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**Scottish Immigration to New Zealand from 1840 to 1950 – An Introduction with Preliminary Findings**

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**Abstract**

Census estimates suggest that the Scots made up approximately 20 per cent of migrants to New Zealand between 1840 and 1950, and Scottish influences are pervasive throughout the country; yet the Scots remain one of the least studied of New Zealand's major ethnic groups. This paper provides a brief outline of the aims, methodology and hypotheses of a thesis in progress as part of Dr Brad Patterson's Marsden Funded research project that seeks to remedy this gap. The paper goes on to discuss some preliminary findings from the database under construction for that thesis.

The daughter of Alexander Fraser and Elizabeth MacDonald, Marjory Fraser was born in 1803 in Knockie, Inverness. At age 18 she married Duncan Fraser at Fort Augustus, Inverness. Five children were born to the couple before they moved to Corran, Argyle, where a further five children were born. Marjory arrived in Wellington on the *Blenheim* in December 1840 with her husband, sister Jane, and 10 children – one of whom was born in the Bay on Biscay on board the *Blenheim*. [1] She and her husband initially lived in Wellington, eventually settling permanently at Parewanui in the Rangitikei where they farmed until the end of their lives. Altogether, they produced 15 children, 10 of whom lived past the age of 30. [2]

Marjory is just one among approximately 6500 individuals whose life histories comprise a statistical database currently under construction based upon a Register of Scottish Immigrants to New Zealand arriving before 1921 created by the New Zealand Society of Genealogists Scottish Interest Group. Information in this register has generally been supplied by descendants of the Scottish immigrants. The database will provide the statistical foundation upon which my masters thesis will rest.

The thesis is part of a wider and much larger project being undertaken by Dr Brad Patterson's Marsden-funded research team on the patterns and impacts of Scottish immigration to New Zealand to 1950. The role of the thesis is to present a demographic profile of migrant trends from 1840 to 1950, thereby providing the statistical underpinning for further scholarly investigations of Scottish migrants. It will assist in providing accurate answers to such fundamental questions as 'who left?', 'when?', 'from where?', 'in what numbers?', 'where did they settle?' and 'who with?'

Previous researchers into British migration to New Zealand have tended to concentrate on shipping lists, thereafter linking this information with material from such sources as birth and baptismal records, marriage certificates and censuses. In this way individuals were tracked through their lives.[3] As the foundation of the database under construction is the NZSG Scottish Interest Group's Register, it is based upon a ready made list of over 6500 individuals in which the linkages have been made by those who know them best – their descendants. This is a considerable advantage, as it is always difficult when attempting to link information in order to tell someone's life story, and to know for certain which Donald MacDonald one is looking at. Although there are inherent problems with genealogical material, the collected records are, nonetheless, a most valuable source.

In addition to providing a wealth of information in one place, data-basing this register also allows assessment of the value of genealogical material in historical research. Too often academic historians disregard genealogists as a source of information, but in many cases family historians hold vital information that is not available in official sources. Diaries, family bibles, letters, oral tradition and other family records are often the sources cited on the registration forms, and frequently the information they provide is either impossible to find or nearly impossible to link to the correct migrant by using official documents alone. However, a reliance on such sources by descendants can also be the downfall of the register entries, as much as their primary strength. Often registration forms are incomplete and information as to exactly when and where an ancestor left Scotland or arrived in New Zealand is not recorded. Thus, while there are approximately 6500 migrants in the database, when it comes to analysing the data it will be necessary to conduct further sampling procedures.

Another drawback to this Register as a source of information is the fact that personal documents and family records and traditions are not always as reliable as believed. Although family tradition may have it that great uncle Dugald was a clerk in Lanarkshire prior to embarkation, it may well be that he was a farm hand from somewhere else altogether. It was not unheard of for people to reinvent their pasts when embarking on a new life in a new country. One exemplary case is that of 'Grandpa' MacFarlane. Orphaned in England at age eight, George Telfar moved to Scotland to live with his unmarried Aunt. Upon leaving Scotland for New Zealand at age 18 he changed his name to Jock MacFarlane, presumably in order to seem more Scottish. It was only many years later, and after his death, that his wife revealed to their children and grandchildren that he actually had no immediate Scottish ancestry. [4] Although it must be accepted that such mistakes can slip through in family as well as public records, it must be assumed that for the most part the traditions passed down have at least some foundation in fact and as such genealogical material can be a valuable source.

