

A MOST 'VALUABLE CLASS': THE SHETLAND FEMALE
EMIGRATION SOCIETY AND THE EMIGRATION
OF SINGLE WOMEN TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND
TASMANIA IN THE EARLY 1850S

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Abstract. This article examines the reasons behind the formation of the little-known Shetland Female Emigration Society and its reception in the Australian colonies. Much has been written about emigration from Scotland and, even more extensively, about female emigration from the United Kingdom in the second half of the nineteenth century. The question of female emigration from Scotland at the time has, by contrast, attracted little attention from scholars so far, even though the country represents a particularly interesting case-study, offering as it did candidates for emigration that differed widely from one region to another in linguistic, religious and ethnic terms. Yet, the SFES, which was launched in 1850 to help in the emigration of young and single women to South Australia and Tasmania, presents the particularity of having offered a Presbyterian, Scandinavian, English-speaking set of emigrants whose moral, domestic and religious qualities made them stand out from their Celtic (and Roman Catholic) Highland and Irish counterparts. Drawing on a wide range of primary sources, this paper looks at the conditions in which this philanthropic society was launched, at the intersection of Scottish, British and Australian needs. It also, and mostly, argues that the reception of such schemes must not only be analysed through the lens of gender, famine-relief and imperialist goals, but also through that of a cultural, religious and ethnic bias.

Keywords. Emigration, Scotland, Shetland, Australia, Tasmania, women, ethnicity

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‘They are religious, simple in their tastes, they speak English,
and the appearance of most of them is pleasing.
Indeed, I need not say they are *infinitely* superior to the usual
run of female emigrants
you are accustomed to see landed on your shores.’¹

Much has been written about emigration from Scotland to the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century.² Even more has been written about female emigration from the United Kingdom in the late Victorian period, whether focusing on the imperialist project in which it was inscribed or the link that might be established between philanthropic and feminist schemes.³ The question of female emigration from Scotland in the early and mid-Victorian period has, by contrast, attracted little attention so far, even though the country represents a particularly interesting case study, insofar as the candidates for emigration differed widely from one region to another in linguistic, religious and ethnic terms. The Shetland Female Emigration Society offers in this respect a largely unexplored⁴ yet stimulating entry into the question, being an emigration scheme that was both famine-relief- and gender-related, and which contrasted a Presbyterian, Scandinavian, English-speaking set of emigrants with their Roman Catholic, Celtic and Gaelic-speaking counterparts.

The Society was founded in the spring of 1850 at Lerwick under the superintendence of the Inspector-General of the Highland Destitution Board. The Potato blight, which had spread from Ireland to Scotland in 1846, had hit the Highlands and islands disproportionately and, as in the case of Ireland, emigration rapidly emerged as a solution to alleviate the distress of the region. While the different schemes are now relatively well-documented, research has mostly focused on the role played by the Highland and Island Emigration Society (HIES) between 1852 and 1857.⁵ Yet, the late 1840s-early 1850s were not only years when emigration was promoted as a way to alleviate distress from the regions of the United Kingdom that were the hardest hit by the famine – essentially Ireland and Scotland, they were also years when the gender imbalance revealed by two successive censuses (1841 and 1851) and the poverty it entailed emerged as a growing cause for concern. The Shetland Female Emigration Society, through the establishment of a fund to pay for the outfits and passage to South Australia and Van Diemen’s Land⁶ of what they hope would be hundreds of female emigrants, thus not only offered a solution to a situation that was specific to the Northern isles, but also one specific to single young women. Like similar schemes at the time, the initiative arose from pragmatic considerations: emigration would simultaneously provide young Shetland women with work and marriage opportunities at a time when both were scarce in their islands while contributing to ease the extreme labour shortage in Australia and help redress the opposite gender imbalance there. Where the scheme stood out from others of the kind, however, was in the reception of the emigrants it assisted, and their perception

as moral, industrious, religious, and literate, in stark contrast to their Celtic (and Roman Catholic) Highland and Irish counterparts. This particular attraction exerted by Shetland migrants has received scholarly attention thanks to the work of Rebecca Lenihan on Shetland-New Zealand patterns of emigration in the 1870s but, as Lenihan herself, concludes, ‘remains to be investigated’ as far as other parts of the world and periods are concerned.⁷

Drawing on a wide range of primary sources, including censuses, passenger lists, correspondence, emigration commissioners’ reports, parliamentary papers, minutes of committees and newspaper articles,⁸ this paper thus looks into the circumstances surrounding the formation of the SFES and examines how perceptions of gender and race interacted to shape the reception of these young women from Shetland in the colonies. In that respect, the SFES, which emerged from the intersection of British and Australian needs, not only provides us with additional knowledge concerning emigration from Scotland in the mid-nineteenth century and the obstacles faced by female emigration in particular, but also with greater insight into the complexity of the discourse surrounding that migration. The latter, we argue, must not only be analysed through the lens of gender, famine-relief and imperialist goals, but also through that of a cultural, religious and ethnic bias involving, in addition to the traditional Anglo-Saxon/Celt division, that of Scandinavian⁹ Shetland.

The context: emigration from the Highlands in the early nineteenth century and previous female emigration schemes

Emigration from Scotland to Australia did not start with the Great Famine, nor was it unique to the Highlands and systematically linked to overpopulation. The population increase in Scotland between 1801 and 1851 had certainly been substantial, having risen from 1.6 to 2.8 million.¹⁰ These figures nevertheless hid a very uneven reality, with regions such as Inverness (including Skye), Orkney and Shetland experiencing one of the lowest population increases over these 50 years (33%, against a 125% and a 258% increase respectively for Ayr and Lanark).¹¹ Poverty, therefore, as expounded by Devine, was not necessarily the result of overpopulation but could, in some cases, result from ‘a gross imbalance between numbers, resources and employment opportunities’ and the ‘absence of viable industry to provide an alternative to the insecurities of peasant agriculture for the inhabitants of the region’ at a time when much land went out of cultivation in some areas (Skye notably).¹² In the Highlands and Islands (in common with Ireland), a moderate population increase could thus be exacerbated by changes in the economy which caused the demand for labour to fall and led to high rates of unemployment. Thus, while applicants for emigration and land grants in the 1820s had predominantly come from the Lowlands and the middle and upper-middle classes – Protestant, literate and Presbyterians,¹³ the nature of emigration

changed, with a growing number of Highlanders ready to take advantage of the bounty¹⁴ and government schemes that were being established.

From the 1830s, under the influence of Edward Gibbon Wakefield's theory of 'systematic colonisation', the British government had increasingly looked to emigration as a means of populating the Empire with useful and valuable British citizens while at the same time ridding Britain of its paupers.¹⁵ Wakefield's principles were to be essentially applied to Australian and New-Zealand emigration which, by contrast with North America, entirely stemmed from governmental initiatives.¹⁶ It was in this context that the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission (CLEC) had been founded in January 1840 and given responsibility for land management in the British colonies. It selected emigrants (young unmarried servants, young couples with or without children, agricultural workers, shepherds or skilled craftsmen) according to their potential contribution to the development of the territory, and provided them with the necessary information on destinations and means of transport. At the end of the 1840s, when the Highlands were hit by the Great Famine, emigration was therefore 'almost unanimously accepted' as the best way to alleviate the Highlanders' situation.¹⁷ It was also a response to the calls of the Australian colonies for more immigration to help reduce the price of labour, which had steadily increased as a result of the end of transportation.¹⁸

While Scottish emigration grew in the 1830s and 1840s, and became more varied, it nevertheless remained an essentially male phenomenon. The journey, even as part of assisted emigration, remained fraught with danger for women who chose to leave without a husband or their family, and cases of immorality and abuses during voyages were much publicized in the British press, as were protests in the colonial press about the lack of morality of the new immigrants.¹⁹ These negative experiences meant that, by the mid-1830s, officials in Australia, although lamenting the fact that the disproportion of the sexes in the colonies was a very serious evil,²⁰ had become quite hostile to the idea of single women travelling alone. Female emigrants, in addition to being more carefully selected, would now need to travel under the protection of families or relatives so as to ensure that only virtuous women would contribute to increase the ranks of the colony.²¹

Until the late 1840s, assisted female emigration therefore only stemmed from a few isolated, small-scale initiatives. In 1849, however, the appalling working conditions of London's dressmakers and their frequent recourse to prostitution, revealed through Henry Mayhew's weekly letters on 'Labour and the Poor' in the *Morning Chronicle*,²² shocked the middle-classes into action and rapidly raised both awareness and money. That year, as plans for the Shetland Female Emigration Fund were devised, four other societies were created, which rapidly came to collaborate with one another: the Fund for Promoting Female Emigration,²³ the short-lived National Benevolent Emigration Society, the British Ladies' Female Emigrant Society, and Caroline Chisholm's Family Colonisation Loan Society.²⁴ The context was therefore one of great activity, with London hosting a variety

of disparate associations that aimed at making sure that female emigration – now considered as a solution to poverty and the lack of marriage opportunities in Britain – would take place in the best possible conditions.

