Poverty and the Poorhouse: The Impact of Gender, Family and Migration on the Provision of Welfare in Highland Perthshire 1864 – 1884

Student Dissertation

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Poverty and the Poorhouse:
The Impact of Gender, Family and Migration
on the Provision of Welfare in Highland Perthshire
1864 – 1884.

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Bunty and Bill McClure
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The Poor Law (Scotland) Amendment Act of 1845 secularised the administration of poor relief in Scotland and legalised the building of poorhouses to provide for the aged and infirm, physically or mentally disabled and the destitute. Unlike English workhouses, Scottish poorhouses did not provide for the unemployed and able-bodied. Eligibility for poor relief was determined according to debility and destitution with moral concepts of the deserving and undeserving poor dictating the type of welfare offered and accepted. Relief decisions were made at parish level and could vary between localities with local Poor Law Inspectors interpreting national guidelines according to local custom.

In 1864, the Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse opened its doors to provide indoor relief for the poor of eleven parishes in Highland Perthshire. This region of rural Scotland had experienced high levels of poverty with significantly more women than men receiving poor relief. This was exacerbated by changes in agricultural practices leading to depopulation through migration and emigration. Relatively few local studies of the Scottish Poor Laws have been undertaken, with this area of scholarship considered as having largest gap in the historiography of experiences of the poor in Britain. To date no detailed scholarship of Highland Perthshire has been undertaken and this study therefore aims to address these gaps in Scottish Poor Law historiography. It will do so by examining how gender influenced the provision, administration and experience of poor relief in rural Scotland through analysis of the Poorhouse inmates between 1864 and 1884. Using quantitative and qualitative methodologies, it tests the contention that women were more vulnerable to poverty than men, concluding that being female did predispose an individual to poverty and this was exacerbated by the family status, illegitimacy and migration.
## CONTENTS

Abstract

Contents

List of Charts

List of Figures

List of Tables

Personal Statement / Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

2. Gender, Destitution and the Deserving Poor

3. Illegitimacy, Eligibility and Child Welfare

4. Migration, Family and Kinship

5. Conclusion

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Appendix 3

Appendix 4

Appendix 5

Bibliography
# LIST OF CHARTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chart 2.1</td>
<td>Percentage of registered females and males receiving poor relief within the national population of Scotland, the county of Perthshire and the Poorhouse Union, 1864-1881</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 2.2</td>
<td>Percentage of registered females receiving poor relief within the national population of Scotland, the county of Perthshire and the Poorhouse Union, 1864-1881</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 2.3</td>
<td>Percentage of registered males receiving poor relief within the national population of Scotland, the county of Perthshire and the Poorhouse Union, 1864-1881</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 2.4</td>
<td>Age and gender of Poorhouse inmates, 1864-1884</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 2.5</td>
<td>Marital status of Poorhouse inmates, 1864-1884</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 3.1</td>
<td>The percentage of persons who accepted and rejected the offer of the Poorhouse as the sole mode of relief from the Parishes in the Poorhouse Union, 1864-1884</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 3.2</td>
<td>Number of women with illegitimate pregnancies and children and number of illegitimate children admitted to the Poorhouse, 1864-1884</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 3.3</td>
<td>Occupations of all women with children admitted to the Poorhouse by percentage and number, 1864-1884</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 3.4</td>
<td>Occupations of women with illegitimate children admitted to the Poorhouse by percentage and number, 1864-1884</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 4.1</td>
<td>Mean percentage of female and male inmates in the Poorhouse according to birth parish or location of birth, 1864-1884</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**LIST OF FIGURES**

| Figure 2.1 | Map showing the location of the county of Perthshire within Scotland and the Highlands | 8 |
| Figure 2.2 | Map showing the locations of the Poorhouse Union Parishes in Highland Perthshire | 10 |
| Figure 2.3 | Map showing the location of the Poorhouse in relation to Logierait Village and Ballinluig Railway Station | 19 |
| Figure 2.4 | Photograph of the Poorhouse Building, Logierait | 19 |
| Figure 3.1 | Map showing the parish location of farms where Catherine Fleming and her son Donald lived and were employed as domestic and farm servants | 40 |
| Figure 4.1 | Map showing family migration pattern of Eliza Cameron and family, 1838-1874 | 50 |
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1  Geographical area and size of population of Poorhouse Union parishes in 1861, 1871 and 1881  9

Table 3.1  Numbers and percentages of persons who accepted and rejected the offer of the Poorhouse as the sole method of relief in the Poorhouse Union, 1864-1872  31

Table 3.2  Number of women with children admitted to the Poorhouse by type of debility, 1864-1884  33

Table 4.1  Mean numbers and percentages of male and female Poorhouse inmates according to birth parish or location of birth, 1864-1884  47
PERSONAL STATEMENT

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at The Open University or at any other university or institution. Parts of this dissertation are built on work I submitted for assessment as part of A825.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation has been researched and written whilst working at home during the global Covid-19 pandemic, with national and regional lockdowns and restrictions on movement and access to libraries and archives. It has been a huge challenge, but one which has been a welcome focus during a very challenging time.

I would like to thank Dr. Jane Adams for her invaluable help, positive feedback and encouragement in supervising this dissertation. I would also like to thank all the archive staff at Perth and Kinross Archives for their help and support in providing access to material and making me welcome in a safe environment during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. In particular, thank you to Claire Devine for her interest and encouragement in this research.

Special thanks to Linda McClure for her unwavering support and encouragement during this MA and dissertation. Final thanks to my dogs for staying up with me at all hours and making me take regular breaks for dog walks.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

On 1 September 1859, representatives of eight parish Poor Law Boards met at the Logierait Inn in the rural Scottish village of Logierait in Highland Perthshire and agreed to jointly establish a poorhouse for the area. The all male board included seven landowners, three clergymen and the factor for the Marquis of Breadalbane.\(^1\) The aim was to provide suitable lodging for those in their parishes who were ‘infirm in body and weak in mind […] the impotent Poor who are friendless and unfit to manage themselves’. It would also ‘secure the pregnant with regular attendance of the Medical Officer in cases of distress and sickness’.\(^2\) Four years later on Monday 25 January 1864, with eleven parishes now participating and the Duke of Atholl providing the land, the Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse (hereafter ‘the Poorhouse’) opened its doors to receive its first occupants. Built to accommodate up to 110 individuals, known as inmates, the Poorhouse generally only housed between 40 and 50 people providing relief for the poor in the parishes of Blair Atholl, Caputh, Dowally and Dunkeld, Dull, Fortingall, Kenmore, Killin, Little Dunkeld, Logierait, Moulin and Weem. These parishes combined to form the Poorhouse Union, which covered a geographical area of 1248 square miles (848,267 acres) with a total population of 20,852 in 1861 reducing to 18,657 by 1881.\(^3\)

This study asks how gender influenced the provision, administration and experience of poor relief in rural Scotland following the 1845 Poor Law (Scotland) Act. It examines who was eligible for poor relief and how moral concepts defined the type of welfare offered and

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\(^1\) Perth and Kinross Archives (hereafter ‘PKA’), CC1/19/1/1/1, Poorhouse Minute Book 1859-1876, 1 September 1859.

\(^2\) PKA, CC1/19/1/1/1, 7 July 1861.

\(^3\) Scotland Census, (1861), (1881).
accepted. It tests whether the Poorhouse acted as an aid or deterrent to unmarried mothers and questions the effect of migration, and family and kinship support on levels of poverty. The study covers a twenty-year period from 1864 to 1884 following the opening of the Poorhouse and focuses predominantly on the female inmates to determine how poverty was linked to gender.

The historiography of poverty in Scotland has largely focused on macro studies of socio-economic change and trends in population growth, industrialisation, urbanisation, migration and emigration.4 Scholarship of the Scottish Poor Laws has also concentrated on the historic and national context concentrating on the ideology, governance and procedural relationship between local authorities and the national supervisory body. These include narrative descriptions of the Old Scottish Poor Laws by Thomas Ferguson, Jean Lindsay and Robert Cage.5 Additionally, Ian Levitt and Christopher Smout’s presentation of the data collected for the 1844 Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, provides a demographic breakdown of poverty in Scotland at that time.6 The architecture and administrative framework of the New Scottish Poor Law following the 1845 Act is outlined by Audrey Paterson.7

English local studies have led the scholarship of poverty in Britain using history from below methodologies to reflect the perspectives of the poor and the impact of national laws at local

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level. In comparison, few local studies have been undertaken in Scotland, which has been
described as having the largest gap in scholarship within Britain regarding experiences of the
poor.\textsuperscript{8} The existing historiography of local Scottish poverty includes Rosalind Mitcheson’s
key study of the Old Scottish Poor law.\textsuperscript{9} Studies examining poor relief under the New
Scottish Poor Law of 1845 include the work of Wendy Gordon on gender and poverty, Peter
Jones and Stephen King on pauper petitions and agency and Andrew Blaikie’s extensive work
on illegitimacy, migration, and political, moral and social economy.\textsuperscript{10} This study will test
Gordon’s hypothesis that poverty in Scotland under the 1845 Act was far from a ‘random
hazard’ with women more likely than men to be poor.\textsuperscript{11} This will be undertaken within the
context of similar work undertaken by Blaikie in northwest and northeast Scotland, Mitchison
in relation to the Old Scottish Poor and Samantha Williams on gender poverty and the Old
English Poor Law.\textsuperscript{12}

Jones and King highlight the scarcity of local Scottish studies and suggest that, despite a
wealth of archival material in county record offices and archives, historians of welfare have
largely disregarded these.\textsuperscript{13} In addition, they argue that the differences between Scottish
legislation and that of England and Wales precludes the use of criteria established by the

\textsuperscript{8} Peter Jones and Steven King, ‘Voices from the Far North: Pauper Letters and the Provision of Welfare in
\textsuperscript{9} Rosalind Mitchison, \textit{The Old Poor Law in Scotland – The Experience of Poverty, 1574-1845} (Edinburgh:
\textsuperscript{10} Wendy M. Gordon, ‘The Demographics of Scottish Poverty: Paisley’s Applicants for Relief, 1861 and 1871’,
After Their Own Fashion: Infant Lives and Family Biographies in Southwest Scotland, 1855-1939, \textit{Scottish
Economic & Social History}, 18 (1998), 95-113; ‘Household Mobility in Rural Scotland: The Impact of the Poor
Eilidh Garrett, Ros Davies, ‘Migration, Living Strategies and Illegitimate Childbearing: A Comparison of Two
Scottish Settings, 1871-1881’ in Alysa Levene, Thomas Nutt, Samantha Williams (eds.), \textit{Illegitimacy in Britain,
1700-1920} (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan: 2005).
\textsuperscript{11} Gordon (2010).
\textsuperscript{12} Mitchison, p. 92. Samantha Williams, \textit{Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle under the English Poor Law 1760-1834}
\textsuperscript{13} Jones and King, p. 76-78.
historiography of the English and Welsh Poor Laws, emphasising the need for further scholarship. This study will therefore answer their call for further scholarship into experiences of the poor at local level to address the gaps in Scottish historiography.

A quantitative approach will be used to assess statistics of poverty to contextualise pauper demographics at local level and place them within a regional and national context. The key primary sources for this are the census and Scottish Poor Law records which provide data on the number of poor relieved each year at national, county and parish level. Qualitative analysis will then be undertaken to create case studies or pauper biographies using Poorhouse records, civil registration records and census enumerator schedules.

