have been a stopping-off place until passage could be secured for America or some other land of opportunity. It was only those emigrants, such as the Irish, who could not afford the cost of a sea-passage who remained behind, or those, like Polish or Lithuanian emigrants, who had been duped into seeing Scotland itself as a land of opportunity. On the other hand many English people came to Scotland by choice, seeing in it a chance to sell their skills at a higher price than could be commanded south of the border.

It is this rich history which has created a Scottish tapestry of many different cultures, languages and religions. In many cases there was assimilation, acceptance and harmony. On the other hand Scotland witnessed a society with numerous stresses which continue into the 21st century.



### ACTIVITY:

Read the following pages on Migration and Scottish Society and make summary notes on each sub-heading.

Push & Pull Factors



## Migration and Scottish society

### Migration within Scotland

Migration is the movement of people within a country. In general terms it is seen as the shift from rural areas to the towns and cities. When considering Scotland between 1830 and 1930 it can be argued that migration also references the shift in population from a depressed economic region to areas which offer employment opportunities.

### The Lowlands

The first movement to be examined is that which took place within Lowland Scotland. Population pressures had been building up in the rural Lowlands prior to 1800. By the turn of the 19th century, rural parishes were facing the prospect that the growth in population at 10 per cent per decade might soon lead to famine. In the period 1800–1851 that prospect was avoided by the achievement of a balance between land and people. This famine was avoided by changing land ownership and by introducing a new way of hiring labour.

The land was divided into medium- and large-sized estates and then split up into individual farms. By 1830, sub-tenants had disappeared and the typical holding was 200 acres for large farms employing six men. Once the land was divided in this way there was no scope for creating more tenants. The only exception to this pattern was in north-east Scotland. In Aberdeenshire, crofts formed the majority of holdings.

The hiring system led to labourers and ploughmen contracting themselves to a farmer for a period of six to twelve months. As the farmer had to provide board and wages he was unlikely to take on more labour than was necessary to do the job. When extra hands were needed, for instance at harvest, the farmer simply employed immigrant Irish labourers.

The hiring and land tenure systems which developed led to the use of less labour in the rural Lowlands, with the exception of the south-west and north-east. Displaced farm labourers headed for the nearest town in search of work and accommodation. By 1851, 15 per cent of the population of Peebles-shire had made its way to Edinburgh.

After 1840 the process of rural depopulation was accelerated in the Lowlands by the introduction of labour-saving technology, such as the self-binding reaper and the potato digger. In 1840 it took 22 man days to tend an acre of barley; by 1914 it was down to 12. This process was reinforced by the higher wages to be earned in urban areas. On moving to a town a former agricultural labourer might earn 50 per cent more in industrial work, although he was less well protected from the impact of economic depressions. Of equal importance in moving to the towns was the prospect of a more varied social life and an end to the isolation of living on the land. As a ploughman from Dumfries put it to the Royal Commission on Labour (1893–4) ‘the life of an agricultural labourer is altogether colourless ... his life throughout is sleep, eat and work; no time for enjoyment as other labourers

have; no half-holiday on Saturday ... no holiday as a right, only as a favour; we get from three to four a year.’

Towns provided higher wages, shorter hours, more leisure and freedom in the evenings and weekends away from the employer. Perhaps because of a combination of these factors, between 1861 and 1891 rural employment in the Lowlands fell by around a third in spite of rising wages. This pattern continued into the 20th century and by 1914 only 14 per cent of males were employed in agriculture.

## Migration and Scottish society

### The Highlands

The exodus from the Highlands to the southern Lowlands of Scotland has traditionally been seen as a result of the employment opportunities opening up in industry. However, recent research has shown that not all migration was permanent. Whether migration was permanent or temporary depended on the social and economic conditions in which the Highlander lived. Thus, migration from the south and east Highlands was higher than migration from the north-west Highlands and Islands in spite of the fact that the distance from growing Lowland towns was the same.

