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DAVID STEVENSON



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DEPOPULATION BY CLEARANCES AND NON-ENFORCED EMIGRATION IN THE NORTH EAST HIGHLANDS

ADAM WATSON and ELIZABETH ALLAN

During the Highland clearances, many people were evicted from their homes by landowners and their agents, mainly to make way for more profitable sheep farming.¹ The best documented clearances occurred in Sutherland, Ross-shire and the Hebrides between 1800 and 1855. The Highland clearances are still widely discussed internationally, but it is not generally realised that clearances also took place in the north east Highlands, mostly to make way for deer forest rather than sheep walk. The deliberately cleared glens there are still empty of people today, but so are other glens where no clearances took place. Non-enforced emigration was the main cause of depopulation in the area. This paper documents some information on these matters in upper Deeside and nearby (see Figure 1).

The main information came from unpublished records and maps in estate offices, in the Scottish Record Office at Edinburgh and in other archive collections, supplemented by published notes in books, newspapers and government papers, and interviews with local people. Most of our information was from upper Deeside, having been gathered in the course of an intensive study of place names there.² Our sources on clearances in other parts of the north east Highlands are therefore fewer, but this does not mean that fewer clearances occurred there.

The term 'the clearances' is often emotive, and rational discussion is difficult because the term is understood differently by different people. In this paper, a clearance is defined as an enforced simultaneous eviction of all families living in a given area such as an entire glen. A series of individual evictions carried out at different times could empty an area of people eventually, but we have come across no evidence of this in upper Deeside or nearby. Areas could also become empty by net, non-enforced emigration over many years, with or without pressure from landowners to leave, but it would be confusing to refer to this as a clearance.

The legal background. The law in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries gave many farming tenants no continuity of tenure. In his comments on this manuscript, James Hunter noted that many tenants generally, and all smaller tenants in much of the Highlands, had no leases: their occupancy could be ended legally at any term day. Many Highland crofters refused written leases in the early 1880s, as they would thus be giving up their traditional right to work the land they lived on, and so the security of tenure to which they felt they were entitled.³ If tenants in past centuries refused to leave, they were in breach of the law.

The Glen Lui clearances. An early clearance occurred on the lands of the earl of Mar, in Glen Lui. Farquharson's map (1703)⁴ showed four farms on the east side of the glen, and current inspection of the ground reveals that three of these appear to have had more than one dwelling each. After the failure of the 1715 Jacobite rising which the earl started at Braemar, his lands were forfeited. His brother Lord

Grange, a Hanoverian, took over the lands and then, as Michie wrote, 'proceeded to dispose of them to the highest bidder' and ordered a clearance of Glen Lui 'to enhance the value of the property to a purchaser'.⁵ Grange's letter of 15 September 1726 to James Farquharson of Balmoral stated,

... we desire you to ... eject those people after their harvest is over. You may call for ... and such other discreet men as you see proper to assist in the ejection; and ... the more you have along with you there will be the less opposition, these people perceiving it to be vain for them to resist. ... As I also wrote before, regard not at that time impertinenceys so as to be provoked to do any thing but what belongs to the Ejection, only you may observe and notice such Impertinenceys, if any be offered, and since you are to have people with you, there will be no want of proof, and — punish that Impertinency afterwards in fit season. ... It will be in vain for James Mcenzie to pretend that he does not countenance them: they are there as his Tenants, and surely none of them can be so stupid as to imagine they may continue there as our Tennants spite of our Teeth.⁶

Seton Gordon commented

The day of the evictions must have been a sad one for Glen Lui, the old people mourning and lamenting as they were herded like cattle from the glen which was associated with all the joys and all the sorrows of their simple lives.⁷

The Catholic Register of births at Braemar shows for Glen Lui many births from 1704 up to 1726 inclusive, next a gap between 1727 and 1731 inclusive, and then many births from 1732 up to December 1756 (the book ended in 1757).⁸ This suggests that the clearance ordered by Lord Grange was carried out in late 1726, but that the new owner permitted a re-population of Glen Lui about 1732, which would have increased his funds from rent payments. A document of 14 March 1732 confirmed that Patrick Farquharson of Inverey bought the Forest of Mar from Lord Grange in that year.⁹

Glen Lui was again cleared of people at Whitsunday 1776. This was a more benign clearance, involving an agreement between the earl of Fife and John McKenzie of Glen Lui, and payments of money by the earl, as follows:

