RECOLLECTIONS OF AN ARGYLLSHIRE DROVER

WITH HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE WEST HIGHLAND CATTLE TRADE

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The last of the true Argyllshire drovers died at Minard, on the shores of Loch Fyne, in April 1957. Other men are still alive in the district who went with cattle to the Falkirk Trysts. But they were not drovers in the sense that Dugald MacDougall was; they simply acted as cattle-men, taking the beasts by road and track to a distant market. Dugald was much more. In his young days—he was born in 1866—he worked with four uncles who were farmers and cattle-dealers in the parish of Kilmichael Glassary. The Spring and Summer found him out in the islands buying young cattle. Autumn brought the big trysts at Falkirk, and from about 1886 until the late 'nineties Dugald MacDougall took part in most of the droves that went to the October tryst. He came, moreover, of a family of drovers. His uncles, his grandfather, his great-great-uncles followed this business in successive generations. He was the repository of a droving tradition that dated from the eighteenth century and that was localised in Mid-Argyll. His forebears lived in North Knapdale, a secluded parish on the west coast which has the closest links with the islands of Islay and Jura, the breeding grounds of some of the finest Highland cattle. They bought cattle in these islands and in the neighbouring parishes, and sold them after grazing them to English and Lowland buyers at the Falkirk Tryst. This same pattern of business was followed by successive generations of the family for over a hundred years, coming to an end with the subject of this article at the end of the nineteenth century.

In the six months before he died the old drover was thinking and talking a great deal about his droving years. He was ninety years old at this time. His memory was good

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and his powers of expression unimpaired. In November 1956 he made a remarkable sound recording. He had never previously used, or even seen, a recording machine, yet he answered a series of questions on his life and experiences with a fullness of detail and a spontaneity of expression that give his account a unique value. It lasts for forty minutes and is in English, but he could equally well have spoken in his native Gaelic. Indeed the language he uses is Gaelic in its essential thought-forms and colour as well as more obviously in its cadences and pronunciations.† The facts of a drover's life are there, probably more fully than in any extant oral source; but the account is more than a piece of informative social history; it acquires from the old man's telling and the artless changes of his mood a compelling and moving quality.

The facts of Dugald MacDougall's life are soon set down. He was born in 1866 on a small farm called Craig Murail in the low hills north of Lochgilphead. An aunt at Bellanoch brought him up, and when she married the miller at Kilmartin he lived with them at the mill-house near the ruins of Carnasserie Castle. He had a job for five years in the estate office of the Malcolms of Poltalloch, and then at nineteen years of age he joined his four uncles, who were called MacLellan and had two farms in the district. These were his droving years. In 1899 or thereabouts he moved to the farm of Craiganterve, near Ford at the southern end of Loch Awe. Craiganterve is still remembered as having been the best farm in the district, and a model for the whole neighbourhood, during his tenancy. He was here for forty-four years, saw his family grow up, became an elder in the Church and served as Clerk to the Kilmartin Parish Council. After he retired to live with his daughter at Minard, he was often to be seen taking a walk along the road, a spare figure, slightly bowed, with a handsome kindly face, a curly grey beard, and a surprisingly full head of white, wavy hair.

Dugald's reminiscences were of the native West Highland cattle. For centuries these small, hardy, black cattle had been bred for export on the mainland, but especially in the islands, of Argyll. The trysts at Crieff, Falkirk and Glasgow already feature in the rentals of the Lochfyneside estate of Campbell of Knockbuy in the seventeen-thirties,[1] a period when Crieff

† Inverted commas, when used here, indicate excerpts from Dugald MacDougall's account, unless referred to another source. Few modifications have been necessary, and those, slight ones to make plain the drover's meaning. Words I have inserted are in square brackets.

was pre-eminent and when droving and cattle-stealing were still liable to be confused, not least in the minds of the drovers. From his home, not a mile distant from where Dugald lived in his later years, Archibald Campbell, 2nd laird of Knockbuy, carried on a successful cattle-dealing business in partnership with his kinsman, Campbell of Inverawe, with a turnover of 2,000 cattle in the year 1739-40. These beasts, purchased in the islands of Islay, Jura and Mull, and from the West Highland mainland as far north as Moidart, were grazed on the parks about Knockbuy (the present-day Minard) until they were ready to be driven to the Lowland trysts and ultimately into England.[2]

