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**‘The individual, the community and the impact of touring film:
interviews with Jim Hunter and others’**

Callum Brown and Ealasaid Munro

Jim Hunter recalls being challenged by a Tory of the Thatcher era in the 1980s to name one state-funded activity that had no downside. Hunter named the Highlands and Island Film Guild. Of the more than one hundred people we interviewed, few were as articulate and enthusiastic for the Film Guild shows as Jim Hunter. Here’s how he recalled it:-

CB: So, did the Film Guild van come to your community?

JH: Yes, eh, they came, the Film Guild came. There’s a community hall... it’s been much extended I think since, but at the time the original bit of it was relatively new and it served both Duror and Kentallen. Kentallen is the next wee place going towards Ballachulish. And the Film Guild van came there every second Friday night, which was quite a good night for it to come, because of course it could easily have been a [Laughs] Wednesday night or whatever, but, a Friday night was good. I couldn’t tell you when I would have started going regularly, certainly not when I was very little obviously, but certainly when I was probably older, primary and certainly, secondary [school]. ... Well, we all went just, [laughs] I think sometimes we had no idea until we got there what the film would be. But we just went anyway. I remember the older people, the older guys who would be there. Well, when I say older, they wouldn’t be as old as I am now most of them, but they seemed old at the time. And one I remember particularly, that got a universal slating from the Duror

critics panel was *The Pyjama Game* [Laughs] which eh, clearly didn't go down well. But I can remember seeing, I mean again, it would be hard to be categorical about what I actually saw, but eh, you know, I can remember Westerns and some war films of that time - Douglas Bader [in *Reach for the Sky*] and all that kind of thing, *The Dam Busters*, I think that would have been, yeah, that would have been when I was there.

On this project, we interviewed those who, in their older age now, recollected the Film Guild coming, between the late 1940s and early 1970s usually fortnightly, to their community, village hall or another public space to show feature films as well as newsreels and shorter films. As Annette Kuhn has contended of her respondents speaking of the 1930s, recollection of film watching in early years is characteristically 'associated in memory with plenty and generosity', 'energy and abundance', flexible or cyclical time, and memories of 'cinema in the world and the world in the cinema'.¹ We, too, were interested in establishing a number of features of the place of the Film Guild in memory – in the recollections of growing up in the Crofting Counties in the mid twentieth century, in the wider experience of the community, and in the life of the individual. In this article, we use Jim Hunter's interview with us to isolate themes that forge the main narrative typologies we encountered, providing a foundation for an experiential appreciation of encounters with media as modernity in the Highland zone in the middle decades of the twentieth century, and considering commentary from other respondents.

For those unfamiliar with him, Jim Hunter grew up to be a man of some significance to the modern history of the Highlands – first as a newspaper journalist on the *Press & Journal* and later as a freelance features-writer and broadcaster mainly with the BBC, *The Scotsman* and the *West Highland Free*

¹ Annette Kuhn, 'Heterotopia, heterochronia: place and time in cinema memory', *Screen* 45 (2004), pp. 106-114 at pp. 107-8.

Press, then as the director of the Scottish Crofters' Union and chairman of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and through it all a well-known historian and author of 14 books on Highland crofting, emigration, and soldiering. He became later in life the first professor of History at the University of the Highlands and Islands. For many, his outstanding book was *The Making of the Crofting Community* of 1976 which introduced modern social history to the study of the Highlands and islands and, to a large extent, to Scottish history as a whole. His life has touched so many aspects of the Highland and Hebridean experience of the last seventy years, and has been an active agent in economic and cultural change. But what is significant is that his testimony amplifies the ordinary – the way our interviewees were able to credit the Film Guild with a memorable place in their life narratives.