Blaikie and Gordon have used Poor Law application registers, which record the history of a person’s claims for relief to create rich case studies. However, the application records have not survived for the parishes of Highland Perthshire, which has required deeper mining of existing sources. In this regard, the pauper biographies have been constructed using the comprehensive Poorhouse records including inmate registers, minute books and books of letters written by the Poorhouse Governor to the local Parochial Boards (unfortunately the replies do not survive). Poor Law records from the Parochial Boards of the parishes in the Poorhouse Union have also been consulted, but these are less comprehensive with missing time periods. These sources when combined provide information on place of birth, age, reason for admission, parents (in some cases), occupation, length of time in the Poorhouse and reason for dismissal (again in some cases). Despite restrictions on access to archives and academic libraries due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been possible to combine evidence from published and unpublished sources to provide rich case studies.

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The methodology for the quantitative analysis in this study has been developed in order to compare levels of poverty and number of inmates according to demographics of age, gender, marital status and birthplace. The qualitative analysis will use a methodology employed by Blaikie to link records of life-events of births, marriages and deaths with census enumerators’ books and records of the Scottish Poor Law.\(^\text{15}\) The latter two sources Blaikie notes are rarely used in conjunction with each other or with civil registration records, with Scottish Poor Law records particularly underutilised. Linking data from these sources can create rich biographical accounts, enabling the life stories and circumstances of pauper inmates to be discovered. This history from below approach will be used to produce what Barry Reay terms a microhistory, where ‘the local becomes the site for the consideration of much wider issues’.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{15}\) Blaikie, ‘Unhappy’, pp. 97-98.
CHAPTER 2. GENDER, DESTitution AND THE DESERVING POOR

This chapter asks to what extent gender influenced the provision and experience of poor relief in rural Scotland. It will determine who was eligible for poor relief and how moral notions of the deserving and undeserving poor dictated who received relief. It will test the findings of Gordon, Blaikie and Williams that women were more likely to be poor than men and that being female predisposed an individual to poverty. To contextualise the study, an overview of the geography, rural economy and history of poverty in the area will be outlined. This will be followed by a summary of the workings of the New Scottish Poor Law following the 1845 Act. A demographic analysis of poor law statistics will highlight gender differences in the number of females and males registered poor within Scotland, the county of Perthshire and the Poorhouse Union. Poorhouse statistics will then be evaluated to determine inmate demographics of gender, age and marital status. Finally, the chapter will provide insights into the lived experiences of the poor through case studies of typical inmates.

This local study is focused on the Highland region of Perthshire, the fourth largest county in Scotland, which stretches 77 miles from east to west and 63 miles from north to south as shown in Figure 2.1. It has a total area of 2523 square miles and was the eighth largest county for population during the nineteenth century. A great fault line divides the Highland and Lowland areas, splitting the county into two distinct regions and encompassing a range of differing landscapes, from mountains and lochs, to rivers, wild moors, passes and glens, waterfalls and forests. For this reason, tourism had long been associated with the county due

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to its natural beauty and links to romantic histories such as Sir Walter Scott’s 1828 novel, *The Fair Maid of Perth*, which described Perthshire as the most varied and beautiful of all the provinces in Scotland.³

During the nineteenth century, the geological divide mirrored the cultural divide between the two regions with native Gaelic speakers in the Highland areas and English speakers in the Lowlands. Highland Perthshire was among the first regions in the Highlands to endure extensive depopulation due to changes in land tenure and agricultural practices. Its history of land clearance is, however, less well known than the higher profile clearances in Sutherland which came to represent the cruelties and human suffering resulting from forced evictions.⁴ The region had historically been occupied with numerous cottars (agricultural labourers who worked the land in return for a cottage) in smallholdings of between one and fifteen acres let by the landowners to the local residents. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, the number of these had been greatly reduced due to the clearance of tenants from the land to make way for larger sheep farms. A number of these clearances took place from the 1830s to the 1850s in the parishes of Dull, Fortingall, Kenmore and Weem leading to migration to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Perth and emigration to America and Canada.⁵ Likewise, in Little Dunkeld in 1843, the landowner converted small farms into large ones turning out small tenants who had no option but migrate or emigrate.⁶ This resulted in young people travelling to find work elsewhere, leaving behind a ‘stagnating and ageing population’.⁷

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⁶ *NSA, Little Dunkeld* (1843), p. 1011.
Figure 2.1.  Map showing the location of the county of Perthshire within Scotland and the Highlands  Base Map Source: Charles Withers, Highland Communities in Dundee and Perth 1787-1891 (Dundee: Abertay Historical Society, 1986)

*IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS*

The county of Perthshire is outlined in red with the Highland border dissecting the county.

Key to numbered parishes in Highland Perthshire:

The eleven parishes, which combined to form the Poorhouse Union, were diverse in their populations and geography even within this Highland region. Local employment was predominately as farm labourers and domestic servants with the main agricultural output consisting of potatoes, oats and barley, with turnips for the cattle and sheep. Other occupations included manufacture, retail and craft trades including smiths, millers, masons, carpenters, weavers, shoemakers and other trades and crafts associated with rural life.\(^8\) As Table 2.1 highlights, Fortingall in the northwest and Blair Atholl in the north had significantly larger parishes by area, with Dull and Logierait much smaller geographically but with higher populations. This was due to the mountainous areas in the north having smaller remote rural populations with no local market towns. Dull and Logierait were both served by the nearby market town of Aberfeldy with Perth and Crieff a train ride away.\(^9\) Figure 2.2 shows the location of each parish in the Poorhouse Union with clear depictions of the mountainous terrain in Fortingall and Blair Atholl.

### Table 2.1 Geographical area and size of population of the Poorhouse Union Parishes in 1861, 1871 and 1881  
Source: *Scotland Census*, (1861), (1871), (1881)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parishes in Poorhouse Union</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Square Miles</th>
<th>Population 1861</th>
<th>Population 1871</th>
<th>Population 1881</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blair Atholl</td>
<td>181,114</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>1659</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>1742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caputh</td>
<td>18,922</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2373</td>
<td>2115</td>
<td>2064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowally and Dunkeld</td>
<td>9456</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dull</td>
<td>63,417</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2945</td>
<td>2681</td>
<td>2565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortingall</td>
<td>196,683</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>2181</td>
<td>1766</td>
<td>1690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenmore</td>
<td>67,196</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1615</td>
<td>1508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killin</td>
<td>96,926</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>1520</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>1277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Dunkeld</td>
<td>41,268</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2104</td>
<td>2373</td>
<td>2175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logierait</td>
<td>37,759</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>2592</td>
<td>2417</td>
<td>2323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moulin</td>
<td>44,640</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1831</td>
<td>1793</td>
<td>2066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weem</td>
<td>41,887</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>799,268</td>
<td>1248</td>
<td>20852</td>
<td>19763</td>
<td>18675</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.2  Map showing the locations of the Poorhouse Union Parishes in Highland Perthshire  Base Map Source: *Map of Perth and Clackmannan Shires, New Statistical Accounts of Scotland*, Vol. 10, Perth (Edinburgh, 1845)\(^{10}\)

*IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS*

Parish:
- Blair Atholl
- Caputh
- Dowally and Dunkeld
- Dull
- Fortingall
- Killin
- Kenmore
- Little Dunkeld
- Logierait
- Moulin
- Weem

Against this rural backdrop of dramatic natural beauty, poverty had long been acknowledged as a problem. In the mid-eighteenth century under the Old Scottish Poor Law, a report was made to the Sheriff of Perth regarding the state of the poor concerning the nine parishes of Blair Atholl, Dull, Fortingall, Logierait, Little Dunkeld, Killin, Kenmore, Moulin and Weem. In these parishes, due to the large numbers of poor and insufficient funds for their maintenance, the Justices of the Peace licensed the use of badges allowing the poor to beg.\(^{11}\)

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\(^{10}\) See Appendix 1.

In 1844, a Report to the Royal Commission evaluating the status of Scottish poverty in 1843, recorded that within the division containing the parishes in this study, 3.75 per cent of the population were receiving poor relief, the sixteenth highest out of forty-three divisions.12

The findings of the Royal Commission evidenced a need to reform the Old Scottish Poor Law under which relief was funded through voluntary assessment by local heritors (landowners) and administered by the Kirk Sessions (the church court responsible for administration of poor relief). Population expansion and substantial changes in Scotland’s economy due to industrialisation and urbanisation from the late-eighteenth century led to increasing numbers of poor and insufficient funds to provide for them. The Disruption of 1843 when the Church of Scotland split with 40 per cent of clergy leaving to form the Free Church signalled the end of the Old Scottish Poor Law.

England and Wales had seen reform a decade earlier in 1834 with a New Poor Law that abolished outdoor relief of aid to the poor in their own homes and forced entry to the workhouse. The destitute through unemployment were regarded as the architects of their own poverty, spreading the disease of pauperism and the workhouse served to punish and reform their immorality.13 In Scotland, the amendments to the Old Poor Law were operational rather than ideological.

The 1845 Act created parish Parochial Boards to oversee the administration of welfare, which were supervised and regulated by a central Board of Supervision in Edinburgh. The Board’s

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role was supervisory and it had no statutory powers. Each Parochial Board employed a Poor Law Inspector to evaluate applications for relief against criteria for destitution and disability. Paterson notes that as applicants for relief were required to be both ‘destitute’ and ‘disabled’ there were numerous ways to interpret these definitions at different times within the same parish. ‘Disability could be applied to widows with or without children, deserted wives and families, single-parent families, the aged, the homeless, wives of prisoners, and so on.’

Inspectors therefore interpreted and implemented these national laws according to local need and custom.

The provision and acceptance of poor relief in Scotland was undertaken through the lens of political, social and moral economy. With economic behaviour dictated by family survival, custom and tradition could be compromised when negotiating the provision of poor relief with local Poor Law Inspectors. As Blaikie notes, the Poor Laws acted to maintain the social order through the control of economic dependency by those whose behaviours were considered immoral. Eligibility for relief was also determined according to settlement status of the applicant which identified the parish chargeable for upkeep of the pauper. For men their settlement status was defined by their parish of birth, with women taking their husband’s settlement status at marriage. Single women took their father’s settlement parish and illegitimate children that of their mother. Settlement could also be claimed from residency in the parish lasting over five years. Poor Law officials did not actively seek out those in destitution, rather the poor had to make an active choice to apply to their parish Inspector of the Poor for relief.

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16 Paterson, p. 175.
As the able-bodied had never had a right to claim relief, instead relying on family, friends and charity, Scotland had no need for a system of deterrence and punishment.\textsuperscript{17} It was, however, acknowledged that temporary relief may be provided in times of ‘occasional sickness or unusual calamity although not as a matter of right’.\textsuperscript{18} Scottish poorhouses were therefore not designed to enforce work, but as a place of last resort for those in ill health, aged, infirm or destitute with no other means of support. Gordon argues that it is for this reason that the demographics of Scottish poorhouses were completely different to that of English workhouses, which were full of destitute men.\textsuperscript{19}

Poor Law Inspectors would consider an applicant’s gender as the initial factor when deciding upon their claim for relief. Women were regarded as ‘innocent’ dependents of men in their roles as wives or daughters and as such were more at risk of becoming ‘disabled’ without male support. Inspectors questioned women regarding their husbands or fathers, in order to determine settlement status and therefore the chargeable parish.\textsuperscript{20} Unmarried mothers were classed as undeserving and were only offered relief through the poorhouse, a deterrent against further claims on the parish for illegitimacy. Women did, however, receive temporary aid to give birth or whilst children were under two years of age, when a mother and child would be charged as one inmate in the poorhouse.\textsuperscript{21} Williams argues that women were more likely to experience poverty than men, which was heightened by having to raise children as lone parents with their earning potential being significantly less than men.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{17} Paterson, p. 178.
\textsuperscript{18} Sir George Nicholls, \textit{A History of the Scotch Poor Law} (London: John Murray, 1856), p. 112.
\textsuperscript{19} Gordon, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{20} Gordon, pp. 30-31.
\textsuperscript{21} Perth and Kinross Archives (hereafter ‘PKA’), CC1/19/1/2/1, Poorhouse Letters Book 1863-1873, Letter from Poorhouse Governor to Inspector of the Poor, Dull, p. 272.
\textsuperscript{22} Williams, p. 125.
Between 1861 and 1881 Scotland’s population increased by 22 per cent with a 20 per cent increase in females and a 24 per cent increase in males.\textsuperscript{23} Despite this increase, the proportion of the national population receiving poor relief fell from 4.37 per cent to 2.98 per cent for females and from 1.85 per cent to 1.50 per cent for males. In 1861 there were 112 females to every 100 males, which had dropped to 107 females to every 100 males by 1881.

