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The **Jacobite Risings** were a series of uprisings, rebellions, and wars in Britain and Ireland occurring between 1688 and 1746. The uprisings were aimed at returning James VII of Scotland and II of England, and later his descendants of the House of Stuart, to the throne after he was deposed by Parliament during the Glorious Revolution. The series of conflicts takes its name from Jacobus, the Latin form of James.

The major Jacobite Risings were called the Jacobite Rebellions by the ruling governments. The "First Jacobite Rebellion" and "Second Jacobite Rebellion" were known respectively as "The Fifteen" and "The Forty-Five", after the years in which they occurred (1715 and 1745). Although each Jacobite Rising had unique features, they were part of a larger series of military campaigns by Jacobites attempting to restore the Stuart kings to the thrones of Scotland and England (and after 1707, Great Britain). James VII of Scotland and II of England was deposed in 1688 and the thrones were claimed by his daughter Mary II jointly with her husband, the Dutch-born William of Orange.

After the House of Hanover succeeded to the British throne in 1714, the risings continued, and intensified. They continued until the last Jacobite Rebellion ("the Forty-Five"), led by Charles Edward Stuart (the Young Pretender), who was soundly defeated at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. This ended any realistic hope of a Stuart restoration.



The Highland Clearances

The Highland Clearances (Scottish Gaelic: *Fuadaich nan Gàidheal*, the expulsion of the Gael) were forced displacements of the population of the Scottish Highlands in the 18th century. It led to mass emigration to the coast, the Scottish Lowlands, and abroad. It was part of a process of agricultural change throughout the United Kingdom, but was particularly notorious due to the late timing, the lack of legal protection for year-by-year tenants under Scots law, the abruptness of the change from the clan system and the brutality of many of the evictions.

From the late 16th century the law required clan leaders to regularly appear in Edinburgh to provide bonds for the conduct of anyone on their territory. This brought a tendency among chiefs to see themselves as landlords. The lesser clan-gentry increasingly took up droving, taking cattle along the old unpaved drove roads to sell in the Lowlands. This brought them wealth and land ownership within the clan, though the Highlands continued to have problems of overpopulation and poverty.

The various Jacobite Risings brought repeated British government efforts to curb the clans culminating after the 1746 Battle of Culloden with brutal repression, and the Act of Proscription of 1746 incorporating the Dress Act required all swords to be surrendered to the government and prohibited wearing of tartans or kilts. The Tenures Abolition Act ended the feudal bond of military service and the Heritable Jurisdictions Act removed the virtually sovereign power the chiefs had over their clan. The extent of enforcement of the prohibitions was variable and sometimes related to a clan's support of the government during the rebellion, but overall it led to the destruction of the traditional clan system and of the supportive social structures of small agricultural townships.

From around 1725, in the aftermath of the first Jacobite Rising (known as **the 'Fifteen'**) clansmen had begun immigrating to the Americas in increasing numbers. The Disarming Act of 1716 and the Clan Act made ineffectual attempts to subdue the Scottish Highlands, so eventually troops were sent in. Government garrisons were built or extended in the Great Glen at Fort William, Kiliwhimin (later renamed Fort Augustus) and Fort George, Inverness, as well as barracks at Ruthven, Bernera and Inversnaid, linked to the south by the *Wade roads* constructed for Major-General George Wade. These had the effect of limiting organizational travel and choking off news and so further isolated the clans and limited the unrest to local outbreaks.

Nonetheless, things remained unsettled over the whole decade.

In 1725 Wade raised the *independent companies* of the Black Watch as a militia to keep peace in the unruly Highlands, which increased the droves of clansmen now immigrating to the Americas. Increasing demand in Britain for cattle and sheep and the creation of new breeds of sheep, such as the black-faced which could be reared in the mountainous country, allowed higher rents for landowners and chiefs to meet the costs of an aristocratic lifestyle. As a result, many families living on a subsistence level were displaced, exacerbating the unsettled social climate. In 1792 tenant farmers from Strathrusdale led a protest against the policy by driving over 6,000 sheep off the land surrounding Ardrross. This action was dealt with at the highest levels in government, with the Home Secretary Henry Dundas getting involved. The Black Watch was mobilized, halted the drive and brought the ring leaders to trial. They were found guilty, but later escaped custody and disappeared.



The Year of the Sheep: the first Clearances

Another wave of mass emigration came in 1792, known as the Year of the Sheep to Scottish Highlanders. The people were accommodated in poor crofts or small farms in coastal areas where farming could not sustain the communities and they were expected to take up fishing. Some were put directly onto emigration ships to Nova Scotia (Antigonish and Pictou counties and later Cape Breton), the Kingston area of Ontario and the Carolinas of the American colonies. There may have been a religious element in these forced removals since a good number of the Highlanders were Roman Catholic. This is reflected by the majority representation of Catholics in areas and towns of Nova Scotia such as Antigonish and Cape Breton. However, almost all of the very large movement of Highland settlers to the Cape Fear region of North Carolina was Presbyterian. (This is evidenced even today in the presence and extent of Presbyterian congregations and adherents in the region.)

As in Ireland, the potato crop failed in the mid-19th century, and a widespread outbreak of cholera further weakened the Highland population. The ongoing clearance policy resulted in starvation, deaths, and a secondary clearance, when families either migrated voluntarily or were forcibly evicted. There were many deaths of children and old people. As there were few alternatives, people emigrated, joined the British army, or moved to the growing urban cities, like Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee in Lowland Scotland and Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Liverpool in the north of England. In places some people were given economic incentives to move, but few historians dispute that in many instances landlords used violent methods.