An important place to start is to emphasise the diversity of the types of community within the Highlands and Islands. The zone covered islands and mainland, the mountainous and the lowland, and the Gaelic-speaking and the English-speaking; these factors initially affected geographical access, and though we did not encounter any indication that language was a bar to film consumption, the enthusiasm for it was already in full-swing in parts of Shetland before the Guild's shows arrived. The religious cultures varied significantly, from the Calvinist Presbyterian through more liberal Presbyterian to Episcopalian and Roman Catholic; there was clear evidence from our interviews that church-induced cultural resistance to films was greatest in the Calvinist areas and least in the Catholic ones.² Then, there were major economic differences, with places of farming (such as Orkney and Easter Ross), crofting and fishing (such as the Hebrides and Western Highlands), fishing and crofting (such as Shetland), forestry, and some places of industry (such as Kinlochleven, Invergordon and Corpach), commerce and urban life. Across this range, uptake

² We leave a direct comparison of Catholic and Protestant consumption of film in the Highlands and Islands to another occasion.

of Film Guild shows seems on the face of it little affected by the local economy. Yet, it is important to take account of this diversity in community type when contextualising memories of film.

Jim Hunter's enthusiasm for the Film Guild was fostered in the community at Duror on the coast south of Ballachulish in Lochaber. Here there was quarrying and small farming, but to a significant extent the postwar community was re-forged by the Forestry Commission. Large numbers of local men (mainly) worked for the Commission, established as a government agency first in 1919 by the British government to encourage reforestation after the First World War, a strategy renewed after the Second World War. The Forestry Commission was a totalising employer, buying land, planting and harvesting trees, building workers' housing and running various support services for its employees and communities. The establishment of a Forestry Commission area of operations had some indirect impact on the nature of community and its collective receptivity to modernity. By arrival in less populous districts, it recruited an in-migrant workforce with families drawn from other Highland and Lowland areas, fostering a degree of relative cosmopolitanism, inducing the dominance of more south-facing, English-speaking, and non-Calvinist cultural alignment. To some degree, these were disturbances in the cultural landscape, as also in that of family, tending to promote marriages between folk from different places.

So, the first narrative typology to note from Jim's interview is that of cultural and religious transformation to the local originally Episcopalian community. Like so many, Jim's parents and grandparents were newcomers to Duror:- 'My mother's people came from the other side of the loch, from Strontian area, and my father, well his mother came from Tiree and the name Hunter from his father came originally from Ayrshire. So, we weren't natives to that area, so we weren't Episcopalian, but the few families - and I think there's only about one - there's only one family now in Duror who have been there so

to speak since the time of the Jacobite rebellion. But they [‘native’ Duror people] were very Episcopalian and so were all the other genuinely local families.’ So it was that this was mainly a Protestant community, mostly Church of Scotland to which Jim and his family attended when he was a child. As in Lowland urban Scotland, the 1950s was a religious time in Duror, with high levels of child attendance at church or Sunday school, and, if adult attendance was already sliding in the country as a whole, church membership was very high (peaking in the Kirk in 1956), observance of religious *rites de passage* were very strong, and observing the Sabbath was pretty much mandatory with restricted Sunday working, and, in Jim’s recollection, no play or toys, and very little reading of light books. The religious life he describes was not a pattern confined to the Highlands or to Calvinist Presbyterians, but was near-to uniform in Lowland Scottish Protestantism of the immediate post-war decades.³ But what is interestingly absent from Jim’s narrative is the possibility of real hostility in Duror to film. Such hostility was to be found in certain religious traditions, and we return in the last article in this collection to see how an antagonistic narrative to film emerged in Calvinist Presbyterian rhetoric of the mid twentieth century.

The second striking feature of the testimonies we obtained, all the way from Shetland in the north to Lewis in the west and to Argyll in the south, is the way respondents recalled the Film Guild as an enchantment coming in a small van. In the descriptions of the man in a van bringing a projector and the cans of film, there is something of a cargo cult. The joyous recollection of the van parking up outside the village hall, and the doors opening to reveal revered and exotic goods – the film projector in many cases (though some halls had a

³ For the national pattern in the 1950s, see John Highet, *The Scottish Churches: A Review of their State 400 Years after the Reformation* (London, Skeffington, 1960); and Callum G Brown, 'Religion and secularisation', in T. Dickson and J. Treble (eds.), *People and Society in Scotland volume 3, 1914 to the present* (1991, John Donald, Edinburgh), pp. 48-79.

permanent projector), and the cases of films, was a widespread memory. Jim's testimony here is a stand-in for many we spoke with:-