Famine in Shetland, expansion of the Australian colonies and concerns about gender imbalance

In the case of Shetland, a combination of three elements in particular account for the decision that was taken at the time to provide for female emigration.

The first one was the Potato Famine, which hit the Highlands and Islands in 1846, and added to the distress already experienced by the region as a consequence of the rapid social and economic changes. In April 1846, letters began to appear in the Scottish press to alert the public as to the severity of the crisis that might be expected in Shetland as compared with the rest of the Highlands – and even Ireland itself²⁵; from late 1846, concern was expressed that, while the Scottish Highlands had been receiving publicity and assistance, the destitution in Shetland was being overlooked. Letters stressed ‘the utter neglect’ with which the ‘poor friendless Shetlanders’ were being treated,²⁶ a situation that was attributed to their under-representation in Westminster.²⁷ ‘What I have now to urge [...],’ ‘A Shetlander’ wrote to the *John o’Groat Journal*, in February 1847, ‘is that Government will without delay do the same for the poor inhabitants of these islands that they have in so humane a manner done for others similarly situated on the west coast of Scotland; that is, to send supplies of grain of various kinds, together with potatoes for seeds.’²⁸ The year before, after inspecting twenty-seven of the most distressed parishes, Sir John McNeill, as recently appointed Chairman of the Board of Supervisors for the New Poor Law in Scotland, had come to the conclusion that the only effective solution for the West Highland population was emigration.²⁹ Shetland, however, was not concerned by the scheme.

The second element is the expansion of the Australian colonies. Famine in the Highlands and Islands coincided with years of great expansion in the Australian colonies, whose governments were ready to contribute financially to the passage of emigrants.³⁰ The usual pattern of immigration so far had been single men, couples, or small families, but the acute shortage of labour (especially on pastoral stations) that had occurred in some colonies such as New South Wales as a consequence of the end of transportation had caused them to relax their regulations regarding age limits and start recruiting whole families who would normally have lacked the means to emigrate.³¹ Increasing standards of living and growing demands for improvement in terms of services had also led colonies that were still dependent on transportation, such as Van Diemen’s Land,³² to welcome an increasing number of free immigrants. From the early 1850s, obtaining domestic servants, in particular, became a priority.³³

The third element that made Shetland a perfect candidate for a female emigration scheme was the sex ratio problem, which emerged as a growing cause

Table 1. Scottish population statistics.

	Males	Females	Ratio of females to 100 males
1801	739 091	869 329	117.6
1811	826 296	979 568	118.5
1821	982 623	1 108 898	112.9
1831	114 456	1 249 930	112.2
1841	1 241 862	1 378 322	111.0
1851	1 375 479	1 513 263	111.2

Source: Gray, *Scottish Population Statistics*, xvii.

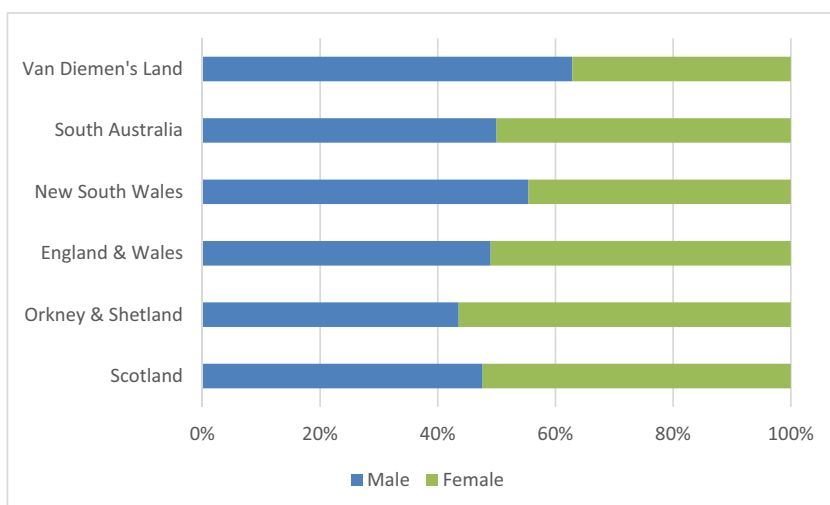


Figure 1. Sex ratio in Britain and the Australian colonies in 1851.

Sources: For the Australian colonies: Historical and Colonial Census Data Archive (HCCDA), 1851 census; for England and Wales, Orkney and Shetland, Scotland: Cheshire, *The Results of the Census of Great Britain in 1851*, 46.

for concern both at home and in the colonies. The 1841 census for England and Wales had revealed a surplus of over 300,000 women out of a population of 15.9 million, i.e. 103.8 females for 100 males³⁴ which, when combined with the current deterioration of economic conditions, triggered a renewed interest in female emigration among both governments and philanthropists.

Not only had that female excess been consistently greater in Scotland (Table 1) but the Highlands, Orkney and Shetland showed greater disparity between the sexes than any other district of a similar extent in the United Kingdom, with a ratio of 131.9 females for 100 males in 1841, and 136.4 in 1851 (Figure 1). Arthur Anderson, Orkney and Shetland's Liberal MP between 1847 and 1862, quoting a surplus of 8,000 females out of a population of about 62,000, attributed that

situation to the higher rates of male emigration³⁵ and the hazardous nature of the occupation of the men, many of whom were sailors or fishermen.³⁶ The single women were not only, therefore, as in many other regions, unmarried but also widowed women.

The fact that even greater gender imbalance could be found in the European populations of the Australian colonies but with an opposite sex ratio obviously made female emigration look like the perfect solution, as it promised to solve two problems at once through the transfer of the excess female population from the Mother country to the colonies,³⁷ where the governors were under pressure to bring young females to address the shortage in domestic servants and redress the demographic imbalance between the sexes.³⁸ There, while New South Wales had managed to progressively remedy the situation, South Australia and, above all, Van Diemen's Land, where women only represented 31% of the population in 1831 and 36.3% in 1851, still suffered from acute gender imbalance and appeared, in this respect, perfect destinations.

Launching the Shetland Female Emigration Society

While the creation of the Shetland Female Emigration Society is mainly to be understood in the context of the acute gender imbalance in both Orkney and Shetland and Van Diemen's Land, it must also be viewed through the prism of the converging interests of a small group of people.

The initiator of the scheme was Lady Franklin. Jane Franklin, together with her niece and travel companion, Sophia Cracroft, had arrived in Lerwick on 29 July 1849 as part of a tour of Shetland and Orkney which, she hoped, would provide her with new information from whalers about her husband's lost expedition to discover the Northwest Passage.³⁹ Before setting off for the Arctic in 1845, John Franklin had been Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land between 1837 and 1843, and Jane Franklin was not only well acquainted with the conditions and circumstances of the colony, but had taken an active part in the latter's affairs, contributing in particular to schemes of female education.⁴⁰ A couple of months before sailing for Shetland, she had also taken part in the creation of the British Ladies' Female Emigrant Society, of which she had become one of the vice-presidents,⁴¹ and whose stated aim was to 'seek to meet and obviate the evils consequent on this long period of undisciplined idleness [the voyage], and to promote the moral and religious improvement of the Female Emigrants, by providing them with suitable employment, and by introducing an organized system of industrial classes on board'. These aims were to be achieved through:

1. 'The establishment of homes for the reception of the Female Emigrants, where they may be instructed and prepared, prior to their leaving their native country';

2. The provision of 'visitation at the ports, where the Emigrants [were] formed into industrial classes, and supplied with means for their instruction and employment during the voyage, through the agency of the Visiting Committees';
3. The appointment of 'judicious and efficient Matrons for the superintendence of the young women on the voyage';
4. The creation of 'corresponding societies in the colonies for the protection and assistance of the Female Immigrants on their arrival';
5. The provision of 'an extended and constant supply of useful materials for employment', which including knitting and needlework, books and 'all kinds of school materials.'⁴²

Her interest in both Australia (in addition to her stay in Van Diemen's Land she had travelled extensively to Port Phillip and New South Wales) and female emigration meant that when she was approached by candidates for emigration in Lerwick, Lady Franklin reportedly 'volunteered to do anything in her power to promote it during her stay in the islands.'⁴³ That stay in Shetland lasted more than a month, enough time to interview candidates for emigration and start mustering support for a scheme that would assist the passage of unmarried females to Tasmania. Once back in London, she and her niece set to find the right person to form a plan to make that emigration possible.

William Henry Giles Kingston, editor of *The Colonist* and *The Colonial Magazine and East India Review*, was to be that person and the other major figure in the launch of the SFES. A strong advocate of government-assisted emigration, he immediately agreed to join in the venture and rapidly became the main spokesperson and correspondent of the society, undertaking in the first instance to gather as much information as possible about the potential emigrants then soliciting assistance from the CLEC and Sidney Herbert (as President of the newly-created Fund for Promoting Female Emigration).