In the south and east Highlands there was a fall in the number of tenancies, which created a large pool of landless labourers dependent on wages. The growth of industries such as fishing in Argyllshire soaked up some of the surplus labour, as did the growth of small towns such as Campbeltown and Tarbert. Education also played its part in weakening the attachment to the land by raising expectations and improving skills. By 1826, 70 per cent of the population of Argyll could read, while only 30 per cent of the Hebridean population were literate. Thus, the peasant values of the Highlander in the south and east were broken by the growth of commercialism and the improvement in education, which removed the barrier to permanent migration to the south.

The north-west Highlands and Islands did not develop the same

spirit of commercialisation as did the south east and dependency on the land was intensified. It remained a peasant society. The population was sustained until the 1840s by the cultivation of the potato and by temporary migration to the Lowlands. Out of a population of 10,000 in Mull, 8000 were living on potatoes. However, from the 1850s, temporary migration allowed the peasants to buy grain and pay rentals on the crofts. It was estimated that in the 1850s a half to two-thirds of the income of the inhabitants of Skye came from agricultural work in the Lowlands. In the 1870s, the herring industry drew in migrants with as many as 5000 men and women arriving in the fishing ports of Caithness and Aberdeenshire during the catching season. By 1891, three out of four of the population depended directly or indirectly on fishing alone or on a combination of fishing and crofting.

Temporary employment, therefore, allowed the peasant to remain attached to the land. This lifestyle did not collapse until after the First World War. The Russian Revolution saw an end to the massive export trade in herring to eastern Europe. Mechanisation of the harvest in the Lowlands also saw the demand for migrant labour sharply decline. Between 1911 and 1939, the population of the Highlands fell more steeply than at any time in its history, despite the fact that the crofters had been assured security of tenure. The Hebrides, for instance, lost 28 per cent of its population in this period.

### Where in Scotland did the Highlanders settle?

Before the railways, the main form of transport was by sea. Migrants from Caithness, Orkney, Shetland and the north-east were channelled to the eastern Lowlands. Other Highlanders and the Hebrideans settled in the western Lowlands. This pattern generally maintained itself throughout the period 1830–1940. Highlanders tended to settle in and around Edinburgh, Glasgow and its satellite towns. As early as 1801 Highlanders constituted 29 per cent of the population of Greenock.

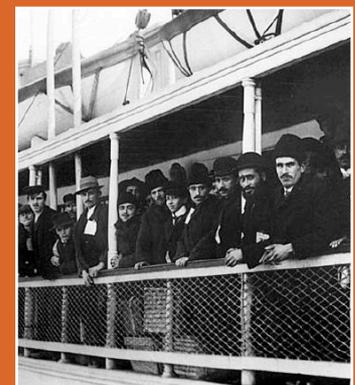
## Emigration and Scottish Society

### Emigration from Scotland

Emigration is the movement of people from one country to another. It is the result of push and pull factors. The push comes from poor economic conditions or political oppression at home and the pull effect is generated by the attracting powers of the other country, including the promise of higher wages, political freedom and economic opportunity. Not all emigration is voluntary. Sometimes whole populations are forced to flee their native lands through war or oppression. Normally, emigration is a result of individuals wishing to better themselves and their families.

In 19th-century Scotland, emigration was the result of both force and persuasion. Until about 1855, a number of the emigrants from the Highlands were actually forced to

leave the land because of evictions. In the Lowlands, the decision to move abroad was nearly always the outcome of the desire to improve one's living standards. Whatever the reason, Scotland lost between 10 and 47 per cent of the natural population increase every decade. During the period 1921–1930, those leaving Scotland actually exceeded the entire natural increase.



### ACTIVITY:

READ THE FOLLOWING PAGES AND MAKE A SET OF QUESTIONS WHICH, WHEN ANSWERED WILL PROVIDE GOOD NOTES ON THE KEY POINTS. SO, REMEMBER TO HAVE THE ANSWERS TOO!