At Marr Lodge 31 August 1775 It is agreed betwixt The Earl of Fife and John McKinzie in Glenluie That the said John McKinzie is to flit and remove himself and family from his possessions in Glenluie ... and that at Whitsunday first The said John McKinzie getting an Allowance and payment from the Earl of Thirty pounds Scots as ... for his Houses in Glenluie and the said Earl promises to give possession of and access to that part in Allanquoich possessed by James Robertson and John McNab.¹⁰

In his journal covering 1783 to 1792 the earl of Fife¹¹ wrote of deer 'above the houses' in Glen Lui, but did not mention people. This is consistent with Scrope's (1839) comment that Glen Lui 'was cleared of sheep and cattle etc, and turned into a forest upwards of sixty years ago'¹² (i.e. the late 1770s). Luibeg

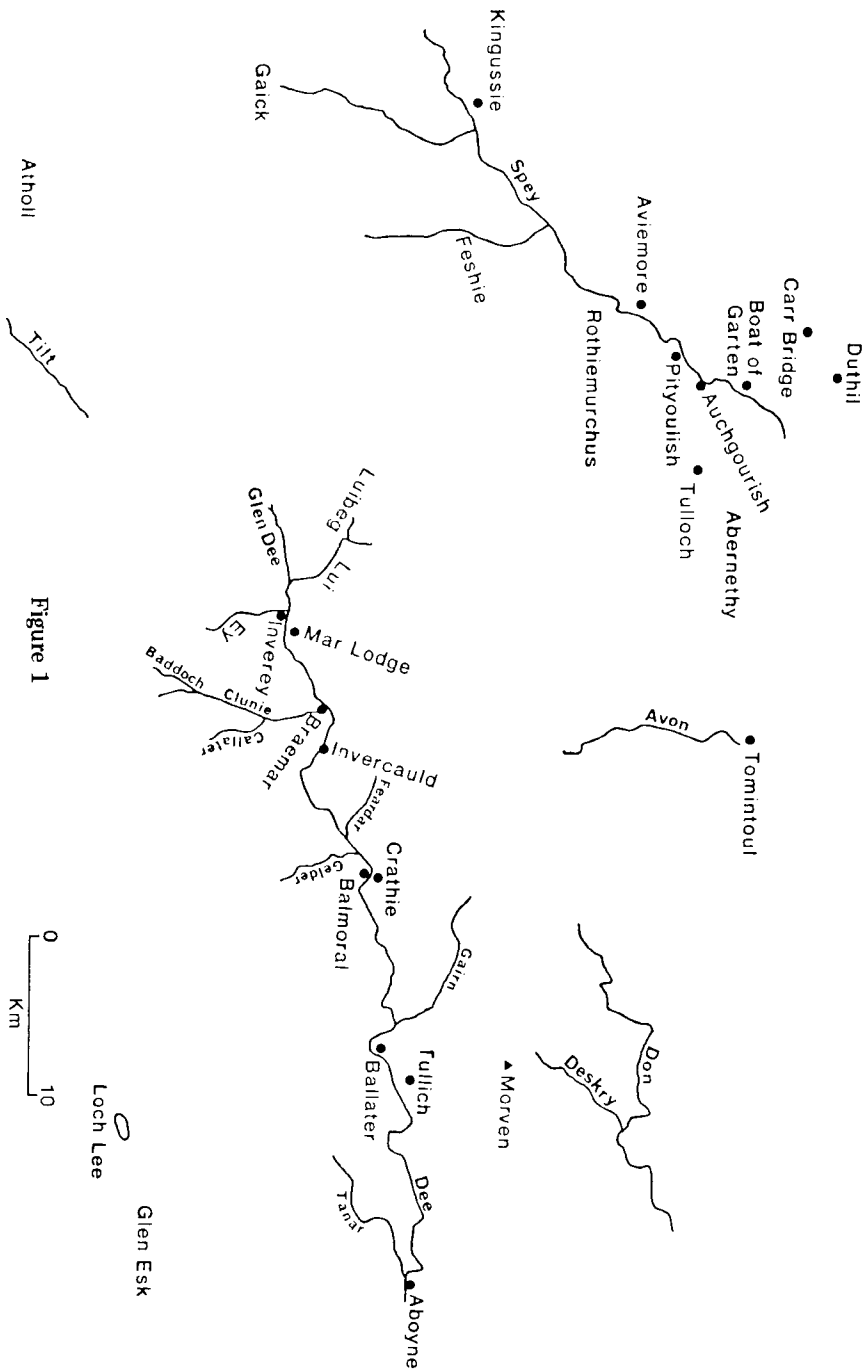


Figure 1

was 'reserved for deer' in 1763,¹³ but probably this meant merely an end to summer use of Luibeg by people and their beasts at shielings. Glen Luibeg stands above Glen Lui, and current inspection of the ground as well as local tradition and the earl's journal indicate that there were no farms there.