Using population data from the census for 1861, 1871 and 1881, the percentage of females and males receiving poor relief has been calculated using \textit{Board of Supervision Annual Reports} from 1864 to 1884 to illustrate trends of poverty at national, county and local level.\textsuperscript{24} This is illustrated in Chart 2.1. Percentages have been calculated according to percentage of females within the female population and percentage of males within the male population as depicted in Charts 2.2 and 2.3.

\textbf{Chart 2.1.} \textbf{Percentage of registered females and males receiving poor relief within the national population of Scotland, the county of Perthshire and the Poorhouse Union, 1864-1884} Source: \textit{Scotland Census} (1861), (1871), (1881). PP. 1864-1884, \textit{Board of Supervision for Relief of Poor in Scotland, Annual Reports}
In 1864, at the time the Poorhouse opened, 4.51 per cent of the national female population were registered poor compared to 1.99 per cent of males. By 1884, despite the population increase, these figures had fallen to 2.75 per cent for females and 1.50 per cent for males. As Chart 2.1 illustrates, the national picture of poverty during this time shows that significantly more females than males received poor relief and that over the twenty-year period, there was a reduction in the number of registered poor, with a steeper decline in poor relief for females. The regional statistics for the county of Perthshire in 1864 also reflect national findings with 4.33 per cent of the female population receiving relief with 1.81 per cent of males. By 1884, these figures had also dropped significantly to 2.81 per cent of females and 1.56 per cent of males. Similarly, the statistics for the Poorhouse Union in 1864 show that 5.66 per cent of females received relief compared to 2.53 per cent of males. By 1884, these figures had fallen to 3.24 per cent of females and 1.47 of males.

**Chart 2.2. Percentage of registered females receiving poor relief within the national population of Scotland, the county of Perthshire and the Poorhouse Union 1864-1884**
Chart 2.3. Percentage of registered males receiving poor relief within the national population of Scotland, the county of Perthshire and the Poorhouse Union, 1864-1884

Charts 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 clearly illustrate that within Scotland, the county of Perthshire and the Poorhouse Union there were significantly higher numbers of females receiving poor relief than males and that these fell during the twenty-year period of this study. However, despite this fall, females receiving relief were still significantly higher than males. In addition, a noticeable finding for the Highland Perthshire parishes reveals that the numbers of registered poor for both females and males were higher than both county and national statistics. This suggests that people living in this rural area were at a greater risk of poverty than the national and county average, with females considerably more likely to fall into poverty. Chart 2.2 in particular, emphasises the steep fall in poor relief for females from 5.66 per cent to 3.24 per cent, a greater decrease than the county and national average. The Board of Supervision considered this reduction due to efficient Poor Law management and the use of poorhouses as
a test of true destitution and debility. This, however, has been debated with discrepancies between national and local figures as noted by Paterson.25

These local demographics highlight interesting variations on the macro trends with the increase of the national population by 22 per cent, whilst the county population of Perthshire decreased by 3.36 per cent and the population of the Poorhouse Union parishes decreased by 10 per cent. This provides evidence that rural depopulation was still occurring and that poverty in this rural Highland area was greater than the national and county average, with females the predominant recipients of poor relief, a finding that Mitchison highlighted in her study of the Old Scottish Poor Law.26

Outdoor relief was the preferred method for distributing aid both by Parochial Boards and by those receiving it and could be provided in money, clothes, food, fuel, rent or medical aid. It was cheaper than maintaining a pauper in a poorhouse and the poor associated it with respectability being reserved for the deserving poor. The offer of poorhouse relief was therefore used as a ‘test’ to distinguish between those unwilling or unable to support themselves. Poorhouse relief was very basic and associated with stigma, so only the most desperate in need accepted it, which kept a check on poor rates.27 The requirement for paupers to be both disabled and destitute, also meant that Parochial Boards would often reject claims of ‘disabled’ paupers who were elderly or infirm, but were not considered destitute whilst they had living relatives to support them.28

25 Paterson, p. 191.
Poorhouse policy stated that females and males were to be separated upon entry with children older than two years removed from their mothers. Inmates were then washed and clothed in poorhouse clothing. Classes of inmate were determined by age and categorised as those above fifteen years of age, under fifteen and above two, and children under two years of age. Regulations required each class and sex to have separate accommodation with mixing and communication prohibited. There were also separate probationary and sick wards. 29

The Poorhouse for the Highland Perthshire parishes was situated on the north bank of the River Tay in the rural village of Logierait on three acres of land provided by the Duke of Atholl at an annual rent of four pounds and fifteen shillings per acre.30 The village had a post office, inn, church and school and the Poorhouse benefited from good transport links to the local towns of Perth, Aberfeldy and Pitlochry via the Highland Railway, which opened in 1865, stopping at Ballinluig Junction Station, just under a mile away. The map at Figure 2.3 indicates the rural location of the Poorhouse and its proximity to Logierait Village and Ballinluig Station. The photograph at Figure 2.4 shows the design of the Poorhouse building.

To contribute to their upkeep, female inmates were expected to help with household chores and males with tailoring or construction. At Logierait, the Poorhouse Governor employed the younger unmarried mothers in cleaning. One of which, Barbara Lamond, he considered ‘a great help in the House and a good worker.’31 The old male inmates were engaged in the work of teasing oakum (separating rope fibres), which was then sold to Dundee shipbuilders to mix with tar for use as a sealant.32

29 PP. 1851 BOS (1294) XXVI.755 26, pp. 1-14.
30 PKA, CC1/19/1/1/1, Poorhouse Minute Book 1859-1876, 17 October 1861, p. 25.
31 PKA, CC1/19/1/2/1, Letter from Poorhouse Governor to Inspector of Poor Blair Atholl, 16 May 1872.
32 PKA, CC1/19/1/1/1, 10 August 1870, pp. 206-207. PKA CC1/19/1/20/1, Poorhouse Cash Book 1871-1916, pp. 79-92.
Figure 2.3.  Map showing the location of the Poorhouse in relation to Logierait Village and Ballinluig Railway Station  Source: National Library of Scotland, *Ordnance Survey Six Inch Map: Perth and Clackmannan*, Sheet XL SE and Sheet L NE, Revised: 1899, Publication: 1900

Figure 2.4.   Photograph of the Poorhouse Building, Logierait  

*IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS*
A full list of Poorhouse inmates was taken twice yearly on the two Scottish term days of Whitsunday on 15 May and Martinmas on 11 November. A methodology using data from the Whitsunday head count was developed for this study to provide a comparative and longitudinal analysis of Poorhouse demographics of age, gender and marital status. Data has been sampled every two to three years in 1864, 1866, 1868, 1871, 1874, 1876, 1878, 1881 and 1884. The dates include the two census years of 1871 and 1881 to enable data linkage. Chart 2.4 depicting age and gender of inmates, shows that there were less women than men over 60 years of age with an aggregated total over twenty years of 86 women to 108 men. Due to the greater numbers of women receiving poor relief, this suggests that the majority of women in this age group were considered deserving of outdoor relief. In the under-60 age group, women were the larger aggregated group with 54 women to 30 men, suggesting that these were destitute unmarried mothers or widows whose dependents were considered their debility. As such, they were seen as undeserving and were tested through an offer of the Poorhouse. This is explored in more detail in chapter 3.
Chart 2.4  **Age and gender of Poorhouse inmates, 1864-1884**  
*Source: Perth & Kinross Archives, CC1/19/1/3/1, Poorhouse Inmate Register*

Chart 2.5 records marital status of inmates and reveals that the majority of both women and men were single with a slightly higher aggregated number of men at 89 to women at 81.

More married men were in the Poorhouse than women at 14 to 5, but there were higher numbers of widows than widowers at 50 to 30. This data combined with age and gender provides a demographic for the Poorhouse showing that single men over 60 were the largest group, followed by widows and single women under 60. This provides evidence that women who accepted Poorhouse relief had fallen into poverty due to the lack of male support. This was either through the death of a spouse, having no support from the father of illegitimate children or lack of family and kinship support. These findings from a rural agricultural area mirror those of Gordon in an urban industrial environment where ‘women without husbands (and with children) were especially disproportionate in the applicant proportion’.³³

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The lives of the Poorhouse inmates are highlighted in the following examples providing insights into the typical occupations, marital status and circumstances leading to admission. They highlight how inmates were not always well behaved and many were at the lowest levels of destitution when admitted. Male inmates featured in the Martinmas count on 11 November 1864 included Peter McLaren aged 60 from Logierait, a former farm servant who was blind. Alexander McFarlane, 78 from Fortingall had been a former stonebreaker now destitute with debility and sore legs. George Robertson, 80 from Blair Atholl, also a former stonebreaker, was disabled by blindness, age and rheumatism. The Poorhouse Governor generally noted the conduct of inmates as favourable, but some were troublesome to Poorhouse staff.34 George Robertson above is recorded in the offences book with disorderly

34 PKA, CC1/19/1/1/1, 28 May 1865.
conduct by swearing and using abusive and threatening language ‘on the pretence that he got sour milk in his porridge and different from that supplied to other inmates’. He was sent to the probationary ward for three days and was deprived of all milk during this time. He was also required to have a bath before being readmitted to the main part of the house. Common debilities of inmates together with age and infirmity included lameness, epilepsy, deafness, asthma, rheumatism and pneumonia.

Female inmates included Jean Stewart, 82 and Mary Holmes or McKay 79, both widows with their settlement in Logierait, Jean from birth and Mary from residency. They were the first entrants to the Poorhouse on 27 January 1864. Mary’s trade is listed as a hawker and she was admitted with ‘debility and age’ and had generally good conduct. She was dismissed and readmitted to the Poorhouse a number of times before leaving at her own request on 17 April 1865. Jean is listed as a vagrant with ‘debility and age’ and of ‘dirty habits’. She appears in the punishment book on Sunday, 14 August 1864 for committing disorderly conduct ‘in so far as she insists on her food not being the same in quantity as the other inmates’. It also notes that she was annoying the other inmates in her ward. Her punishment was to be removed to the probationary ward where she was kept for forty-eight hours. All cheese and potatoes were withheld from her diet during this time. Jean was dismissed from the Poorhouse on 22 March 1864 and then re-admitted on 23 March. She left again on 16 April 1864 at her own request, being readmitted on 19 April where she appears to have stayed until her death on 30 April 1868 from general weakness and rheumatism.36

35 PKA, CC1/19/1/13/1, Offence and Punishment Book 1864-1868, 3 July 1865.
36 PKA, CC1/19/1/3/1, Poorhouse Inmate Register, 1867.
Extreme levels of destitution are shown in the case of Helen Graeme, an Irish hawker who was admitted to the Poorhouse on 13 January 1865. Helen was aged 30 and single and had ‘broken down’ at Balnaguard in the parish of Little Dunkeld, suffering with bronchitis and dropsy (swelling of the legs). She was transported to the Poorhouse ‘in a cart, without any coverings except her rags of clothes and almost dead with cold’. She was admitted to the sick ward and required constant nursing. Irish immigrants were considered a burden on the parish, but if they had residential settlement in Scotland they were eligible for relief. Those without a settlement could be sent back to Ireland.\(^{37}\) The Poorhouse Governor after challenging Helen about her settlement status remarked in a letter to the Inspector for Little Dunkeld that if she was able to leave the Poorhouse ‘you should get her removed as it is more than likely that otherwise, she will bother your parish’. Helen never left the Poorhouse and died a month following her admission on 26 February 1865.\(^{38}\)

In summary, greater numbers of women than men received poor relief in Scotland. This is also reflected in the statistics for the county of Perthshire and the parishes in the Poorhouse Union. Highland Perthshire had a higher rate of poverty than both the county and national average, which was exacerbated by rural depopulation and changes in agricultural practices. Two conditions had to be met before relief was granted, a person had to have a ‘debility’ and be ‘destitute’. Debility could be age, infirmity, physical or mental disability. The children of deserted wives, widows and unmarried mothers were also considered as debility. The law of settlement determined the parish responsible for relieving a pauper, with women defined in relation to male support, either by a husband or father’s parish of birth or long-term residence. A person was considered destitute if they had no access to family or other support and could


\(^{38}\) PKA, CC1/19/1/2/1, Letter from Poorhouse Governor to A Butter Esq of Faskally, Pitlochry, 16 January 1865.
not provide for themselves or their dependents. Women with dependent children were particularly vulnerable in this regard.