## **Emigration and Scottish Society**

### **Leaving the Highlands**

The eviction of Highlanders from their homes reached a peak in the 1840s and early 1850s. The decision by the landlords to take this course of action was based on the fact that the Highland economy had collapsed, while at the same time the population was still rising. As income from kelp production and black cattle dried up, the landlord saw sheep as a more profitable alternative. The introduction of sheep meant the removal of people. The crofting population was already relying on a potato diet and when the crop failed in the late 1830s and again in the late 1840s, emigration seemed the only alternative to mass starvation.

The policy of the landlord was to clear the poorest Highlanders from the land and maintain those crofters who were capable of paying rent. The Dukes of Argyll and Sutherland and other large landowners financed emigration schemes. Offers of funding were linked to eviction, which left little choice to the crofter. However, the Emigration Act of 1851 made emigration more freely available to the poorest. The Highlands and Islands Emigration Society was set up to oversee the process of resettlement. Under the scheme, a landlord could secure a passage to Australia for a nominee at the cost of £1. Between 1846 and 1857 around 16,533 people of the poorest types, comprising of mainly young men, were assisted to emigrate. The greatest loss occurred in the Islands, particularly Skye, Mull,

the Long Island and the mainland parishes of the Inner Sound.

After 1855, mass evictions were rare and emigration became more a matter of choice than compulsion. Between 1855 and 1895 the decline in the Highland population was actually less than in the rural Lowlands and certainly much lower than in Ireland. The Highlands experienced a 9 per cent fall in population between 1851 and 1891, while Ireland in the same period faced a 28 per cent fall. The Crofters' Holding Act of 1886 gave the crofters security of tenure and this also slowed down the process of emigration.

However, in spite of the increase in the number of crofts the exodus from the Highlands continued. In 1831 the population of the Highlands reached a peak of 200,955, or 8.5 per cent of the total population of Scotland. In 1931 the comparable figures were 127,081 or 2.6 per cent.

### **Destinations abroad**

Although much of the decline was the result of permanent migration south, a substantial number left for the New World. Indeed, those who were removed from the land in the phase of evictions of the 1840s and 1850s generally refused to move to Lowland Scotland. They preferred to settle in Canada in places such as Ontario and Nova Scotia, where they could remain in touch with the land and maintain their style of life. In Nova Scotia in the first half of the 19th century, 59 per cent of UK settlers were Scots-born.

### **The Lowlands**

Keeping in touch with the land was not a consideration for the urban emigrant from the Scottish Lowlands. The decision to emigrate in this part of Scotland was purely voluntary. Indeed, emigration was seen by trades unions and other voluntary groups as a practical solution to unemployment and economic depression. Lowlanders were moved to leave their birthplace by a combination of low wages, poor housing conditions and unemployment. The high points in emigration statistics corresponded with years of severe economic depression. These occurred in the late 1840s and early 1850s, the mid-1880s, and the period 1906–13. Emigration was so heavy in the period 1871–1931 that it more than offset the increase in the population due to new births. In fact in the economic depression of the 1920s emigration exceeded the natural increase in population. This was brought to a halt in the 1930s as the world trade depression saw emigrants return home. Indeed, the numbers leaving Scotland in the 1930s were at their lowest for a century.

The rise in emigration from urban areas saw a shift in the pattern of overseas settlement and the social status of emigrants. In the early 19th century it was the poorer members of society who chose to migrate: from the Highlands it was landless peasants; from the Lowlands it was unemployed craftsmen, labourers and small farmers. The country of settlement tended to be Canada.

## **Emigration and Scottish Society**

In fact, in the period 1825–1835 over 70 per cent of emigrants from Scotland settled there.

By the 20th century things had changed substantially. The skilled worker was the highest number of those emigrating. Indeed, in 1912 and 1913, 47 per cent of adult male emigrants from Scotland described themselves as skilled, compared with 36 per cent of those from England and Wales. Only 29 per cent classed themselves as labourers. It seems also that, as the 19th century wore on and emigration became more of an urban phenomenon, social standing determined the country in which one settled. Unskilled labourers tended to opt for Canada and Australia, while skilled workers preferred South Africa and the USA. The middle classes strongly preferred South Africa.

