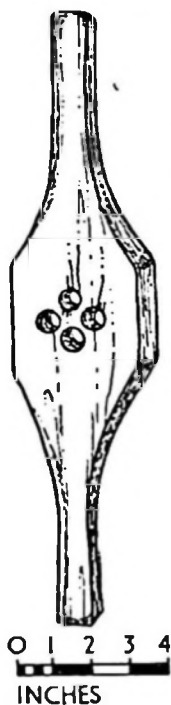


An Instrument Used in Twisting Ropes

The sketch shows an instrument for adjusting the tension in rope-making, used as follows. Lengths of binder twine were laid out in groups of two, three or four, according to the thickness of rope required, three groups, each of five or six small strands, being most commonly used. The end of each group of small strands was then passed through one of the holes of the tension adjuster, and the ends were bound together.

One man fixed the whole bunch on to a *thraa-hyeuk* or *thraa-crook* (wimble), a second held the tension adjuster, and three others fixed their wimbles, one into the end of each group of small strands. Twisting then began, the three men at one side pulling fairly firmly against the single man at the other, the man with the tension adjuster standing between. The small strands in each group were thus twisted in one direction, and the three groups twisted together in the other. Meanwhile the man with the tension adjuster pressed it up against the twisting of the single man, moving slowly backwards from him as the rope lengthened, faster or slower according as the tension had to be slacker or firmer, till he was as near the three men at the other end as room would allow. The wimbles were removed, the tension adjuster drawn off, and the loose ends knotted to prevent unravelling. Two or three men at each end of the rope then pulled it strongly to make sure it would not kink when released, if the tension was rather firm.



It will be seen that a two-strand rope required four men, a three-strand rope required five, and a four-strand rope required six. An arrangement is sometimes found whereby three wimbles fixed in a frame can be driven by one handle, so that one man can replace three. This apparatus is called a *threuple* (treble) *thraa-hyeuk*.

The tension adjuster shown is $16\frac{3}{4}$ inches in overall length, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in maximum width, $\frac{7}{8}$ inch in thickness, and the diameter of the holes is approximately $\frac{5}{8}$ inch. It is inscribed "J. Milne, Ardmiddle Mains", and is now owned by Mr. J. Hunter, farmer at Brownhill, Pitglassie, Turriff, Aberdeenshire, who used it up to about 1945.

Mr. Hunter also spoke of another form of the instrument,

in which the holes were replaced by notches, two at one side and one at the other.

Further information on similar devices elsewhere would be welcomed.