Captain Robert Craigie had been sent to Shetland in 1847 to oversee poor relief for the population in the context of the potato famine. Two years later, he was appointed Inspector-General of the Highland Destitution Board and was the person solicited by Kingston to provide him with particulars as to the demographic imbalance between men and women on the island and the mode of life of the female population, as well as the extent of their poverty. Craigie was prompt to seize the opportunity and recommended the formation of a Committee of Gentlemen and another of Ladies in Lerwick whose purpose would be that of selecting candidates for emigration and collecting funds for their clothing and their passage before handing them over to the care of the BLFES.⁴⁴ By the spring of 1850, these two committees had been formed under his superintendence, and a fund started to collect contributions that would pay for their outfits and their passage, with H. Fox Maule (MP for Perth) and Arthur Kinnaird (banker, and committee member of the British Association for the Relief of Distress in Ireland

and the Highlands of Scotland) acting as Trustees. As London secretary to the new Shetland Female Emigration Society, W.H.G. Kingston convinced the CLEC to afford assisted passage to Australia to forty young women 'as an experiment in the first instance' on condition that their outfits should be complete, that they should be conveyed free of expense to the depot at Deptford, and that £5 per head should be raised to pay for other expenses 'incidental to their transport'.⁴⁵ The Highland Destitution Board also made a donation to the Lerwick Committee. The young women were to be accompanied by two 'respectable married couples' from the same locality. Each girl would undertake, from her wages, at the end of nine or ten months, to pay £5 to the Colonial Treasury so as to assist in their turn the emigration of some relative or friend in Shetland whom she may nominate. A similar plan had been adopted with some families from England and Kingston hoped the colonies would encourage it in its application to Shetland.⁴⁶ Although New South Wales, and Victoria in particular, had been receiving the majority of Scottish emigrants,⁴⁷ the two favoured colonies for the Shetland females were, for the reasons seen above, to be South Australia and Tasmania, where arrangements were made with Caroline Chisholm's Family Colonization Loan Society.⁴⁸

On 4 May 1850, Kingston was confident enough about the success of the scheme to inform the Secretary of the St Andrew's Society in Adelaide of the 'probable arrival by the *Lysander*, to leave Plymouth the 10 June, of a party of 40 young women.' These would be selected from 150 to whom Lady Franklin had spoken.⁴⁹ Their outfit was to be found in Shetland, and their passage to Deptford would be provided for by a grant from the Highland Destitution Board. This, Kingston insisted, should not be taken to mean that these girls were 'inferior to those to whom free passages have been granted', as they were, on the contrary, 'in every respect infinitely superior to a vast proportion of those who have gone out'.⁵⁰

First departures and obstacles

Difficulties rapidly arose however, thus contributing to the small number that were to leave in the end. The first of these, if we believe a letter sent by the local Relief Society inspector to W.H.G. Kingston, was the fact that family life was very closely knit in the Shetlands and so encouraging young women to leave their family circle proved more difficult than foreseen.⁵¹ 'If this timidity can be overcome by the success of a single party', Craigie wrote to Kingston in March 1850, 'the example would speedily be followed by hundreds'.⁵² Funds also proved slower to obtain than had been expected and no more than 21 young women could be selected to leave for South Australia. Other difficulties emerged as Craigie informed Kingston of 'an unwillingness in the upper classes in Shetland to assist these young women' following reports that had circulated 'concerning the *Indian*'⁵³ and other vessels.⁵⁴ The Inspector-General of the Highland Destitution Board advised to put off their departure until August, which would give Kingston enough time to send to Shetland a large parcel of tracts and books, which he

hoped would 'have due effect in conquering scruples'.⁵⁵ Accounts of the ill-treatment of women by surgeons and officers on some ships in the previous year, and more particularly the *Indian*, were published in newspapers across the country in 1850 and probably contributed to these concerns. The account published by the *John O'Groat Journal* of Wick, a Highland-based newspaper, in its edition of 22 March, may have proved particularly dismaying.⁵⁶ It was only early July that a score of young women was selected, after advertisement had been placarded on all the pieces of worship in the mainland, offering a free passage to Australia to intending female emigrants. This first party, which had initially been meant to sail in May, therefore only left Aberdeen for Deptford in the first week of August 1850, where it was entrusted to the care of a matron and a schoolmaster appointed by the British Ladies' Female Emigrant Society.⁵⁷ The young women embarked on the *Joseph Soames* on 8 August and finally sailed from Plymouth to Adelaide on 18 August.⁵⁸

To judge from the passengers' list, the selection seems to have been made essentially on the assumption that the young women, whose experience in Shetland made them—in the words of Arthur Anderson, a native of those islands—particularly fit 'for bush life', would become 'the wives of agricultural settlers';⁵⁹ their ages – between 18 and 31 – seem to indicate that most of them had probably never been married (there might have been some young widows among them, but the absence of title before their name renders impossible such identification) and almost all (19) were registered as 'farm servants', with only one appearing as 'Shawl knitter', and another one as 'Housemaid' (Table 2).

The ship arrived at Port Adelaide on 23 November and all 21 young women were said to have been engaged with families that were recommended to them⁶⁰ 'at 5s. a week within 24 hours of their arrival'.⁶¹ The girls were reported to have been described by several ladies of the BLFES, as well as by some Commissioners on departure 'in the highest terms of their fitness, as far as could be ascertained, for the life they are to lead, of their pleasing and gentle manners, their good temper, their gratitude for the attention shown them, and their anxiety to employ themselves usefully'.⁶² As a consequence, continuance of emigration from Shetland was warmly recommended by the St Andrew's Society⁶³ and W.H.G. Kingston was commissioned by the CLEC to select more of the young women.⁶⁴ Much more was to be written about the following shipments however than was actually carried out and, month after month, articles were published in the colonial press announcing the arrival of new emigrants only to be contradicted in the following weeks.

Part of the explanation for these delays seems to have lain in the fears that existed among the potential emigrants, their relatives and the SFES, not only regarding the potential dangers faced on board, but also those that might be encountered on arrival for lack of proper assistance. The Launceston-based St Andrew's Society had recognized that the reports of gross mismanagement in various ships that had arrived in South Australia in the previous years had

Table 2. Shetland female passengers listed as ‘single women’ on the *Joseph Soames*, London 12 August 1850 / Plymouth 22 August 1850 – Port Adelaide 23 November 1850.

Name	Age	Occupation
Anne Beattie	18	Shawl Knitter
Juga Dalziell	28	Farm Servant
Margaret Garrock	22	Farm Servant
Barbara Hughson	18	Farm Servant
Henderson Jamieson	31	Farm Servant
Jean Lawrence	20	Farm Servant
Barbara Matterson	26	Farm Servant
Robina Millar	28	Farm Servant
Helen Min	21	Farm Servant
Jane Mitchell	26	Farm Servant
Helen Ninianson	21	Farm Servant
Jane Ninianson	26	Farm Servant
Agnes Robertson	25	Farm Servant
Catherine Smith	22	Farm Servant
Elizabeth Smith	21	Housemaid
Catherine Tait	28	Farm Servant
Elizabeth Tait	22	Farm Servant
Murray (?) Tait	20	Farm Servant
Sarah Taylor	20	Farm Servant
Jemina Thomas	18	Farm Servant
Mary Thomas	25	Farm Servant

Source: List of passengers of the *Joseph Soames*, 1850, <https://bound-for-south-australia.collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/1850JosephSomes.htm> (last accessed 25 June 2023).

contributed to deter emigration from Scotland.⁶⁵ Just a couple of months after the arrival of the first Shetland females in Port Adelaide, in February 1851, Kingston himself accused the colonists of not providing any ‘real, active, efficient machinery... to aid and protect emigrants... at the most critical time of their existence, the first few hours of their landing on the shores of a new-colony’ and threatened to withdraw his support for such schemes should no ‘active, energetic institutions’ be established to guarantee the safety of the newcomers.