Jock MacFarlane is also an excellent example of why it has been necessary to limit the statistical analysis of Scots migrants to Scottishborn migrants. This limits the people 'counted' in order to see patterns in the migration flow tidily and prevents the numbers from becoming unwieldy and unrepresentative. Yet such people cannot be excluded from the research altogether, as perception plays an important role in communities and such people as Jock MacFarlane, or people who were born into Scottish families en route to New Zealand, almost certainly considered themselves Scottish if or when the question of community or ethnicity ever came up. To individuals and families a child born to Scottish parents two weeks before departure to New Zealand is no more 'Scottish' than a child born two weeks into the voyage. Therefore although they can play no part in the numerical analysis their experiences will be considered in my thesis.

Testing the noted hypothesis, and testing the validity of the genealogical material requires comparison with other sources. The most useful points of comparison currently available are three Scottish subsets of the raw data collected for the Ministry of Culture and Heritage's 'Peopling of New Zealand' project. This data was collected from post 1876 death certificates – New Zealand death certificates prior to 1876 did not include such details as place of birth, how long a person had been in New Zealand, parents' details, marriage information or the number of children a person had produced at the time of their death. The data naturally includes a greater number of migrants from the late 19th century and early 20th century than from earlier years of migration to New Zealand. Many of the earliest immigrants had passed away before 1876. One requirement placed upon the 'Peopling of New Zealand' collection of data from the death certificates was that all names be left out so that each entry is, unfortunately, anonymous. As such they can not be linked with any other sources of information and will necessarily have to stand alone and be used only as a point of comparison. Another set of data that affords comparisons is that compiled by Rosalind McClean for her 1990 thesis on Scots migrants to New Zealand between 1840 and 1880. [5] This data was collected from a variety of Scottish records, including census enumerators' books, shipping lists, church records and private documents.

The available sets of comparative data leave the period from 1880 to 1950 relatively uncovered. In order to compensate for the deficiency somewhat, a sample of shipping lists for some of this period

will be undertaken. As the 1920s was a decade of peak migration to New Zealand, this decade, at least, will be sampled. Ultimately all of these datasets and analyses will hang upon a framework of official statistics. Should time and funding permit, it is hoped that some research will be undertaken in Scotland. Gaps left by the data available in New Zealand will be further filled, and the stories of interesting individuals or parishes will be further 'fleshed out'. Although this is a demographic study of migrant flows, it should not be forgotten that the migrants who created these flows were individuals with their own histories to tell.

Restricting the definition of 'the Scots' to those who are born in Scotland, at this early stage in the research only one of the above hypothesis is easily tested and may be discussed with any confidence: that the majority of Scottish migrants were from the Lowlands.