ALEXANDER FENTON

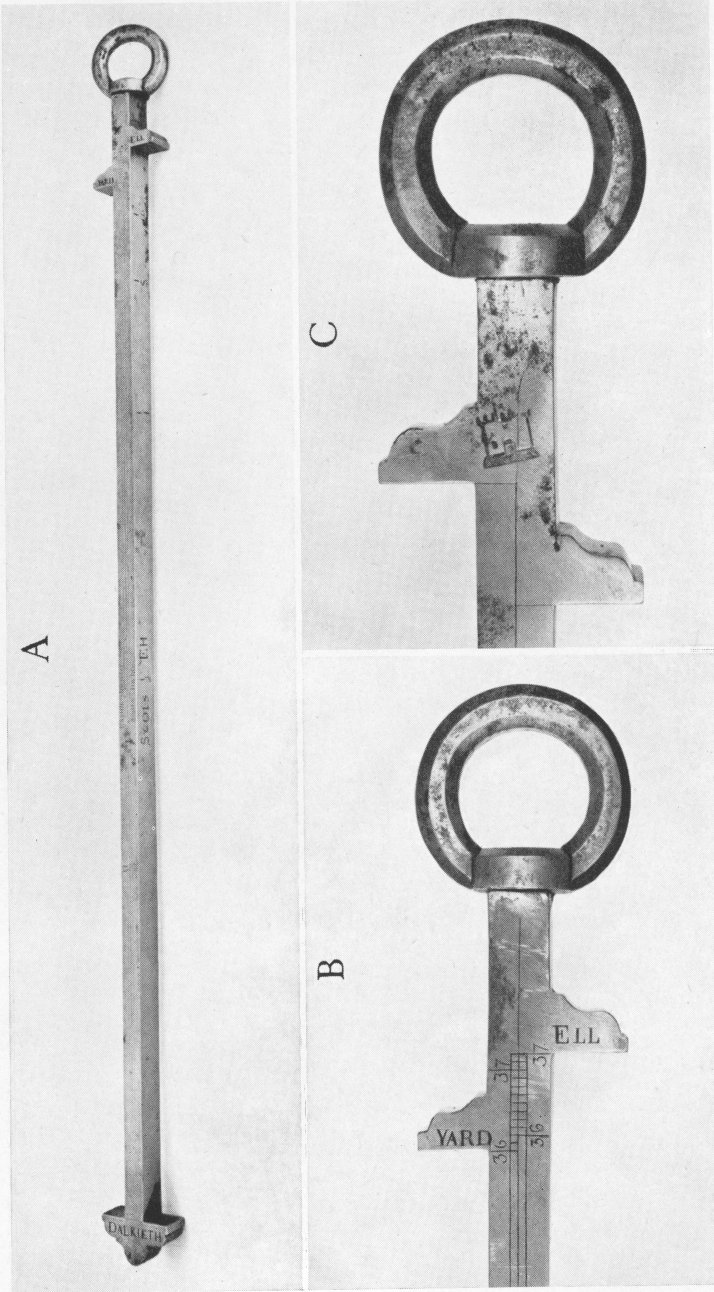
An old Scottish Yard and Ell measure

An interesting eighteenth century standard measure of length (cf. Plate I), which has recently been presented to the national collections at the Royal Scottish Museum, shows two systems of measurement—the yard, with its divisions into feet and inches, and the ell, with its divisions into Scots feet and Scots inches.

By the seventeenth article of the Act of Union, in 1707, the English weights and measures were made statutory throughout the United Kingdom. But the habits of the Scots were slow to accept such a radical change and it is not surprising that, except for direct exchange of goods between the two countries, the article did not take effect. The Scots, accustomed in regular payments and local trading to their own units, continued to measure their cloth in ells and their grain in bolls as their forefathers had done. Another century was to pass before the old measures lost ground and only in 1826 were the "Imperial Standards" recognised and adopted throughout Scotland.

The standard yard and ell measure is dated 1744 and so belongs to the time when accurate measurement in either of the two systems might be required. It takes the form of a burnished iron bar of rectangular section, 1 inch by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, with a heavy swivel suspension ring at one end. Near the lower end (remote from the ring), engraved lines indicate the zero of scales marked along the faces of the bar and projections on either side, having their inner faces filed to flats corresponding with the zero markings, permit a measuring rod to be easily set with its end at the zero of the scales. At the upper end (near to the ring), there are two similar projections having flats arranged such that on one side a yard stick would just fit if its end were placed against the zero flat, and on the other such that the ell stick would likewise correctly fit in place.

A double scale extends along the length of the bar. One shows divisions of the "English Yard", every inch being



A. General view of Standard Yard and Ell Measure. showing division of the inch into tenth-parts.
B. Comparison of final inch of Imperial Measure and Scots Measure.
C. Impression of Stamp in the form of a castle on a mound.

marked and the upper flat exactly opposite the 36th inch. The other, marked "Scots Ell", is divided into Scots feet and Scots inches, showing the upper flat exactly opposite the 37th inch. The Scots inch, however, was slightly longer than its English equivalent, (being 1.0016 imperial inches) so that the two scales are unrelated except at the zero mark. A curious feature is the division of the last inch in both scales into tenth-parts.

Other two faces of the bar are engraved to show, on one side, half-, quarter-, eighth- and sixteenth-parts of a yard and, on the other, similar divisions of the ell.

Across the lower projections the word DALKIETH is engraved and on the reverse side the initials "H.H. DG." with the date "1744" are stamped, the D and G being interlaced. This would suggest that the measure was associated with the town of Dalkeith in 1744 and that the responsible authority for guaranteeing accuracy in weights and measures was the Dean of Guild whose initials were H.H.