JH: I actually remember the van very well because it had a curious kind of construction. It was a smallish van, I've no idea what kind of van it was, but it had welded onto the back, one of the back doors, a kind of box that stuck out. It must have been about that much [gestures], if not more, and that was to make room for the screen. Because otherwise, the screen wouldn't have fitted into the van. That must have been sort of [laughs] made to order, and welded on to the standard van, whatever it was. And so, I remember that. I remember you know the projectionist would be there and I couldn't tell you his name of course, we were just kids. Half way through, or at some point in a feature film, you would have to change the reels on the projector and all that kind of thing. And of course, there was always other stuff before you got - cartoons and a news reel and what not - before you got to the main event. [Laughs] And you know, it was again, you know, it was very much a cross section of the community, there were older people, kids, people in between, and so, yeah, it was a big thing.

INSERT ABOUT HERE photo of Film Guild audience.

The 'big thing' was to be found in the anticipation. Finlay Macleod, brought up in Ness in north-west Lewis, expressed in interview his 'sense of excitement' with Film Guild shows in the early fifties when leisure and educational provision for the young was 'very sparse'. He reported that there 'was no library, no children's library, no books to speak of in school, school usually *arid* and not enabled people to become readers. No books at home, except religious ones.' Though the comics of DC Thomson and

newspapers were slowly becoming distributed in Ness (often sent by friends in Glasgow), and whilst football was a major attraction for boys, what he called ‘secular aids’ were few. ‘Into that mix came the Film Guild,’ Finlay said. ‘[T]here was no telly, there was no radio, very little written material, as I said, and into that world came films. Pathe News, with the news, and films of different kinds; cowboys, opening a different world altogether, a plethora of war films, navy, air force, army, and of course, Hollywood of all kinds.’⁴ Advertised in advance in the *Stornoway Gazette*, this anticipation led, when the films were shown, to the quite genuine sense of delight and rapture, in faces and entire bodies leaning forward on sometimes very hard seats in a wide-eyed and complete transported state. Now, as Jim Hunter makes clear, the screenings were not viewed uncritically; there was a developing fine judgement about films and film stars, with quite keen and astute opinion being forged week by week. We interviewed a woman in north west Lewis who became so enthused with film that she became an avid buyer of popular film magazines in the late 1950s, full of photographs, paintings of stars and films stills, and kept doing so even after moving to London in the 1960s, and, most impressively perhaps, still had these magazines when interviewed in the 2010s which she left the room to bring out from the loft to show us after more than fifty years.⁵ Film was a modern enchantment, intake in one medium generating delight in another, a form of intertextual consumption.

But film viewing was not a religion, and the film show was not worship. For most of the Highlands and Islands, film stands proud in their perception of the arrival of modernity. Film came when other media were delayed in arrival, filling, as Jim Hunter told us, an entertainment vacuum. Radio reception into the 1960s was, as he described it, ‘pretty awful’. He reported that ‘medium wave radio reception [kept] fading and coming and going’, and Irish radio was easier

⁴ Interview HIFG35 Finlay Macleod.

⁵ HIFG_42 Anonymous.

to hear in the Ballachulish area than the BBC stations. Whilst a few parts of the crofting counties got television in the mid 1960s, it did not arrive in Jim Hunter's Duror until after he had departed for University in Aberdeen in 1967. When it did arrive, it was in the form of advanced 625 lines in colour. The point here is that much of the Highlands skipped an inferior technological stage, missing out on the grainy, low-definition 405 lines television in black and white. In short, until virtually 1970, film was the only fully-fledged medium of what most people regarded as modern leisure technology in much of the Highlands and Islands. And outside the few Highland towns with a permanent cinema, the Film Guild was for most people the main purveyor.

And the way the medium operated had its distinctiveness. Jim Hunter and one of the authors recall where we were in November 1963 when we heard news that John F Kennedy had been shot dead in Dallas. Brown was 10 at his parents' house in South Edinburgh, and after playing with a mate, went to watch television to be confronted with a silent screen captioned with Kennedy had been shot and all television programmes were cancelled (though they did come back later after being sent to bed). Jim Hunter, by contrast, was 15 years old and heard the news on a special radio bulletin; but, being a Friday, he went to the village hall in Duror to see the film show as normal. So, for Jim, the Film Guild marks in his memory where he was the evening Kennedy was killed.

