

<b>Institution:</b> University of the Highlands and Islands
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 30
<b>Title of case study:</b> The Northern Highlands of Scotland and Emigration: Working with cultural heritage bodies to change public understanding of the region's past
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Staff at the UHI Centre for History are at the forefront of research on emigration and the northern Highlands of Scotland. This work has had considerable impact on the culture and society of the region through its development of public understanding of the significance of emigration to Highland history. Making good use of our geographical location in the region, the Centre's research has engaged the community through lectures, the internet, and by working with museums and other cultural bodies, transforming the way in which both local society and diasporic groups perceive their history and its culture. The impact of this research has been most clearly seen in the shaping of museum curatorial practice (at Timespan Museum, Helmsdale and Special Collections, University of Aberdeen) and in the creation of social networks that bring together academics and the public to foster new ways of thinking about the northern Highlands and emigration.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Since the inception of the Centre for History in 2005, its staff have been engaged in research on the northern Highlands and emigration. This research has focused on emigration to both North America and, prior to that, Europe, across a wide chronological sweep, from the sixteenth century to the present day. This geographical and temporal breadth has challenged both academic and public focus on the Highland Clearances and nineteenth-century emigration, leading to a richer understanding of the region's past.</p> <p>James Hunter's work has underpinned much of the Centre's research strategy on the northern Highlands and emigration, both in his time as Director (2005-10) and subsequently as Emeritus Professor of History. His recent research on the Scottish diaspora has a considerable northern Highland focus, in particular his book <i>Scottish Exodus: Travels Among a Worldwide Clan</i> (3.1). This book explores the history of one clan, the MacLeods, and how they became diasporic, migrating across the globe. Hunter's approach in this book is ground-breaking, given its focus on Highland emigration to both North America and Europe, and this geographical range has shaped the Centre's approach to research on the northern Highland diaspora.</p> <p>Highland emigration to Europe has formed the focus for much of the Centre's research since 2008. In his articles and book (3.3; 3.4; 3.5), David Worthington (employed at the Centre since 2008) explores the connections linking writers and expatriates from Scotland and the other early modern kingdoms of the British Isles with the two major dynastic conglomerates east of the Rhine, the Austrian Habsburg lands and Poland-Lithuania. This work makes clear the vibrant and sustained diasporic connections between the Highlands and central and eastern Europe that were forged through emigration, while Worthington's chapter on Highland migration to Poland-Lithuania (3.4) is the first academic work to look specifically at Highland emigration within early modern Europe.</p> <p>While shifting focus from Europe to North America, further research on the northern Highlands has emphasised the importance of emigration from the region in a later period. In her post at the Centre for History since 2009, Elizabeth Ritchie has researched social and economic conditions in the Highlands and emigration from the region to North America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, demonstrating the centrality of emigration to Highland history in this period (3.2).</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b></p> <p><b>3.1</b> James Hunter, <i>Scottish Exodus: Travels Among a Worldwide Clan</i> (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2005, 2007).</p> <p><b>3.2</b> Elizabeth Ritchie, "'A Palmful of Water for your Years': Babies, Religion and Gender Identity among Crofting Families, 1800-1850', in Jodi A. Campbell, Elizabeth Ewan and Heather Parker (eds), <i>The Shaping of Scottish Identities: Family, Nation, and the Worlds Beyond</i> (Guelph: Centre for Scottish Studies, 2011), pp. 59-78.</p> <p><b>3.3</b> David Worthington, <i>British and Irish Experiences and Impressions of Central Europe, 1560-1688</i> (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2012).</p> <p><b>3.4</b> David Worthington, "'Men of noe credit"? Scottish Highlanders in Poland-Lithuania, c.1500-</p>

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1800', in T.M. Devine and David Hesse eds., *Scotland and Poland: Historical Encounters, 1500-2010* (Edinburgh, 2011).

3.5 David Worthington, "All our dear countrymen"? British and Irish expatriates east of the Rhine as recorded in the 'Triennial Travels' of James Fraser of Kirkhill (1634-1709)', *Britain and the World*, 5(3) (2013).

#### Evidence of research quality

'A remarkable book', Dr Alexander Murdoch, University of Edinburgh

'Review of *Scottish Exodus: Travels Among a Worldwide Clan*', *Journal of British Studies*, 46:1 (2007), pp. 186-8.

'The book rests on a fresh and challenging methodology. It offers a rich range of individuals and texts, most of which are poorly known', Dr Thomas O'Connor, NUI Maynooth, Ireland

'Review of *British and Irish Experiences and Impressions of Central Europe, c. 1560-1688*', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 65:4 (2012), pp. 1331-2.

'Any thought that the Scots who made up this migrant community were drawn from equivalent urban groups in Scotland are tested in David Worthington's very interesting chapter on Scottish Highlanders in the Commonwealth', Professor Steve Murdoch, University of St Andrews

'Review of T. M. Devine and David Hesse (eds), *Scotland and Poland. Historical Encounters, 1500-2010*', *Scottish Historical Review*, 92:2 (2013), pp. 155-6.