The majority of poor relief was administered by outdoor relief to those considered deserving with others thought to have dubious claims, tested through an offer of the Poorhouse. Women with illegitimate children were considered immoral and undeserving. As such the Poorhouse was offered as their sole form of relief to act as a deterrent for their aberrant behaviour, the children of which were considered a drain on parish finances. The Poorhouse had a larger number of single males over 60, with more single and widowed females under 60. Whilst female poverty was much greater than male, older women were more likely to benefit from outdoor relief, with temporary aid provided to younger women with children through the Poorhouse. As the Poorhouse was seen as a refuge of last resort due to the level of stigma and restrictions imposed on behaviour, inmates were generally at the lowest levels of destitution. Women were especially vulnerable with those admitted having little other recourse for help. Unmarried mothers were particularly punished by separation from their children. The next chapter will examine the nature of illegitimacy and poverty in more detail through an analysis of the demographics and pauper biographies of unmarried mothers in the Poorhouse.
CHAPTER 3. ILLEGITIMACY, ELIGIBILITY AND CHILD WELFARE

In Scotland, 9 per cent of births in 1859 were illegitimate compared to 6.5 per cent in England and Wales. \(^1\) However as Scotland’s population was unevenly distributed across the land, this figure hid huge regional variations. Studies at regional and parish level are therefore required to understand the dynamics of population change and local factors influencing illegitimacy.\(^2\)

One of the Poorhouses stated aims was to ‘secure the pregnant with regular attendance of the Medical Officer in cases of distress and sickness.’\(^3\) This chapter examines notions of illegitimacy, morality and childhood poverty through an evaluation of family circumstances and the treatment of women with illegitimate children in the Poorhouse. It asks whether the Poorhouse acted as an aid or deterrent for unmarried mothers and how particular employment practices for domestic and farm servants ultimately led to illegitimacy and admission to the Poorhouse. This examination will be undertaken within the context of Scottish studies of illegitimacy, in particular the work of Blaikie and others, testing their findings from northeast and northwest Scotland that illegitimacy stemmed from employment practices in rural areas.\(^4\)

This chapter will firstly undertake a statistical analysis of unmarried mothers in the Poorhouse over the twenty-year period of the study. It will examine whether the numbers admitted increased or decreased during this period and determine how national Poor Laws were interpreted at local level. Qualitative analysis will then be undertaken using methodology

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\(^3\) Perth and Kinross Archives (hereafter ‘PKA’), CC1/19/1/1/1, Poorhouse Minute Book 1859-1876, 31 January 1860.

employed by Blaikie to link records of life-events of births, marriages and deaths with census
enumerators’ books and records of the Scottish Poor Law.  

The work of historians of the family including Davidoff and others have questioned
assumptions of family groupings and structures in the past in relation to the concept of
perceived public and domestic spheres for women and men.  Their work questions notions
that the move from home working to factory production due to industrialisation created
separate spheres of work (public) and home (domestic), with men going out to work in
factories, whilst women stayed at home to look after the children.  This perception arguably
led to the concept of the nuclear family unit comprising parents and children living in one
household without extended family.  Davidoff et al., however, note that the role of domestic
servants undermines these theories of separation between home and work, with most domestic
work undertaken by women living in their employer’s houses.  With studies of the family
focusing on work and home, this has resulted in domestic service being largely absent from
the historiography of either family or work.  This chapter therefore aims to contribute
research to this gap in the historiography.

Pauperism, the term used to describe a person as responsible for their own destitution, relied
on a cause and effect ideology whereby poverty, a material need, was the resulting effect of a
cause from aberrant behaviour, regarded as a form of resistance or deviance from hegemonic
ideals.  The exception, being the physically or mentally disabled or aged and infirm who
could not be held responsible for their own destitution.  Poor Law Inspectors and Parochial

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5 Blaikie, ‘Unhappy’, pp. 97-98.
6 Leonore Davidoff, Megan Doolittle, Janet Fink and Katherine Holden, ‘The family and the historian’, in The
A825 MA History Part 1, 2nd edn (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2016), p. 6-14.
Boards operated according to hegemony regulating the distribution or withholding of relief. Those considered undeserving of poor relief due to moral failures, such as illegitimate pregnancies and children, were regarded as a threat to the social order, disrupting the ideological ideal of the model nuclear family.\(^7\)

As chapter 2 outlined, whilst poor relief for those considered deserving was predominately provided by outdoor relief, the undeserving poor were deemed to require punishment and social reform for their immoral behaviour. Thus, poor relief for unmarried mothers with illegitimate children was generally only provided by indoor relief through the Poorhouse. The intention was to dissuade claims and reform the morals of those granted relief. Prior to the 1870s some parish Parochial Boards were still granting outdoor relief to unmarried mothers with illegitimate children. However, this practice had largely been phased out by 1872, with the Board of Supervision issuing guidelines following a report by its Visiting Officer who reported that, ‘the system of granting outdoor relief to women who claim aliment on behalf of their bastard families is now, practically, without defenders’.\(^8\)

An offer of poor relief solely in the Poorhouse was known as the ‘poorhouse test’ and it was applied to all mothers with illegitimate children, to widows who had legitimate children but were thought might fall into immoral habits, and to deserted wives. This was designed to determine the legitimacy of an applicant’s claim of debility and destitution. If the offer was rejected the applicant was considered not to need relief and could be supported by family or relatives. The poorhouse test was employed as a moral deterrent to keep a check on

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\(^8\) PP. 1873 (C.681) XXIX.613 29 *Board of Supervision for Relief of Poor in Scotland: Twenty-seventh Annual Report, Appendix (A), No. 4. Report by Visiting Officer for the Half-Year ended 30 June 1872*, p. 23.
pauperism especially for unmarried mothers whose offspring were considered a financial burden to the parish. Poorhouse policy was also strict in its guidelines for the treatment of unmarried mothers, who were separated from their children unless under two years of age. In practice, it appears that the Poorhouse Governor did not always abide by these rules and was criticised by the Board of Supervision’s Visiting Inspector in July 1870, who noted that female inmates with illegitimate children were permitted to communicate with their children meaning they could ‘hardly be tested efficiently by the Poorhouse’. The Poorhouse Governor was again criticised in November 1873 for allowing Christina Stewart, an unmarried mother with an illegitimate child the ‘extra indulgence of tea, in common with the other workers’ when she was the mother ‘of several bastard children’. The Visiting Inspector ‘pointed out to the Governor the expediency of distinguishing in the matter of indulgences between this and other Test Cases on the one hand, and cases of ordinary destitution on the other’.

However, whilst the poor were regarded as moral agents, the acceptance or rejection of poor relief, especially in the case of indoor relief through the Poorhouse demonstrates that the poor had a degree of agency over their own lives, albeit compromised by material need. Agency in this respect is defined according to Webber as involving an act of intention either through negotiation with Poor Law Inspectors to argue a case for relief or through an act of rejection against this authority, in this case a rejection of an offer of the Poorhouse.

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9 PKA, CC1/19/1/1/1, 10 August 1870, p. 203.
10 PKA CC1/19/1/1/1, 6 November 1873, p. 308.
11 Blaikie, ‘Accounting’, pp. 204-205.
Statistics for the acceptance or rejection of Poorhouse relief in Highland Perthshire are only available from 1864 and 1872. These illustrate that during this period only 44 per cent of those offered the Poorhouse as the sole mode of poor relief accepted the offer with 56 per cent rejecting indoor relief. Of those that rejected the Poorhouse, some continued to support themselves, received charity or family support, with others largely the old and infirm, receiving a smaller offer of outdoor relief. Table 3.1 and Chart 3.1 clearly show that the majority of individuals who were offered the Poorhouse as the only form of relief rejected it with 8 out of the 11 parishes in the Poorhouse Union having higher rejection than acceptance rates. The statistics do not clarify the reason for application and it cannot be assumed that all these relate to women with illegitimate children. However, Dull parish had 44 applicants for relief, and of these, 8 young women with 16 children declined the offer and maintained themselves without parochial relief. Moulin also records that 37 individuals were offered Poorhouse relief, but this totalled 52 when their 15 dependents were included. This illustrates that women with children made up a significant proportion of claimants and their rejection of Poorhouse relief demonstrates that they were active agents and not just victims of the system.

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13 PP. 1870 (357) XI.1 11 Report from the Select Committee on Poor Law (Scotland), p. 402. PKA, CC1/19/1/1/1, 7 February 1872, p. 249.
14 PP. 1870 (357) XI.1 11 p. 402.
Table 3.1 Numbers and percentages of persons who accepted and rejected the offer of the Poorhouse as the sole mode of relief in the Poorhouse Union, 1864-1872
Source: PP. 1870 (357) XI.1 11, Report from the Select Committee on Poor Law (Scotland). PKA, CC1/19/1/1/1, Poorhouse Minute Book, 7 February 1872

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parishes forming Poorhouse Union</th>
<th>No. Persons who accepted Poorhouse</th>
<th>% Persons who accepted Poorhouse</th>
<th>No. Persons who rejected Poorhouse</th>
<th>% Persons who rejected Poorhouse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blair Atholl</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caputh</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowally</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dull</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortingall</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenmore</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killin</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Dunkeld</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logierait</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moulin</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weem</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>152</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>198</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 3.1 The percentages of persons who accepted and rejected the offer of the Poorhouse as the sole mode of relief from the Parishes in the Poorhouse Union, 1864 – 1872

0%  10%  20%  30%  40%  50%  60%  70%  80%  90%  100%

- Blair Atholl
- Caputh
- Dowally
- Dull
- Fortingall
- Kenmore
- Killin
- Little Dunkeld
- Logierait
- Moulin
- Weem

- % Persons who accepted Poorhouse Offer
- % Persons who rejected Poorhouse Offer
Analysis of women with children in the Poorhouse compiled from inmate registers provides insights into the most prevalent types of debility and highlights other life-course factors that could result in a family falling into poverty. Table 3.2 records the numbers of women and children admitted to the Poorhouse over the twenty-year period counted by each separate admission to the Poorhouse (which was considered a new Poor Law application) and by family group. The data clearly shows that the largest type of family in the Poorhouse was unmarried mothers and their illegitimate children with 79 individuals admitted. This was more than double the next family type of widows with children, comprising 36 individuals. The next family type was deserted wives with children with 16 individuals and finally, family types where a parent was either permanently or temporarily physically or mentally disabled. This group was the smallest with 7 individuals.