A third feature of the narratives we obtained was a sense of community in Film Guild shows, and of the way the shows fitted into the panoply of community activities. Young and old, male and female, of seemingly all backgrounds turned up on the night of a Film Guild show. It might have been a medium of modernity, but it was transposed on top of the existing cultural structure. Jim Hunter recalled the forms of entertainment in the village of Duror. Many in his village did not go out drinking in the 1950s and 1960s, but there were carpet bowls and whist drives for older folks, Christmas parties and Sunday-school parties – though not birthday parties he observes, unlike today

when there are seemingly always birthday parties for children. There was the Gaelic Mod, active in most parts of the Gàidhealtachd, with local and national competitions, ceilidhs and concerts. And Jim rightly notes the mania of the 1940s through to the late 1960s for amateur dramatics, or Amdram as it was called, which infected so many rural communities throughout both Lowland and Highland Scotland. There was often more than one team of Amdrams in a community, and there were competitions at local, regional and national levels. Jim acutely observes how the Film Guild joined this range of community activities. He does, however, note that the local gentry may not have shown up to film shows. As previously observed, Duror had much Forestry Commission employment, and only the landed elites were seemingly not plugged into this community.

A fourth feature of the testimonies obtained by the project was how the films watched by respondents at Film Guild shows fitted in with the sense of ‘the other’ – of places not in the community. Jim Hunter referred to this as ‘the Bright lights’ – the notion, mythical or otherwise, that interesting places were located elsewhere. In 2015, Highlands and Islands Enterprise published a report, *Our Next Generation*, giving the results of a survey conducted amongst 421 young people aged 15-30 in the west Highlands regarding their attitudes to the area, the environment and their own aspirations. In this it was clear that in most regards the young felt optimistic and content with their home turf; the two most negative issues were job opportunities (lamented by 74 per cent of respondents) and, interestingly, cinema provision (rated by 73 per cent as very or quite poor).⁶ Jim related the findings of this Report to reaction to Film Guild shows in the 1950s and 1960s:-

⁶ Highlands and Islands Enterprise, *Our Next Generation: Young People in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross: Attitudes and Aspirations* (2015), Figures 5.6 and 5.7, pp. 29-30. The Report is available to download free at www.hie.co.uk

JH: [T]he overwhelming view was very, very positive. I think one of the things that has changed very fundamentally, is that we were aware that the scenery was nice [Laughs], and we liked, you know, it was a place I was, even at that age, consciously very fond of. But we didn't sort of attach any wider value to that because I think we thought in the sort of cliché phrased of 'Bright Lights' being elsewhere, we thought of that. Now, I think today, partly because, or maybe mainly because of the huge significance that's now attached to the natural environment, that young folk here think about what we just thought of vaguely was nice scenery, to them it is something that they are aware that they have, of their localities have, that a lot of other places don't have. Now, that thought *never* occurred to us. Well at least it never occurred to me. And you know, I was very attached to the place at the time and was not somebody who was desperate to get away to the city or whatever. But I didn't see much alternative, I don't suppose, and particularly if you wanted to have a good job as it were. Short of working for the Forestry Commission there wasn't much opportunity to do anything, to get a job of any kind in the locality.

These remain enduring themes in a Highland history so dominated by emigration, and could, it might be conjectured, have placed some focus on films as a tantaliser of 'the other place'. But Jim told us:

JH: I don't think we thought of that as a kind of window on the wider world, because, you know, an awful lot of the films were – it was just entertainment basically, I think. I don't think we... I mean there were also of course newsreels and what not. And you were kind of interested in that. But I don't think we saw it as a kind of, you know – something – it

was just so different I supposed to what we were aware [of], where we were living.

This is a characteristic style of response from interviewees retrospectively articulating a broadly unfamiliar view – in this case of distant places on film being viewed longingly and enticingly.