The "spirit of improvement" had already, it seems, communicated its quickening influence to the shores of Loch Fyne and the lairds of Mid-Argyll, and Knockbuy appears as one of the earliest of the pioneers of stock-breeding in the Highlands. The enclosures at Minard were an indispensable part of his plan for raising the standard of his Highland cattle by breeding only from the finest beasts. His success was marked. ". . . the Galloway gentlemen," he writes in February 1744, "acknowledge these several years past my cattle were inferior to no highlanders grazed with them; which demonstrates Argyllshire is as capable as Galloway for that purpose, though the latter has run away with the profit for many years back, which proper attention and application might alwise preserve to the Shire of Argyll." The Duke should follow suit he urged in a letter to Campbell of Stonefield. Whether indeed the ambitious programme of agricultural and industrial reforms launched by the dukes of Argyll in the next decades was inspired, at least in part, by the advice and practice of Knockbuy, or not, there is no doubt that having a neighbour as active and enterprising as Archibald Campbell must have served to keep the ducal improvers on their toes.[3]

Smaller farmers had little interest in improvements, and the bulk of Highland cattle continued undersized and puny. But the movement which Knockbuy had so early pioneered in Mid-Argyll gained impetus. By the end of the eighteenth century many lairds in the West Highlands subscribed to and practised the new principles of selective breeding; none to more effect than Campbell of Shawfield, whose estate in Islay bred animals that took pride of place among the Highland cattle (MacDonald 1811:422 ff., 623 ff.)[4]. It is no wonder that Dugald MacDougall's droving ancestors dealt largely in the product

of the Islay grazings, nor that Bakewell himself declared, too late, "that he wished he had laid the foundations of his improved breed with the kyloe or West Highland cow, for it wanted only size to be perfect" (Sinclair 1831: pt. 1, 264; Smith 1805:243).

Already by the seventeen-sixties professional drovers appear in the Knockbuy rentals as substantial tenants. They were prosperous enough by the late seventies to rent two or three farms at seventy or eighty pounds sterling.[5] Possibly here in Argyll, as in Galloway (Haldane 1952:51, 65), this professional class superseded Knockbuy and the other drover-lairds in their cattle-dealing functions, and by their increased specialisation enabled the Scottish supply of cattle to keep pace with the mounting demand in the South. Too often, however, the insufficiency of their capital hampered them. When allied to a lack of moral scruples, it caused an alarming frequency of bankruptcies among drovers and brought the whole class of drovers into disrepute (Haldane 1952:49-52). But there appears to be something more solid and reliable about the late eighteenth century Mid-Argyll drovers than there was about their contemporaries in Galloway. If the *Statistical Account* does not applaud their virtues, it is equally silent about their failings. The regular appearance over a fairly long period of the same names in Knockbuy's rental against farms wide in extent and highly rented, inspires confidence in such men as Charles Young, John McKellar and John Macfarlane. In a shire where lairds as active and experienced in cattle-dealing as Knockbuy had blazed the trail, and where their power was considerable, it may be that drovers as a class acquired habits of regularity and honesty in advance of the rest of the country.

Dugald MacDougall begins his account with a story which he heard as a little boy from his grandfather MacLellan who had Gallcoille farm in North Knapdale and carried on business as a drover and cattle-dealer. It was a story which, he confessed, he heard many times before he could understand it and it concerned two uncles of his grandfather, who were drovers in Knapdale, "bought the cattle at the farms where they were reared, you know, and . . . took them away to the markets of the South and to the markets where they could get them sold. It was to the markets of the South they had this lot." They bought on credit . . . "they didn't pay them. The bargain was that they would give so much for them, and pay

them when they came back after selling them in the markets of the South. But they found that the price that they could get for them there wouldn't meet the price that they had to pay the people at home. They were going to drop money themselves, and they were going to be the occasion of the people at home dropping money too, because they would be disappointed not to get the price at which they sold them." Many drovers at this period—the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century—would not have scrupled to fail their creditors. "Well, they considered. The one spoke to the other, what [was] the best thing they could do. And the other brother advised him and he said, 'the only thing that I can do, that I can think we ought to do, and keep our own credit, and do the best we can for the people at home, is take them back, every one of these animals, to the owner that had them when he sold them, and deliver them to the owner at his own farm, where we bought them, and tell them that that's the best thing we can do. We can't pay the money that we ought to pay, but there's your animals as we found them.' So they had so much confidence in them after that that they would give them any cattle they wanted without paying for them; they could take them away to sell and pay them when they came back." The rustic innocence of these droving brothers evidently found a ready response in a community more fearful of defaulting drovers than insistent on the uttermost farthing.[6] This engaging story forms a fitting preface to Dugald's account.