Of course, many Scottish emigrants found a place nearer home, in England, particularly after the 1920s. In the period 1841–1931, around 749,000 Scots moved to other parts of the UK compared to over two million who emigrated abroad. It was during the economic depression of the inter-war years that there was a shift from emigration overseas to migration to other parts of the UK, mainly to England. By 1931, the number of Scots in England equalled those from Ireland, whereas 60 years earlier the Irish outnumbered the Scots by two to one.

However, for the best part of the period 1830–1939, the opportunities were seen as being greater abroad,

particularly in Australia. The outflow of people was made easier by the revolution in transport. The steamship did not dramatically alter the cost of passage from Scotland but it did reduce greatly the travelling time. In the 1850s, it took around six weeks to cross the Atlantic; in 1914 it took only a week. The reduction in travelling time allowed for temporary migration as well as permanent; something unthinkable in the days of sailing ships. Furthermore, if things did not work out in the New World then the price of a steamship ticket brought you back to your native land in a week. Emigration seemed less risky in the age of the steamship.

### **Emigration in the 20th century**

During the 1920s and 1930s the principal aim of the emigrants was to find work and wages and escape mass unemployment at home. This mostly affected the age group 16–29, skilled rather than unskilled workers and men rather than women.

Although most of the emigrants were able to make a better life for themselves and their families abroad, the impact on Scotland has been less favourable. Many of the most productive and talented Scots have left their birthplace to enrich, both economically and culturally, other countries at the expense of their own.