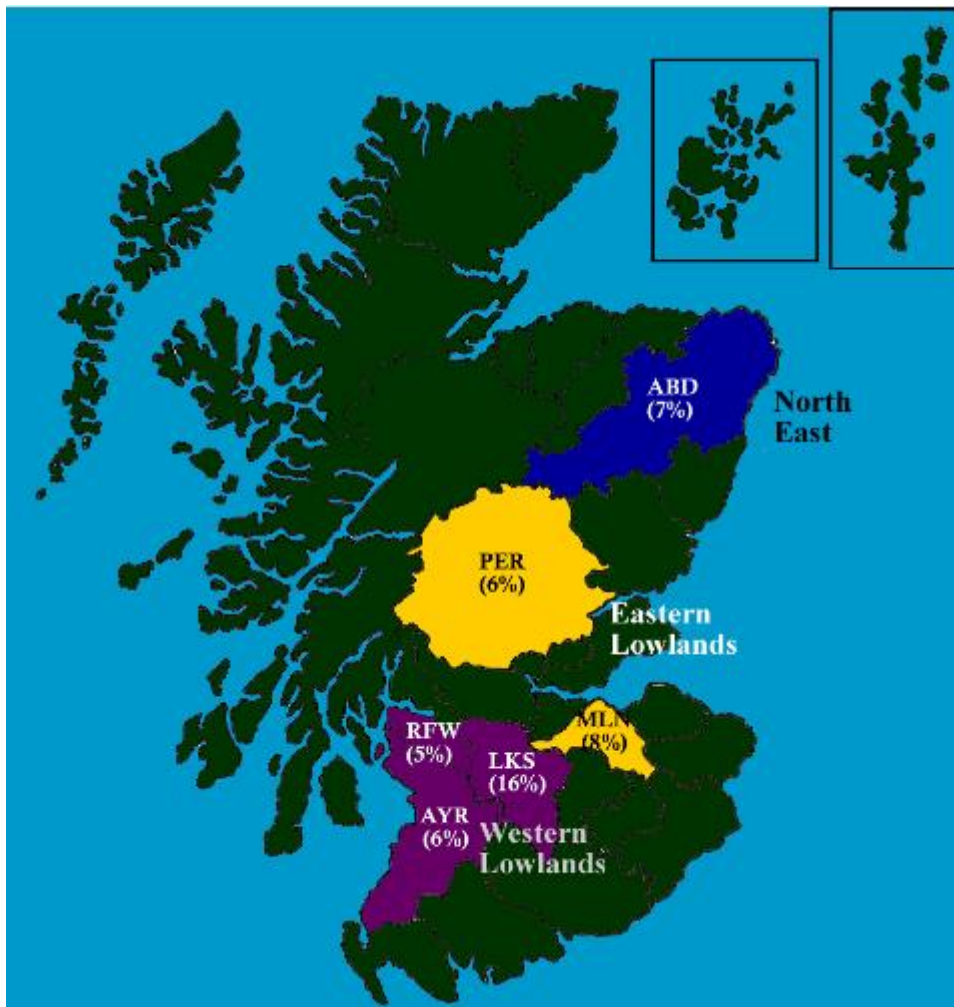
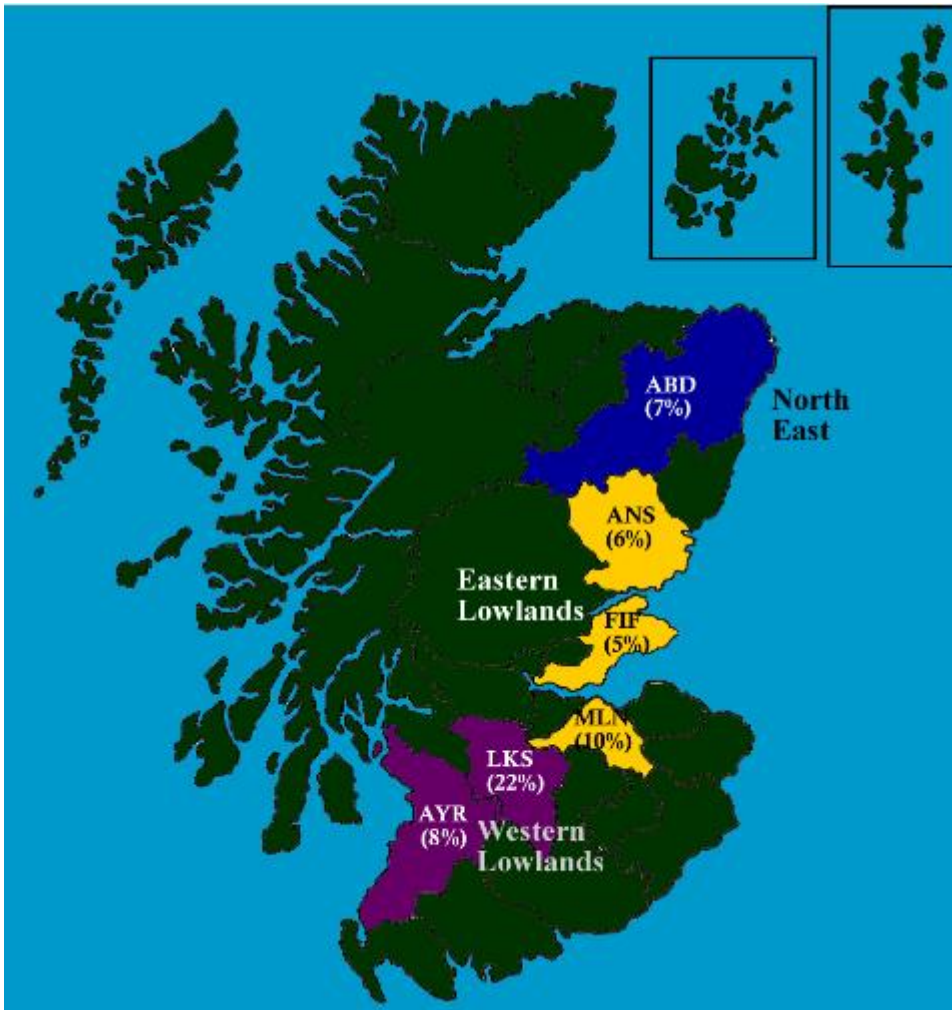