These may have been the first drovers in the family, the men who founded the long tradition followed by Dugald's grandfather, then by his four sons, Dugald's uncles, and finally by Dugald himself. As cattle-dealers, they required grazing lands. The uncles had two farms, Barmolloch and Ardnackaig. Ardnackaig is situated on the west coast of North Knapdale, upon the Sound of Jura. Barmolloch is an upland farm three miles south of Ford, with hilly land on either side, but a prospect northward of a broad glen opening out into the wooded parkland of Ederline. Here, on the good Barmolloch pastures the brothers summered their cattle. Hugh MacLellan was the business head and had charge of the buying and selling. Dugald went with Hugh in the Spring of the year to buy young cattle in Islay and Jura.[7] The Islay trysts in May and June offered the finest cattle in the West, a consequence of Shawfield's careful breeding.

The black cattle of the West Highlands could fetch the

highest prices at Falkirk. But changes were afoot that did not always please the older farmers. "There was more black ones in these days, black ones. But they got, when they got like everything else, into fancy things, they did away with the black ones. There's hardly any left of the black cattle." This departure from a sober black for coats of many colours—brindled, dun, brown, yellow and red—Dugald viewed as a regrettable piece of frivolity, but cross-breeding was something far more serious; "they wouldn't go in for crosses, not by any [means]. One of the uncles especially had a great horror o' crosses. Nothing but the pure Highland native cattle, you know, bullocks and heifers." In this objection they were in good company, for the learned Dr. Smith had laid it down as axiomatic that " crossing the true Highland breed with any other ought to be avoided. . . . The native cattle are always the hardiest cattle and the best feeders." The improving lairds had reached the same conviction after experimenting with crosses between the native cattle and Galloways and other breeds. In the end they found the English buyer much preferred the West Highland beast (Smith 1805:250).

The Barmolloch drovers brought the Islay cattle over the ferry at Port Askaig to Jura, and drove them by the eastside road to the ferry at Lagg.[8] Here they were loaded into the ferry-boat. Dugald recollected that the bottom of the boat was thickly heaped with a protective layer of birch branches. The ferryman was called Lindsay, and he had a blind assistant. The cattle were carried to Keills and unloaded on to the jetty. There was no need for them to swim ashore, as the jetty sloped down to the water, and boats could be discharged in any state of the tide. Its corrugated surface, made of thin slabs of stone set vertically, would offer a ready foothold to the cattle as they scrambled ashore.

The herd made its way by Tayvallich and Bellanoch to Crinan Moss and Kilmichael and up the glen to Barmolloch. Here they remained to graze until they were ready to be sold at the Falkirk Tryst.

The Barmolloch men had other cattle grazing, bought at the local trysts at Lochgilphead and Kilmichael. The Kilmichael tryst was the more important, held on the last Wednesday of May in a field still called the Stance Field, situated within a curve of the River Add below the late eighteenth-century bridge at Kilmichael.[9] To refresh his memory, Dugald turned to a faded copy of Orr's *Scottish Almanac* for 1916, a thin paper-