Yet, some other interviewees did explicitly see the Guild as a window on the world, and credited the *visual* nature of film with this tendency. Murdo was born and raised in Barvas on Lewis, and explained how film helped him to navigate and interpret city life, and how it prepared him for the more quotidian aspects of life outside the Highlands and Islands:

[The Guild] was a window on the world. If you're brought up on an island, you see newspapers or books or whatever, and you look at something like a double-decker bus and you're; 'Oh, ok, this is a double-decker bus, I'll know one if I see one'. But in the films you saw them moving, you saw movement, and sound. And that made such a whale of a difference, it gave you a better understanding. Or a jet plane takin' off, or whatever it might be. It was a fantastic window on the world. That's my best description of it [...] 'Cus you saw things that you otherwise would not see. So then [laughs] when you saw your first double-decker bus, you were; 'Oh, that's a double-decker bus, I know what you look like!'⁷

Dan, a broadcaster born and raised on the Isle of Lewis, also drew on the idea of the Guild as being a 'window on the world', and similarly, noted that it offered something different from more readily available media forms such as newspapers and radio.

⁷ HIFG_32 Murdo Morrison.

You could, you could *see* things happening, you know? Pathé News for example. They showed, they showed a brief clip of the cup finals and things like that. And you'd see the sort of huge crowds that attended football grounds in the 1950s and things like that. And, you know, these sort of things, they certainly [...] opened up your ideas of a world outside the Highland communities. [...] So yes I think, I mean, it's a cliché, but they were a window on the world. Which then got extended vastly when TV arrived.⁸

It must be acknowledged that virtually all of our respondents were interviewed in the Highlands and Islands, and, though all had travelled and even lived elsewhere for stretches of their lives, they were perhaps less likely to have said they were so influenced by film to consider out-migration. Of film, many respondents did talk about the sense of being made aware and more familiar with distant places – such as London. And some of our respondents went to live and work there. But community narrative is a vital context here. Migration has been a constant feature of European society for at least a millennium, and in the 18th and 19th centuries there was relentless movement of people out (and then often back again – return levels being poorly recorded, but featuring sometimes in one third of cases).⁹ Jim Hunter in his historical research has recovered detailed understanding of the highways across the North Atlantic, travelled with relatively little knowledge of the places to which they were heading except that sent by relatives by letter. In this context, it seems implausible to suggest that migration was stimulated by Film Guild shows. The emigration culture was already there, the knowledge of destinations by then of longstanding and well matured into Highland consciousness, and with much more useful detail from relatives and friends than that from brief film scenes. The other place, the 'not-

⁸ HIFG_051 Dan Murray.

⁹ For a good collection of approaches to this, see Marjory Harper (ed.), *Emigrant Homecoming: The Return Movement of Emigrants, 1600–2000* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2005).

here', the place supposedly to escape to, was made more visually vivid perhaps, but the lives that folk from the Highlands might lead elsewhere required greater sophisticated and tailored information, and that often still came by letter or by visiting returnees.

A fifth theme to emerge is rather the opposite to the notion of film triggering escape. This is the idea that the Film Guild was part of the attempt to save the Highlands and Islands, part of what Jim Hunter referred to as 'the Highland renaissance'. Since the 1990s local and national government in Scotland has strongly evoked this idea, giving rise to 'Highland 2007', a year of celebration backed by the First Minister Jack McConnell.¹⁰ Jim Hunter is very articulate on the sea change that has befallen the Highlands and Islands since the 1940s. It might be summarised as involving: firstly, economic change with rising tourism, industry in many places including the oil industry especially in Shetland and Orkney, with the dramatic growth in the quality of infrastructure including houses, roads and air flight, and the tremendous rise in the standard of living; and secondly, cultural change, with a growing self confidence in the zone with diverse activities in media, the flourishing of Gaelic-medium teaching, cultural activities and broadcasting, and the rise of interest in traditional music. As chairman of HIE, Jim Hunter was part of the process, but he is not alone in noting the late twentieth-century recovery from the dire fear that gripped central and local government from the 1910s to the 1960s that rural society in the Highlands and Islands might collapse. This fear was based on an argument that living incrofting countries was not only perilous in economic terms, but in cultural terms, with too little to do, and with – as Jim sees it – need to develop a modern version of community self-confidence which, he argues, was crushed in successive waves by southern occupation, the landed elites, the attempted suppression of language, and then by clearance and emigration. The

¹⁰ This is evoked at an archived webpage:
https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/1259/year_of_culture_to_showcase_highland_renaissance_-_first_minister

Scottish Office became increasingly concerned with this, and their hand was behind the establishment of the Film Guild.