#### **4. Details of the impact**

The Centre for History's research has demonstrated that emigration from the northern Highlands was far more geographically and temporally diverse than scholars have previously thought. This research stresses the importance of Europe, both as a destination for emigrants and somewhere from which immigrants came to the region, while also establishing a more complex interpretation of the role of the Clearances in Highland history. The key impacts of this research, as evidenced by curator and public testimony, have been:

- 1) To inform and change curatorial practice in the region's museums;
- 2) To inform and change public understanding of the role of emigration in the region's history.

#### **Curatorial Practice**

The Centre for History's research has had a significant influence on the curatorial practice of museums in the region. Growing out of the Centre's strategy for public engagement and its original research focus on the Highlands and Islands (see REF3a), staff at the Centre have worked with a number of cultural bodies in designing exhibitions, providing content and creating social networks, bringing together academics and the public across the UK and Europe. This approach has changed both the heritage sector's and the public's understanding of emigration from the northern Highlands.

The Centre's research on emigration from the region has found a wide public audience through its work with local museum and heritage bodies. Staff have collaborated with Timespan Heritage Centre in Helmsdale to develop a host of activities and projects to commemorate the 200-year anniversary of the start of the Sutherland clearances in 2013 and the emigration which followed, principally contributing content to an innovative iPhone app. Public talks and workshops held in Timespan have attracted good audiences, including those returning to the region from North America, such as the 45 people who attended Elizabeth Ritchie's talk on 'Why did the Clearances happen?' at Timespan in September 2011(5.2). The main feature of the project is a digital trail iPhone app, developed in conjunction with the company Bluemungus and funded jointly by Museums Galleries Scotland (£22,407) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (£45,900) (5.4). The app takes visitors on a tour of the cleared Strath of Kildonan and involves the stories of local people, reconstructions of pre-clearance houses, maps, documents and the reflections of those whose ancestors were cleared and subsequently emigrated. The app can be used as a tour guide for those who visit the Strath or accessed virtually, so people can explore the history of the region and learn about the Clearances from anywhere in the world and has been downloaded almost 1000 times. Along with new exhibitions and various talks, the app was launched in 2013 and formed the basis for a UHI fieldtrip jointly with students from the University of Aberdeen (5.5; 5.6). In particular, the app details the emigration of Kildonan tenants to the Red River settlement in Manitoba,

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Canada, emphasising the centrality of the migratory experience in the region's history, one of the key findings of the Centre's research, principally in the work of Hunter and Ritchie (3.1; 3.2). The Centre for History had a direct impact on curatorial practice at Timespan, through the membership of James Hunter and Elizabeth Ritchie on the original steering group committee at the museum, to direct collaboration with the museum staff over the content of the Kildonan trail and accompanying app (5.3). As Jacquie Aitken, archivist at Timespan, stated 'from 2011, Timespan was delighted to form a fruitful and lasting curatorial partnership with the UHI Centre for History... This role involved providing advice at all stages in the development of the app, considerable input into the historical content and a bench mark for maintaining high standards. This expert knowledge helped the steering group to focus on the important aspects of the history of the Clearances and condense it into a clear and concise narrative for the app' (5.3).

The impact of Worthington's research about northern Highlanders in early modern central Europe on curatorial practice has been showcased in a recent exhibition organised by the Special Collections department at the University of Aberdeen ('Wanderlust: travel journals and explorers' notes' exhibition, The Gallery, The Sir Duncan Rice Library, 27 April to 7 September 2013) (5.10). Drawing on Worthington's recent article in *Britain and the World*, this exhibition presented travel journals from the Special Collections, including the papers of James Fraser. As Dr James Foster, Fulbright Scholar and visitor to the 'Wanderlust' exhibition, wrote: 'I found the piece that you wrote [3.6] very useful in helping me to understand more about the life of James Fraser and the context in which he operated' (5.3). In addition, Worthington has presented public talks on the Fraser memoirs to the Saltire Society and the Highland Archaeology Festival 2012.

**Public Understanding**

The Centre for History's research has also had impact on public understanding of the role of emigration in the region's past. The testimony below demonstrates how the Centre's commitment to disseminating its research to a public audience has then achieved this impact. James Hunter's research on the diasporic character of the MacLeod clan has been communicated to a wide public audience in the region and beyond. His book, *Scottish Exodus* has sold many thousands of copies and he has given public talks on this subject to large audiences at a number of significant events. Moreover, Professor Hunter was a key part of the Scotland's 'Global Impact' conference (October 2009), a major international event which attracted a wide-ranging public audience from across the Scottish diaspora. Elizabeth Ritchie's research on the region has been disseminated widely through digital media and public talks. Through her membership of the board of the award-winning Dornoch History Links Museum, Ritchie uses her blog connected with the museum (<http://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/>) to encourage research into the region and to engage with the local community, stressing in particular, the connections with the wider world forged through emigration. Ritchie has given public talks on the Highlands and emigration to the following bodies: Tarbet Ness Heritage Centre, 2010; Timespan, Helmsdale, 2011; Dornoch Heritage Society, 2011; U3A, Nairn, 2012; Highland Family History Society, Inverness, 2013; Helmsdale 2013; U3A, Inverness, 2013. Moreover, the research that was used for Timespan's iPhone app has shaped public understanding. For example, positive public feedback stated that 'This is a fantastic app. Crammed full of info about the clearances... Would like to see it in book form for iPad too' (5.3).