The upper projections are engraved "yard" and "ell" respectively and below the ring there appears the impression of a stamp in the form of a castle, with portcullis gate, on a mound. Doubtless this also was an authoritative stamp but, as yet, its significance has not been traced. It may have been impressed by the maker, unknown, or it may relate to the town of Dalkeith, or, perhaps, a higher authority in Edinburgh.

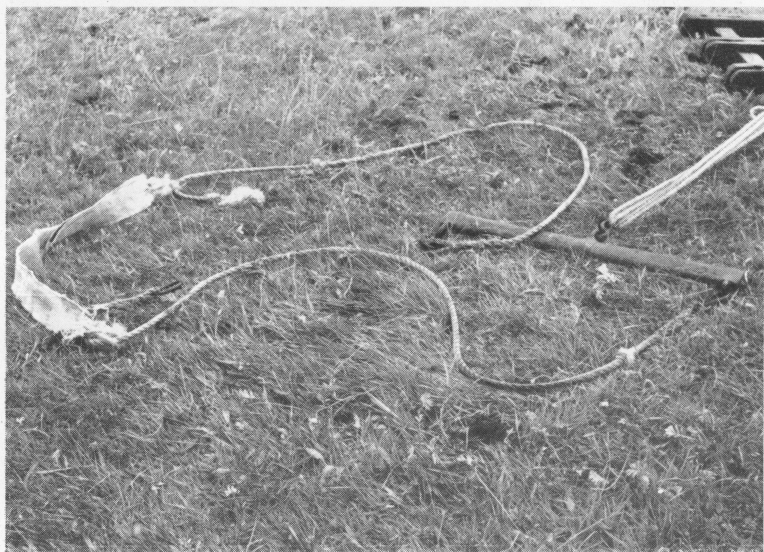
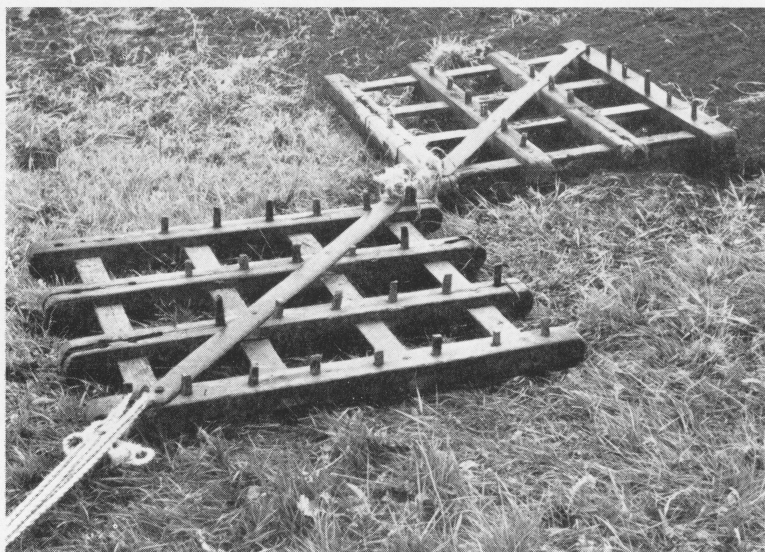
The instrument is carefully made and clearly the work of a good craftsman and its preservation in good condition is probably due to its having been kept in its original oak-fitted case, with long sliding lid.

R. W. PLENDERLEITH

Some North Uist Harrows

In the course of a recent field trip to North Uist I observed several interesting types of harrow still in use, or only recently abandoned, which elsewhere in Scotland have long been obsolete. Whilst they do not conflict with my classification of Scottish harrow-types (Whitaker 1958), it is perhaps worth recording their survival in some detail, to supplement Beveridge's observation (1911:315-6) that wooden harrows survive in the remoter districts of North Uist.

A triangular harrow (Plate II:2 and 3) with sides 2 feet



FIGS. 1 and 2—Harrow from Garbhac Cuartalain, North Uist.