## Immigration and Scottish society

### Irish emigration to Scotland in the 19th and 20th centuries

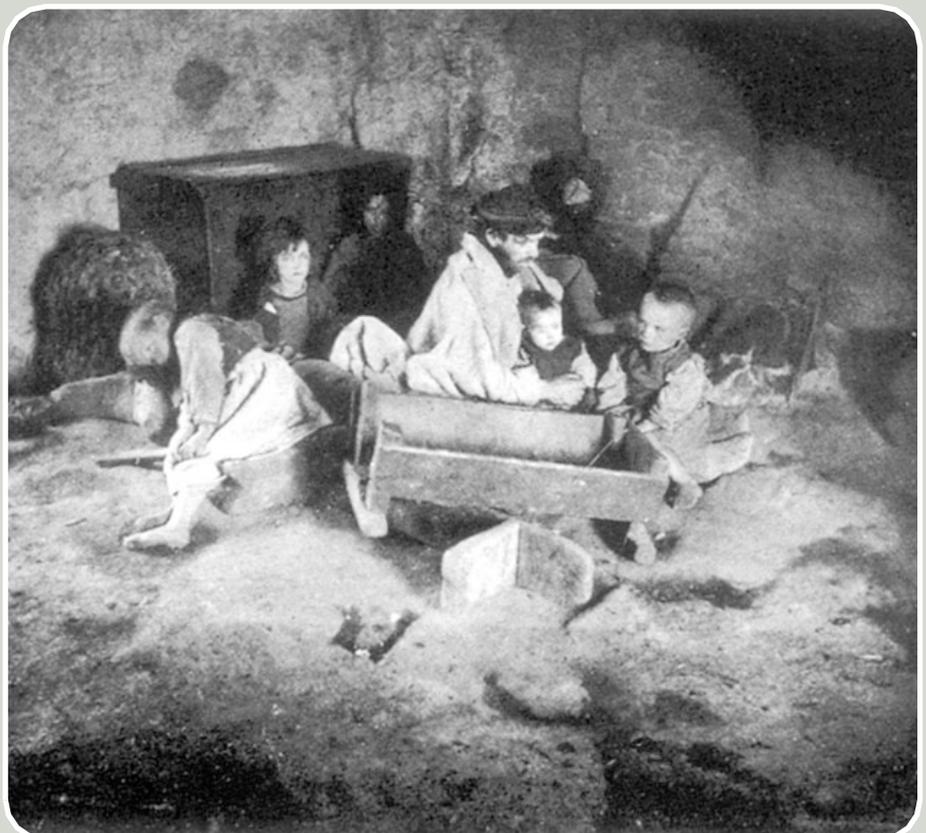
#### Early emigration

With fares from as little as 6d for a deck passage from Ireland to Greenock, emigration to Scotland was a regular feature of Irish life before 1840. Most of the emigration, however, was on a temporary basis, peaking during important times in the farming calendar, such as harvest. In the summer of 1841, 57,651 Irish, mainly male labourers, crossed to England and Scotland to work on the harvest. There was no attempt to form permanent settlements, although with the development of cotton weaving, the construction of railways and the general expansion of the economy, Irish roots were beginning to be laid in Scotland. Prior to the great famine of 1846–7, emigration from Ireland could best be

described as a trickle. After the famine it became a flood.

#### The impact of the Irish famine

According to the census, the Irish-born population of Scotland stood at 126,321 out of a total of 2,620,184 in 1841, or 4.8 per cent. Ten years later it stood at 207,367, or 7.2 per cent, out of a total of 2,888,742. This compared to 2.9 per cent for England and Wales. During 1848 the average weekly inflow of Irish into Glasgow was estimated at over 1000, and the figure for January to April of that year was put at 42,860. Between 1841 and 1851 the Irish population of Scotland increased by 90 per cent. The census figures, however, underestimate the total strength of the Irish community in Scotland. They record only those people who were Irish-born because the children of Irish immigrants born in Scotland were classified as Scottish.



#### Activity:

Read this, and the following pages, making summary diagrams (or notes) on each sub heading.

## **Immigration and Scottish Society**

### **Settlement of the Irish**

Because of their poverty and poor state of health, Irish immigrants tended to settle in or around their point of disembarkation which, in practical terms, meant the west coast of Scotland. The nearest counties to Ireland, Wigtownshire and Kirkcudbrightshire, had substantial Irish populations by 1841. The famine pushed the numbers up to 16.5 per cent of the population in Wigtown. Even Dumfries-shire saw its Irish-born population stand at 5.9 per cent in 1851. The Irish also made their way to the east coast, particularly to Dundee, where a large female Irish community established itself. Edinburgh had only a small Irish community of 6.5 per cent of the total population in 1851.

However, it was the industrial areas of the west of Scotland which saw the largest concentrations of Irish immigrants. Almost 29 per cent of all Irish migrants settled in Glasgow but the smaller industrial towns of the west also had substantial Irish communities. The population of Coatbridge in 1851 was 35.8 per cent Irish.

### **Occupational structure**

On the whole, the Irish settled wherever muscle and strength was in demand, and as such they found their way into coalmining, dock work and labouring of all kinds. It was estimated in 1851 somewhere between a half to three-quarters of all dock-labourers and two-thirds of miners were Irish. Many also found

their way into the less skilled jobs of handloom weaving and other textile work. Irish women, for instance, made up 44.3% of female textile workers in Greenock in 1851.

However, due to the operation of sectarianism, their lack of education and, in many cases, their language (which was Gaelic), the Irish were under-represented in the more highly paid skilled trades.

### **Religious divisions and tensions**

Their lowly occupational status and their willingness to work for less than the going rate did not endear the Irish to the Scottish working class. Their religion was also a factor that gave rise to discrimination from all sections of Scottish society. Since the Reformation, Scotland had been a Protestant country and Catholicism was largely frowned upon. The popery of the Irish was, therefore, detested by the Presbyterians of Scotland. Attacks on the Irish became commonplace in newspapers, pulpits and on the streets. As late as 1923 the Church of Scotland could still publish a pamphlet entitled 'The menace of the Irish race to our Scottish Nationality'. The Irish were seen as drunken, idle, uncivilised and undermining the moral fibre of Scottish society. They were also seen as carriers of disease. Typhus, for example, was known as 'Irish fever'. Although the accusations had some force, it had nothing to do with ethnicity and more to do with poverty. The incidence of fever among the Irish was due to their unsanitary housing. It was also because many of the immigrants who arrived fleeing the famine were so

weak that their resistance to disease was low. The Irish-born in Dundee constituted 20 per cent of all burials in 1848, whereas seven years earlier they had only constituted 5 per cent.