When Cordiner visited 'Lui beg' in 1776, he wrote 'The ruins of several stone buildings shew that it had once been inhabited: but it is now, as the other pastures in the forest, left to fatten the deer'.¹⁴ Cordiner doubtless meant the Glen Lui houses that he would have passed on his way up to Luibeg. Taylor's book (1869) stated that Glen Lui 'is without inhabitant, though once it could boast of families sufficient to put a meal mill in requisition, to supply their wants'.¹⁵

The greens of Glen Lui have remained unfarmed. Since 1943 a few sheep have occasionally strayed there in summer. Hundreds of red deer graze the greens, and in winter snow the former farmlands and nearby hill slopes support 300-400 stags.¹⁶

Proposed evictions at the Baddoch. In 1733 a proposal was made to evict tenants from a farming settlement at the Baddoch, beside Glen Clunie.

Eviction orders on behalf of John Farquharson of Invercauld 1733 . . .
warn hereafter named tenants possessors and occupyers of the lands . . .
viz Donald Lamond, James McDonald and now deceased John Stewart
Alias Tyarn in Rienluig in Baddoch to flit and remove yourselves Wives
bairns families Servants Subtenants Cottars and Grassiers goods and gear
further and frae their occupation and possession . . . at the sd leas of
Whitsunday.¹⁷

This order was contested successfully on behalf of the young Alexander Farquharson of Auchendryne, whose tutor claimed that the land was Auchendryne's. Hence the evictions did not take place, but the eviction orders are a reminder of the peremptory nature of such proposals.

The Glen Dee clearance. We have already noted Scrope's comment that 'Glen Lui was cleared of sheep and cattle, etc, and turned into a forest upwards of sixty years ago', and he added 'and the other glens' (on Mar Forest) 'at different and more recent periods'.¹⁸ The only other glens with former farms are Glen Dee and Glen Ey. Glen Dee was much more important than Glen Ey for deer stalking in 1783-92, according to the earl of Fife's journal.¹⁹ Glen Dee had a number of farming townships, seven of which are named in the Catholic Register of births for Braemar for 1703-57.²⁰ Michie wrote that Dalvorar in Glen Dee 'carried a great stock of cattle and sheep, and in the remotest parts of the Mar forest, the people had their summer pasturages and shielings, full of healthy human activity'.²¹

The report of the Select Committee (1872) gives more detailed information. At Cubrach (Dubrach), the factor said 'the people were removed to the low country with very great advantage to themselves because that glen was never free from typhus fever and diphtheria, and all complaints which are consequent upon poor blood, were prevalent in this glen, simply because the only food that they had was unripened cereals and unripened potatoes'. Despite this, a questioner pointed out that Grant from Dubrach lived to be 110 years old! The Dubrach

farm was said to have had about two acres of arable land. The first addition to the Mar deer forest was Delavorar in Glen Dee, 'then occupied by Charles M'Hardy' who retired from the grazing in 1829.²² On 13 September 1791, the earl of Fife wrote in his journal that the ground in Bynack and on Sgarsoch on Geldie was full of sheep, and on 15 September he complained that there was not a stag over the whole of Beinn Bhrotain 'nor the day before in Bynack . . . all spoiled with Charles Macardy's sheep'.²³

In the Select Committee's report (1872) two families were said to have gone out of Glen Dee, from Daloozer (Dalvorar) and Tenguie (Tonnagaoithe); 'that is all the land that I have ever known where tenants have been turned out in any way to make room for deer'. On leaving Glen Dee 'about 1829' 'Charles M'Hardy went down the country, and the other keeps a croft at Castleton and he keeps a horse and three or four cows'. M'Hardy went to a place below Ballater. One of the questioners asked 'Are you aware that my father rented the Geldie, Boynach and Corryrone, and grazed upwards of 800 cattle and 500 sheep upon those glens?' These high numbers indicate the good quality of the hill grazings, quite apart from the arable land of Glen Dee, for carrying cattle. The grazier mentioned was probably Mr William Gordon, 'a drover from the North country'; when the lease for these hill grazings was done, 'Lord Fife sent some sheep to it, and the like of that, himself'.²⁴

