



This is an account of the clearance of a township in *Glen Calvie* in *Sutherland* in June 1845. During this period landowners were turning over much of their land to a new system of sheep farming. Many families were being asked, or forced, to leave their homes.

The people of *Glen Calvie* lived in modest houses made with turf. They grew barley and oats and herded cattle and sheep. They paid rent for their land to the Duke of *Sutherland*. They were a law-abiding, God-fearing people who always paid the rent.

When word came in 1845 that their valley was to be 'cleared' they met their fate with quiet dignity. Eighteen families of around 92 individuals had nowhere to go so they marched out of the glen in a group, with two or three carts filled with children, their bedding and other belongings.

They found shelter in the grounds of *Croick* church. It was wet and cold but they would not shelter in the church itself for fear of breaking its sanctity. So they made a shelter of sorts in the grounds. Around a small fire mothers and children huddled.

Some of them scratched their names and brief messages into a glass window of the church. One message says 'This House is Needing Repair', another says, 'Calvie People the Wicked Generation'. It suggests that these people who trusted their church and their chief could not believe that those who had always protected them were now turning them out of their homes. To them their misfortune was the result of their own sinful behaviour! Another telling point is that these were native Gaelic speakers and yet their comments were written in English, almost as if they realised their highland culture would leave the valley with them.

After several days the people left. Few records exist of where they went and how many survived.

A newspaper reporter for *The Times* witnessed the events and wrote about them. You can read the report here > <https://www.scotclans.com/scotland/scottish-history/modern-scotland/1785-clearances/witness-account-by-a-correspondent-for-the-times/>

ACTIVITY

Make up a 2 minute drama scene about the clearance of *Glen Calvie*.

Give each person a character (mother, father, child or grandparent). Decide on the setting, action, start and ending. Rehearse the scene using improvised dialogue (speaking).