I am aware that there is, or ought to be, an emigration officer and chaplain; that there is a labour office, and that there exists in name a Ladies’ Society, but do its members, or secretary, or some other officer of their own sex, the moment a ship drops her anchor, go on board, in spite of sunshine or rain, and offer their aid to those unprotected young women? Do they take every, mean to guard them from temptation? Do they take the same pains to protect them that the evil-disposed do to injure them— to lure them to vice? [...] Your colonists complain, justly, I fear, of the disreputable character of some of the

young females sent out, but let me ask them, who would, if they knew the real state of the case, allow virtuous girls to run the risk to which they are exposed on first landing on your shores? [...]. Colonists are too apt to sneer at the efforts of well-intentioned philanthropists, or to complain of the supineness or indifference to their interest of their friends at home. Truly philanthropists may well sicken at the way their well-judged efforts are met and misunderstood, and your friends may say, 'How can you expect us to help you who do so little to help yourselves'.⁶⁶

At a time when the debate on the cessation of transportation was raging, Kingston, it seems, also made use of the bad reputation suffered by the colony as a result of the transportation system to account for the reluctance of Shetlanders to leave for Van Diemen's Land.⁶⁷ Whether that growing dislike of the young Shetlanders 'at the idea of being sent to a "convict country"' was true, exaggerated, or invented, it was later to be given by Kingston as an explanation why the destination of the second 'shipment', initially meant for Van Diemen's Land, was altered to South Australia.⁶⁸

Tasmania was to experience some more disappointment. Kingston, in a correspondence with the Hobart-based *Colonial Times*, announced in February 1821 that a party of 60 would probably sail in April for the colony and, less than a week later, that the CLEC had proposed 'devoting a vessel exclusively to the Shetlanders' that would 'take two hundred young women and ten or twelve married couples'.⁶⁹ The news caused quite a stir and, over the next few weeks, the colonial press abounded with articles about these 200 female Shetlanders for whom the British government was said to have chartered the *Beulah*. Yet, even though the young women were still expected in Hobart Town in July,⁷⁰ it turned out that the ship, which departed from Plymouth on 20 May and arrived at Hobart on 29 August 1851, did not carry the much-awaited freight but essentially girls from Irish workhouses and a few English single women.⁷¹

As it was, it was only in July 1851, after another visit earlier in the month by Lady Franklin and Sophia Cracroft, that Kingston visited Shetland again to select emigrants and only on 20 September 1851 that a party of 55 Shetlanders, including 25 single women, departed from Deptford for South Australia on the *Charlotte Jane*. Although still qualifying as "young" (they were aged between 17 and 31), these were no longer registered as "farm servants", but simply as "servants" (Table 3), probably reflecting at that stage the colonies' growing need not only for farm labour but for domestic servants. Only 24 arrived in Adelaide in January 1852, one having died at sea in November.⁷²

'Country girls uncontaminated by the vices of London'⁷³

In view of the recent scandals linked to female immigration, it was essential for the promoters of the scheme in their exchanges with the colonies to insist on

Table 3. Shetland female passengers listed as ‘single women and girls’ on the Charlotte Jane, London / Plymouth 8 October 1851–Port Adelaide, 14 January 1852.

Name	Age	Occupation
Mary Arthur	17	Servant
Joan B. Bain	31	Servant
Babara Davidson	29	Servant
Grace Davidson	17	Servant
Elizabeth Fraser	21	Servant
Marion Fraser	25	Servant
Elizabeth Gray	29	Servant
Martha Halcron	17	Servant
Janet Halcron	19	Servant
Elizabeth Hunter	26	Servant
Joan Leslie	22	Servant
Margaret Moar	19	Domestic servant
Agnes Monas	31	Servant
Ellen Moore	18	Domestic servant
Mary Ramsay	25	Servant
Margaret Robertson	31	Servant
Jane Smith	20	Servant

Source: List of passengers. Available at <<https://www.theshipslist.com/ships/australia/charlottejane1852.shtml>> (last accessed 14 March 2022).

the moral character of the young women. Because the Legislative Council of New South Wales had attributed the lack of morality of the young emigrants in the 1830s to the fact that too many had been selected from the towns,⁷⁴ particular emphasis was put on the fact that the Shetland women were ‘country girls uncontaminated by the vices of London’.⁷⁵ The idea, as it was stated, was in fact to assist the emigration of these young women to the colonies *before* they set to London and increased the numbers of poor needlewomen there or, in other words, check the stream ‘in its source’. ‘The fund would then be for the purpose of assisting the emigration of those who, to a certainty, would become distressed needlewomen if they remained at home, but are now in every respect fitted to become colonists’.⁷⁶

To this end, Kingston hired a matron to teach the single women ‘such household knowledge and habits of cleanliness and order as shall fit them more for service or for becoming the wives of agricultural settlers’⁷⁷ and material was provided by the British Ladies’ Female Emigrant Society to employ and instruct the women and girls on board. The female emigrants were visited in the depots at Deptford and Plymouth by the matron and ladies of the BLFES. They were again, like the men, visited on board the ship, in the river, then in Plymouth Sound and, at their arrival in the ports, welcomed by the chaplains appointed by the bishops.⁷⁸

As a consequence, the group of Shetland women that sailed on the *Joseph Soames* could be presented by Arthur Anderson as ‘a valuable class’⁷⁹ and, in the words of Captain Craigie as relayed to the Saint Andrew’s Society and the colonial press, as ‘moral, very industrious, cleanly in their habits, accustomed to work in the fields, and when not so engaged to manufacture hosiery—they are religious, simple in their tastes, they speak English, and the appearance of most of them is pleasing. Indeed, I need not say they are *infinitely* superior to the usual run of female emigrants you are accustomed to see landed on your shores’.⁸⁰

That the young women should have been presented in such favourable light by those in charge of the scheme is in no way surprising. More unexpected however are the enthusiastic comments in the Australian press and among the emigration societies in the colonies that greeted the Shetland immigrants on their arrival, and which stand in stark contrast with those that had applied to previous female immigrants. The Irish orphans sent as part of the Earl Grey scheme in the previous two years had been variously referred to in the Melbourne press as ‘a set of ignorant creatures, whose whole knowledge of household duty barely reaches to distinguishing the inside from the outside of a potato, and whose chief employment hitherto has consisted of some such intellectual occupation as occasionally trotting across a bog to fetch back a runaway pig’ or ‘the most stupid, the most ignorant, the most useless and the most unmanageable set of beings that ever cursed a country by their presence. . .’⁸¹. In contrast, in the 1850 annual report of the St Andrew’s Society spoke highly of the Shetlanders:

The girls, without exception, seem well adapted for country work. They can all wash and milk, and do other ordinary duties required in farm-houses. . . The surgeon-superintendent speaks most favourable of their moral character. . . and the directors themselves noticed as most pleasing features that they did not, as is usual with girls on their first arrival, hesitate to go to the country, even if the distance was great, but all were anxious to know if there was a place of worship in the neighbourhood of their new abode.⁸²

That vision was confirmed by *The Courier*, where one could read in July 1851: ‘In Shetland the adult female population. . . are brought up in very industrious habits, and do a great part of the farm work, whilst their husbands and male relations are at the fishery.’⁸³ ‘The Shetland women’, other newspapers explained, ‘are moral, industrious, and religious’⁸⁴ and ‘their simplicity and gentleness of manner have generally excited the esteem and goodwill of strangers’.⁸⁵

These reactions must first be understood in the context of the large female emigration that had preceded them and which had regularly been met with great disappointment on the part of the local authorities. In the late 1830s, the committee of the Legislative Council of New South Wales responsible for emigration had thus deplored the fact that a great number of the female emigrants sent to the colony were ‘very different in character from what they appear[ed] to have been represented to the Committee in London and quite unsuited to the

wants of the colonists'.⁸⁶ When selecting young unmarried women, they had stressed how great care should be exercised to see that they were of virtuous character as 'the great object of importing young women [was] not merely to supply the demand for servants' but 'to restore the equilibrium of the sexes. . . and to provide virtuous homes for the labouring classes of the community'.⁸⁷

They are also to be understood in the context of the strong reaction that had arisen in the wake the Early Grey scheme which, even though it had sought to provide assurances as to the morality of the young girls by providing the help of matrons, had triggered considerable opposition, especially among the Scottish and Northern Irish Presbyterians community. The twenty ships that had sailed from Britain to Eastern Australia between 4 June 1848 and 30 July 1850 had carried over 4,000 Irish orphans, a large majority of them Roman Catholics. Among fears of popery, and in the context of rising tensions over renewed attempts at transportation on the part of the British government, the columns of the Australian press had then rapidly filled with protests regarding the ignorance and the lack of training of the young girls, which made them ill-suited for the double role that awaited them in the colony, that of wives and farm or domestic servants. Not only were these girls, who mostly came from urban backgrounds, largely untrained for farm-work, but most of them had indeed received very limited education and were untrained in the domestic skills which were needed by the aspiring Australian middle-class, such as cooking, house management or dealing with visitors. By contrast, the circumstances under which the young women of Orkney and Shetland were brought up were felt to be well calculated to fit them for 'bush life' and domesticity:

Isolated to a great degree from towns and shops, the Orkney and Shetland housewives have to provide such things as their little farms cannot produce by laying in a stock for some months. They therefore learn, of necessity, habits of forethought, and are besides compelled to exercise a variety of occupations highly valuable in the wives or servants of settlers 'in the bush'—baking, brewing, candle-making, carding, spinning, dairying, tending of cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry, caring of meat for winter stores, planting, hoeing, and clearing the garden and fields, are all employments in which the housewives and other females of the Orkney and Shetland peasantry take a part, and to this is in many cases added the teaching the children to read, &c.⁸⁸

While relating the emigration of the Shetland girls to this recent – and unsatisfying – experience is essential, more elements need to be considered to understand the ever-growing demand for more emigrants from these islands as well as their reception in the Australian colonies. The discourse that defined the previous wave of emigrants did not only pertain to anti-Irish prejudice but also included elements of a religious, ethnic and cultural nature that denoted wider anti-Celtic and anti-Roman Catholic sentiment and applied *de facto* to other emigrants from Scotland.