### **Irish communities**

In spite of the hostility of the host society and their poverty, the Irish Catholics showed a tremendous capacity to build sustainable local communities. One study of Dundee showed that in the early 1860s there were only two Catholic churches and three schools, one of which the Dundee Advertiser described as a 'cellar under the Chapel', serving a community of around 20,000. Within 10 years the number of churches and schools had doubled, all financed to a large degree out of the contributions of low-paid workers. The Catholic Church provided other services of a recreational and social kind. Indeed, there was little need for Catholics to go beyond the bounds of the Church since all their needs were catered for. Even the working class obsession with professional football was catered for by the setting up of Hibernian FC in Edinburgh and Celtic FC in Glasgow. The Irish Catholics had become a community within a community and this was strengthened by the degree of inter-marriage. In Greenock it was found that in 1851 80.6 per cent of Irish men and women had found marriage partners amongst their own numbers. Forty years later the numbers were still high at 72.4 per cent. Such a situation made it difficult for the Irish Catholic to assimilate into the mainstream of Scottish society.

### **Irish Protestant Emigration**

The same charge could not be levelled at the Protestant Irish. As Catholic Irish immigrants declined in number in the late 1870s and 1880s the Protestant Irish took up the slack. Most of these new immigrants came from the most Orange counties of the north, such as Armagh. There had been historic links of an economic and religious kind between the west of Scotland and Ulster. Even the Church of Scotland recognised that in their 1923 attack on the Catholic Irish '[no complaint can be made about] the presence of an Orange population in Scotland. They are of the same race as ourselves and of the same Faith, and are readily assimilated to the Scottish race'. Thus the Protestant Irish did not face the same degree of discrimination endured by the Catholic Irish.

### **Sectarian rivalry**

The arrival of Ulster Protestants with their Orange traditions increased the tempo of sectarian rivalries. The Catholic Irish had, of course, borne the brunt of attacks from all quarters of Scottish society since the 18th century but the assaults tended to be unsystematic and random. Even the arrival of the Irish in large numbers after 1846 only provoked occasional skirmishes between the rival communities at sensitive moments in the religious calendar, rather than full-scale conflict. As the Irish made few inroads into skilled employment and kept themselves very much to themselves, there was little for the native population to fear. Although certain parts of Glasgow and other towns became associated with Irish

Catholics, there was never the creation of 'ghettos' (which has been the case in Belfast and Derry). Residential mixing created a shared sense of grievance among slum dwellers, whether Catholic or Protestant, and this did much to reduce tensions. Moreover, there was little political danger from the Irish in the 19th century. Most Irish males did not qualify for the vote as they failed to put down roots long enough in any one constituency to satisfy residential qualifications. Disqualified in large numbers from voting until reform of the franchise in 1918, the Irish, with the encouragement of the Catholic hierarchy, directed their political energies towards Home Rule for Ireland. Those that could vote gave it to the Liberal Party as the only party which might deliver on the subject of Home Rule.

With the partition of Ireland in 1921 the Irish became more embroiled in the politics of their adopted country. They overwhelmingly supported the Labour Party and this allowed them access to mainstream political life in Scotland. As part of this concord the state provided for segregated religious schooling out of income from the rates, which led to numerous protests from Protestant churches about putting 'Rome on the rates'. In the 1930s, Protestant extremist groups, such as the Scottish Protestant League (SPL) in Glasgow and the Protestant Action Society (PAS) in Edinburgh, made significant short-lived political capital out of sectarian rivalries. In Glasgow, the SPL won 23 per cent of the total votes cast in the 1933 local elections, and similar impressive gains were

made in Edinburgh by the PAS a few years later.