Figure 1, based on the NZSG register data, highlights the top six counties in which Scottish-born migrants who arrived in New Zealand between 1840 and 1920 were born. [6] These six counties alone supplied 48% of Scottish migrants to New Zealand over this period, leaving the remaining 26 counties of Scotland to make up just over half of total migrants. [7] Comparing the percentage of migrants from the Lowlands to those from the Highlands – here classifying those regions of the North East and the Far North under the 'Highland' heading – it becomes very clear that over this period the majority of migrants were indeed from the Lowlands rather than from the Highlands. [8] 71% of migrants in the register have 'Lowland' counties listed as their place of birth. [9]



Comparing the NZSG data to the 'Peopling of New Zealand' data for the same period (Figure 2) indicates a very similar outcome. With Perthshire being switched for Angus, and Renfrewshire for Fife, the top six counties of origin alone represent an extraordinary 58% of total migrants. [10] Again the Highland/Lowland divide is clear, 71% of all migrants from Scotland to New Zealand having been born in the Lowlands. [11]

There is, however, one factor that complicates this otherwise clear finding. In the early nineteenth century Scotland experienced a period of internal migration that saw a massive drift of Highlanders move permanently into the Lowlands as Scotland urbanised. It is therefore likely that many of the migrants to New Zealand born in the Lowlands had parents or grandparents who were born in the Highlands. Attempting to trace back through the genealogies of every Scottish migrant to New Zealand is obviously beyond the scope of this research, although the genealogical data, unlike other data-sets, does shed some light on the issue. This raises the tricky question of just how Lowland migrants saw themselves in terms of their personal origins, sense of history and identity.

Examining the origins of New Zealand's Scottish migrants by decade, rather than looking at the period 1840-1920 as a whole, presents some interesting divergences to the pattern described above. Mostly this is due to the small numbers of people in the sample for a given decade due to that being a decade of low migration volume – for example the 1890s which represents just over 1% of all Scots migrants in this period. [12] Because a smaller number of people came during this decade, counties from which large family groups migrating together tend to dominate the picture in terms of percentages for the 1890s. For example, seven of the migrants who arrived in this decade, and were born in Aberdeen, were from one family; another five migrants constituted all of another family. Highland county families were more likely than their Lowland counterparts to migrate together. As such in the 1890s the Highlands and the North East dominate the 'top six' counties of origin and the Highland/Lowland split becomes 50/50.