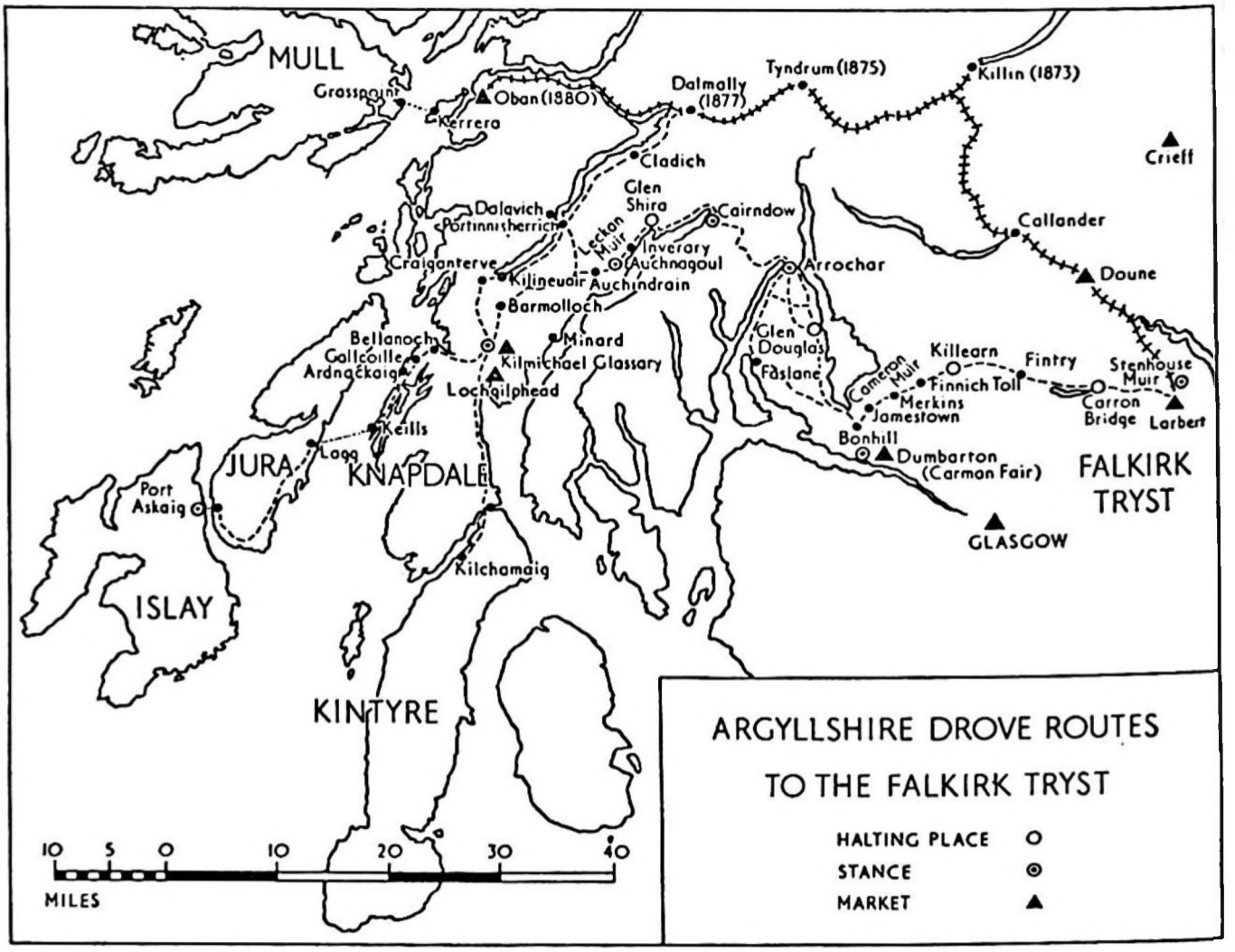
backed pamphlet containing miscellaneous information: "The Rising and Setting of the Sun, the Phases of the Moon, with its Age, the Times of High Water at Glasgow, and a General Tide Table; also a Table of the Probable Weather that will occur during the Year, and a List of Fairs, Holidays and Fast Days kept in some of the Principal Towns in Scotland." Information yet more exotic is to be found in its pages; a list of the Imperial Parliaments, the names, birthdays and marriages of all nine of Queen Victoria's children, and a splendid catalogue of the Sovereigns of Europe, no less than twelve in number if one includes Tsar Nicholas II and Sultan Mohamed V who succeeded his brother Abdul (deposed). Seven closely printed pages at the end of the almanac give details of the trysts of Scotland, classified according to their month. None, as Dugald explained, bears a specific date. "There was no date; it was the day of the week, yes. . . . And you can see from this old almanac, you can see it there, the days of the week." Here he reads aloud from it: "Tuesday before last Wednesday . . . Wednesday fortnight after Kilmichael in May, yes. And the Falkirk Tryst was the second Tuesday of October, and the day following he says in this almanac too." [10]

For a century and a half the Falkirk Tryst occupied a unique place in the economic development and social life of Scotland. It was the annual meeting place of English buyers and Scottish drovers, a gathering geographically almost as widely representative as the General Assembly. Here was congregated the cattle-surplus of all the Highland counties, beside beasts raised on Lowland farms. The export trade was worth about a quarter of a million pounds in the closing decade of the eighteenth century, and still it was expanding (Haldane 1952:205 ff.). By Dugald MacDougall's time, the traffic had shrunk to a slender current compared with the full spate of the mid-nineteenth century. It was still, however, the principal cattle-market in Scotland, and its three trysts, in August, September and October, saw many Highland cattle sold to English and Lowland buyers.

The Barmolloch men attended the biggest of the trysts, held in October. There were other trysts where they sometimes did business, Doune in Perthshire and Carman Fair at Dumbarton, with its stance on the top of the hill above Renton. "I was at that fair once, and there was only one house, a shepherd's house, up there. And the market-day the shepherd got a licence; he could sell spirits to the dealers or them that

came with the cattle. That was the only house that was in it at Carman, up at the top of the hill, yes." Kilmichael was the regular local market, and usually, "when they were taken away from this district, as most of the older cattle were, it was to the Falkirk Trysts".