The Glen Ey clearance. Farquharson's (1703) map showed seven separate farms in Glen Ey, excluding the low ground close to Inverey.²⁵ Taylor (1869) stated 'At no very remote date nine families lived in Glen Ey; now not one but a game-keeper's'.²⁶ Michie wrote that nine families were removed from Glen Ey about 1830 at the shooting tenant's request, and that this was 'typical of what gradually took place all over Upper Deeside'.²⁷ According to the House of Commons Select Committee on game laws they were evicted to make way for deer, though Mr M'Combie, farmer at Allanquoich and factor for the earl of Fife, said that not 300 acres 'of arable land have been put under deer' on Mar. When asked 'Have the people been turned out to make room for the deer on the Fife property?', he answered that a long time ago there were five 'families turned out of Glenaig' [Glen Ey: our interpretation], that they got land 'lower down, near the village [Braemar]; and there were never any of them turned out of the country altogether. He went on 'They were taken down to the lower part of Lord Fife's estate, and got crofts there'. To the question, 'were they put in as good a situation as before?', he replied, 'In a better situation, and their families are all ready to testify to that'. Little Inverey was added to the deer forest about 1838, but this was hill land only, and included no arable ground except for the land of the five evicted Glen Ey tenants. Questioned on whether eight Glen Ey farmers were evicted who had 3,000 cattle and sheep, the factor answered 'I told you there were five'. A suggestion was made that there were five families up to 1842 or thereabouts 'in the upper part of Rynigelich and Meikle Aucherie' (these would be Ruighe an t-Seilich and Meikle Ach a' Cheiridh, where there is still the largest block of fertile land in Glen Ey, near the ruin marked Auchelie on Ordnance Survey maps).²⁸

In 1937 Alexander wrote that 'Men, only recently dead, were born in Glen Ey, and once on a time, not so long ago, two score children came out of the

valley to school'.²⁹ Helen McDonald from Mar, who now lives in Braemar, told one of the present authors (A.W.) that many families left Glen Ey during the clearance, and some people emigrated to Canada. The late John Morgan, who was brought up at Inverey, said to A.W. that Calum Lamont and his family were cleared from Dail nam Fiadh near the wood of Coille Phiobair (piper's wood) in Glen Ey. The Lamonts had the nickname Piper; Robbie Piper, his brother John the tailor, and their father Calum had all been residents of Dail nam Fiadh. After the clearance the Lamonts farmed at Allt a' Chlair east of Corriemulzie, and Robbie got a job as a gardener at Mar Lodge. Mrs Jean Bain told us that, when a child at Inverey in 1900-10, she knew an old woman Kate Lamont, nicknamed Ceitidh Chaluim (Calum's little Kate), who was one of the last inhabitants of the Glen Ey farms, and who moved out in the clearances.³⁰ A note in Diack's book states that Robert and Kate Lamont, who were still alive at Inverey about 1920, were 'the last two survivors of the community which formerly lived in the glen'.³¹ The Glen Ey clearance is well known to several local people to whom A.W. has spoken, including Braemar residents Jack and Cathy Morgan, whose mother was Robert Lamont's daughter.

Colin McIntosh, a resident of Braemar, told A.W. that some of the people cleared from Glen Ey, including a family called Dingwall, one called Stewart, and one called Lamont, were given poor wet land, north-east of the Catholic chapel at Braemar, which was not being worked at the time. Miss Annie Grant of Braemar recollected two Gaelic-speaking old ladies, Lamont by name, who tended their cows between the chapel and Clunie Water in the early part of this century, and whose family had come from the Glen Ey clearance. The land near the chapel was divided up into long strips, which are shown on an unpublished Fife Estates Plan of Auchindryne Village Lands.³² This plan marked the names of John Dingwall, Charles Stewart, Alexander Lamont, Andrew Lamont, John McDonald, James Paul and Mrs McNab on the strips.

The Glen Clunie clearance. In the Select Committee's evidence, the question was asked whether twelve families were evicted in Glen Clunie from twelve farms with 2,000 sheep and 500 cattle. The answer was that 'the ground was cleared for sheep, to make two big farms for sheep'.³³ Later, the nearby Glen Callater 'was afforested' (turned into a deer forest) about 1884.³⁴ Glen Callater had been uninhabited except for summer shielings, so the formation of the deer forest here would have cleared people from their summer grazings.