One interesting conundrum that appears when examining the data by decade is the massive and very sudden increase both in numbers and proportions of Shetlanders migrating to New Zealand in the 1870s. While the percentage of migrants from Shetland sits on 1-2% for every other decade between 1840 and 1920, in the 1870s 6% of the NZSG migrants are recorded as having been born there. Comparing this with the 'Peopling of New Zealand' data produces a parallel and even more striking result. Whereas Shetlanders represent between 3-6% of all migrants in the 'Peopling of New Zealand' sample in every other decade, they represent a full 10% of all migrants in the 1870s. This comparison raises two important questions. Firstly, why did more Shetlanders arrive in NZ in the 1870s than in any other decade? This question requires further research on my part. Secondly, why are there more Shetlanders proportionately in the 'Peopling of New Zealand' sample than in the NZSG sample? The answer to this is probably methodological, depending on the criteria for selection of migrants in the two samples. The NZSG data-set is based on descendants of Scottish migrants supplying the information – in short, a 'self-selected sample' – while the 'Peopling of New Zealand' data-set is based on a random selection of death certificates. Where the Ministry of Culture and Heritage 'Peopling of New Zealand' researchers have included all Shetland-born migrants as Scottish born migrants, not all descendants of Shetlanders consider the Shetland Islands to be culturally Scottish. There is a tendency today for Shetland Islanders, and for the descendants of Shetland Island immigrants, to deny their cultural ties to Scotland. Obviously, people who hold this view are not likely to list their ancestors in a register of immigrants of Scottish birth. This is another example of why methodological issues must be constantly taken into account when analysing the results of the data-sets. Although, understandably, the proportion of Shetlanders is constantly higher in the 'Peopling of New Zealand' data-set than in the NZSG set, both data-sets show a comparable level of increase among the Shetland Island community arriving in New Zealand in the 1870s, a pattern that will be further explored in the thesis.

Although it is still early days for this research, it has become very clear that comparing different sets of data is vital to the work. One cannot know whether anomalies are due to the actual pattern of migration or to biases in the data itself without such comparison.

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[1] One child having died in Corran.

[2] Contributed by Ian Clapham, Feilding, to the 'Register of New Zealand immigrants of Scottish birth arriving before 1 January, 1921' compiled by the Scottish Interest Group of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists. Register Number 1093, Database Reference Number 01917.

[3] See, for example, Rosalind McClean, 'Scottish Emigrants to New Zealand, 1840-1880: Motives, means and background', University of Edinburgh, 1990; Charlotte Macdonald, 'Single women as immigrant settlers in New Zealand, 1853-1871', University of Auckland, 1986.

[4] Craig MacFarlane, Personal correspondence, June-November 2006.

[5] Rosalind McClean, 'Scottish Emigrants to New Zealand, 1840-1880: Motives, means and background', University of Edinburgh, 1990

[6] Percentages given equal the percentage of all migrants in the register who are listed as having been born in that county.

[7] Lanarkshire, 16%; Mid Lothian, 8%; Aberdeen, 7%; Perthshire, 6%; Ayrshire, 6%; Renfrewshire, 5%.

[8] Where 'Highland' is taken to be comprised of the Far North (Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands and Caithness); North East (Nairnshire, Moray, Banff, Aberdeen and Kincardineshire); and Highlands (Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland, Inverness, Argyll and Bute – including Arran) and 'Lowland' as comprised of Eastern Lowlands (Angus, Perthshire, Fife, Kinrosshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Stirlingshire, West Lothian, Mid Lothian and East Lothian);

Western Lowlands (Renfrewshire, Lanarkshire and Ayrshire); and Borders (Berwickshire, Peebles, Selkirkshire, Roxburgh, Dumfries, Kirkcudbright and Wigton).

[9] Western Lowlands, 29%; Eastern Lowlands, 33%; Borders, 9%; Far North, 5%; North East, 11%; Highlands 13%.

[10] Lanarkshire, 22%; Mid Lothian, 10%; Aberdeen, 7%; Ayrshire, 8%; Angus, 6%; Fife, 5%.

[11] Western Lowlands, 33%; Eastern Lowlands, 31%; Borders, 7%; Far North, 7%; North East, 10%; Highlands 12%.

[12] 93 of 6606 migrants in the NZSG sample arriving in New Zealand in the 1890's (1.4%). 98 of 3759 migrants in the PNZ 'combined' sample arrived in this decade (2.6%)

**References:**

McClellan, Rosalind. 1990. 'Scottish Emigrants to New Zealand, 1840-1880: Motives, means and background', PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh

Macdonald, Charlotte. 1986. 'Single women as immigrant settlers in New Zealand, 1853-1871', PhD Thesis, University of Auckland.

Register of New Zealand immigrants of Scottish birth arriving before 1 January, 1921' compiled by the Scottish Interest Group of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists.