



## [Settlement at Glen Gravir]

The crofting village of Gravir (44 crofts), in the Parish of Lochs, Isle of Lewis, showed a steady rise in population in the 70 years from the 1841 Census, at 233 people, to the peak population of 468 people in 1911, a rise of over 100% in 70 years. From 1911 there is a steady decline in the Gravir population.

Population statistics for the crofting townships of Pairc:

Township	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Habost	53	68	89	96	98	113	121	111
Kershader	70	81	84	104	114	103	111	101
Garyvard	46	63	77	94	103	101	74	100
Caverstay	29		38	42	78	45	54	64
Cromore	127	170	182	221	259	271	294	284
Crobeg	9	50	30	10	11	6	3	3
Marvig	98	146	189	206	206	205	225	206
Calbost	67	105	122	158	183	197	200	187
Gravir	233	270	326	353	368	389	416	468
Lemreway	179		209	236	245	261	316	335
Orinsay	148					4	2	5
Steimreway	62	89						
Eishken			11	17	29	11	14	14
Total	1121	1042	1357	1357	1694	1706	1830	1882

Gravir was grossly overcrowded in 1911 with an average of well over 10 people per croft of about 5 acres of inbye land each, or less than half an acre per person on average. The passing of the long-awaited Smallholders (Scotland) Act 1911, which took 5 years before Parliament, brought a strong feeling of optimism and hope to the deprived landless and homeless families.

Agitation for new crofts started again as soon as the First World War ended, but when it became clear that neither the Government or the new Island landlord, Lord Leverhulme, would not support the establishment of any more re-settlement schemes in the former crofter townships of Park, the Gravir people took the initiative themselves and began to move out to Gravir common at Glen Gravir from 1920 onwards.

There, they reclaimed new landholdings for themselves, built new dwelling houses, barns and stockyards and boundary fences etc., and they felt free for the first time in their lives. At first they did not get any financial assistance or official blessing, but they campaigned for recognition as a Dept. of Agriculture settlement for 12 years until the Government recognised the Glenside Gravir settlement in 1934. Then they qualified for financial assistance for housing and fencing etc.

The Glenside re-settlement scheme provided for 15 new landholdings, but as usual it was too little and too late and two of the fifteen landholdings were never occupied by a family, crofts Nos. 9 & 14. Serious emigration and de-population set in in the 1920's and the herring fishing, on which crofting depended to a large extent, never recovered after the loss of our European markets of Germany, the Baltic States and Russia, as a result of the First World War.

The Glenside re-settlement scheme marked the end of a century and a half of population clearance and re-distribution in the Park Peninsula. For over 100 years from the 1830's there were scores of landless, and therefore homeless, families living in sub-standard temporary homes, pleading and petitioning the Authorities for a few acres of land to cultivate and build a decent home for their families, but no-one listened until emigration and de-population emptied the Parish of Lochs of its population. In the end they gave up the struggle, to the eternal shame of the administration that preferred to back the Park Deer Forest.

[ends]

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