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## UHI Centre for History

### Seminar Series – Spring 2014

All seminars will be held in Dornoch Room, Ross House, North Highland College, Grange Road, Dornoch and will commence at 5.15pm. Please contact Dr Kirsty Reid, [kirsty.reid@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:kirsty.reid@uhi.ac.uk), for further information and to book a place.

#### **Darren Tierney, February 12th 2014**

#### **'I was in prison and you came to see me': the Catholic Church and the Scottish prison system, 1845-c.1890.**

Between 1800 and 1880, owing primarily to Irish migration, the number of Catholics in Scotland increased from 30,000 to some 330,000. As the Catholic population increased so too did the number of Catholics in Scottish prisons, often disproportionately so. The Church, for its part, was conscious of the need to serve its 'fallen' sons and daughters, believing as it did that religion had the power to rehabilitate. It is against this backdrop that this paper will chart the development of the Scottish Catholic prison mission between 1845 and c. 1890. In the early years this mission was nothing more than occasional clerical visits to prisons at the request of Catholic inmates, but by 1890 salaried chaplains had been appointed to all the major Scottish prisons, women religious were making regular visits to female inmates and assistance was being provided to prisoners on the 'outside'

The prison mission represents an important but overlooked aspect of the nineteenth-century Scottish Catholic Church. It did not develop in isolation or independently from wider developments in either the Church itself or Scottish society and, as such, the value of this paper lies not only in the telling of an as of yet untold story, but also in bringing to light important interactions between the Church, state and broader society.

#### **David Alston, March 26<sup>th</sup> 2014**

#### **A forgotten diaspora: the children of enslaved, and 'free coloured', women and Highland Scotsmen in Guyana before emancipation.**

In this seminar I will consider the particular importance to the Highlands of the colonies of Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice (today the Republic of Guyana) on the north coast of South



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America. At the end of the eighteenth century they were the most undeveloped colonies in the region, on the margins of empire, populated not only by enslaved Africans, and their descendants, but by mobile 'free coloured' people, and transient European speculators and adventurers, who were willing to take greater risks than in longer established colonies. Sexual abuse of enslaved women, and of enslaved female children, by owners, managers and overseers, was endemic but there were, too, some relatively stable and enduring relationships between Highland Scots and enslaved women. There were also relationships with 'free coloured' women, many of them individuals who showed a high degree of self reliance and ingenuity in advancing their own interest and that of their children. A number of the children, of both enslaved and 'free coloured' women, were sent to the Highlands for education. I will present a number of case studies of these relationships and explore the fate of these children.

**David Taylor, April 30<sup>th</sup> 2014**

**A 'Parasitic Middle Class' or 'Too Good to Lose' Restoring the eighteenth-century tacksmen of Badenoch to their rightful status**

No social group in the history of the eighteenth-century Highlands has been more vilified or misunderstood than the tacksmen. It has generally been accepted that with the demise of the military functions of the clan, not only did this traditionally important class lose its *raison d'être*, but that estates were desperate to remove them from their function as economic middlemen: hence the well-documented tacksman-led migrations from the western seaboard in the 1770s.

This paper challenges those conclusions, demonstrating through a detailed study of the central Highlands, that this west-coast picture was certainly not universal. In Badenoch the tacksmen did not emigrate, but remained as social and economic leaders of the community right into the nineteenth century, regarded by the Gordon estates as too valuable to be driven out, and at times, too powerful to challenge.

**Elizabeth Ritchie, May 21<sup>st</sup> 2014**

**'With a Woman and an Axe: The Labour of Scottish Emigrant Women to Rural Canada, 1800-1850'**

One man encouraging emigration to Canada exclaimed that Scots could make a success of themselves whether they came with 'great working sons or with only useless girls.' However for many emigrant families it was these 'useless girls' who were the key to their success. This



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paper explores the work that emigrant women did as they created new farms out of the old growth forest of British North America in the early nineteenth century: how important was traditionally female work like dairying, to what extent were work practices carried over from the old world to the new, and how did new settlers divide up the work between men and women?