‘Presbyterian wives’⁹⁰

One particular circumstance surrounding the creation of the Shetland Female Emigration Society needs to be underlined. In late July 1849, at the same time Lady Franklin and Sophia Cracroft were in Shetland, the island was also visited by John Dunmore Lang, whom Sophia Cracroft described in a letter to her mother and sisters as ‘An Australian Celebrity, a Presbyterian Minister, a radical reformer of all Churches. . . . Member of Legislative Council of Sydney – a writer whose pen is dipped in gall’.⁹⁰ Lang’s concerns for the growing number of mixed marriages among his Protestant congregations in New South Wales had led him to staunchly oppose the immigration of Roman Catholic female emigrants to Australia and encourage immigration of ‘a superior character’ from the United Kingdom. He had been touring the British Isles over the past two years, giving lectures and trying to stimulate Protestant emigration.⁹¹ His crusade had taken him to Shetland where, on 27th and 28th July, in Lerwick, he had delivered two successive addresses on the prospects of the Australian colonies for the settlement of families, and on the importance of promoting the emigration of ‘virtuous and industrious Evangelical Protestants’.⁹² Two years before, in Edinburgh, Lang had appealed to ‘his fellow-countrymen, the people of Scotland, and their ancient and noble colony, the North of Ireland, on behalf of the cause of civil and religious liberty – on behalf of our common Protestantism’, to colonize the Australian colonies and the Southern Hemisphere before they were ‘transformed into the seats of mere Irish Roman Catholic communities’.⁹³ In 1848, in the colonial press, he had also denounced the selection of the Irish orphans as ‘a plot to replace Protestantism by “Romanism.”’⁹⁴ The use that could be made of female redundancy in Shetland therefore immediately caught his attention. “The young women of these islands,” he wrote on his way back,

have at least as good a claim upon the bounty of the nation as those young women from the South of Ireland, whom Earl Grey has. . . been sending out to Australia for the last fifteen months, at the public expense, to supply Irish Roman Catholics wives for the English and Scotch Protestants of the humbler classes in our Australian Colonies, and thereby, to win these colonies over to the Papacy, through the Jesuitical and thoroughly Satanic device of “mixed marriages.”⁹⁵

More generally, both the creation of the SFES and its reception in the Australian colonies coincided with a revival in anti-Catholic feeling and activity throughout the British Empire,⁹⁶ triggered in part by the restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England in 1850. Some seven thousand meetings were then held around the country and thousands of petitions were sent to the Crown asking for some form of retaliation.⁹⁷ Australia, because of its rapid expansion, appeared particularly at risk. A key aspect of anti-Catholicism, as shown by Vaughan, was its ‘social-national dimension’ and ‘the Catholics were considered as a mortal

threat to the existence of an “organic” Protestant Anglo-Saxon world and race’.⁹⁸ Kingston himself, who was also one of the major contributors of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge,⁹⁹ warned in one of its tracts: ‘The priests and followers of the Bishop of Rome are making strenuous efforts to regain in the Southern hemisphere. . . that ascendancy over the minds of the people which they have so justly lost in most countries of the old world’.¹⁰⁰ Sending Shetland women over to Australia offered in this respect assurance of ‘Presbyterian wives’.¹⁰¹ Anti-Catholicism, although it was closely associated with anti-Irish rhetoric, does not seem to have been exclusively directed against the Irish however – the colonies were willing to intensify their recruitment in the North of Ireland¹⁰² – but against the Roman Catholics at large. It also, most certainly, intersected with elements of ethnic prejudice.

‘Without disparaging the people of Skye, the Shetlanders are superior in every respect’

In this respect, the Skye Emigration Society, established a year later in the wake of the Shetland Female Emigration Society, provides us with convenient basis for comparison. The new society was created this time at the initiative of W.H.G. Kingston, with the help of Sheriff substitute Fraser of Portree, and, together with the SFES, was to form the basis of the Highland and Island Emigration Society, created a couple of months later, in April 1852. The Isle of Skye was one of the hardest-hit areas of the Highlands and Islands in terms of over-population and destitution and was to provide the large majority (59%) of the 5,000 or so emigrants whose passage was assisted by the HIES between 1852 and 1857. It was also from that region – Celtic and Gaelic-speaking – that a growing number of female emigrants were to leave when the Society’s family-centred policy was modified in 1853 to increase the proportion of single females in answer to requests from Australian businesses and the colonial government.

The contrast between the vision of these Highlanders and that of the Shetlanders is once again striking. While the colonial press invoked the Celtic heritage of the Highlanders¹⁰⁴ to confirm Robert Lowe (Nottingham-born member of the NSW Legislative Council)’s remarks about them being regarded as ‘barbarous’ in the colony,¹⁰⁵ the ‘particulars’ provided by Robert Chambers and reproduced by *The Courier* leave no doubt as to the importance attached to the ethnic origin of the Shetlanders:

In the green huts. . . the girls and their guests gather, seldom or hardly mixing with the other sex – and here may be distinguished fair faces and modest looks amidst smoke and darkness [. . .]. They appear to be excessively fond of singing and dancing, and seize all proper opportunities for indulging in them. In their families well-conducted housekeeping is somewhat as in Norway a complicated and arduous concern requiring no small degree of forethought

and management in the direction. . . Most of the females take pride in being neatly clad and young girls even tastefully dressed may be seen on Sundays at the churches. As respects personal appearance *the stranger will not fail to notice the fair hair, blue eyes, and spare figure which betoken a Scandinavian ancestry* [my emphasis].¹⁰⁶

Although, according to Grydhøj, there is little to suggest that in the early nineteenth century the Shetlanders should have regarded themselves as Scandinavian,¹⁰⁷ in the Victorian period Norse or Viking Romanticism¹⁰⁸ may have added to racial, economic and political arguments and contributed to spread the image of the ‘dynamic’, self-sufficient Norsemen as opposed to the ‘lazy, exploitative’ Celts, both in England and among Lowland Scots. Additional evidence that the dissatisfaction felt towards the uneducated, Celtic females did not only apply to Irish immigrants but also to the Highlanders could be found in yet another letter, published ten years later in the *Englishwoman’s Journal*:

The signal failure of Government emigration [. . .] long felt in the colonies, is beginning to make itself felt at home, by the refusal of the colonists any longer to send funds for which they are burdened with the half-savage and wholly untaught and unskilled population of the wilds of Ireland and Scotland. Women born and bred in pea huts, who know nothing of the requirements or even decencies of civilized life, whose whole art of cooking consists in knowing how to boil a potato or mix porridge, whose skill as laundresses is confined to the washing of their own garments in the running brook, stronger in the domestic duty of peat-cutting than house-cleaning; women such as these, with Government certificates as cooks, laundresses, and housemaids, have been shipped by hundreds to Melbourne, Adelaide, and Sydney. . . to be found, as a matter of course, utterly wanting in the first principles of their duties; instead of helps, hindrances in the family; so insupportable, that speedy dismissal has been the only alternative. Of such women our colonies have had more than enough.¹⁰⁹

That the young Shetland women, by contrast to their Irish and Highlands counterparts, should have spoken English rather than Gaelic certainly worked in their favour, as the promoters of the Shetland Female Emigration Fund were very much aware of,¹¹⁰ and as illustrated by the statement released to the colonial press in 1851 by Arthur Henderson:

[It] is a very rare occurrence to find an adult person, male or female, unable to read the English language, and a great proportion of them can also write, and work the ordinary rules of arithmetic. *The English language is universally spoken — no other, indeed, is generally known.* It is a fact well established that for universality of elementary instruction, *the remote islands of Shetland bear the palm from any other district, even of educated Scotland.* [my emphasis].¹¹¹

Concurrent with immigration from Ireland, large numbers of Scottish Gaelic speakers had reached Australia as free immigrants from the mid-1830s, with more than 2,000 arriving directly from Skye, Mull, Oban and Lochinver (all Gaelic-speaking areas) between 1838 and 1839. In the second half of 1851 alone, when Henderson's statement was released, nearly 500 landed in Victoria, representing about one-quarter of all assisted immigrants to the colony in the same period.¹¹² With the creation of the Highland and Island Emigration Society, these numbers exploded in the years that followed, with almost 5,000 emigrants from Gaelic-speaking areas being sent to Australia between 1852 and 1857¹¹³ despite the rapid complaints from immigration agents that most of the passengers that arrived at Point Henry on the *Araminta* (the first of two HIES chartered ships to arrive in Victoria) on 4 October 1852, were 'in a most deplorable state of ignorance and quite unacquainted with the English language'.¹¹⁴

