

The University
Glasgow W2

26th February 1959

Dear Mr Mackay

Thank you very much for your letter and for counting up the War casualties – the numbers put a different complexion on the population figures. In my letter, I was saying that for 1939 – 1957, there were 320 births and 307 deaths registered in Lochs Parish (for Park) and in Stornoway (where events took place outside the civil Parish – I expect a few people were born or died in other places but it is quite impossible to trace them in official registers). Thus if we add 33 War casualties, we find that there was a ‘natural decrease’ – in other words the population is no longer replacing itself in Park. Of course emigration counts for most of the folk that are leaving.

This was the point on which I was seeking your help. As the paper is now away for proof reading I can’t quote the exact statistics, but you’ll get them when the paper is printed. If you could give me a quick answer, I could probably slip such comments as are necessary into the paper in the proof stage.

In Park, the population appears to have declined from 1500 in 1939 to 908 today. Now firstly, this decline is accounted for by ‘natural decrease’ –

Births (320) less deaths (307) and War casualties (33) = -20.

So emigration must equal 1500 (less 20) = 1480, less the present population of 908 – so that means 572 people have left the area since 1939 – apparently.

But in my count I only have 369. Now it’s very possible that I was not told of some – it’s a long time since 1939 anyway. But another idea occurred to my wife. Just as you counted the seasonally employed folk in the population for 1953, so did I, but what of the people permanently away not married but in permanent employment say in Glasgow, and still coming home and perhaps sending home money? There are 184 of them in Park in 1958.

My wife reckoned that in Sollas, North Uist, there are more people permanently away now than in 1939. She remembers crofts with 2 or 3 men at home working the croft. It is different now. I wonder if you could cast your mind back to 1939 and try to think just how many people then would fall into this ‘permanently away’ category – if you could do it for Kershader, and perhaps Habost, that would be quite sufficient at present – it would test the idea.

There is also another possibility: - the 1939 count (National Identity Card Census) may have included some evacuees from Glasgow. I definitely did not take this into account when asking for ‘emigration’, so the 369 do not include such folk. Were there many evacuees for Glasgow in Park? Perhaps Mrs Macrae at the school would remember for her school roll – but if you could give me an estimate for Kershader and Habost, that would again be a pointer.

For a later date there is one really good way of testing this. Do you think you could write down a list of everybody in Kershader for 1939 (October), and put against each name just what has happened to him or her – death, emigration etc? There’s no hurry for this, but it would certainly be the ultimate answer as to what the population decrease is really due to.

It seems that what we really want to know is as follows: -
Population in 1939 (from Identity Card Census) and number of evacuees.
Number of people permanently away in 1939.
Births, deaths and War casualties for 1939 – 1958.
Population in 1958.
Number permanently away in 1958.

From these figures we can really tell: -

1. If there has been an increase in permanent employment outside Park since 1939.
2. If evacuees were numerous enough to upset the calculations: On this point it is clear that in all the crafting areas we have studied, the 1939 figures show up as a slight 'bump' in the population graphs.
What we want to know, just how many people have really left for good since 1939

Perhaps this may seem a long way of going about the problem, but I am convinced that until all these factors are really assessed we will not know the real reasons for the fact that 1/3 of Park's population have left the area since 1939.

I would have answered your letter before now but I have had a spell in bed with influenza, which is raging down here. I hope you have escaped it.

I am most grateful for your interest and help.

Kindest Regards

Yours sincerely

James B. Caird