Further data mining provides even greater coherence to these family types by identifying whether individual family groups had been in the Poorhouse previously and how many times they had been admitted. From a total of 37 separate family groups comprising mothers and children, 24 families had been admitted due to illegitimate children and of these 4 were admitted twice and 1 admitted 3 times. The majority of unmarried mothers (20) were admitted with 1 illegitimate child, 3 women had 2 illegitimate children and 1 woman had 4 illegitimate children. Widows with children comprised 6 separate family groups with three having been admitted twice. Deserted wives with children had 5 family groups, 1 of which had been admitted twice. There were 2 family groups where admission had been due to 1 of the parents having a physical disability.
Table 3.2  Number of women with children admitted to the Poorhouse by type of debility, 1864-1884  Source: PKA, CC1/19/1/3/1, Poorhouse Inmate Register

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women and children in the Poorhouse</th>
<th>No. of Individuals</th>
<th>No. of Family Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illegitimacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women with illegitimate pregnancy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women with illegitimate children</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegimate children</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed Parents with Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow with children</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of widow</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desertion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deserted wife with children</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of deserted wife</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and Mental Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife with disabled husband</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother with physical disability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of parent with physical disability</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Longitudinal statistics for the number of women in the Poorhouse with illegitimate children shows a significant decline in admissions from 1872 when the poorhouse test was used to greater effect. Chart 3.2 shows that during the 8-year period from 1865 to 1872, there were admissions to the Poorhouse each consecutive year. These totalled 50 individuals: 3 women with illegitimate pregnancies, 17 women with illegitimate children and 30 illegitimate children. The period from 1873 to 1884 saw a significant decline in the number of women with children with 7 years out of 12 receiving admissions and 5 years with no admissions in 1874, 1875, 1876, 1883 and 1884. The total number of individuals admitted for this period was 28, consisting of 5 women with illegitimate pregnancies, 5 women with illegitimate children and 18 illegitimate children.
Chart 3.2  Number of women with illegitimate pregnancies and children and number of illegitimate children admitted to the Poorhouse, 1864-1884
Source: PKA, CC1/19/1/3/1, Poorhouse Inmate Register

Occupations for women with children in the Poorhouse are shown in Chart 3.3, which illustrates that 11 worked as farm servants (32 per cent) and 10 as domestic servants (29 per cent). Other occupations include 4 housewives (12 per cent), 4 millworkers (12 per cent), 3 who earned money sewing and knitting (9 per cent) and 2 hawkers who sold their wares on the street (6 per cent). When occupations are narrowed down to just women with illegitimate children, the percentage of farm servants increases to 48 per cent as shown on Chart 3.4. Roles of farm and domestic servants were not clearly defined and could be interchangeable with women keeping house also helping with farm duties. Demographics of family type and occupation clearly illustrate that the greatest number of women with children in the Poorhouse was due to illegitimacy and that they had occupations as farm and domestic servants.
**Chart 3.3  Occupation of all women with children admitted to the Poorhouse by percentage and number, 1864-1884**  
Source: PKA, CC1/19/1/3/1, Poorhouse Inmate Register

![Chart 3.3](image1.png)

**Chart 3.4  Occupation of women with illegitimate children admitted to the Poorhouse by percentage and number, 1864-1884**

![Chart 3.4](image2.png)
These findings whilst using a tiny dataset from one institution, do correlate with those of Reid, Davies, Garrett and Blaikie whose studies in rural northeast and northwest Scotland concluded that high illegitimacy rates were due to employment opportunities for young people being predominantly those of farm or domestic servants away from their homes and parental supervision. This type of work employed farm workers often on six-monthly contracts. This resulted in regular movement between jobs as work became redundant or available, there being no support from the Poor Law for periods of unemployment. In addition, very little housing existed for married couples with most male workers residing in a bothy (a remote and very basic cottage) or farm buildings. Pre-marital conception was therefore common resulting in higher rates of illegitimacy.

In rural areas couples intending to marry and legitimise their children could only do so if employers provided family housing and this was a rarity. This would seem to disprove Laslett’s theory of a ‘bastardy prone sub-society’ which defined unmarried mothers in negative terms as deviant and passive, contending that illegitimacy was the result of local communities of women linked through kinship or marriage giving birth to illegitimate children over several generations. The demographic analysis from the inmates in the Poorhouse demonstrates that these women were located in remote rural areas away from each other and their families. They had little hope of marriage or the legitimisation of their children due to short employment contracts, high mobility and lack of accommodation for couples. As Reay notes, Laslett’s theory and terminology adopts a social attitude imbuing unmarried mothers with a stigma or deviance that may not have existed in the communities in

15 Andrew Blaikie and others, ‘Migration’, pp. 147-149.
which they lived.\textsuperscript{18} In Highland Perthshire, stigma seems to have applied to Poorhouse relief itself, rather than the reason for the relief as seen in earlier figures for the rejection of indoor relief.

In Highland Perthshire where the land clearances had reduced the number of cottars and increased large areas for sheep farming, the bothy and chaumer systems were used to house male farm servants. In the chaumer system the male farm servants would eat in the farmhouse kitchen and sleep in the farm buildings. Female servants had their own quarters, but would mix with labourers in the farm kitchen. This system of housing farm workers was therefore regarded as one of the main causes of high illegitimacy rates.\textsuperscript{19}

The life of a domestic farm servant is illustrated through the case study of Catherine Fleming whose pauper biography provides evidence of the temporary use of Poor Law relief due to an illegitimate pregnancy.\textsuperscript{20} Catherine was admitted to the Poorhouse on 23 December 1866 aged 36 with her three-week old illegitimate son Donald. Catherine was born in Blair Atholl, the parish of her father’s birth around 1833. By 1841 the family were living at Spoutwells Farm in Lethendy, Perthshire. The family comprised her father, Donald, a gardener aged 61, her mother Mary aged 45 and sisters, Anne 12 and Mary 5. By 1851 Catherine was working as a house servant for David Miller, a farmer of 90 acres employing 6 labourers in at Hillocks of Clunie farm in the parish of Clunie, Perthshire. The chaumer system was in use at this farm, as the household also included three male farm labourers and a blacksmith. In 1861, Catherine was working as a domestic servant for another farmer of 90 acres, Robert Anderson and his family at Burnside Farm in Lethendy.


\textsuperscript{19} J. Drummond Smith, ‘The Housing of the Scottish Farm Servant’, \textit{The Economic Journal} 25 (1915), 466-474 (p. 468).

\textsuperscript{20} See Appendix 3.
Donald was born on 16 November 1866 in the village of Wester Caputh. His birth record marks him as illegitimate and no father is listed. Catherine’s occupation is recorded as farm servant. Her address is not listed so it is unknown where she was residing prior to Donald’s birth. It is likely, however, that Donald’s father was a farm servant. When Donald was 3 weeks old Catherine applied to the Poor Law Inspector as destitute and with no income with which to feed herself and the baby. She was offered the Poorhouse due to the illegitimacy of her child. Following admittance on 23 December 1866, mother and child remained in the Poorhouse for 7 months, until 23 July 1867. Time spent in the Poorhouse depended both on personal circumstances and negotiation with the Poor Law Inspector as to the level of need. Women who had children under the age of two or had given birth in the Poorhouse were charged as one inmate. This may have been due to the Poor Law expectation that a mother would provide exclusive care for her child during its most vulnerable period, up to two years, before leaving the child with relatives and returning to work in service.21

By 1871 Donald had been boarded out (fostered) with two unmarried sisters, Margaret and Isabelle Slater in Wester Caputh whose household also included Margaret’s illegitimate son and another boarded out child from Edinburgh. Catherine was working as a domestic servant in Caputh for James Stewart, a widowed farmer of 140 acres at Drum of Kincairney employing 3 labourers, a boy and 2 women. In 1881, Catherine was working for George Martin, a crofter of 2 acres at Thorngreen in Collace, Perthshire. Donald aged 14, was now employed as a farm servant at Whitely Farm in Cargill, Perthshire for Alex Martin, a farmer of 44 acres. The locations in this biography are shown in Figure 3.1.

21 Alice Reid and others, ‘Vulnerability’, p. 108.
In February 1868, another farm servant, Matilda McEwan aged 18 was admitted to the Poorhouse with Margaret, her illegitimate child of three weeks. Matilda had been working as a farm servant from at least the age of 12 and in 1861 was a cow herder at a farm in Little Dunkeld with 3 male and 3 female farm servants. She left the Poorhouse after five months to work as a dairymaid in Pitlochry whilst her child was looked after by a woman in Logierait. Upon her departure, the Poorhouse Governor gave her a pair of boots and wrapped the child in a petticoat when they left. In accordance with Poorhouse accounting, this would be charged to the parish of Little Dunkeld, Matilda’s settlement parish.

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22 See Appendix 3.
Figure 3.1 Map showing the parish location of farms where Catherine Fleming and her son Donald lived and were employed as a domestic and farm servants  

*IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS*

Parish locations:

- **Moulin:** 1833 Catherine born
- **Lethendy:** 1841 Catherine with parents at Spoutwells Farm  
  1861 Catherine, domestic servant, Burnside Farm
- **Clunie:** 1851 Catherine, domestic servant, Hillocks of Clunie Farm
- **Wester Caputh:** 1866 Donald born  
  1871 Donald boarding with Margaret and Isabelle Slater
- **Logierait:** 1886-1867 Catherine and Donald in Poorhouse
- **Caputh:** 1871 Catherine, domestic servant, Drum of Kincairney Farm
- **Cargill:** 1881 Donald, farm servant, Whitely Farm
- **Collace:** 1881 Catherine, domestic servant, Thornhill
The case of Catherine Hossack aged 37 provides insight into the use of the Poorhouse for medical attention for the birth of a child.23 Catherine, from the Parish of Dull, was admitted to the Poorhouse on 10 January 1865, with pregnancy recorded as her debility. She gave birth on 4 February 1865 to a son named Henry McDonald Hossack. Two letters survive from Mr McCallum, the Poorhouse Governor which highlight the care with which Catherine was provided and how the inmates were treated kindly. The first letter is to Mr John Hossack, Catherine’s father and it simply states that his daughter was ‘safely delivered of a son, both are doing well, she was only about two hours ill’. The other letter is to Dr Irvine, the Medical Officer for the Poorhouse which records that the child was born before the midwife arrived, ‘I sent for Mrs Robertson but the child was born some short time before she came and all well’.24 Catherine spent a total of four months in the Poorhouse, leaving on 15 May 1865. Henry unfortunately died in November 1865 aged 9 months following 10 days with bronchitis.

In summary, Poor Law officials regarded illegitimacy as a moral problem, which disrupted the social order of the nuclear family. In Highland Perthshire however, there were fewer opportunities for marriage due to the main employment as farm or domestic servants requiring workers to live in the homes or properties of their employers, with no available accommodation for married couples. The largest group of women and children in the Poorhouse were unmarried mothers with illegitimate offspring. The majority of these worked as farm or domestic servants and had no male support to provide for them, either from family or the fathers of their children. Illegitimate children were common in this working

23 See Appendix 3.
24 PKA, CC1/19/1/2/1, Poorhouse Letters Book 1863-1873, Letter from Duncan McCallum, Poorhouse Governor to John Hossack, Aberfeldy, 4 February 1865. Letter from Poorhouse Governor to Dr Irvine, Pitlochry, 4 February 1865, p. 254.
environment and were generally brought up by extended family or foster parents. There were a number of women in the Poorhouse with more than one illegitimate child suggesting any stigma may have been associated with admission to the Poorhouse, rather than with the illegitimacy of the child.