While that might not necessarily have represented an obstacle for farming activities, having a non-English speaker as a domestic servant was more problematical. One report on the Skye migrants who had left Liverpool on the *Ontario* in 1852 thus stated that out of all the healthy single women that were landed in Sidney on 30th November,¹¹⁵ about thirty had procured positions but, because of their 'ignorance of the English language and other causes, the greater number ha[d] been returned to the Government'.¹¹⁶ In July of the same year, only fourteen days after the *Araminta*, the *Marco Polo* had left Birkenhead for Melbourne carrying a total of 887 passengers, among whom 114 single women from Inverness-shire, only half of whom could read and write.¹¹⁷ Although registered for the majority as 'domestic servants' (probably a way to obtain assisted passage), few were actually engaged as such, a situation that might have been due not only to their lack of experience and skills, but also to their inability to speak, read or write in English. In 1853 again, the *Cornwall Chronicle* complained on the landing of the *Royal Albert* with 273 government emigrants that the majority of them were from the Isle of Skye, and spoke Gaelic.¹¹⁸

These are but a few examples, which nevertheless provide us with a better understanding of the reasons why the promoters of the scheme emphasised the fact that the Shetland women spoke English, not Gaelic, and showed far higher literacy rates than their Irish and Skye counterparts, which led them to be rapidly hired.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

Demand for more single females from Shetland continued throughout the early 1850s. In March 1853, the Legislative Council of Tasmania required the Lieutenant Governor to appropriate a sufficient sum from the land fund 'to introduce 300 single females from the Shetland Islands'¹²⁰ and, in April, the sum of £5,500 was sent to the CLEC to defray the expense. The colony requested that the departure of the new emigrants occur the following summer,

and recommended the use of the *Lady Montagu* as her Master, Captain Andrew Cheyne, was a native of Shetland, both interested 'in the question of emigration from the North of Scotland' and 'at the same time aware of the requirements of the Colony'.¹²¹

By 1856, however, no group of Shetlanders had yet arrived. The £5,500, the Legislative Council was later to learn, had been used instead by the CLEC to pay for the passage of various groups of emigrants, in total disregard for the colonies' requests: the *William Hammond* had carried Irish and English emigrants (among whom 43 single women)¹²², the *Sir Allan McNab* Highlands families assisted by the HIES. Not one single woman came from Shetland.

The number of young women sent to the Australian colonies through the means of the Shetland Female Emigration Society was no doubt very low as compared to other, later, female emigration schemes. Yet, the enterprise certainly deserves interest among historians as the reactions it triggered and the amount of press coverage it received not only testify to how valuable the Shetland emigrants appeared as females in the colonial context of the time, but also raise fascinating questions yet to be explored as to the appeal exerted from afar by Shetland's distinct ethnic identity. Indeed, while the racial motivations behind the emigration of white British women to reproduce the Anglo-Saxon race in the colonies have been at the core of many works,¹²³ the existence of a possible hierarchy among these women is far less visible (not to say inexistent) in the historiography of the phenomenon. In this respect, and in a more specific Scottish context, it may prove interesting to challenge the purported division between Lowlands and Highlands, or Anglo-Saxons and Celts, by further examining the role possibly played by this third, distinct, Scandinavian, identity in nineteenth century discourses on emigration.

Notes

1. *Adelaide Times*, 27 August 1850, p. 3.
2. Among others M. Prentis, *The Scots in Australia* (Sydney, 2008); M. Harper, *Adventurers and Exile: The Great Scottish Exodus* (London, 2003); E. Richards, *Britannia's Children* (London, 2004); L. Beaton, 'Westralian Scots: Scottish settlement and identity in Western Australia, arrivals 1829–1850', unpublished PhD thesis (Murdoch University, 2004), and B. Wilkie, *The Scots in Australia*, (Woodbridge, 2017).
3. In addition to J. Hammerton's seminal work, 'A Study of Middle-Class Female Emigration from Great Britain, 1830–1914', unpublished PhD diss. (University of British Columbia, 1968), see L. Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860–1930* (Toronto, 2007); Bush, "'The right sort of woman": female emigrators and emigration to the British Empire, 1890–1910', *Women's History Review*, 3:3, 1994, 385–409; Kranidis, *The Victorian Spinster and Colonial Emigration: Contested Subjects* (London, 1999); and, more recently, Ruiz, *British Female Emigration Societies and the New World, 1860–1914* (London, 2017).
4. The only references to it appear to be found in the first pages of Haines's account of the Highland and Island Emigration Society in R. Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*

- (New York, 1997), 220–21, Marjory Harper's *Adventurers and Exiles*, 275, and the chapter "More Women Wanted" in Norah Kendall's short history of the Shetland islands *With Naught but Kin Behind Them, The Shetland of its Early Emigrants* (1998), 175–85.
5. See in particular Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, 1997, 220–21, M. Prentis, 'The Emigrants of the Highland and Island Emigration Society', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 69 (1983): 39–47, and D. MacMillan, "Sir Charles Trevelyan and the Highland and Island Emigration Society", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 49 Part 3, November 1963, 161–188.
 6. Van Diemen's Land was renamed Tasmania in 1856 but the latter name was already in use in the 1840s. Both Van Diemen's Land and Tasmania will therefore be used in this paper.
 7. R. Lenihan, "'In habits, in character, in fact . . . [in] . . . everything except language. . . like the Norwegians": New Zealand's Shetland Migrants', *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, Volume 4, Number 1, Autumn 2010, 221.
 8. The work undertaken by both public organisations and private individuals in sharing Australian collections online has, over time, facilitated this research work by providing additional pieces to what sometimes looks like a giant puzzle, involving actors on both sides of the world at a time when correspondence took as a rule 2 to 3 months.
 9. The islands were only transferred to Scotland in 1469.
 10. J. Gray (ed.), *Scottish population statistics, including Webster's Analysis of population. 1755* (Edinburgh, 1952), Volume 44, xvii.
 11. E. Cheshire, 'The Results of the Census of Great Britain in 1851, with a Description of the Machinery and Processes Employed to Obtain the Returns', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Mar., 1854, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 45–72, 59.
 12. T. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine, Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1995), 22–23. Devine notes however that 'congestion and depopulation could clearly coexist side by side as a result of the complicated interplay of landlord policies, clearances and schemes of assisted emigration'.
 13. Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, 2008, 26.
 14. Under these schemes, an incentive or a reward (i.e. bounty) was paid to recruiting agents in Britain so that they would find suitable skilled labour and ship them out to the new colony which urgently needed workers.
 15. M. Harper, *Emigration from North-East Scotland*, Vol. 1 – Willing Exiles (Aberdeen, 1988), 10–11.
 16. *Ibid.*, 13.
 17. E. Richards, 'The Highland Diaspora and its Antipodean Outliers.' In Marie Ruiz (ed.), *International Migrations in the Victorian Era* (Leiden, 2018), 85.
 18. Parliamentary Papers, Volume 31, Gipps, George, 'Minute of his Excellency the Governor, to the Legislative Council, on presenting a Bill to secure on the Ordinary Revenue of the Colony the payment of Debentures issued to meet the expenses of Immigration', 30th November 1841, 22–23.
 19. See among many others *Few Copies of Letters and Some Remarks upon Sundry Documents on the Subject of Female Emigration by the Superintendent of the Layton Emigrant Ship* (Sydney: 1836).
 20. Lord Goderich, extract from a letter from Lord Howick to the Lords of the Treasury, 16 February 1831, quoted in J. MacArthur, *New South Wales, Its Present State and Future Prospects: Being a Statement, with Documentary Evidence submitted in support of petitions to His Majesty and Parliament* (London, 1837), 108.
 21. 'Final Report of the Committee of the Legislative Council of New South Wales', 1835, in MacArthur, *Ibid.*, 138–141. In 1840, the Emigration Commissioners refused a proposal