The Balmoral clearance. Scrope (1839) wrote that 'Glen Gelder has lately been reserved for deer by Sir Robert Gordon',³⁵ and Stirton that 'the deer forest was made in 1833'.³⁶ This probably meant restricting or prohibiting grazing by sheep and cattle, not clearance of farming people from their homes. Balmoral was then owned by the earl of Fife's trustees, with Sir Robert Gordon as lessee, but Sir Robert died in 1847 and the lease was acquired for Queen Victoria, who started to spend holidays at Balmoral in September 1848.³⁷ The Prince Consort bought the estate in 1852.³⁸ Grimble wrote that 'clearing was first commenced in this forest in 1848',³⁹ and this probably meant removal of farmers. The entire farming population of Glen Gelder was cleared, to improve the area for deer. The families were given better houses and incomes elsewhere on the lower parts of the

estate. John Harper, who was brought up at Candacraig, Crathie, told A.W. that the local story handed down for several generations was that thirteen families came out of Glen Gelder on one day. He said that one, named Stewart, got land called Tulach Chocaire near the site of the present Lochnagar Distillery, and later went to the nearby farm of Buailteach, but that most got work on the estate. It was recorded that crofting tenants 'gladly forsook their holdings in Glen Gelder when offered employment on the estate by the Prince Consort, with comfortable houses and an assured livelihood'.⁴⁰

The Glen Tanar clearances. On the south side of Tanar, a number of families were cleared from their farms in 1855-8, but were given holdings elsewhere on the extensive Huntly estates.⁴¹ The south side formerly held twenty-nine houses, including nine at Knockieside West where there used to be a hotel, a general merchant's shop and at least three shoemakers. But

Eighty years ago the whole of the population on the south side of the glen were evicted so that the deer forest might be extended, and the number of inhabitants speedily decreased, and soon after the coming of Sir William Cuncliffe Brooks there only remained in the whole glen those who were in his employment.⁴²

It was said that 'in Glentanner Estate 7000 sheep were kept' but 'in 1850 the sheep were knocked out'.⁴³ Another source states that 'in 1854 the upper part of Glen Tanar was first converted into a deer forest'.⁴⁴

Other information on clearances in upper Deeside. Scrope stated of Invercauld that 'It does not exceed twenty years since the sheep and other animals were finally cleared off the hills to the west, where it joins the Marr Lodge forest'.⁴⁵ The Select Committee report of 1872 gave further information from Invercauld. When a witness was asked whether he knew of any tenant being evicted for killing deer, he replied 'Not in my time'. Mention was made of a Mr Leys, farmer and innkeeper at the Inver, being turned out because his son killed a hare; the landlord (Invercauld) gave him notice to quit '15-16 years ago' and he moved to Monecht near Echt.⁴⁶

Michie wrote that the great Highland clearances began 'about twenty years prior to 1801', and went on for ten or twelve years in the northern counties 'with great rigour'. But he describes depopulation in upper Deeside as being 'effected with less severity, because the course adopted was a gradual dispossession extending over a much longer period of years, but it began quite as early'.⁴⁷

It is probable that clearances to make way for deer occurred in other glens in upper Deeside, to judge from Grant:

What storm did not Professor Blackie raise, when he mentioned the evictions in Braemar? . . . how desolate are the glens that once teemed with a brave people! . . . when I look to Glendee, Gleney, Glenlui, Glencuaich, Glencluny, Braemar, Strathdee [the main Dee valley between Invercauld and the foot of Gairn], Glengairn, Glenfinzie, Morven and Glentanner, I cannot but exclaim, oh! desolate! oh! dreary! oh! desert civilisation! . . . turning our fields into deer-forests.⁴⁸

Michie, born in 1830 and brought up near Crathie, described a group of families evicted from the high glens of Braemar

with sorrow and sadness depicted in every face, and headed by a piper playing "Lochaber no more" . . . compelled to give up their fields to the deer of the forest, to kindle in the breasts of those that remained a spirit of hatred against the offending proprietor.⁴⁹

Many people in the Braemar and Balmoral area still know about the clearances there, having been told about them by their parents and grandparents. We have noticed no animosity about these clearances, even from people whose ancestors were evicted. This may be because some of the cleared people were given land elsewhere on the same estate, and others alternative employment on the estate.

Other clearances from areas near upper Deeside. The report of the Napier Commission (whose remit excluded Deeside and other parts of Aberdeenshire) gave information on clearances and deer forests in Speyside. In 1827, Rothiemurchus was cleared of sheep for grouse shooting (Napier, Question 43546).⁵⁰ It was first let as a deer forest in 1843; shortly after, some deer calves were brought over from Mar and released,⁵¹ which suggests that red deer had been very scarce or absent before then. The Napier report showed that, in 1869, ten Abernethy tenants who owned 455 sheep were removed because their pasture was planned for deer forest, and had to go to new holdings which later proved too small. Abernethy was said to have been cleared 'for plantation' in 1865,⁵² but Orr noted that the proportion of only 10,000 acres of woodland to 25,000 acres of deer forest casts doubt upon this assertion.⁵³ The late Alexander J. Grant, former gamekeeper on Invercauld, told A.W. that his father had been cleared along with others from crofts at Tulloch in upper Abernethy.