Sectarian rivalries still exist in Scottish society, but on a much reduced scale. However, the assimilation of Irish immigrants into Scottish society has taken place without the level of violence found in other places, such as Liverpool, and this remains one of the major achievements of modern social history.

### **Experiences of immigrant and migrant groups in Scotland**

Although other immigrant groups in Scotland have been less visible and have had less impact than the Irish, they have enriched Scottish society on an economic and cultural level. Until the 1890s, the scale of overseas immigration was small, with only a few thousand resident migrants in Scotland. After 1891 it grew quite rapidly before slowing down in the early 1900s. By 1914, Scotland had nearly 25,000 European residents. Most came from southern and eastern Europe, with a quarter of the newcomers between 1891 and 1901 coming from Italy. However, the majority of the new arrivals came from eastern Europe, particularly Russia and Poland. Most were male, with a ratio of 173.6 males to every 100 females in 1911. They settled overwhelmingly in the west of Scotland, where their industrial skills were useful in finding work. Nearly half of the occupied males were in coalmining in 1911, with the next largest group 12 per cent in tailoring. Italians crowded into the restaurant and the wholesale and retail trades.

However, dwarfing the number of overseas immigrants were English migrants, who came north of the border looking for industrial and commercial opportunities. As one might expect, the experiences of these different groups varied greatly. Some found acceptance, while others had to struggle to establish themselves.

### English migrants

The most prominent migrant group has been the English, and yet this is the group about which we know the least. At each census until 1921 the English increased their numbers, growing from 1.5 per cent in 1841 to 4 per cent in 1921. Of course, in certain parts of Scotland the figure for English settlement could be much higher than the national total. There were more English-born residents than Irish-born in Edinburgh and this increased as the 19th century wore on. In 1881 there were 11,514 English-born residents and 7875 Irish-born. Forty years later the respective figures were 28,187 and 6382.

The attractiveness of Edinburgh for professionals no doubt accounted for the large numbers of English in the city, but the latter were also involved in the industrial development of Scotland. It was English know-how and skill which was behind the development of the Scottish cotton industry. Many of the early skilled workers and managers were of English origin. In more recent times the increasing trend to foreign ownership of industries in Scotland has seen more English firms establish branches north of the border. The

growth of government too has provided more civil service positions for English migrants. In spite of English involvement in the Scottish economy it remains a fact that we know more about the Lithuanians in Scotland than we do about our nearest neighbours.

### Jewish immigrants

Of the overseas immigrants, the Jewish community have had the highest profile in Scottish, if not the whole of Great Britain's, society. Although it was estimated that there were only 300 Jews in Glasgow in 1883, the immigrant population of Scotland increased substantially between 1881 and 1911. Most of these foreigners were Russian Jews fleeing poverty and pogroms in their native lands. In 1881, there were 225 Russians in Scotland, which constituted 3.5 per cent of the total foreign population of Scotland. By 1901 the Russian population was 6102, or 24.7 per cent of the total foreign population. In Glasgow, the rise was even more dramatic. The number of Russian Jews relative to other foreigners increased to 45.9 per cent from 19.1 per cent in 1881. The main area of settlement was the Gorbals in Glasgow. There were estimated to be 6500 Jews living in the Gorbals in 1901 and 18 years later there were 9000. The Gorbals was attractive because of its cheap accommodation, but once roots had been established and individuals began to prosper there was a movement towards Pollockshields.

Many of these immigrants were involved in the tailoring trade, but equally they were important in the

development of the cigarette industry in Glasgow. Hawking and peddling were also popular among Jews in Glasgow and Edinburgh, where 10 per cent were involved in this occupation. In industry, Jews had a reputation for both undercutting wages and for militancy. Such a combination of views laid the basis for scape-goating. Jews were seen as 'sweaters': masters employing labour for long hours in terrible conditions at low wages, but there is very little evidence to connect Glasgow Jews with the sweating system. Nor was there any evidence to connect them with diseases such as cholera, which in the late 19th century were said to have been exclusively connected with Jewish communities.

Anti-Jewish organisations failed to make any headway in Scotland. Trades unions were briefly involved in opposing immigration in the early 1890s, although this sentiment was aimed at all groups coming into Great Britain and not just the Jews. However, by 1895 the Glasgow Trades Council opposed an anti-immigration resolution at the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC).

The Aliens' Act of 1905 did much to halt the number of immigrants coming into Great Britain, and the whole immigrant question declined in importance. Free from being the subject of controversy the Jewish community in Scotland prospered and made a substantial contribution to Scottish society, particularly in the legal profession. There is little evidence today of anti-Semitism in Scottish society.

## Lithuanian immigrants

Lithuanian immigrants began entering Scotland in serious numbers in the early 1890s. Most were agricultural workers who had been pushed off the land by poverty. Indeed, the depression in agriculture saw one in four Lithuanians, around 650,000, leave their homeland for other parts in the period 1870–1914. Not all were economic immigrants; some fled Tsarist oppression. While most were bound for the USA, a number settled in the west of Scotland. They were persuaded by agents of the large iron and steel combines, such as Bairds and Dixons, to come to Scotland to dig coal in company-owned mines. As a result, a small Lithuanian community was established in the west of Scotland, particularly in Coatbridge where some 5000–6,000 immigrants congregated.

The newcomers were received in a hostile and suspicious manner by the local mining community. Indeed, the Lanarkshire Miners' Union offered to support any strikes against the Lithuanian presence in the area. Although the main reason for opposition by the miners was undercutting wages and safety measures, part of the problem lay also with their religion. The Lanarkshire coalfields had a history of sectarian rivalry, and the Catholicism of the Lithuanian and Polish incomers only added to the opposition from Protestant miners. Complaints about the undercutting of wages in which Lithuanian miners were working became the subject of STUC attention at its 1892 Congress in

Glasgow. There were also major discussions in the Glasgow Trades Council and controls on the entry of immigrant labour were demanded.

The local media took up the anti-immigrant protest. Like the Jews, the Lithuanians were accused of being 'most filthy in their habits of life' and a danger to the health of the local community. Drunkenness was also highlighted. In this respect the immigrants were no different to the local miners, but their appearance before the sheriff created more publicity because of their 'alien' status. Part of the problem with drink lay in the customs of the newcomers. Christenings generally lasted three days and weddings a week, therefore it was little wonder that a few of the guests ended up drunk and disorderly!

Once settled, the Lithuanian miners began to join with their fellow Scottish miners in fighting to improve conditions in the mining industry and as such were accepted into the Lanarkshire Miners' Union. They also won respect from locals for their community spirit. Very quickly, the Lithuanians had their own clergy, two newspapers, insurance societies, shops and other recreational groups.

The advent of the First World War brought about the collapse of the Lithuanian community in the west of Scotland. Seeing themselves as Russian, some 900 men refused to fight for Great Britain and as such departed for Archangel in 1917. Nevertheless, there was also a sizeable portion who did fight on the side of Great Britain. Those who left for Russia did not return and after the

hostilities the Great British authorities began to repatriate those who remained. Women and children were offered repatriation in lieu of poor relief and many accepted it rather than starve. Some 400 women and children left for Lithuania in 1920 and after this the community disintegrated. Those who were left were assimilated into Scottish life and only a few traces of this once vibrant community remained.

## Conclusion

The experience of immigrant groups in Scotland was little different to that in other countries. Discrimination and hostility gradually gave way to assimilation after a protracted struggle. Apart from the skirmishes between Irish Catholics and native Protestants the process was accomplished in a peaceful manner. Violence played little part in the immigrant experience in Scotland.

(Text from Learning and Teaching Scotland 2009).