By early October the cattle were in superb condition. "After the summering and that they were splendid big animals



. . . oh grand big bullocks, just full of flesh and hair when they were sold at three and a half years old in October." The heifers were sold off a year younger, but the bullocks were kept as long as there was grazing for them. The Barmolloch droves numbered fifty or sixty cattle. They could be handled by two men and their dogs. The seven day journey of nearly a hundred miles of road and track began early enough to allow the cattle a rest for three days at the end of it before the Tryst commenced. The route which they followed was one which had been long used by drovers from Mid-Argyll. First the drove made for the old hill track leading from Loch Awe

over the high moorland north of Loch Fyne to the farm of Auchindrain near Inveraray. Many of the drovers coming from Mull and Nether Lorne ferried their beasts across Loch Awe at Portinnisherrich (Haldane 1952:90) and joined this track on the Leckan Muir. (They were from remote, unvisited regions to Dugald, who spoke of the northern Argyll and Inverness-shire islands as "Mull and these places".) The Barmolloch droves would emerge on to it two or three miles from its starting point at the mediæval church of Kilineuair. It was a narrow track, about six feet wide, but dry and clean and well-drained, with a firm bottom of stones.

The first day with its unaccustomed fatigues and steep gradients was the hardest on the cattle. The road rises almost from sea level to a loch-strewn terrain a thousand feet higher, apparently desolate but for sheep and predatory birds. It clambers to its summit at Loch a' Chaoruinn; here the drovers could ease off and look back over the winding track to the waters of Loch Awe, and in the distance, beyond the String of Lorne, the great hills of Jura and Mull.

A good drover was careful not to press his cattle too hard, especially at the outset. "They were in full bloom, and full of flesh and hair. If you sweated them, the hair drooped down and never got up again into the same [condition]. The great secret was to take them there as good-looking as they were when they left home. One would think there was nothing but drive and force them on with a stick, but that wasn't allowed at all. They'd go quite nicely when they were left alone. The man that was in front—they didn't all stay behind—he took maybe twelve or so of the first cattle on, and the rest followed; and if these went into a gap, or found an open gate, and went in, you had only to get twelve out, whereas if you were all behind, you would have the whole sixty or fifty, and that spent time to get them back out again. There was an art in doing it right, properly; even suppose one would think it was a simple thing, there was an art in doing it properly too, to give man and beast a chance, yes."

The old track can still be travelled on foot, but the surface has become pitted, eroded, and in places, water-logged. To the neglect of half a century and the effects of harsh weather was added more active ill-usage. The *Argyllshire Advertiser* announced on 20th August 1924, under the heading "Motor Cycle Feat", that a local motor-cyclist had recently driven "a machine of the well-known B.S.A. manufacture " from Ford to

Inveraray "by the old hill-road". This no doubt praiseworthy individual initiated the trials which damaged the road beyond repair. Yet so late as 1914 or thereabouts a small boy called Archie Campbell, now living at Arrochar, travelled this road with his father, who was taking a drove of thirty young cattle from Oban to Mr. Macfarlane's farm of Stronafyne at the head of Loch Long.

The route which the drovers followed from Auchindrain coincides fairly well with the present road through Inveraray, round the head of Loch Fyne, over the Rest and Be Thankful Pass to Arrochar, and thence by Tarbet and Loch Lomondside to Balloch. But in recent years the old road over the Rest has been superseded by a new road with easier gradients. Along the west shore of Loch Lomond, too, the older road can frequently be seen escaping from the macadam bondage of the new, to make a brief excursion.[11] After Alexandria the drovers crossed the river at Bonhill. "It was a wooden bridge that crossed [the Leven] at Bonhill, a wooden bridge. It's a fine concrete bridge now." Here they turned to the left as if making for Jamestown and then took the old hill road over the Cameron Muir. "There was an old toll over there. It was Finnich Toll they called it. It was getting into disuse when I went there at first." And so on to Killearn. From there the drovers' road led through Fintry, past Spittal Hill farm, and across the Kirk o' Muir; "there's a big reservoir they tell me, converted now on the right hand side up there, a great big water works that wasn't there when we were going at all". Carronbridge came next, and Denny, Dunipace and Denny-loanhead, and finally, Larbert, the end of the long journey.