There were also Speyside clearances in Kincardine parish on the east side of Spey, south of Boat of Garten, where Lobban wrote about 'the arable ground of Pityoulish after that place was formed from the many crofts and small holdings which were cleared off to put the ground under sheep'. Near the site of the upper mill on the Auchgourish burn, he mentioned that a number of crofts were cleared to make room for sheep. Some of the crofters were offered holdings over in 'Aan side', and the rest 'were placed in wooden houses (and in some cases semi-derelict hovels with turf roofs) at the street of Kincardine'.

Lobban recalled an old resident in Wester Tulloch who

had a house at the 'Glaichk' on the Duke of Gordon's estate at the foot of Craigowrie on the old right-of-way between the Braes of Abernethy and Badenoch. When the edict went forth that go they must, by night he hopped across the march and by nightfall the following day had a dwelling of sorts erected which qualified him as a squatter on Seafield estate.

Of an old shepherd he stated, 'The house where he stayed was at the west of the Auchgourish sheep ground and was at one time a school . . . before the clearances.' Lobban also wrote,

Not a few of these characters of the neighbourhood were displaced persons in a way as their holdings were taken over their heads to form the

deer forest, although the estate found it convenient in some cases to install more suitable tenants in the place of certain rent defaulters.⁵⁴

In the parish of Duthil, between Carr Bridge and Grantown, Murray stated that 'Mr. A. Mackintosh, Woodside Cottage, Duthil, told me that in the whole parish only from Garrochar and from Aittenlia were families put out to make room for sheep'.⁵⁵

At Glen Avon in upper Banffshire, lying north of upper Deeside, 'the ground was cleared' in 1838,⁵⁶ and Grimble stated that the Forest of Glenavon was cleared in 1841.⁵⁷ Scrope wrote that 'since 1773 it has been occupied as a grazing, but it is said that the Duke of Richmond contemplates restoring it to a deer forest'.⁵⁸ Gaffney quoted the report of the 1841 census:

This is one of the most remote districts in the parish situated among the Glenavon Hills. Formerly there was three larger farms with pretty considerable families on each of them but now the whole of this district has been converted into a Deer Forest. One of the families who were formerly there has left this parish altogether -- the other two still continues in the parish.⁵⁹

In this case, these sources showed no evidence of people being cleared, but merely a change of land use.

Dinnie (1865) stated of Glen Esk 'above the loch [Loch Lee] is Glen Lee, a narrow vale once thickly inhabited, but now wholly deserted by the human species, their place is supplied by a numerous population of red deer'.⁶⁰ The Select Committee's report gave fuller details. About 8,000 sheep were displaced to make room for deer on the earl of Dalhousie's estates in Glen Esk. In response to the question how many tenants were evicted, the answer was 'Not so very many, because the farms were pretty large holdings'. These farmers left their farms after getting notice to quit at the termination of their leases.⁶¹ As the deer ground in Glen Esk had long been at the top of the glen, these farmers were probably displaced from the extensive valley pastures of Glen Lee and Glen Mark, which still show ruins of many buildings and stone dykes. Whitehead in 1960 wrote that 'Invermark was afforested in 1853, when it was said to contain "only one hind, a wanderer from Deeside"'.⁶²

In 1824 *The Scotsman* reported large-scale evictions in north-east Perthshire (although in this case we do not know whether or not the farms remained empty):

Last week, a Sheriff's officer from Perth executed no fewer than sixty-six summonses of removal in the districts of Rannoch, Atholl, and Strathardle, raised by two landed proprietors against their tenants for arrears of rent. The removal of so many families will be productive of great misery. Most of them are destitute, without any trade.⁶³

Barron wrote that in 1812 the *Inverness Courier* and *Inverness Journal* carried an advertisement that the deer forest of Glen Feshie 'is adapted either for summer grazing to black cattle, or for shooting ground to a sportsman who might wish to preserve the tract for deer, moor game and ptarmigan, all of which abound in the adjoining hills, and with which it would be abundantly stocked in a very short time. if carefully kept for the purpose'.⁶⁴ A similar advertisement appeared for

Gaick, according to McConnochie.⁶⁵ Gaick continued to be let as a sheep walk till 1826, 'when it was . . . placed under deer'.⁶⁶ In 1857, Marx protested about clearances for deer, mentioning new deer forests in Glen Feshie and Ardverikie.⁶⁷ Somers wrote,