Historians at the Centre have also been instrumental in using insights from research on early modern migration from the Highlands to central Europe in order to change public perceptions of both historical and more recent migration to and from the region. In his research on this theme, David Worthington has developed numerous connections with community groups, especially in Poland and Scotland. Developing from his programme of public engagement, Worthington is now involved in a number of initiatives in which the Polish community in Scotland contributes to historical understanding about emigration to the region. He engaged these groups with his research through a number of activities including: a public lecture at the Institute of Cultural Studies of the University of Wrocław, two public lectures at UHI Executive Office, one in English, the other in Polish (5.7); an interview on the BBC Highland website; an interview for the *Inverness Courier*; a radio interview for BBC Highland; a series of talks to local history societies (in Portree, Dornoch, Inverness, Cromarty, Dingwall and Nairn); a public lecture in Inverness as part of 'Polish Week'

celebrations; a podcast for the *Heritage North* website; and the authoring of several newspaper articles in English and Polish. From these public engagement activities arose the opportunity to become involved in a number of Scots-Polish community groups, through which Worthington's research has influenced public understanding of the region's past. During 2011-12, he was a member of the steering group for an oral history project assessing Polish veterans of World War Two and their families in the eastern Highlands. In addition, Worthington created and administers a Facebook site on Scottish-Polish historical links along with colleagues at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland). This has brought together a range of public and academic users interested in both historical and contemporary connections between Scotland and Poland and how emigration has shaped both countries (5.8). This Facebook site has been the direct inspiration for the forthcoming Polish-Scottish Heritage Trail Project (which has received £50,700 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and includes Worthington on its Advisory Board), once again demonstrating the capacity of Centre staff to shape curatorial policy and practice (5.9). A key feature of the Polish-Scottish Heritage Trail website will be an interactive map on 'The Highlands and Poland' derived from Worthington's research. The impact of the Scottish-Polish historical links website has also been demonstrated by the extensive testimony from leading members of the Polish community in Scotland, indicating how the public have engaged with and helped shape the research process. For example, Leszek Wiecech, former Consul General of Poland in Edinburgh, wrote that the website 'is extremely valuable in the context of Polish-Scottish studies and preservation of the role the Scottish community have played in the development of Poland and how Poles – not just during and after WWII – have contributed to the development of Scotland. I hope it will be continued – it is even more important now, when so many Poles have moved to the U.K. Knowledge of our centuries-old relationship will definitely improve mutual understanding. Your page also helps in developing a sense of belonging to the Scottish community among some descendants of Scots in Poland' (5.3)

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 'New App will bring Clearances site alive', *Northern Times*, 13 October 2011

<http://www.northern-times.co.uk/News/Dunno-13102011.htm>

5.2 'Why did the Clearances happen?', *Timespan*, 17 September 2011

<http://timespan.org.uk/why-did-the-clearances-happen/>

5.3 Testimony from museum curators and public users of the research

- Project Manager, Archive Office, *Timespan*, Helmsdale, Email to the CfH, 11 & 29 October 2013
- Former Consul General of Poland in Edinburgh, 1995-1999, Email to CfH, March 2013
- Fulbright Scholar, Email to CfH, 30 April 2013
- Member of the public (visitor), 8 September 2012

5.4 Bluemungus, 'Timespan: Museum Without Walls App (Scotland's Clearances Story)', May 2012, <http://www.bluemungus.com/projects/timespan-museum-without-walls/>

5.5 'Launch of Scotland's Clearances Trail App', 19 May 2012

<http://timespan.org.uk/launch-of-scotlands-clearances-trail-app/>

5.6 UHI and University of Aberdeen Field Trip

<http://historylinksdornoch.wordpress.com/2013/01/29/clearances-fieldtrip-in-kildonan/>

5.7 'Academic studies Poland's Scots', BBC News website, 14 July 2008

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/highlands\\_and\\_islands/7501969.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/highlands_and_islands/7501969.stm)

5.8 Scottish-Polish historical links / Związki historyczne Polski i Szkocji Facebook group

<https://www.facebook.com/ScotlandPoland>

5.9 Polish-Scottish Heritage Trail Facebook group

<https://www.facebook.com/polishscottishheritage>

5.10 'A Kings College graduate abroad', University of Aberdeen Library, Special Collections and Museums, May 2013, <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/news-events/events/2812/>