In Highland Perthshire higher numbers of poor rejected rather than accepted an offer of the Poorhouse including a large proportion of unmarried mothers. The Poorhouse, did in this respect, act as a deterrent to unmarried mothers claiming relief with numbers falling after 1872 when the poorhouse test was used more effectively. It does not, however, prove that rates of illegitimacy also fell in this region. For the most destitute, the Poorhouse acted as a refuge providing food, clothing and shelter during a period of extreme vulnerability for women with young children. The Poorhouse also provided medical aid during childbirth and a safe haven, albeit basic, for the most vulnerable period of a child’s life. Whilst the Board of Supervision had strict guidelines for the treatment of unmarried mothers, it is clear from local Poorhouse minute books that the Poorhouse Governor took a kinder approach to the women in his care.
CHAPTER 4. MIGRATION, FAMILY AND KINSHIP

This chapter will examine how the Poor Law principle of settlement was used to determine eligibility for relief and how this affected the provision of welfare. It will assess how migration created a higher risk of poverty for women and how family and kinship networks were vital in preventing a fall into poverty. Gordon’s study of Paisley, an urban industrial environment, identifies inward migrants as particularly vulnerable to poverty. Gender, family status and migration, she contends, predisposed individuals to poverty, but were also crucial factors in determining eligibility for relief even before the Poor Law’s determining factors of disability and destitution were assessed.¹ This chapter will test this finding in a rural setting where regular migration was a key factor both for the employment of domestic servants and agricultural workers, but also for those seeking work in the industrialised cities and towns. It will examine household structures to assess if and how mobility created a greater risk of poverty and how Poor Law policy exacerbated this risk to women through the law of settlement. Further questions will address how kinship support played a determining role in the eligibility for relief and the extent to which the poor had agency and direction over their own lives.

The qualitative approach developed in chapters 2 and 3 from Blaikie and Gordon’s methodologies will be applied to create pauper biographies from linked sources of civil records, census schedules and Poor Law records.² This chapter will additionally use Parochial Board records from parishes in the Poorhouse Union where these exist. Each parish

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Poor Law Inspector maintained the ‘poor roll’, a record of all those receiving relief in the parish. Whilst the application registers with the pauper histories do not survive, some minute books are extant for a number of parish Parochial Boards and these can provide further insight into how individuals were treated. This information combined with civil registration records and census returns, enables the creation of pauper biographies, which can shed light on the lived experiences of the poor. These can identify the circumstances behind their claims and the degree of agency they had as active participants in their own lives.

As outlined in chapter 2, settlement status was a crucial factor in providing relief as it determined the parish responsible for the upkeep of a pauper. The principle of settlement had been established in the Old Scottish Poor Laws prior to 1845 to ensure that landowners who funded poor relief were not paying for paupers who had recently moved to their parish.3 To receive relief a pauper had to be born in the parish or have a residential settlement from living and working there for more than five years. Women generally took the settlement status of their husbands or fathers and children up to the age of 14 took the settlement parish of their fathers or in the case of illegitimate children, their mother’s settlement status.

Applications for relief could be made to the Inspector of the Poor in the parish where the applicant was residing whether or not they had acquired a settlement there. Inspectors were obliged to provide temporary relief if the applicant was eligible under the criteria of being both destitute and having a debility, following which the parish of settlement would be charged for their upkeep. In 1872 Sarah Livingston’s claim for relief was lodged with Killin parish where she was residing, but repayment was sought from Dull Parochial Board. The Dull minute book records that the Inspector was to offer to Killin parish that the case be

settled by the Board of Supervision jointly, failing which the Inspector was instructed to sue Killin Parochial Board for repayment.⁴

Parochial Boards and Poor Law Inspectors went to great lengths to track down extended family and kin that could potentially support or pay for a claimant’s relief. If the extended family were located they would be expected to look after the individual themselves or pay for their relief. In 1872 Widow D McGregor from Aberfeldy made an application to Logierait parish, to which the Inspector was instructed to offer her the Poorhouse and ‘prosecute her two sons John and Peter who are able bodied and in a position to maintain her.’⁵ In 1884 the Inspector for Dull sent Janet McDougall to the Poorhouse and charged her son, John McGregor, a hotelkeeper in Glasgow for her upkeep.⁶

Poorhouses were only authorised to admit paupers who had a settlement in an affiliated parish. Inmates from parishes outside the Poorhouse Union could be admitted as boarders but only if sanctioned by the Board of Supervision. The 1873 case of Grace Stewart demonstrates how this regulation was strictly enforced. Grace, a pauper in poor health was sent to the Poorhouse by Dull Parish where she resided. Her settlement, however, was in the parish of Kinclaven outside the Poorhouse Union. As Kinclaven did not have permission to board a pauper in the Poorhouse, the Poorhouse Governor wrote to the Inspector for Kinclaven demanding that he forward approval for her board immediately, without which she would be removed and sent back to the parish. Grace however died a month later never having left the Poorhouse.⁷

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⁴ Perth and Kinross Archives (hereafter PKA), CC1/7/10/1, Dull Parochial Board, Minute Book 1865-1879, 22 March 1872.
⁵ PKA, CC1/7/27/1, Logierait Parochial Board, Minute Book 1856-1895, 17 April 1876.
⁶ PKA, CC1/7/10/1, 26 March 1884.
⁷ PKA, CC1/19/1/2/1, Poorhouse Letters Book 1863-1873, Letter to Inspector of Kinclaven, 8 November 1873.
As highlighted in chapter 2, Poorhouse inmates were largely long-term residents over 60 with slightly more males than females, with a large proportion of females under 60 with children receiving temporary relief. This is consistent with Board of Supervision guidelines on the classes of paupers for whom the Poorhouse was to be offered. Analysis of inmate registers in relation to birth parish as shown in Table 4.1 and Chart 4.1 indicate that the majority of individuals were born in a parish in the Poorhouse Union. This may initially appear to suggest that inmates had low mobility but as chapter 3 has shown in relation to unmarried mothers, there were high levels of migration in this region for farm and domestic servants.

Additionally, Michael Anderson’s analysis of the 1851 census records that almost half the Scottish population were living in a different parish or town from that of their birth. Rather than indicating high levels of mobility, the Poorhouse statistics demonstrate how the law of settlement worked to bring back the most destitute or undeserving individuals in the case of unmarried mothers from wherever they were living to their parish of settlement in order to receive indoor relief through the Poorhouse. An offer of the Poorhouse from the Poor Law Inspector could significantly impact on household structures particularly for women who may be residing far away from their husband or father’s settlement parish, having to travel to an area they may not have known without family or friends in order to receive poor relief.

Table 4.1 and Chart 4.1 provide a breakdown of birth locations, which have been grouped according to whether an inmate was born in a Poorhouse Union parish, outside the Poorhouse Union but within the county of Perthshire, outside Perthshire but within Scotland or outside

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8 PP. 1851 (1294) XXVI.755, Board of Supervision for Relief of Poor in Scotland: Fifth Annual Report, Appendix (A), Circular as to Poorhouses, 2 February 1850.
Scotland. Mean numbers and percentages have been calculated from each sampled year to provide an average figure for each birth location over the twenty-year period. These figures indicate that 69.4 per cent of women and 74.6 per cent of men were born in a parish in the Poorhouse Union. Only 9.9 per cent of women were born in Perthshire but outside the Union Parishes, but strikingly 14.6 per cent were from other counties in Scotland suggesting migration and possible travel for poor relief due to settlement from a father or husband. The very few women born outside Scotland were Irish immigrants. For males, between 8 and 9 per cent were born outside the Poorhouse Union parishes, the county of Perthshire and Scotland suggesting a small degree of inward migration to Highland Perthshire.

Table 4.1 Mean numbers and percentages of male and female Poorhouse inmates according to birth parish or location of birth, 1864-1884
Source: PKA, CC1/19/1/3/1, Poorhouse Inmate Register

| Place of Birth 1864 - 1884 | Males | | Females | |
|---------------------------|-------|------------------------|--------|
|                           | Mean No. | Mean % | Mean No. | Mean % |
| Within Poorhouse Union Parishes | 13.7 | 74.6 | 12.2 | 69.4 |
| Outside Poorhouse Union Parishes but within Perthshire | 1.8 | 8.6 | 1.6 | 9.9 |
| Outside Perthshire but within Scotland | 1.8 | 8.6 | 2.4 | 14.6 |
| Outside Scotland | 1.2 | 8.3 | 0.6 | 2.9 |
| Unknown | 0 | 0 | 0.6 | 3.1 |

Chart 4.1 Mean percentage of female and male inmates in the Poorhouse according to birth parish or location of birth, 1864-1884
The following case studies provide evidence of how gender, family status and migration predisposed individuals to poverty and how the law of settlement impacted on household structure. Case studies have been selected to highlight the different circumstances experienced by female inmates prior to and following their admission to the Poorhouse and how indoor relief impacted on their family structures. They also highlight the importance of family and kinship support and how the lack of such networks could push a family into poverty.

The case study of Eliza McLaren or Cameron, a widow with four children provides evidence of how a life-crisis event could push a family into poverty and how this was exacerbated by migration. Eliza was admitted to the Poorhouse with her children John aged 12, Catherine 9, Eliza 6 and Alexander 2. Her settlement status was that of her husband Duncan Cameron, a gamekeeper who had been born in Kinloch Rannoch in Fortingall. The inmate register lists Eiza’s birth parish as unknown but the 1871 census records her born in Killearn, Stirlingshire around 1838. Marriage registers record that Eliza married Duncan in 1859 in Row, Dunbartonshire. In 1861 Eliza and Duncan were living in Kilsyth, Stirlingshire with his aunt, but by 1862 they had moved to Kirkhill, Inverness where they had their first child, John in 1863. Catherine was born three years later in Knockando, Moray, with Eliza following in 1868. The 1871 census does not list Duncan in the household with Eliza recorded as head. Her status is listed as married suggesting that Duncan was working away. The last child Alexander was born in Rothes, Moray in 1871. Duncan’s death record has not been located, but he died sometime after November 1871 following Alexander’s birth (as Eliza was not marked as a widow on the birth record) and August 1874 when Eliza and the children were admitted to the Poorhouse. Family and kinship support from Duncan’s parents and siblings

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10 See Appendix 4.
was unlikely with Duncan’s father and brothers all working as shepherds in remote areas around Loch Rannoch in Fortingall. Eliza’s extended family has not been located in the census records.

On 7 October 1874, John was dismissed from the Poorhouse to undertake work as an apprentice tailor and daughters Catherine and Eliza were sent to Perth Ladies House of Refuge Certified Industrial School on 18 October 1874 for five years, paid for by Fortingall Parochial Board. Eliza and Alexander remained in the Poorhouse for another eight months until they were dismissed on 1 June 1876. Two years later on 21 November 1878 Alexander was re-admitted as a deserted child and remained in the Poorhouse until 24 April 1883. From the age of six he attended the local school during the winter months but regularly left the Poorhouse each year between April and August to work as a farm servant. By 1891 he had moved back to Morayshire, where he had settlement status due to his birth and was working as a farm servant. It is unknown what happened to Eliza following her departure from the Poorhouse, as she cannot be located on the 1881 census or through a death record.

Eliza’s case study evidences how the death of her husband drove the family into poverty exacerbated by a lack of extended family and regular migration, ultimately leading to the family’s disbursement. This supports Gordon’s conclusions that access to family support was the biggest influencer on whether a person ended up in poverty and that widowed, abandoned or single parents were the most at risk.\(^\text{11}\) Figure 4.1 outlines the migration pattern for Eliza and her family, highlighting how families were required to move for work, sometimes considerable distances from their birth or settlement parishes.