In the Highlands, new forests are springing up like mushrooms. . . . Deer-forests and the people cannot co-exist. . . . a mountain range laid out in forest is, in many cases, more profitable to the proprietor than when let as a sheep-walk. . . . Deer have received extended ranges, while men have been hunted within a narrower and still narrower circle. . . . The clearance and dispersion of the people is pursued by the proprietors as a settled principle, as an agricultural necessity.⁶⁸

A letter in 1856 stated

the preliminary steps towards introducing the same vandalizing system into the Highlands — a land, then of happy intelligent peasants — were being taken by their Duke of Athol. He was clearing Glen Tilt of its peasant proprietors . . . Glen Tilt is now a deer forest.⁶⁹

Blackie and clearances for deer. A critic of clearances for deer was J.S. Blackie, Professor of Greek in the Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh. A letter in 1856 stated

. . . a recent writer in the *Times*, who had travelled through Braemar, says that "along the course of the Dee and its tributaries, from Aboyne to Athol, there stretches for a length of fifty miles a range of deer forest nearly unbroken on the South side of the river, and often diverging from it to spread far on the North. If any one penetrated these tracks of old primeval firs, brush-wood, and ranges of granite hills, he will hardly find a scene more impressive, and yet none more melancholy; for over this enormous track, in *glens once busy with hamlets*, and on the flank of hills once living with the sheep of their inhabitants, not a house is to be seen, but the smart lodges of a few gamekeepers, and not a streak of smoke or sound of life through all these dreary solitudes. Natives who know this country will mark out to you the places, now in heaps of ruins where the farmhouses of thriving tenantry once existed; and old men, mourning, tell you that the survivors of their departed friends are to be found in the streets of Canada, but no longer in their native glens, once the homes of peace, plenty, hospitality, and good neighbourhood."⁷⁰

As a subsequent letter in *The Nation* referred to 'Professor Blackie's anti-depopulation appeal to the *Times*', the quotation in the above letter was probably from Blackie.⁷¹ He was reported as saying that,

. . . when extensive tracts of country are enclosed and fenced round, and sent into the market as deer forests, the State has certainly a right to enquire whether this is done in such a way as not to interfere with the well-being of the human population who have for centuries inhabited happy dwellings, along the green fringes and sheltered nooks which belong to these wild districts. Now, the fact I am afraid is, that under the action

of commercial principles the human kind are sometimes sacrificed to the brute kind, and a whole district, once dotted with a happy population, systematically cleared of men, that it may be plentifully stocked with deer.⁷²

Background to population changes in upper Deeside. The population of both parishes in upper Deeside increased from 1700 to 1755, but had decreased by 1794-5, and further declined up to 1801 (Table 1). Numbers in Crathie-Braemar parish on the whole dropped thereafter up to 1901. However, in Glenmuick, Tullich and Glengairn, numbers increased in 1811-31 and again between 1851 and 1901, due to the growth of Ballater town.

Table 1

Population in upper Deeside, 1696-1901

Year	Crathie and Braemar	Glenmuick, Tullich and Glengairn	Source
1696	2300?	1800?	Calculated by Michie ⁷³ from Poll Book ⁷⁴
1755	2671	2270	Dr Webster's estimate (in Old Statistical Account) ⁷⁵
1794-5	2251	2117	Old Statistical Account
1801	1876	1901	Census (in New Statistical Account) ⁷⁶
1811	--	1894	"
1821	--	2228	"
1831	1808	2279	"
1841	1712	2118	Census records
1851	1788	1984	"
1901	1452	2347	"

Michie wrote

About the middle of the 18th century, the population of the five upper parishes was . . . far in excess of the resources of the district. . . the smaller tenants and landless cottars had a hard struggle. In good seasons

they just managed to make a living, and in bad many of them were on the point of starvation. That the congestion reached its height soon after Culloden is confirmed by a statement in one of the pleadings in a lawsuit between Invercauld and the earl of Fife in 1760, that never within the memory of man had there been so much land newly taken into cultivation. About the same time, too, the author of a Description of the Parish of Birse complains that the forest, which properly belonged to Birse people as a grazing, had been encroached upon by "Highlanders from the head of Dee", who were living there as squatters. . . . Soon after this time the population began to decline. The processes by which the reduction was effected were gradual but continuous. The chief of these were the enlargement of holdings as opportunity offered, and the elimination of crofters and cottars.⁷⁷