PLATE II

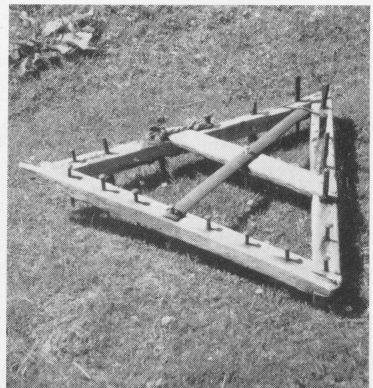
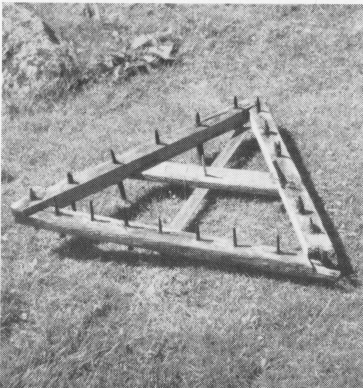


FIG. 1 (above)—Harrow from Balelone, North Uist.
FIGS. 2 and 3 (below)—Harrow from Drim-seidinish, North Uist.

10 inches long and tines manufactured out of 8-inch smith-made bolts was discovered at Drim-seidinish (Grid reference 08/885634). It had been made by Donald Maclean ("Domhnall Ruadh") towards the end of the war, to replace a rectangular harrow that had been purchased by a lady-collector. The wood used was larch, and it is probable that it formed part of an older implement. It was used up to about 1956, and was, of course, drawn manually. It is now extremely unusual to see a harrow of this type, even cast away as lumber.

Two very much heavier harrows (Plate III:1 and 2), rectangular in shape, each being roughly 3 feet 3 inches by 3 feet 6 inches, and joined at the corner were seen in a field at Garbhac Cuartalain (08/815600). They were attached by a new piece of manilla rope to a swingle-tree, at either end of which were rope traces leading to a stout piece of webbing. From their appearance it seemed that the harrow was drawn manually, no hoof-marks being visible in the damp earth, but the weight of the combined harrows must have been considerable. It was unfortunately not possible to make further enquiries on this occasion.

A rectangular ash harrow (Plate II:1) measuring 3 feet 6 inches by 3 feet 10 inches was observed at Balelone (08/724737). It had a piece of chain attached to one corner by which it was drawn, almost certainly by a horse. The tines were rectangular in section and measured 9 inches long. A similar wooden harrow was also seen at Huna (08/715723).

There is an interesting rectangular harrow from North Uist preserved in the Highland Folk Museum at Kingussie¹ (accession no. A 51), which was collected by Dr. I. F. Grant at Locheport—one wonders if it was the predecessor of the triangular harrow described above. This was drawn by a woman and measured 2 feet 4 inches by 2 feet 7 inches. Parts of 21 (out of an original 24) tines survive, three being circular-sectioned wooden ones, whilst 18 were of iron, oblong in section and forced into the original circular holes in the bulls. They varied in size from 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, no two being quite alike, and it was stated that some were made from old horse-shoes. The shortage of iron for tines was a common theme of Gaelic folklore in the past (cf. Macdiarmid 1910:31-2).

NOTE

¹ I am indebted to the Curator, Mr. George Davidson, for the description of this implement.

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 1911 *North Uist: its archæology and topography*. Edinburgh.
 MACDIARMID, JAMES
 1910 "More fragments of Breadalbane folk-lore", *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 26:31-59. Inverness.
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 1958 "The harrow in Scotland", *Scottish Studies* 2:149-65. Edinburgh.

ILLUSTRATIONS

- Plate II: Fig. 1. Wooden harrow with 24 tines: Balelone, parish of North Uist (08/724737). Photo: Ian Whitaker, June 1958.
 Figs. 2 and 3. Triangular wooden harrow, originally with 20 tines: Drim-seidinish, parish of North Uist (08/885634). Photo: Ian Whitaker, June 1958.
 Plate III: Figs. 1. and 2. Linked wooden harrows, with traces: Garbhac Cuartalain, parish of North Uist (08/815600). Photo: W. F. H. Nicolaisen, June 1958.