- to assist 124 young women from a workhouse, recalling the rule that unmarried females should not be taken unless 'under the protection of their families and near married relatives, or unless they go as servants to cabin passengers by the same ship'. Hammerton, 'A Study of Middle-Class Female Emigration', 1968, 168.
22. Mayhew, 'Labour and the Poor', Letter XI, *The Morning Chronicle*, 23 November, 1849.
23. The Fund was created by two Tory MPs, Lord Herbert and Lord Ashley together with Mary Jane (Lady) Kinnaird, philanthropist and later co-founder of the Young Women's Christian Association, to help poverty-stricken milliners and seamstresses by providing them with the logistical and material assistance necessary to emigrate to the colonies.
24. In 1852, Sir Herbert's Fund was disbanded and merged with Caroline Chisholm's Society.
25. 'The Irish landlords [...] are kinder and better landlords than many we have in Scotland. I will not trust myself to write about the kind of bondage endured in Shetland, where the tenants must fish for any party that chooses to make bargain for them with their proprietor [...] even the Irish have more comfort in their mud huts than the Shetlanders'. *The Scotsman*, 'State of the Shetlanders', 22 April 1846, p. 3.
26. *The London Times*, 20 October 1946; *John O'Groat Journal*, 19 February 1847, p. 3.
27. 'We have only about a third share of the suffrages that send one member to Parliament, and hence, on political grounds, our claims, are very slender'. *John O'Groat Journal*, 19 February 1847, p. 3.
28. *John O'Groat Journal*, 19 February 1847, p. 3.
29. D. MacMillan, 'Sir Charles Trevelyan and the Highland and Island Emigration Society, 1849–1859', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 49 Part 3, November 1963, 161–188, 1963.
30. 'We wish to receive emigrants; we are willing to pay for them', the Speaker of the New South Wales Legislature, Mr. Nicolson, wrote in a letter that was read a couple of months later to the House of Lords. 'There are millions among you dying of hunger; let us have those starving crowds; here they will find a superabundance of the necessities of life. Instead of importing Indian corn to the starving peasant, export the peasant and his family to where the Indian corn grows. The mother country will thus be relieved of a load which is increasing annually, and pressing on her resources in the most fearful manner'. 'Emigration to Australia', *House of Lords Debates*, 1848, cc1.34. Available at <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1848/aug/10/emigration-to-australia#S3V0101P0_18480810_HOL_19> (last accessed 16 April 2016).
31. Richards, 'The Highland Diaspora', 93.
32. When transportation to New South Wales ceased in 1840, the number transported to Van Diemen's Land increased sharply and led to strong and vocal reaction, both in the colony and in London.
33. 'House of Commons, 27 May', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Adviser* (NSW), 6 November 1850, p. 3.
34. V. Molinari, 'L'émigration des femmes célibataires vers les colonies de l'Empire britannique de 1849 à 1865 : entre philanthropie, féminisme et colonisation matrimoniale', in *Femmes et migrations aux XIXe et XXe siècles : regards et représentations*, Revue ILCEA, 34 | 2019, 4. Available at <<https://journals.openedition.org/ilcea/555>> (last accessed 14 March 2022).
35. Lenihan also underlines a 'preparedness', among the men, 'to seek employment elsewhere' and quotes the 1845 *New Statistical Account of Scotland* noting that 'the attachment of Shetland males "to country is not very strong, and effect which may, in some measure, arise from the love of a wandering life, induced by sailor habits, and which so many of the

- young men imbibe, by going annually in the whalers to Greenland” (R. Lenihan, *From Alba to Aotearoa, Profiling New Zealand’s Scots migrants 1840–1920* (Dunedin, 2015), 2).
36. *South Australian Register*, 12 August 1851, p. 2.
37. S. Herbert, Fund for Promoting Female Emigration, *First Report of the Committee*, March 1851, 22.
38. In 1841, the Governor of New South Wales, George Gipps, had insisted: ‘Immigration is not only desired in New South Wales, as elsewhere, for the purpose of increasing the population, or of opening new sources of wealth [...] in New South Wales immigration has been, since the discontinuance of transportation, required, in order to maintain the industry of the colony in a state even of ordinary progressions, the disproportion of the sexes, or the preponderance of males, having been such, when transportation ceased, that the colony barely possessed within itself the means of keeping up its population at its then existing numbers’. George Gipps, ‘Minute of his Excellency’, 22–23.
39. Four years before, in 1845, John Franklin had led two ships, the HMS Erebus and the HMS Terror, carrying 129 crewmembers, into the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. They never returned. In 1848, with no sign of what had happened and at Lady Franklin’s insistence, the British Navy had begun sending out search parties. Franklin herself actively and relentlessly contributed to the search.
40. J.G. Franklin, *The Life, Diaries and Correspondence of Jane Lady Franklin 1792–1875* (Cambridge, 2014), 84–86.
41. *First Annual Report of the British Ladies’ Female Emigrant Society* (London, 1850), 1.
42. *Ibid.*, 2, 4, 6, 7.
43. *John o’ Groat Journal*, 10 August 1849, p. 2.
44. The British Ladies Female Emigrant Society also offered its help in procuring clothes and accessories for the women. *South Australian Register*, 12 August 1851.
45. Kingston, *How to Emigrate*, 1852, 285–6.
46. *South Australian Register*, 29 August 1850, p. 3.
47. Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, 2008, 60.
48. Stephen Walcott, London, to H.G. Kingston, London, 9 April 1850, in MacMillan, ‘Sir Charles Trevelyan and the Highland and Island Emigration Society’, 166.
49. *Adelaide Times*, 27 August 1850, p. 3.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Lenihan also stresses the family nature of the Shetland migration and ‘a tendency for a large number of the Shetland migrants to come to New Zealand in family groups, nuclear and extended’ (“In habits, in character. . .”, 2010, 204, 210).
52. Letter from Captain Robert Craigie, Lerwick, R.N., to W.H.G. Kingston, London, 5 March 1850, in MacMillan, ‘Sir Charles Trevelyan and the Highland and Island Emigration Society’, 166.
53. The Indian had left Plymouth in April 1849 and arrived at Port Adelaide in August 1849. An extensive list of complaints concerning misbehaviours of all kinds was published on arrival.
54. ‘Kingston to the Saint Andrew’s Society, 3 June 1850’, in *Adelaide Observer*, 28 September 1850, p. 1.
55. *Ibid.*
56. The contents of the article may understandably have acted as a strong deterrent for potential emigrants: ‘By recent accounts from Adelaide, we learn that the atrocities perpetrated on board the emigrant vessels that lately arrived at that colony, were of the most harrowing and brutal description. No one, in fact, can read the narrative without the deepest sympathy for the sufferers, in whose case such a degree of inhumanity and

- tyranny was added to the inconvenience of a long sea voyage, and the natural distress at leaving home, in all probability. . . Female passengers are reported to have been actually flogged and otherwise cruelly treated under the cognizance of the surgeons in some cases; while in others their apartments on board, and their persons, were violated by the sanction of these learned gentlemen who were specially appointed to protect them.' *John o'Groat Journal*, 22 March 1850, p. 2.
57. *South Australian Register*, 12 August 1851, p. 3.
 58. 'Saint Andrew's Society' 1851, 58. Reproduced in *Adelaide Observer*, 7 December 1850, p. 4.
 59. *Adelaide Observer*, 28 September 1850, p. 1.
 60. *The Colonial Magazine and East India Review*, John Hector, Secretary of the St Andrew's Society, 4th December 1850, June 1851, p. 520.
 61. *Parliamentary Papers*, Volume 40, Papers related to Emigration, 1851, 'Report for 30th November 1850, St Andrew's Society'.
 62. *Adelaide Observer*, 16 August, 1851, p. 6.
 63. The St Andrew's Immigration Society was set up in Launceston (Victoria) in 1853. In 1854 it established a separate association in Tasmania where it helped in the selection and 'assistance' of Scottish immigrants.
 64. *Parliamentary Papers*, Volume 40, Papers related to Emigration, Copy of a Despatch from Lieut. Governor Sir H.E.F. Young to Early Grey, Adelaide, 3 December 1850 (received 20 May 1851).
 65. *The Colonial Magazine and East India Review*, 'Annual Report of the St Andrew's Society of South Australia', 30th November 1850, June 1851, p. 514.
 66. 'London Correspondence letter by Kingston dated 18th February 1851, *Tasmanian Colonist*, 18 September 1851, p. 4.
 67. 'I need not tell you of the feeling which exists in this country regarding Tasmania, the result of the transportation system to which she has been the victim. Some here even tell me that I am inducing these persons to go to their certain ruin and destruction, and I cannot but feel that I am incurring a very heavy responsibility in engaging in the work, but notwithstanding this I place such perfect confidence in the exertions of yourself and other influential persons, that I resolve to persevere, trusting that such arrangements will be made as may ensure their being not only protected on first landing, but placed in respectable families, who will watch over them for the future.' Letter to William Henty, dated 18 February 1851, in *Launceston Examiner*, 20 September 1851, p. 6.
 68. The *Chronicle*, an advocate of the continuance of transportation, nevertheless saw in these accusations an instrumentalization of the Shetland females for anti-transportation goals: 'If the truth could be known, we think it would be found out that the Shetland females did not express an opinion at all about the "convict country" and the objection was raised for the females by some party in London, who, acting on the advice of the League here, contributed to "abandon the original intention of sending them to these polluted "shores" – in order, very likely, by keeping away free labour, to strengthen the cry-out for bond' 'More Slander', *Cornwall Chronicle*, 22 December 1852, p. 857.
 69. Kingston, Letter dated 24th February 1851, *Colonial Times*, 15 July 1851, p. 3.
 70. *Launceston Examiner*, 19 July 1851, p. 3.
 71. Passenger List of the 'Beulah', Available at <https://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/genealogy/don_tran/emigration/beulah_1851.htm> (last accessed 14 March 2022).