Halting-places for a night's grazing existed all along the drovers' route. There were stances where custom gave the drover free, unhindered access for his beasts, though a charge was made for the use of them. When there was no stance, accommodation could be obtained on farms for a payment of about ten shillings a score in Dugald's time. The Barmolloch drove must have reached the neighbourhood of the main Inveraray road on the first day, with a full dozen rough miles behind. Accommodation could be got on the stance at Auchnagoul or on farm land in the vicinity.[12] The old rights of free grazing at Inveraray, which are mentioned in the Kirk Session records, had apparently escaped in the eighteenth-century improving movement.[13] "The old town muir to be inclosed" reads a note of November 1758 written in the instructions to

the Chamberlain of Argyll by the 3rd Duke (Fergusson n.d.). The loss of customary stances and the multiplication of turnpike tolls during the early nineteenth century added to the problems of the drovers and contributed to the decline of the Falkirk Tryst (Haldane 1952:212 with note 4; 242-4).[14]

On the second night the drove might be in Glen Shira (as Duncan MacColl, Crarae, remembers) but more usually it reached the stance at Cairndow, an extensive area extending up the hillside on the east side of the head of the loch. "There's a place—I can see the opening yet—where we went. . . . The stance came down to the road, but halfway up the hill it was fenced off. They couldn't get out of it altogether, but they had plenty of room, yes, they had plenty of room. But it will likely be getting into disrepair now like every other thing. . . . It's never used as a stance now." Sadness and nostalgia for the past sometimes gently intrude into Dugald's recollections, but never for long. He quickly remembers his theme, and in imagination gathers his drove from the night's pasture and sets out briskly on the road.

On the third day the drove made its progress through Glen Finglas and over the Rest down to Loch Long and the stance on Stronafyne at Arrochar. The stance lies on the slope of the hill east of the head of the loch, behind the village. On the lower side it was limited by a wall, but above only by steep rocks. The drove road is still to be seen leaving the main road near the Roman Catholic church and re-emerging on the road to Tarbet a mile farther on. Mr. MacFarlane was the farmer at Stronafyne, and he was himself accustomed to buying young cattle from the islands at Oban for selling eighteen months later at the Falkirk Tryst. The route taken by the Stronafyne drove lay along the shores of Loch Long to Faslane, where Mr. MacFarlane's brother farmed, and then through Glen Fruin to Balloch and Larbert. After the decline of the Falkirk Tryst his droves went by the same route to the market at Stirling and continued to do so until 1916.[15] Dugald MacDougall was himself familiar with this route, as an old friend of his, Dugald MacIntyre, recalls. The latter was taking the Poltalloch drove to the Falkirk Tryst in one of the last years of the Tryst, probably in 1900. He met Dugald MacDougall with the Barmolloch drove at the stance at Cairndow. Both were making for the Tryst, but Dugald MacDougall had cattle to pick up on the way and left a day before Dugald MacIntyre. But the latter reached Larbert first, for his friend had travelled

by the Loch Long-Glen Fruin route, picking up cattle from farms in Glen Douglas and probably, too, from Faslane. Farming connections of this kind continued frequently over many years and played no small part in deciding both the route and the halting places of the droves, and from year to year it might be varied in detail.

After a night on the Stronafyne stance, Dugald would usually take the road down the shores of Loch Lomond as did the Poltalloch drover. The road was rougher and slightly more undulating than it is at present, but easier on the feet of cattle than the modern road metal. Passing Firkin three miles south of Tarbet, where droves might be seen leaving their night's grazing, he carried on to where the road, in its winding course, turns away from the loch by the inn at Inverbeg and climbs steeply into "a fine glen they call Glen Douglas". "There's farms up there, and it's there we put the cattle that night." These were farms with which Barmolloch had business connections and where the drove would be reinforced with more beasts for the Tryst. Doune of Douglas farm is two miles along the glen and its spacious, well-walled enclosure by the river may often have provided the drove with a night's shelter and grazing. Higher up still is Invergroin, situated in the valley bottom, where a droving track from Arrochar drops down into Glen Douglas from between the great masses of Ben Reoch and Tullich Hill, to pass by Doune of Douglas, climb the slope to the south and descend to Luss by Glen Mallochan.