Earlier in his book, Michie wrote that, after 1762

The nine years of peace that followed to the nation were not years of prosperity and quiet to Deeside. The proprietors had embraced the opportunity afforded by the drafting of so many of their tenants to the late war to enlarge the holdings of those who remained, and had reaped the advantages of the plan by an increase of rent. They were not, therefore, disposed to revert to the old system of subdividing the holdings among the children of their tenants; but, notwithstanding the increase in the population, and the lack of military or other employment for the daily increasing surplus, they resolved to embrace and make occasions for still farther adding field to field and house to house. The consequence was that the district began again to swarm with idle and discontented men, who rather obstructed than aided the progress of industry. Seeing no hope of getting rid of these by drafting them off to the army, several proprietors, and one at least on Deeside, attempted to eject them from their estates, by serving upon them warrants of removal; and when these were disregarded their domiciles were pulled down about their ears. Many were thus forced, much against their inclinations, to emigrate to foreign lands.⁷⁸

Another example of rural poverty in the 1700s was that some children at upper Deeside schools 'were so poor as to be almost starving, like the nine at Tullich school in 1720 who had only a little water gruel once a day'.⁷⁹

It is clear from the census data and the above quotations that the rural farming population of upper Deeside in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became very high relative to the low amounts and quality of land available. To attain the fairly high standard of living experienced by farming people there today, massive depopulation had to occur.

Depopulation by non-enforced emigration. The glens in upper Deeside have become depopulated even in places where there were no clearances or individual evictions. The population on Invercauld estate is particularly revealing.⁸⁰ Examples in three glens (Table 2) show that the number of adults dropped by 93% between 1851 and 1982, and the number of households by 94%. All places where families now live are at the bottom of these glens, on or close to main roads. The

more remote places have been deserted by residents, although a few incomers use some of the houses as holiday homes. A map of the farmland at Tullich, beside the River Dee east of Ballater, showed eighteen holdings in 1790; today, not even one family lives wholly off this land alone.⁸¹

Table 2

Declines in the numbers of adults (18 years or more) and households in three upper Deeside glens

	Adults		Households	
	1851	1982	1851	1982
Glen Feardar	114	2	47	1
Upper Glen Gairn	86	8	34	2
Glen Clunie, including Callater	46	6	16	3

On Deskryside, just over the Don march from Cromar in Deeside, Astor recorded much depopulation this century.⁸² At the end of the 1800s, Deskryside had at least 200 inhabitants and thirty possessions, including two public houses, and 1,500 sheep used to graze on Deskry moor, including 500 on the higher parts of Morven. By 1950 only twenty people were left, and less than 1,000 sheep on Deskry moor, including only about fifty on Morven.

Upper Glen Gairn, Glen Feardar, Wester Morven and some other parts of Deeside, where no clearances occurred, lost all their people by non-enforced emigration. As families left, their farming holdings were frequently used to provide enlarged holdings for those who remained. This process has continued to date. Many formerly arable farms have become extensive, permanent or semi-permanent pasture for sheep and cattle.

In cases where glens emptied because of non-enforced emigration, the question arises whether more people would have stayed if there had been a different kind of land tenure, as in the Swiss Alps with their many small family-owned farms.⁸³ This cannot be answered for upper Deeside using evidence on population changes, because over the period of depopulation there have been hardly any family-owned farms in the area.

Conclusion. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, enforced clearances of farming populations took place in several glens in the north east Highlands. Unlike the well-known clearances for sheep in the north and west Highlands, most of the eastern clearances were to make way for deer forests. In most cases the cleared people were given alternative land or employment elsewhere on the same estate. A number of nearby glens which had similar over-population have no resident farmers today, even though no clearances occurred. Population reductions there took place by non-enforced emigration, mostly later than the clearances: this has been the main form of depopulation in the area.

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ADDENDUM

Several sources were consulted but are not used in the text. J.S. Smith's paper on 'Deserted farms and shealings in the Braemar area of Deeside, Grampian Region', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 116 (1986), 447-53, mentions briefly the clearances in Glen Clunie in 1830, and in Glen Dee and Glen Ey, using the Select Committee report. D. Fraser, *Christian Watt papers* (Edinburgh, 1983), 31, mentions clearances for deer in a Mar glen, with three months notice, but did not say which glen; moreover, some of Christian Watt's recollections of this area were vague. E. Richards' *A History of the Highland clearances* (2 vols., London, 1982-5) briefly mentions evictions for enlargement of holdings at Rannoch (i, 165, 483) and a clearance of Glenfermate, north Perthshire, for sheep (i, 197), and small removals in Badenoch (i, 238). He put some emphasis on the importance of overpopulation as a background to the clearances, and we agree with this on the basis of the evidence from our area.

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