\(^{11}\) Gordon, ‘Demographics’, p. 41.
Figure 4.1 Map showing the family migration pattern of Eliza Cameron and family, 1838-1874. Base Map Source: Charles Withers, *Highland Communities in Dundee and Perth 1787-1891* (Dundee: Abertay Historical Society, 1986)

*KIMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS*

- Killearn, Stirlingshire: 1838 Eliza born
- Fortingall, Perthshire: 1834 Duncan born
- Row, Dunbartonshire: 1859 Eliza and Duncan married
- Kilsyth, Stirlingshire: 1861 Eliza and Duncan resident
- Kirkhill, Inverness-shire: 1863 John born
- Knockando, Moray: 1866 Catherine born
  1868 Eliza born
- Rothes, Moray: 1871 Alexander born
- Logierait, Perthshire: 1874 Admission to Poorhouse
The case study of Martha Cowan Robertson provides insight into a young woman receiving poor relief for a temporary debility through the Poorhouse. Martha was admitted to the Poorhouse on 20 June 1865 with lameness. She was aged 21, single and born in the flax-spinning village of Friockheim in Forfarshire. Her mother was from Rothes, Moray and her father from Little Dunkeld in Perthshire where she derived her settlement. In 1851 the family resided in Brechin, Forfarshire but by 1861 her mother had died and her father had moved back to Friockheim where he worked as a mason’s labourer. Martha, aged 17 remained in Brechin working as a dressmaker’s apprentice boarding with a laundress and her young son. At the time of Martha’s infirmity in 1865, her father aged 66 was living alone and was unlikely to have had sufficient means to care for her. Without the help of extended family or other kin due to migration by both her parents, Martha had little choice but to accept indoor relief through the Poorhouse. Her settlement being that of her father in Little Dunkeld meant that she was sent to the Poorhouse in Logierait over 50 miles away.

Martha spent almost a year in the Poorhouse, which aided her rehabilitation back to health. The Poorhouse Governor stated in a letter dated 26 September 1865 to the Inspector for Little Dunkeld, ‘Martha is getting quite strong, she is just now away up the garden with only one crutch so much for the poorhouse as a convalescent hospital.’ She left the Poorhouse on 1 May 1866 at her own request having the prospect of work in Arbroath, the largest town in Forfarshire (later known as Angus), which had a booming economy based on fishing and sail-making. The Poorhouse Governor sent a letter with Martha for the local Poor Law Inspector instructing him to grant outdoor relief temporarily (paid for by Little Dunkeld) and find her suitable lodging, as she was ‘almost a stranger in Abroath’.

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12 See Appendix 4.
13 PKA, CC1/19/1/2/1, Letter, Poorhouse Governor to Inspector of Poor, Little Dunkeld, 25 September 1865.
14 PKA, CC1/19/1/2/1, Letter, Poorhouse Governor to Inspector of Poor, Arbroath, 1 May 1866.
Martha worked in Abroath as a dressmaker for a further 9 years until her death in 1875 from a heart condition and dropsy. This was the likely cause of her debility and admittance to the Poorhouse in 1865, with dropsy causing swelling of the legs and potential lameness. Martha’s case provides local insight into interpretation of the Poor Law for a young single woman temporarily disabled through illness. It demonstrates how the law of settlement necessitated migration in order to receive indoor relief. It also highlights how the poor did have a degree of agency in their lives, with Martha physically exercising to improve her health in order to seek work with a view to supporting herself.

The case study of Mary Ann McCall demonstrates how illegitimacy and lack of male support from a father and husband exacerbated poverty.\(^\text{15}\) It also highlights how extended family provided crucial support whilst a person was able to work and contribute to the family economy, but how this support stopped when they became ill, elderly or unable to work. Mary Ann McCall was admitted to the Poorhouse aged 16 on 3 May 1864 with her debility marked as a ‘cripple’ with lameness. Her case study is a particularly interesting case as she is the longest serving resident in the Poorhouse remaining there for 59 years until her death aged 77 in 1923. Linkage to birth, census and Poorhouse records also reveal three generations of her maternal family in the Poorhouse at the same time between 27 June 1871 and 14 November 1872. These consisted of Mary Ann, her mother Ann Dow Harris and her grandmother, Grace Dow. Making these connections was particularly complicated with Poorhouse records not listing the relationship between these three women. The key link was found in the inmate register for the Martinmas headcount in 1873, which was one of only two years in the twenty-year period that listed parents for each inmate.\(^\text{16}\) With listings of birth and

\(^{15}\) See Appendix 4.
\(^{16}\) See Appendix 5.
settlement parishes, this provided key information, which could be used to trace each woman through birth and census records.

As a child Mary Ann was boarded out with at least two separate extended family groups connected to the Dow and Harris families, whilst her mother Ann worked as a general servant with another extended family group from the Harris family. Both Mary Ann and her mother were illegitimate and had no male support in the form of a father or husband, but the large extended family provided care and board for such time until they both became a burden on the family economy. Mary Ann was unable to work due to a permanent disability and Ann worked until she was unable due to age and debility, being admitted to the Poorhouse on 2 December 1869. Grace was the last to enter the Poorhouse on 27 June 1871 having worked as a servant for her brother’s family until she was 71. The inmate register does not record her debility, but the 1871 census two months earlier records Grace as an ‘imbecile’. Mary Ann’s case supports Williams’ findings in relation to the Old Poor Law in England that kinship support was part of the makeshift economy which helped to keep families off the poor roll and without which, a family or individual could easily fall into poverty needing to apply to the parish for help.17

The final case study of Christina Stewart provides an example of a migrant worker who left Highland Perthshire to work in a factory in Glasgow.18 It shows how the law of settlement and poorhouse test affected a migrant worker with an illegitimate child. Christina, a millworker, aged 31 was born in Little Dunkeld and was first admitted to the Poorhouse on 2 March 1871 with her 3 month-old illegitimate daughter, Christina, who was born in the

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18 See Appendix 4.
Glasgow City Poorhouse. Christina had been working as a millworker in Glasgow’s Calton district, one of the main locations of the weaving and cotton spinning industry in the city. It is likely she had lost her job due to her pregnancy and could not support her child. Due to the Poor Law rules of settlement, any application for relief had to be granted by the Parochial Board of her settlement parish of Little Dunkeld. As outlined in chapter 3, poor relief for an illegitimate pregnancy was only to be provided through a poorhouse where one was available. Christina therefore had to travel back to Perthshire to be granted food and shelter in the Poorhouse in Logierait.

Following a year spent in the Poorhouse, the Inspector for Little Dunkeld removed mother and daughter on 9 April 1872. As the child was considered old enough to be looked after by family, Christina would be required to find work to support them both. However, mother and child were again admitted on 26 March 1873 with Christina pregnant with another illegitimate child. Duncan McGregor Stewart was born in the Poorhouse 3 months later on 17 June 1873. Both children had different fathers, who are recorded in the inmate register, presumably for Poor Law officials to seek recompense for relief. The family remained in the Poorhouse for just under 5 years leaving on 4 March 1878. Christina Stewart’s case was referred to as a ‘poorhouse test case’ by the Board of Supervision’s Visiting Officer who criticised the Poorhouse Governor for allowing her the ‘extra indulgency of tea, in common with the other workers’ when she was the mother ‘of several bastard children’. The Poorhouse Governor was instructed to ensure that all test cases were treated in a similar manner differentiating between those deserving of poor relief and those who were not.19

19 PKA, CC1/19/1/1/1, Poorhouse Minute Book 1859-1876, Minutes of the Poorhouse Committee Meeting, 6 November 1873, pp. 307.
On 22 February 1879, Duncan aged 5 years and 8 months was readmitted to the Poorhouse without his mother or sister. His debility was listed as a destitute illegitimate child with epilepsy. He remained in the Poorhouse for a further 2 years, before being removed by the Inspector and sent to the Fechney Institute, an industrial school for boys in Perth. By September 1881, he is readmitted to the Poorhouse again as a deserted child, where he remained for another 2 years until removal to the Baldovan Industrial School in Dundee, an institution for the care of ‘imbecile and idiot children’. It is difficult to locate the correct mother or daughter on the 1881 census, but it is likely that Christina went back to paid employment and her daughter was brought up by family or boarded out. Christina’s case study provides an example of rural migration to an industrial city for employment and how an illegitimate pregnancy and application for poor relief could cause travel back to the parish of settlement. It is likely in this case, that following the birth of the baby in the Glasgow City Poorhouse, the Inspector of the Poor for Little Dunkeld would have been asked to remove Christina and her child and maintain her through the Poorhouse affiliated to their parish.

In summary, this chapter demonstrates that settlement status had a significant impact on the provision of poor relief and that single and widowed females were more vulnerable to poverty due to lack of male support. It illustrates that whilst the Poorhouse demographic indicates that the majority of inmates were born within the Poorhouse Union, this reflected the law of settlement’s strings pulling an individual back to their settlement parish in order to receive relief. It highlights how a life crisis event such as the death of a spouse, illness or debility could result in a downward spiral into poverty, exacerbated by Parochial Boards and Poor Law Inspectors who in an attempt to keep costs low, would test the destitution of applicants through an offer of the poorhouse. With settlement status of females dictated by the birth parish of their fathers or husbands, taking up an offer of poorhouse relief could mean
travelling many miles away from their place of birth or residence. In this rural location with agricultural and domestic service as the main employment, this created a highly mobile workforce requiring single people and families to move frequently. This constant mobility also meant that extended family and kin networks were not always nearby to help with support in the event of life-crisis or were employed in similar work where they could not offer support. In circumstances where extended family or kin were physically able or legally required to support an individual or family but did not do so, the local Parochial Board would ask for recompense for the cost of relieving their relative and threaten them with prosecution if they did not comply. These findings in rural Highland Perthshire support Gordon’s conclusions from urban industrial Paisley that gender, family status and migration were key factors in determining eligibility and provision of poor relief with migration increasing the risk of poverty for women.²⁰

²⁰ Gordon, ‘Demographics, p. 28.
5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how gender influenced the provision, administration and experience of poor relief in rural Scotland following the 1845 Poor Law (Scotland) Act. It examined who was eligible for poor relief and how moral concepts of the deserving and undeserving poor affected the type of welfare offered and accepted. Chapter 2 analysed the gender demographics of poverty in Scotland situating findings from the local study within a national and regional context. This found that significantly more women than men received poor relief and that the parishes in the Poorhouse Union had a higher degree of poverty than the county and national average. This was exacerbated by rural depopulation caused by changes in agricultural practices, which led to younger people migrating and emigrating leaving older generations without support. Eligibility for relief was determined according to debility and destitution with fluidity of interpretation by local Poor Law Inspectors. Whilst female poverty was much greater than male, the Poorhouse housed more elderly males than females evidencing that the majority of older females received outdoor relief. Females under 60 were significantly higher in numbers than males, with the majority of these unmarried mothers or widows with dependent children who were especially vulnerable due to the lack of male support.

Chapter 3 examined illegitimacy, morality and childhood poverty through a discussion of Poor Law ideology and demographic analysis of Poorhouse statistics and case studies. It asked whether the Poorhouse acted as an aid or deterrent for unmarried mothers and how agricultural employment practices led to illegitimate births. Findings in this chapter outlined how Poor Law officials regarded illegitimacy as a moral problem with relief for unmarried mothers offered solely through the Poorhouse. This was evidenced through the largest group
of women and children in the Poorhouse being unmarried mothers with illegitimate offspring. The majority of these worked as farm or domestic servants and had no male support to provide for them. Employment practices for these workers meant accommodation at their place of work with opportunities for illicit liaisons and increased chances of an illegitimate pregnancy and birth. Accommodation for married couples was rare and there were fewer opportunities for marriage and the legitimisation of children.

Illegitimacy was common in this working environment with children generally brought up by extended family or foster parents. Stigma in this regard was associated with the Poorhouse rather than illegitimacy, as suggested by a higher number of individuals rejecting than accepting an offer of the Poorhouse. In this respect, the Poorhouse did act as a deterrent to unmarried mothers claiming relief, the numbers of which fell after 1872 when the poorhouse test was used to greater effect. However, for destitute unmarried mothers, the Poorhouse also acted as a refuge providing food, clothing, shelter and medical aid during a period of extreme vulnerability.