An experienced drover planned his journey carefully, and often put in a short day to rest his drove after a strenuous one and to refresh his beasts before a long trek.[16] On the fifth day, after the relative ease of the previous one, Dugald brought his cattle down to the lochside road at the Inverbeg Inn. Here was a stance opposite the inn which had formerly been used when the ferry plied across the loch to Rowardennan, taking the Argyllshire cattle on the shortest route to the Tryst. Sometimes they were swum across, with two experienced cattle which were kept by the inn to lead them. But the ferry has gone beyond the memory of man, and survives only as a tradition in the locality. An old woman who died at Luss about 1952 at the age of 103 recollected her parents speaking of its existence.[17]

For Dugald and his uncles and their contemporaries the road to Falkirk Tryst stretched ahead through Luss and across

the River Leven. With his drove refreshed and eager for the road, Dugald made for Killearn, more than twenty miles distant. He preferred the Bonhill crossing and the old hill-track across the Cameron Muir rather than the bridge at Balloch and the Gartocharn road which was taken by the Poltalloch drove. Less than four miles beyond Bonhill and situated on the hill-road was the Merkins farm, where Mr. Anderson allowed the drove to stay on many occasions. Eighteen miles was sometimes enough for a day, but if the drove was going well Dugald carried on farther before halting. His younger, lighter beasts were more than a match for the Poltalloch four-year-olds, which took nine days on the journey. By the sixth night the Barmolloch drove was at Carron Bridge with "Laird Thomson as we called him". The old man, whom the drovers accorded a courtesy-title in virtue of his owning his land, never refused grazing to any of the family of his friend, Dugald's grandfather. It was but a short journey after this. By the evening of the seventh day the cattle from the Barmolloch farm had joined some thousands of others on the stance at Stenhouse Muir on the outskirts of Larbert, where the Falkirk Trysts were held. Dugald and his companions could leave them to rest after the arduous trek whilst they sought the hospitable house of Mr. Wilson, the blacksmith.

When the tryst opened on the Tuesday, buyers moved around the field to view the cattle, and the drovers showed off their stock to the best advantage. They kept the cattle "in a close bunch, and got them to move round like that. And the buyer was standing outside, and he was seeing them all as they were coming round. And if possible, if there was one that wasn't so good, it was try to keep that one in the middle, let the rest keep him out of sight. The buyer saw them all, but they were all on the outside." In the long run it was the quality of the cattle that counted, and the Barmolloch droves could compare with any cattle at the tryst. Buyers learned to know the reliable drover with good beasts and formed a business connection that might last for years. Dugald remembered well "a Mr. Carr from Yorkshire" who regularly bought their heifers to rear calves; "he took a one calf off them. Likely it would be a cross—it might be a shorthorn bull—and let them rear the calf and then fatten them off to kill them. . . . That was his rotation, buy more heifers when you sell off the ones you bought."

The bullocks were fetching around sixteen pounds, but

this was not clear profit; the expenses of the week's drove were to be deducted, and the buyer's luck-money, which amounted to a few pounds on the transaction (a custom still maintained and one which appears to have flourished in Knockbuy's day too).[18] The buyer, when he finally accepted the drover's price, clapped the latter's outstretched hand. And "that", commented Dugald, as he smote his hands together with a resounding smack, "that was the bargain sealed; and it was as good as suppose it was in a lawyer's book when they struck hands".

When the cattle were sold, the Barmolloch men left for home, with money in their pockets for the next year's stock. But as the train carried them, at a speed considerably faster than they could walk, to Glasgow for the Ardrishaig steamer, the MacLellan brothers must have wondered how much longer the Falkirk Tryst could go on. In 1873 the railway line fingered its way up from Callander as far as Killin; two years later it had reached Tyndrum, Dalmally in 1877, and on 30th June 1880, Oban and the coast.[19] The progress of the railway meant the decline of the drover's craft. Cattle were conveyed from the most distant points to Larbert in a day. In the last years of the century, droves of a hundred and fifty or two hundred cattle were being driven from Kilchamaig farm on the west coast of Kintyre by Loch Aweside to Dalmally. Here they were loaded into ten trucks, specially ordered by Turner, "the Kintyre cattle-king", for transporting to Larbert.[20] But the older-fashioned drovers continued to walk the cattle all the way, and Dugald and his uncles were at the Falkirk Tryst in the last years of the eighteen-nineties.

With the coming of railway communications, a new phenomenon made its appearance in Scotland's country towns, the auctioneer and the auction sale. Oban was a mere two days' trek from Barmolloch. Even the MacLellans took to selling at the new Oban market in their latter years. The end of the Falkirk Tryst came in 1901, and since then the race of drovers has virtually disappeared in Argyll. At Barmolloch, Dugald's cousins discontinued the old uncles' cattle-dealing business. The tryst ground at Larbert has been turned into a golf-course. The drove-roads are a thing of the past.