IAN WHITAKER

*Proposal for a Scottish Folk Song Society*¹

Six years before the first meeting in the summer of 1898 to discuss the foundation of an English Folk Song Society, and nearly five years before the death of Professor F. J. Child in September 1896, a letter was sent to William Macmath²:

11 OSBORNE AVENUE
 NEWCASTLE ON TYNE
 8 *Jan*y 1892

DEAR SIR

Will you kindly inform me whether you would be disposed to promote a Society such as is roughly sketched on the enclosed sheet. Your name has been given to me as a gentleman interested in such matters, and, it gave me very much pleasure to hear from you that I can add your name as a supporter. The following gentlemen are on the list who have agreed to support.

Sheriff Boyle Hope of Edinburgh
 Sheriff Mackay of Edinburgh
 Sir I Crichton-Browne of London

As soon as I can get a sufficient number of names I will consult them as to holding a meeting in Edinburgh to discuss the matter. The difficulty will be to get an energetic Secretary who has the

necessary literary and musical qualifications resident in Edinburgh. If happily you can aid the Society proposed, it will give me much pleasure to have any suggestions with a list of the names of influential gentlemen who take an interest in ballads, in folk song, or classical music.

Kindly reply as soon as convenient, and return me the enclosed

I am

William McMath Esq
16 St Andrew Square

Yours very truly

Address as above: or
North Eastern Bank
Newcastle on Tyne.

J. Dick³

In his reply William Macmath wrote that he was fond of old Ballads, and was sometimes credited with knowing something about them. Any knowledge he had, however, extended only to the words. He had no knowledge at all of Music, and this was a fatal objection to his putting himself forward as a prominent Promoter of the proposed Society. He could be counted upon for little beyond payment of the subscription.

J. Dick answered at once (20th Jan.) that a want of the knowledge of music was in his opinion no drawback to giving active support. "Everyone of our old ballads were sung: and without a tune they are imperfect. It is almost certain that many of the tunes are lost, but a number are known and can be set to the ballads. In the past the drawback to printing music was its cost. In the present day it is set up by moveable type as cheap as the alphabet."

He followed this with another letter (5th Feb.). Sir George Grove of the Royal College of Music, Andrew Lang and J. A. Fuller Maitland of *The Times* had been secured as adherents, and Sir George Grove was trying to get the backing of the Right Honourable A. J. Balfour. He had noticed that the Earl of Balcarres had recently issued a sumptuous catalogue of his collection of Ballads and asked Macmath if he knew whether the Earl took any interest in the airs or melodies, or would appreciate an invitation to assist. His own duty would, he hoped, cease after a meeting had been called. To get the matter talked about Mr Inglis of the Board of Manufacturers would read a paper on "Auld Lang Syne" at the meeting of Antiquaries on the following Monday. Macmath was invited to attend, an invitation quite superfluous as Macmath was a member of the Antiquaries and had intended to be present.

Macmath sent two names to Dick (6th February). Those of Jas. Barclay Murdoch, Capelrig, Mearns, Glasgow,⁴ and the Rev. William Findlay, The Manse, Saline, Dunfermline.⁵ He gave Dick the name of I. P. Edmund of Wigan who could tell him about Lord Crawford and Balcarres. He concludes, "The thing that would be best for the prospects of the proposed society would be your settling in Edinburgh and taking charge of it in person! One man, in the right place, can carry a Society on his back," a proposal which Dick found entirely out of the question.

However, he sent Macmath a copy of the following letter:

copy
Private

4 CARLTON GARDENS S.W.
6 Feby 1892

DEAR SIR

I am in hearty sympathy with your object and if you succeed in forming a society likely effectively to carry it out I should be glad to join. Perhaps you will communicate with me again when matters are further advanced

Yours respectfully

J. Dick esq

Arthur James Balfour

On 21st September, 1892, Dick wrote Macmath to say he would like to call on him in Edinburgh. Macmath was free between 10 and 1 on 23rd September, but on the 26th Dick wrote regretting that he had been recalled on business and could not wait in Edinburgh. He added that Mr. William Bain of the Bank of Scotland, Edinburgh, had the matter of the proposed Society in hand. On the 29th, Macmath answered saying he was glad that Mr. Bain had the Society in hand.