There is a sixth narrative that takes off from that point. And this is one not much expressed by our interviewees, nor indeed in the popular or official culture of the Highlands and Islands. It is, if you like, an absent narrative. And this is the argument that the Highlands and Islands were suffering from a cultural oppression wrought by the churches and especially by Calvinist religion. This idea is to be found within the Highland zone, and notably in the narrative of one of our interviewees, Dr Finlay Macleod. In his life's work, starting in published essays in the 1960s, and in his interview with us in 2017, Finlay has offered a comprehensive critique of the cultural, educative and psychological consequences of religion, buttressed by examples of theology's detrimental impacts, clerical hypocrisy, and the pure ignorance of those who never went to see films or partake in other 'worldly' or 'vain' activities. Drawn mostly from his encounters with the Calvinistic Free Church and Free Presbyterian Church, his narrative has led to him being a prominent figure in Hebridean culture, a man who held up Gaelic at every opportunity and in every context. He regarded church operations as 'social control', and from early on he developed his fearless intellectual and practical distance from it: 'I certainly was aware that the Church was powerful. I was aware that I didn't want to be part of it, I kicked against Sunday control, and so on, these social controls that the Church had. That's what annoyed me more than the fact that they *believed* or that the Church was full, it was the control it had on everyone's life. And of course, my awareness of that, and my understanding of it, has increased with maturity, but I was never tempted to join the Church, or anything like that. Never. Never.'¹¹ It is in the context of this antagonistic narrative of religion that Finlay attributes his sense of excitement and the educational liberating qualities attending the Film Guild shows arriving in a van fortnightly at Ness.

¹¹ HIFG_35 Finlay Macleod.

This argument was shared, though much less coherently and publicly, by some Edinburgh civil servants. Denizens of St Andrew's House and other commentators regarded a huge danger arising from boredom and the oppression of the Free churches in the Highlands – especially the crushing of things like dance, popular song, sport in some cases, and even amateur dramatics. This argument was founded forcefully in the 1910s in the midst of the First World War, in both Edinburgh and London, as a notion of crisis in rural society throughout Britain: a crisis fostered by agricultural change, declining employment, out-migration of the fit and smart, but also bred in rural culture's failure to keep pace with modern life. The crisis was perceived then as being especially about women's boredom in isolated rural homes; one answer to this in 1919 was the Women's Institute Movement, which in Scotland gave rise to the SWRI, with versions in other countries. More broadly, official government policies shifted inexorably through the 1920s, '30s and '40s towards subsidising rural leisure and culture, ranging from creating playing fields, erecting village halls, forming boys' and girls' clubs, and grant-aiding Amdram. The idea gained even more traction in relation to the Highlands and Islands with inquiries such as that of Fraser Darling and his *West Highland Survey* of 1955, which continued to underpin government views that the Highlands and Islands required not just economic support but cultural guidance. Thus, the Film Guild came into being as part of government adopting a concept of 'rational recreation' to fortify the social good and resilience in rural communities.¹²

But that sixth story is given a most important twist by Jim Hunter, founded upon key historical research he undertook in the 1970s. In contrast to Finlay Macleod's hostile approach to the impact of Calvinistic Presbyterianism upon the Hebrides, Jim identifies a chain of challenge to the self-confidence of Highland society stretching over many centuries – through sell-out by the lairds,

¹² For an overview of this policy's adoption in Scotland, see Callum G Brown, 'Popular culture and the continuing struggle for rational recreation', chapter in T.M. Devine and R.J. Finlay (eds.), *Scotland in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 210-229

military suppression, and cultural challenge through English language teaching kicking off in the eighteenth century, the Clearances of mainly the nineteenth century, and through neglect of fading economic and cultural fortunes in the twentieth century. In his narrative, as in his historical research, Jim Hunter has argued that evangelical Presbyterianism brought to the Highlands a source of identity, pride and self-regard that instilled a much needed inner core to a community suffering from so many other strokes. Hunter told us:-

