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Alex Fraser
250 Reangular

13 Oct.

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I, Alexander Fraser, Crofter, residing in Shuehary or
Rearquhar and renting the croft No 250, beg to submit
the following statement of facts:—

I am 69 years of age. I succeeded to this croft in my
own name at my mothers death in 1862. In 1854 I
was entered as a joint tenant with my mother.
She succeeded, one, Widow William Murray in 1827.
Before entering this croft she was removed from a
holding known as Sandy Croft near Cyderhall, my
father, Grandfather and Great grandfather occupied
the Sandy Croft. I do not know what the extent of
the Sandy Croft was. After my grandfathers death in
1809 this croft was added to a neighbouring farm
occupied by Mr McCulloch. McCulloch being in straitened
circumstances borrowed a sum of £40 Stg. from
my father. In consideration of this he allowed
my father to reside on the old croft as a subtenant
on a five years lease, but charged him an annual
rent of £8. McCulloch only held the farm for three
years when he failed. My father thereby lost a good
deal of money. After this in 1812 my father was ad-
mitted a tenant by the Duke at the same rent
of £8. He continued paying this rent till his death
in 1826. A year or two after McCullochs failure my
father and two other crofters received summonses of
removal as their crofts were to be added to the
farm of Cyderhall. They presented a petition to Earl
Gower pointing out that they were paying a total
rent of £16. 4. 1½: that the land previous to their fore-
fathers occupying it was only brown heather; that
they had spent all their capital in reclaiming and
improving it: And asking for the Earls protection
for their improvements and against eviction. They
received a reply saying that they would not be
removed.

removed till the estate would supply them with a place as good as the ones they then had. However in 1819 and every year thereafter the estate served summonses of removal on my father and tried to evict him. They failed as they could not fulfil their written promise to give him a croft as good as the one he had. In 1827 the year after my father's death, the Estate tried to evict my mother and succeeded as the written promise given to my father did not include his successors. On being removed she was given a small strip of land in Fleuchary then vacated by the widow of William Murray. Donald Murray a son of William Murray however held a part of this croft as subtenant to his father and afterwards to his step mother. When my mother entered ~~my mother~~ Donald offered her his rent, but she refused to take it. He then paid to the Estate. In 1831 he removed to America and my mother then got possession of the whole croft, which up till then she had only in name. On Donald removing my mother paid him £12 stg: melioration for the house he had built in 1818. When Donald built this house the estate gave him a promise that he would not be removed as long as the rent would be paid. Besides this a further sum of £10 stg: was paid for improvements. In 1831 when my mother got actual possession of the whole croft she received a seven years lease at an annual rent of £2. 3s. At the expiry of this lease the rent was increased to £4. In 1854 Mr Loch Commissioner to the Duke of Sutherland came to evict my mother and give the place to Mr Geo Clark a Grieve on Skelbo farm. Mr Loch was accompanied by Mr Gunn factor and Mr Forbes, groundofficers.

After looking to the improvements done to the placecroft Mr Gunn turned to Mr Loch and said to him "what would the people say if you removed her after her son making such improvements on the place. He would do more if he got the croft with her" Mr Gunn then asked my mother if she were willing to have me as a joint tenant. My mothers will was then produced by which she made everything over to me. This incident took place in the early part of harvest and in October of the same year I entered on a 19 years lease as joint tenant with my mother. The rent was then increased from £14 to £5. In 1873 Mr Box then a clerk in Rhives office and Mr Morrison groundofficer passed along between my dwelling house and the arable land. When I went to pay the next rent Mr Peacock said to me. "Mr Box increased your rent to £6. Dont blame me for it as I never saw your place." Mr J. Morrison was present when this was said to me. In 1890 I got an addition of seven acres of which only four is arable, and that same number was hardly arable when I got them. The remaining acres had not been cropped for the last thirty five years. Even then it was only one crop that was ever put into them. They appear to have been a burnt forest, the stocks of trees being met with almost in every yard. This can be seen by the Commissioners when they visit the holding. My rent was then increased to £9.5s. the figure at which it stands at present. The rent has thus been raised three times on our own improvements at something like 200 per cent. In 1842 we erected a dwelling house at a cost of £81. £29 being for buildings and £52 for timber. Steadings were erected a short time previous to that. The stonework there cost about £40 and the timber about £27. In 1873 I repaired part

of the steadings and received about 18¢ worth of timber from the Estate. This and timber to the value of 10¢ supplied in 1870 for a bridge and 10¢ worth of lime supplied in 1873 was all the assistance we ever got from the estate. Last year I repaired part of the steadings and covered it with corrugated iron.

My arable land extends to 21 ac. 2 r.s. 26.0532 poles. Before the addition was made in 1890 it stood about 17 acres. Of this number I have seen improved 7 ac 2 r.s. 12 po. Of that I have myself trenched 2 ac and ploughed 2 ac. The rest was ploughed and trenched by my brothers. Besides what I have seen done myself the greater part of the rest of the croft was reclaimed by my brothers before I came of age. Before a good deal of what was reclaimed could be reclaimed we had to close a ditch or rather gully which ran down through the greater part of the croft. A considerable part of it was about ten feet deep and fifteen feet wide. Besides trenching and ploughing the croft has been pretty well drained. There was not one inch of a drain in the patches my mother got. I have myself made 98 chains of closed drains. These are all in good running order. Besides these there have been a great many more made but they are worse than useless for the want of a proper flow. Many of these drains were rendered useless by the continual filling up of the big burn - a burn which runs along the side of the croft and carries away the water of the Harriets plantation. In former years this burn was regularly cleaned by the Duke's Forester Mr McQuigdale. He was succeeded by Mr Morrison ground officer, but the burn was only once cleaned since Mr McQuigdale left. I have repeatedly asked the various foresters to clean it as formerly but they turned a deaf ear to my applications. Before I could.

could crop the four acres of supposed arable land. I got in 1890 I had to make 27 chains 6 yds of closed drains. Even after this it is with difficulty I can plough it without getting into a bog. In the winter time in soft weather I cannot venture there at all with a cart. Before this part will be anything like decently drained I will have at least to put in as many more chains of drains. Even after that if the estate does not clean the lastuary of the big burn, I will have to give up cropping these four acres.

Besides ploughing, trenching, draining and building houses I have erected 15 chains $1\frac{1}{4}$ yards of a sunk fence and 100 yards of a stone dyke.