

# Scotland and the First World War: A Revision Guide

## Background – Scotland before 1914

### **Population**

- Big population growth in Scotland prior to 1850.
- 1.26 million in 1755 to 2.62 million in 1841. Continued population growth, but not revolutionary growth up to First World War.
- By 1911, 45.6% of the population lived in the central industrial areas.
- Industrial areas of the western lowlands were the dynamic areas of development.
- Population of Edinburgh (although growing) stagnant in comparison to the west.
- Migration to the west and natural population growth.
- Overall death and birth rates fell at this time.
- Last cholera outbreak: 1860s.
- Diseases such as measles and whooping cough less dangerous by the early 20th century.
- Improved medical knowledge and sanitation by the burgh and city councils.
- High death rates from bronchitis, pneumonia and tuberculosis.
- Peaks in emigration: 1880s, 1900s and 1920s.
- 1853–1939: the number of emigrants was half the natural increase of the population.
- Most emigrants before the First World War seeking better opportunities came from central Scotland.
- Scotland at the heart of transatlantic transport links; facilitating movement.

### **Urbanisation**

- By 1911, nearly 50% of Scots lived in towns of more than 20,000 people.
- Large industrial cities.
- 1901: 75 burghs with populations over 5000.
- Tradition of dynamic council government.
- Scottish housing small, with poor levels of sanitation, ventilation and light.
- Overcrowding an enduring problem.
- Mortality rate for Glaswegians living in one to two rooms was three to four times higher than for those in bigger houses.
- 1911: 7.1% of English population lived in one to two room houses; in Scotland it was 47.7%.

### **Education**

- Idealised notions of a broad education system: progressive and meritocratic.
- 1872: education for children 5–13.
- Secondary schools largely existed in the towns and were dominated by the middle classes.
- Small tradition of 'public schools' like Glenalmond and Fettes.
- Day schools such as Heriots and the Merchant Company schools in Edinburgh.
- History began to be taught as a systematic subject; establishment of professorships of Scottish history at Edinburgh (1903) and Glasgow (1911).
- Admission of women to universities from the 1890s onwards.
- Employment opportunities for women graduates outside of teaching and social work were limited.
- Scottish universities short of money; relied on the Carnegie Trust (1901). State funding not significant until after the First World War.

### **Politics**

- Traditional concerns: tariff reform, empire, land reform and temperance.
- New issues: old-age pensions, housing, health and unemployment insurance.
- Irish home rule: only given serious attention between 1910 and 1912.
- Politically volatile period: swings of support for the Conservatives and the Liberals, 1900 and 1906.
- 40% of male voters unable to vote.
- Slow growth of the Labour Movement.
- John Wheatley a key figure in the growth of socialist Labour politics.
- Liberals continued to reflect contemporary concerns.
- Scottish Home Rule Association set up in 1886.

### **'Key Social and Political Issues'**

- Crowded cities.
- Industrial pollution
- Impact of agricultural revolution.
- Extension of the franchise.
- Land reform.
- Growth of the Labour Movement.
- Irish home rule.

### **The economy**

- By 1914, the most significant industries were shipbuilding, engineering and coalmining.
- Core industrial areas: Strathclyde, Lothian, Central and Fife.
- Clydeside yards were major employers and world leaders in terms of output.
- Beginning of relative decline for heavy industries; 1890–1914, half the tonnage ordered in the shipyards was for the Navy.

### **Land reform**

- Liberal support for redistribution of land key to their support before the First World War.
- Land agitation in the Hebrides in the 1900s.
- Land reform bills unsuccessful.
- Small Landholders (Scotland) Act, 1911: impact minimal.
- Issue of land reform still to be settled.

### **'Scottish Martial Tradition'**

- Popular histories of Scotland's heroic past: the Wars of Independence, Covenanters and the Jacobites.
- 18th century Scots dominance of the British Army; enduring symbol.
- 20th century decline in number of Scots in the army.
- Scottish regiments: kilts and tartan, highly visible regiments.
- Highland regiments resistant to amalgamation.
- Continued importance of military symbols, eg. the Highlands, the kilt and the bagpipe to Scottish identity.
- Existence of local regiments important to the success of recruiting at the outbreak of the First World War.
- Relatively large number of Scots enlisted in the First World War – around 688,000.