Chapter 4 examined the Poor Law principle of settlement and how this was used to determine eligibility for relief. It assessed how migration increased the risk of poverty for women and how family and kinship networks were vital for preventing a fall into poverty. Findings demonstrate that settlement status had a significant impact on the provision of poor relief and that single and widowed females were more vulnerable to poverty due to lack of male support. A life crises event such as the death of a spouse, illness or the debility of pregnancy or dependent children could result in the loss of employment or accommodation resulting in destitution and a fall into poverty.
In Highland Perthshire employment as farm or domestic servants created a highly mobile workforce, requiring frequent moves between farms as work contracts expired and seasonal jobs changed. Extended family and kinship networks were a crucial element of support but where these were not accessible, a claim for poor relief was inevitable. When poor relief was claimed, an individual could be living many miles away from their settlement parish. As women were eligible through their father or husband’s settlement, an offer of indoor relief through the Poorhouse required travel back to their parish of settlement, which could be an unfamiliar area a significant distance away.

The findings of this study support the contention that poverty was gendered with women more likely to fall into poverty than men and that being female predisposed an individual to poverty. Lack of male support or extended family could result in destitution, exacerbated by regular employment mobility. Poor Law ideologies of morality meant that women claiming relief were judged for behaviours considered immoral with relief granted in the form of the Poorhouse, which sought to punish behaviours the consequences of which were considered a drain on parish finances. Findings also suggest that the poor who sought temporary relief were not merely passive recipients, but had a degree of agency over their lives albeit compromised at times by survival needs. When able, the poor had the ability to accept or reject the offer of poor relief and a determination to support themselves as much as possible after they had left the Poorhouse. This study has contributed to a gap in Scottish historiography of the poor providing a local analysis of poverty in Highland Perthshire. This has been placed in the context of rural and urban studies of the New Scottish Poor Law with
findings concurring with Gordon’s hypothesis that poverty in Scotland under the 1845 Act was far from a ‘random hazard’ with women more likely than men to be poor. ¹

This study has concentrated on the first twenty years of the Poorhouse. There is scope to continue this research after 1884 with Poorhouse records extant up to the 1920s when the institution changed to the Cuil-an-Daraich Home for the elderly. This could be placed within the context of changes brought about by the Old Age Pensions Act in 1908. A further area for research, which could not be explored in this study, is an examination of orphaned and deserted children in the Poorhouse. This could be undertaken in the context of the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 regarding the use of industrial schools and the process of boarding out of children with foster parents. Additionally, an examination of individual parish Parochial Boards and further analysis of poor rolls could be undertaken to identify further patterns of gender, migration and poverty. Minute books survive for a number of parishes in the Poorhouse Union with contemporaneous records for the two largest parishes of Logierait and Dull.

APPENDIX 1

Figure 2.2  Larger Scale Map showing the locations of the Poorhouse Union Parishes in Highland Perthshire  Source: Map of Perth and Clackmannan Shires, New Statistical Accounts of Scotland, Vol. 10, Perth (Edinburgh, 1845)

*IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS*
APPENDIX 2

Total population of Scotland, the County of Perthshire and Parishes in the Poorhouse Union per census year with female and male populations and gender ratio per 100 people  Source: Scotland Census, (1861), (1871), (1881)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Total Population of Scotland</th>
<th>Total Population of County of Perthshire</th>
<th>Total Population of Poorhouse Union Parishes</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>161246</td>
<td>1449848</td>
<td>3062294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1756875</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881</td>
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Total number of registered poor in Scotland, the County of Perthshire and the Poorhouse Union Parishes, 1861-1884  
Source: PP. 1861-1884, Board of Supervision for Relief of Poor in Scotland, Annual Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total No. of Registered Poor in Scotland</th>
<th>Total No. of Registered Poor in the County of Perthshire</th>
<th>Total No. of Registered Poor in Poorhouse Union Parishes</th>
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<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>1884</td>
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Percentage of registered poor in Scotland, the County of Perthshire and the Poorhouse Union Parishes, 1861-1884
Source: PP. 1861-1884, Board of Supervision for Relief of Poor in Scotland, Annual Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of Registered Poor within National Population of Scotland</th>
<th>Percentage of Registered Poor within Population of County of Perthshire</th>
<th>Percentage of Registered Poor within Population of Parishes in Poorhouse Union</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Female Paupers within Female Population</td>
<td>% Male Paupers within Male Population</td>
<td>% Total Paupers within Total Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.50</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX 3

Chapter 3. Case Study Source Material

Catherine Fleming

Perth & Kinross Archives
CC1/19/1/3/1, Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse Inmate Register, 1864-1893

National Records of Scotland
Scotland Census (1841), 372/1/5, Perthshire, Lethendy, Catherine Fleming
Scotland Census (1851), 339/1/6, Perthshire, Clunie, Catherine Fleming
Scotland Census (1861), 372/2/1, Perthshire, Lethendy and Kinloch, Catherine Fleming
Scotland Census (1871), 337/4/7, Perthshire, Caputh, Donald Fleming
Scotland Census (1871), 337/6/6, Perthshire, Caputh, Catherine Fleming
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Statutory Birth Register (1864), 337/36, Perthshire, Caputh, Donald Fleming, 16 November 1866

Matilda McEwan

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CC1/19/1/2/1, Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse, Letters Book 1863-1873, Letter from Poorhouse Governor to Inspector of the Poor, Little Dunkeld, 28 July 1868, p. 633

National Records of Scotland
Scotland Census (1861), 373/2/50, Perthshire, Little Dunkeld, Matilda McEwan

Catherine Hossack

Perth & Kinross Archives
CC1/19/1/3/1, Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse, Inmate Register, 1864-1893
CC1/19/1/2/1, Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse, Letters Book 1863-1873, Letter from Duncan McCallum, Poorhouse Governor to John Hossack, Aberfeldy, 4 February 1865. Letter from Poorhouse Governor to Dr Irvine, Pitlochry, 4 February 1865, p. 254

National Records of Scotland
Statutory Birth Register (1865), 376/7, Perthshire, Logierait, Henry McDonald Hossack, 4 February 1865
Statutory Death Register (1865), 324/49, Perthshire, Aberfeldy, Henry McDonald Hossack, 14 November 1865
Appendix 4

Chapter 4. Case Study Source Material

Eliza Cameron

Perth & Kinross Archives
CC1/19/1/3/1, Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse Inmate Register, 1864-1893

National Records of Scotland
Scotland Census (1851), 355/A 85/11, Perthshire, Fortingall, Duncan Cameron
Scotland Census (1861), 483/5/4, Stirlingshire, Kilsyth, Duncan Cameron, Eliza Cameron
Scotland Census (1871), 139/7/2, Moray, Knockando, Eliza Cameron
Scotland Census (1891), 134/1/5, Moray, Edinkillie, Alexander Cameron
Statutory Registers Marriages (1859), 503/39, Dumbarton, Row, Eliza McLaren and Duncan Cameron, 25 November 1859
Statutory Registers Births (1871), 141/68, Rothes, Elgin/Moray, Alexander Cameron, 24 November 1871

Martha Cowan Robertson

Perth & Kinross Archives
CC1/19/1/3/1, Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse, Inmate Register, 1864-1893
CC1/19/1/2/1, Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse, Letters Book 1863-1873, Letter from Poorhouse Governor to Inspector of Poor, Little Dunkeld, 25 September 1865
CC1/19/1/2/1, Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse, Letters Book 1863-1873, Letter from Poorhouse Governor to Inspector of Poor, Arbroath, 1 May 1866

National Records of Scotland
Scotland Census (1851), 275/13/50, Angus, Brechin, Martha Cowan Robertson
Scotland Census (1861), 275/4/27, Angus, Brechin, Martha Cowan Robertson
Scotland Census (1861), 298/3/16, Angus, Kirkden, Charles Robertson
Scotland Census (1871), 272/8/37, Angus, Arbroath, Martha Cowan Robertson
Old Parish Registers Births (1843), 298/30 113, Kirkden, Angus, Martha Cowan Robertson, 17 July 1843
Statutory Registers Deaths (1875), 272/158, Forfarshire, Arbroath, Martha Cowan Robertson, 24 March 1875

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Burial Register (1875), Arbroath Western Cemetery, Angus, Martha Cowan Robertson, 26 March 1875
Mary Ann McCall

Perth & Kinross Archives
CC1/19/1/3/1, Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse, Inmate Register, 1864-1893

National Records of Scotland
Scotland Census (1841), 373/3/3, Perthshire, Little Dunkeld, Ann Harris
Scotland Census (1841), 373/8/1, Perthshire, Little Dunkeld, James Harris
Scotland Census (1851), 373/2/20, Perthshire, Little Dunkeld, Ann Harris
Scotland Census (1851), 341/1/11, Perthshire, Comrie, Daniel Dow, Mary Harris
Scotland Census (1851), 382/5/5, Perthshire, Monzie, Thomas Brown, Mary Ann Harris
Scotland Census (1861), 373/6/23, Perthshire, Little Dunkeld, Ann Harris
Scotland Census (1861), 341/6/4, Perthshire, Comrie, Mary Ann McCall
Scotland Census (1871), 373/3/1, Perthshire, Little Dunkeld, Grace Dow

Old Parish Registers Births (1795), 373/0010 0210, Perthshire, Little Dunkeld, Grizel Dow, 1 March 1795*
Statutory Registers Births (1814), 373/10 329, Perthshire, Little Dunkeld, Ann Harris, 10 August 1814
Statutory Registers Marriages (1814), 373/10 427, Perthshire, Little Dunkeld, Daniel Dow, Mary Harris, 3 September 1814
Statutory Registers Deaths (1814), 376/00 0031, Perthshire, Logierait, Grace Dow, 14 November 1872
Statutory Registers Deaths (1887), 376/9, Perthshire, Logierait, Ann Harris, 10 April 1887
Statutory Registers Deaths (1923), 376/12, Perthshire, Logierait, Mary Ann McCall, 3 May 1923

* Grizel was later referred to as Grace

Christina Stewart

Perth & Kinross Archives
CC1/19/1/3/1, Atholl, Weem and Breadalbane Poorhouse, Inmate Register, 1864-1893
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National Records of Scotland
Scotland Census (1881), 387/8/194, Perthshire, Tibbermore, Duncan Stewart
Statutory Registers Births (1870), 644/4 1447, Glasgow, Calton, Christina Stewart, 23 November 1870
Statutory Registers Births (1870), 376/31, Perthshire, Logierait, Duncan McGregor Stewart, 17 June 1873
APPENDIX 5

Extracts from the Poorhouse Inmate Register on 11 November 1873 showing entries for Mary Ann McCall and her mother Ann Harris with corresponding note of their parents
Source: Perth & Kinross Archives, CC1/19/1/3/1, Poorhouse Inmate Register

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<td>65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>James Robertson</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Mrs. Duff</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Mrs. Dow</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Ann Harris</td>
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Extract from the Poorhouse Inmate Register on 15 May 1872 showing entries for Mary Ann McCall, her mother Ann Harris and grandmother Grace Dow
Source: Perth & Kinross Archives, CC1/19/1/3/1, Poorhouse Inmate Register

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Sex</th>
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- CC1/19/1/3/1, Inmate Register, 1864-1893
- CC1/19/1/13/1, Offence and Punishment Book, 1864-1903
- CC1/19/1/20/1, Cash Book 1871-1916

Dull Parochial Board records:
- CC1/7/10/1, Minute Book 1865-1879

Logierait Parochial Board records:
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- Scotland Census (1871)
- Scotland Census (1881)
- Scotland Census (1891)

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- Statutory Registers Marriages
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