That is the end of Macmath's correspondence with Dick. The story may have been continued elsewhere.

NOTES

- ¹ The original correspondence is in Broughton House, Kirkcudbright. The Trustees and Mrs. M. G. Brown (County Librarian) have been very co-operative on every occasion.
- ² 1844-1922. F. J. Child's principal Scottish collaborator in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. Child does not seem to have noticed that William Macmath by his thorough scholarship through many years, and his relentless pursuit of Scottish Ballad MSS, had enlarged his material so considerably that the complete work should have been called *Scottish and English Popular Ballads*.

- ³ James C. Dick, editor of *The Songs of Robert Burns, now first printed with the melodies for which they were written. A study in tone-poetry* (London 1903), and of *Notes on Scottish Song by Robert Burns written in an interleaved copy of The Scots Musical Museum* (1908), two of the most valuable and least-known works about Robert Burns's songs. The rarity of the first of these volumes has never been satisfactorily explained.
- ⁴ Murdoch helped Child with the Motherwell MS. See Advertisement to Part IV of *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*.
- ⁵ Findlay lent his own MS. to Macmath to copy the ballads in it. These were printed by Child in his collection.

WILLIAM MONTGOMERIE

VIth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, 1958

The VIth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences was held in Munich from 24th to 28th August, 1958, under the patronage of the President of the Federal German Republic, Professor Theodor Heuss, and of the Prime Minister of Bavaria, Dr. Hanns Seidel. The Congress was attended by about 400 scholars from thirty different countries, the Scottish Place-Name Survey being represented by the writer.

Apart from five plenary sessions, the main business of the Congress was conducted through the medium of separate meetings of the various sections of the Congress. A total of almost 150 papers was read to these sections, ranging from questions of methodology and systematics and problems of hydronymic research to results of investigations in the fields of Germanic, German, Romance, Slavonic, Greek, Indo-European, Pre-Indo-European and Non-Indo-European onomastics. A further section dealt with the international standardization of geographical names. Both place- and personal-names were discussed in most of the sections, although there was some emphasis on the former.

The writer had been invited to read a paper to Section II (River-names) for which he chose the subject of "The Historical Stratification of Scottish Hydronymy". This lecture was, on the whole, a survey of the various linguistic strata in Scottish river-nomenclature with significant examples, stating their relative chronology, their geographical distribution and their links with the original homes of the people who created them. Another lecture with some bearing on Scottish toponymical studies was delivered by Professor Alf Sommerfelt of Oslo, on "Norwegian Place-Names in the Celtic Districts of Great

Britain and Ireland". Both papers will be published in the Transactions of the Congress.

The VIIth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences will be held in Florence in 1961.

W. F. H. NICOLAISEN

Photographs of Traditional Scottish Life

Interest continues to grow in the School's collection of photographs of traditional Scottish life mentioned in the last issue of *Scottish Studies* (pp. 211-12). Many more are still needed.

Among the more recent accessions to the collection is a fine group of photographs of Skye and St Kilda taken by the late Rev. Canon R. C. Macleod of Macleod, given by Miss Susan Martin. Plate IV shows a group of St Kildans, with Macleod's factor, packing bales of homespun cloth for transport to the market. The photograph was taken about 1900 near the store at the landing place east of the island church, and part of the village dyke can be seen in the background. Rent was paid in kind by the St Kildans until the evacuation of the island in 1930, the most valuable export being tweed woven by the men of the island. The amount sold to the factor, who had a virtual trading monopoly with the islanders, varied in value from £52 to £446 between the years 1881 and 1910.

IAN WHITAKER

Scottish Proverbs: Additional Note

A considerable group of proverbs has been found in the extensive manuscript collection which the late Mr. James E. Crombie of Dyce, Aberdeenshire, left to the Folklore Society. The whole collection is being indexed in the School of Scottish Studies at the present time. It includes valuable folklore material of all kinds (riddles, weatherlore, rhymes, children's games, etc.), principally gathered by the Reverend Walter Gregor in the North-East of Scotland about the turn of the century.



Rent Day, St. Kilda, about 1900. (See page 112.)