JH: Well, it's not my original view of the nineteenth century, which is what I was writing about, that evangelical Presbyterianism gave these people a kind of sense [of identity]. I was very influenced, and much of my understanding of the nineteenth century in the eighteenth and nineteenth century of the Highlands, by having done in Aberdeen [University] courses in African history. And one of the phrases that always struck me about that was in regard to the independent churches in Africa. Somebody [said], I think it's even a book title about Kenya, some place, which was *A Place to Feel at Home*,¹³ and the idea there was that the church, the independent churches in Kenya and other parts of Africa, were giving to people whose tribal culture had been destroyed or was disintegrating around them, a place to feel at home. It gave them an alternative focus of identity and purpose and meaning, leaving aside the spiritual dimension, from a kind of social perspective that otherwise wouldn't have been there. And I felt that in the Highland case, where the world of clanship had collapsed around them and left them extremely disorientated, it's a kind of phenomenon that one sees in essentially tribal societies around the world, whether it's native Americans or whatever.

¹³ F.B Ogot and B.A. Welbourn, *A Place to Feel At Home: Two Independent Churches in Western Kenya* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1966).

That once the old order collapses, what do you put in its place? And in the Highland case, it was particularly difficult.’

Jim noted that Scotland was distinctive, both compared to Africa and to Ireland, in that the oppression came when their own family and kin, the clan chiefs, transmogrified into lairds, and became the primary agents of eviction and clearance. In Ireland, Jim said:

JH: And so the person who was evicting you in Ireland was a foreigner and a Protestant, and it was pretty easy to work up a good-going hatred of that person. In the Highlands it was psychologically much more complicated because the family that was evicting you was also the family that had, so to speak, looked after you [chuckles] to whom you’d looked up to over umpteen generations. So, all of that meant, I think that’s one of them, I’m not saying it’s the only reason, but it’s one of the reasons why resistance, an active resistance to clearance and eviction and the like, took much longer to get going in Scotland than it did in Ireland. And evangelical Presbyterianism, it seemed to me, was part of the solution to that difficulty. It gave an alternative focus and an alternative way of thinking about the world and an alternative meaning to people’s lives and enabled them.

It is certainly the case, as we shall see in a later article, that if Calvinism gave a sense of community and inner strength, for some clergy it came during the course of the middle decades of the 20th century to clash with modernity, or parts of it anyway. In this regard, film came to attract singular questioning and outright hostility. In one view, Calvinism itself changed. Jim Hunter told us at the end of his interview that an attempt to bring Hebridean Christian clergy onside to support the Crofters’ Union drew support from Catholic priests and

one Church of Scotland minister but not a single Free Church minister. And Hunter saw this as emblematic of Calvinist disengagement from change and an increasing quietist surge, as he put it.

In one interpretation Jim told us, the arrival of the Film Guild shows between the late 1940s and early 1970s marks the intensification of modernity in the Highland zone. For the Presbyterian churches, there was never complete acceptance of film, even today. And in one Highland theological view, film became a field of contest. But, Jim Hunter also offers a rather different narrative of his youth, drawn from a non-Calvinist community. He articulates a retrospective account of the moral and emotional power of film showing in the rejuvenation of Highland society in the mid 20th century. He locates it as part of the spectrum of ways by which modernity arrived in the zone – not merely in terms of technological media but in terms of things as diverse as the Gaelic Mod and amateur dramatics. The film shows, in a sense, made people happier to be where they were. Perhaps to Kuhn's 'cinema in the world and the world in the cinema', this paper gives cause to add *cinema in its place*, as a reinforcing of diverse senses of lifelong belonging, even for those who, like Finlay Macleod, might struggle with an unacceptable local establishment. Commercial cinema could never hope to supply small rural communities with anything more than a skeletal service, so real cultural enchantment came through the state subsidy of the man in his van bringing the projector.