72. Elizabeth Hunter, 26. <https://www.theshipslist.com/ships/australia/charlottejane1852.shtml>.
73. Kingston, *How to Emigrate*, p. 258.
74. 'Final Report of the Committee of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1835', in MacArthur, *New South Wales, Its Present State*, 1837, 138–141, 119.
75. Kingston, *How to Emigrate*, 258.
76. Ibid.
77. *Adelaide Observer*, 28 September 1850, p. 1.
78. *South Australian Register*, 12 August 1851, p. 2.
79. *Launceston Examiner*, 20 September 1851, p. 6.
80. *Adelaide Times*, 27 August 1850, p. 3.
81. *Argus (Melbourne)*, 17 April 1850, p. 2.
82. *Parliamentary Papers*, Vol 40, Emigration, Session 4 Feb–8 August 1851, 'St Andrew's Society, Report of annual meeting, 30th November 1850'.
83. *The Courier* (Hobart), 23 July 1851, p. 2.
84. *Adelaide Observer*, 16 August 1851, p. 6.
85. *South Australian Register*, 12 August 1851, p. 2.
86. 'Final Report of the Committee of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 1835', in MacArthur, *New South Wales, Its Present State*, 1837, 138–141, 119.
87. Ibid., 138–141.
88. Arthur Anderson, MP, 'Female Population of Orkney And Shetland', in *South Australian Register*, 12 August 1851.
89. *South Australian Register*, 12 August 1851, p. 2.
90. Kendall, *With Naught but Kin*, p. 164.
91. J.D. Lang, *Narrative of Proceedings, in England, Scotland and Ireland, During the Years 1847, 1848 and 1849: With a View to Originate an Extensive and Continuous Immigration of a Superior Character from the United Kingdom Into this Territory* (Sydney, 1850), p. 3.
92. *John O' Groat Journal* – 10 August 1849, p. 2.
93. J.D. Lang, *Cooksland in North-Eastern Australia, the future cotton-field of Great Britain, its characteristics and capabilities for European colonization* (London, 1847), 479. See also his pamphlet *Popery in Australia, and the southern hemisphere, and how to check it effectually* (Edinburgh, 1847) published the same year.
94. 'I am as confident as I am of my own existence that these young women, who are almost exclusively Roman Catholics, from the most thoroughly Romish and bigotted parts of Ireland have been selected as free emigrants for Australia, expressly with the view to their becoming the wives of the English and Scotch Protestant shepherds and stockmen of New South Wales, and thereby silently subverting the Protestantism and extending the Romanism in the colony through the vile, Jesuitical, diabolical, system of "mixed marriages". *Letters of Dr John Dunmore Lang in 'The British Banner'*, no 36, 'To the Editor of the British Banner – Christian colonization in Australia' November 15, 1848, National Library of Australia.
95. J.D. Lang, 30 July 1849, Lerwick Reproduced in "Dr Lang's Visit to Shetland", *John o' Groat Journal*, 28 September 1849. On the Earl Grey scheme, see V. Molinari 'The Emigration of Irish Famine Orphan Girls to Australia: The Earl Grey Scheme', in Marie Ruiz (ed.) *International Migrations in the Victorian Era* (Leiden, 2018). On the influence of Scottish Presbyterian dissent in the colonies see Valerie Wallace's *Scottish Presbyterianism and settler colonial politics*, 2018. As Wallace convincingly argues, Lang's

- evangelical Presbyterianism cause him 'to protect the Presbyterian community from the domination of Anglicanism and to champion Britain's providential mission to people the colony with virtuous Protestants' (83).
96. J. Wolfe, 'Anti-Catholicism and the British Empire, 1815–1914', in Carey, Hilary M. (ed.), *Empires of Religion* (Basingstoke, 2008), 43.
97. For the first time since the reign of Mary Tudor, and partly as a way to better administer the large number of Catholic Irish that had been flocking into England during the Famine, a papal bull had established thirteen sees and the archdiocese of Westminster in a hierarchy consistent with that of Catholic countries. This decision, which came to be known as the Papal Aggression (from a phrase coined by the *Times*) had immediately provoked a national outcry and fuelled the fears of the Protestant majority. G. Parsons, *Religion in Victorian Britain, Vol. IV: Interpretations* (Manchester, 1989), 117.
98. G. Vaughan, *Anti-Catholicism and British Identities, in Britain, Canada and Australia, 1880s–1920s* (London, 2022), 17.
99. Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, 1997, 187.
100. Kingston, 'Emigrant Manuals No 4: Arrival in the Colony', *Emigrant Tracts no XVII*, London: SPCK, 1851, 49–50.
101. *South Australian Register*, 12 August 1851, p.2.
102. See 12th *General Report of the CLEC*, BPP 1852, vol. XVIII, 22.
103. Kingston, *How to Emigrate*, 287.
104. 'It may be true that the Western Highlander is not quite so industrious at home as he might be', one could read in the *Launceston Examiner*, 'but it is so with all the Celtic race'. *Launceston Examiner*, 4 June 1853, p. 3.
105. Trevelyan to Mc Neill, 15 March 1853, in MacMillan, 'Sir Charles Trevelyan and the Highland and Island Emigration Society', 182.
106. *The Courier* (Hobart), 23 July 1851, p. 2.
107. A. Grydehøj, 'Ethnicity and the origins of local identity in Shetland, UK – Part I: Picts, Vikings, Fairies, Finns, and Ayrans', *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures* (Copenhagen, 2013) 2, 39–48 & 107–114, 42.
108. See A. Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in 19th Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2002); Jensen-Rix, 'The European Circulation of Nordic Texts in the Romantic Period', R.W. Jensen-Rix, 'The European Circulation of Nordic Texts in the Romantic Period', in P Rabinowitz (ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Literature* (Oxford, 2017).
109. *The Englishwoman's Journal*, 'From a lady long resident in New South Wales, and intimate with the requirements and the life of the colony', March 1861, pp. 1–2.
110. Kingston, *How to Emigrate*, 286.
111. *South Australian Register*, 'Female population of Orkney and Shetland', 12 August 1851, p. 2.
112. J. Jupp, *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*. (Cambridge, 2001), 800.
113. Early settlement, as has already been stressed, had been dominated by Lowland Scots. This peak in emigration from the Highlands and Islands was only temporary and coincided with years when colonising bodies at home encouraged this migration in an effort solve poverty issues related to the Famine and the social and economic disruptions entailed by the Clearances while providing the manpower needed in the colonies (Beaton, *Westralian Scots*, 2004, p. 32).

114. Carr, A. Letter to Edward Grimes, in M.J. Murray, 'Prayers and pastures: Moidart emigrants in Victoria, 1852–1920'. unpublished PhD thesis (Deaking University, 2006), 193.
115. The *Ontario* left Liverpool with 309 passengers, the majority from the Highlands, most from the Isle of Skye. 36 died from typhus during the passage. On arrival at Sydney on 30 November 1852, the ship was put into quarantine until 15 December.
116. How & Walker to C.E. Trevelyan, 28 December 1852, in Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, 1997, p. 44.
117. Murray, 'Prayers and pastures: Moidart emigrants in Victoria, 1852–1920'. PhD (Deaking University, 2006), 184.
118. *Cornwall Chronicle*, 19 December 1855, p. 3. Unlike the *Launceston Examiner*, which was considered to be 'a very respectable paper especially amongst the better sort of persons on the Northern side,' the *Chronicle* was referred to by Van Diemen's Land's Colonial Secretary, J.B. Bicheno, as 'an extremely scurrilous paper' (Bell, "'An extremely scurrilous paper'", 1993, p. 4). Besides, the disagreements over transportation with Kingston and other colonists should lead us to see in some of its attacks against the assisted emigrants attacks against the British government and anti-transportation supporters.
119. 'Report of the St. Andrew's Society of South Australia for 30th November 1852', *South Australian Register*, 4 December 1852, p. 3.
120. The request was accepted by W. Denison, Government House. *Hobarton Guardian, or True Friend of Tasmania*, 16 March 1853, p. 3.
121. Kendall, *With Naught but Kin Behind Them*, 1998, 179.
122. William Hammond, List of Passengers. Available at <<https://www.theshipslist.com/ships/australia/williamhammond1854.shtml>> (last accessed 17 June 2022).
123. See among others Perry, "'Fair Ones of a Purer Caste": White Women and Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia', *Feminist Studies*, 23, (3), Autumn (1997), 501–524 and *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto, 2001).