The **Highland Potato Famine** was perhaps more of a major agrarian crisis than a true famine, but *Highland Potato Famine* is now in widespread use as a name for a period of 19th century Highland and Scottish history. True famine was a real prospect throughout the period, and certainly it was one of severe malnutrition, serious disease, crippling financial hardship and traumatic disruption to essentially agrarian communities. The causes of the crisis were in many respects similar to those of the very real Great Irish Famine of about the same time.

In the mid-19th century, most crofters in the Highlands of Scotland were very dependent on potatoes as a source of food. This was because they had been deprived of access to most of the land they had worked in previous centuries and were expected to subsist on very small areas of land. The potato was perhaps the only crop that would provide enough food from such land areas. The land was generally of poor quality in exposed coastal locations. Very similar conditions had developed in Ireland.

In the Highlands, in 1846, potato crops were blighted by a fungal disease. Crops failed, and the following winter was especially cold and snowy. Similar crop failures began earlier in Ireland, but famine relief programs were perhaps better organized and more effective in the Highlands and Islands. During 1847, Sir Edward Pine Coffin (Yes, that's his real name) used naval vessels to distribute oatmeal and other supplies. Nonetheless, in Wick, Cromarty and Invergordon, there were protests about the *export* of grain from local harbors. Troops were used to quell the protests. Crop failures continued into the 1850s, and famine relief programs became semi-permanent operations.

Crofters were not simply given their oatmeal rations: they were expected to work for them, eight hours a day, six days a week. Relief programs resulted in the building of destitution roads. Also, they produced projects with very little (if any) real value, and their administration was very bureaucratic, employing legions of clerks to ensure compliance with complex sets of rules, though clerks feel hunger too and might have taken another job if one, which they thought would feed them better, had been available. The daily ration was set at 24 ounces per man, 12 ounces per woman and 8 ounces per child.

Some landlords worked to lessen the effects of the famine on their crofting tenants. Rather than accept any real responsibility for the plight of crofting tenants, many landlords resorted to eviction. In particular, John Gordon of Cluny became the target of criticism in Scottish newspapers when many of his crofters were reduced to living on the streets of Inverness. Gordon resorted to hiring a fleet of ships and forcibly transporting his Hebridean crofters to Canada, where they were simply dumped on Canadian authorities.

To put it another way, for whatever reasons, some landlords supplied a free passage to what was hoped would be a better life, in Nova Scotia and Canada. It should be made clear that the eviction of people unable to pay their rents was not peculiar to this area. On this

occasion, hard as it was, the people had somewhere better to go and the means of getting there.

During the ten years following 1847, from throughout the Highlands, over 16,000 crofters were shipped overseas to Canada and Australia. In 1857, potato crops were again growing without serious blight.

Second phase of the Clearances

It was only in the mid-nineteenth century that the second, more brutal phase of the Clearances began; this was well after the 1822 visit by George IV, when lowlanders set aside their previous distrust and hatred of the Highlanders and identified with them as national symbols. However, the cumulative effect was particularly devastating to the cultural landscape of Scotland in a way that did not happen in other areas of Britain.

Elizabeth Leveson-Gower, Duchess of Sutherland, and her husband George Leveson-Gower, 1st Duke of Sutherland, conducted brutal clearances between 1811 and 1820. Evictions at the rate of 2,000 families in one day were not uncommon. Many starved and froze to death where their homes had once been. The Duchess of Sutherland, on seeing the starving tenants on her husband's estate, remarked in a letter to a friend in England, "Scotch people are of happier constitution and do not fatten like the larger breed of animals."

While the collapse of the clan system can be attributed to more economic factors and the repression that followed the Battle of Culloden, the widespread evictions resulting from the Clearances severely affected the viability of the Highland population and culture. To this day, the population in the Scottish Highlands is sparse and the culture is diluted, and there are many more sheep than people. Although the 1901 census did return 230,806 Gaelic speakers in Scotland, today this number has fallen to below 60,000. Counties of Scotland in which over 50% of the population spoke Gaelic as their native language in 1901, included Sutherland (71.75%), Ross and Cromarty (71.76%), Inverness (64.85%) and Argyll (54.35%). Small percentages of Gaelic speakers were recorded in counties such as Nairn, Bute, Perth and Caithness.

What the Clearances started, however, the First World War almost completed. A huge percentage of Scots were among the vast numbers killed, (Scotland lost over 147,000 men in World War One - 20% of Britain's losses while only being 10% of the total British population) and this greatly affected the remaining population of Gaelic speakers in Scotland.

The 1921 census, the first conducted after the end of the war, showed a significant decrease in the proportion of the population that spoke Gaelic. The percentage of Gaelic speakers in Argyll had fallen to well below 50% (34.56%), and the other counties mentioned above had experienced similar decreases.

However, the Clearances did result in significant emigration of Highlanders to North America and Australasia — where today are found considerably more descendants of Highlanders than in Scotland itself. One estimate for Cape Breton, Nova Scotia has 25,000 Gaelic-speaking Scots arriving as immigrants between 1775 and 1850. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were an estimated 100,000 Gaelic speakers in Cape Breton, but because of economic migration to English-speaking areas and the lack of Gaelic education in the Nova Scotian school system, the numbers of Gaelic speakers fell dramatically. By the beginning of the 21st century, the number of native Gaelic speakers had fallen to well below 1,000.

Until next month...

Sláinte