Yet it is still common to meet men of middle age who took part in droving cattle to local auction sales before cattle-trucks became widely used. The Poltalloch cattle took two days on the road to Oban, spending a night at Cuilfail, and beasts

from Eilean Righ in Loch Craignish were swum across to join the drove, whilst until the late war droves from Kilberry were making the three-day trek to Oban.[21]

Dugald MacDougall came of a long-lived family. He himself, at the age of ninety, could well have been taken for a man twenty years younger, and that in spite of the rheumatic pains in his legs. These he would refer to, with a wry smile, as " the disabilities of age and the end of the journey". His four bachelor-uncles, the MacLellans, all lived beyond four-score years. His grandfather " was ninety-four or ninety-five when he died, and he wouldn't have died then but he fell". On a wild, stormy day in August 1956, in his ninety-first year, Dugald went to Oban to be presented to the Queen. It was a proud moment for him. He told her about his droving days and the many trysts that he attended. Three months later he made the recording. By the Spring he was dead. Dugald MacDougall was as full of wisdom and kindliness as he was of years. The week he died he set his affairs in order with his usual serenity, like a drover coming to a tryst.

NOTES

My thanks are due to Mrs. Ann MacDougall for making it possible to record her father and for permission to publish the material; to Dr. Iain MacCammond for help in recording; and to Sir George Campbell of Succoth, Bt., whose original suggestion led me to the drover's house. For access to the Kilberry and Knockbuy papers, and for permission to use them in the preparation of this article as well as for her kindness in drawing my attention to much relevant material in them, I am indebted to Miss Campbell of Kilberry. I am grateful to my wife for the initial maps (based on Haldane) and to Miss Isabel Catto for assistance with the transcription. The photograph on Pl. XIII is by J. Munro.

[1] Typical entries are:—"two cowes to the Crieff drove, £33.6.8." (1728) "allowd this day 24 Decr. 1735 of the price of Cowes given in to the Drove, £12.7.4."; "by a cowe given to McKinley with the Drove went to Glasgow, £16.0.0." (1728); "allowd her son [Widow McIllevin's] a crown I owed him when out at the Falkirk Tryst and payd today 2 lib 14 sh. 4d." (1732).

[2] Knockbuy Papers, accounts dated May 1739 to 20th March 1740. The outlay on buying 3323 cattle was £5482.17.2⅝. 1342 were kept for wintering and the rest sold. Knockbuy's accounts for the 1981 cattle which were sold are of interest. The number lost by accident or sickness during the long journeys is remarkably small; only ten proved totally unsaleable.

	Numbers	£. s. d.
Sold to my L. Ross at 30 Sh each	9	13.10. 0.
Sold at the July Tryst 1739	147	294. 0. 0.
To my L. Elphinston	10	17.10. 0.
Sold by Inverawe in England of Conjunct Cattle	666	1607.13.11.
Sold at Creif by Knockbuy of Do.	1127	2254. 0. 0.
Sold by Castle Stewart of the 9 that were left lame on the English road at Ninive [? Moniaive]	7	9. 0. 0.
To 4 Stotes of the Conjunct Catle put in Knok-buy's own drove to make up his numbers	4	9. 0. 0.
To 2 Stotes that dyed, one at Falkirk, Sold by James Campbell, the other in Larigdochart, Sold by Do. McKeck, both for	2	1. 5. 0.
Dy'd at Portaskaig 2, of the Mull Stotes 2, in Lincoln Shyre 1 left rot'n, in all	5	.....
Dy'd at Ninive	2	.....
Lost of the Numr gon to Creif marcat	1	.....
	1980	4205.19. 5.
Sold lame for 10 lib Scots inde	1	—.16. 8.
	1981	4206.16. 1.

Knockbuy reckons the total outlay on buying and transporting the 1981 cattle at £3809.4.10⅓. The nett profit is stated as £387.11.2⅔.

[3] Sinclair 1791-98, Argyll parishes; Sir James Fergusson; Knockbuy rentals and papers; Kilberry rentals; Report 1884 (for Duncan Forbes's account, 1737); Colville 1958.

Throughout the eighteenth century the Dukes of Argyll are found playing an important and often a leading role in the economic development of the county. Duncan Forbes's visit to Tiree and Mull in 1737 on behalf of the 2nd Duke marks an extension to these islands of a policy of agricultural reform that bore hard on the higher tenants, the tacksmen, but laid the foundations of improvement by granting longer leases to working farmers. The enterprises of the 3rd Duke (1743-61) and the 5th Duke (1770-1806) created at Inveraray a new castle and town, a noble park, and roads, bridges and plantations. From 1770, new leases for farms on the estate incorporated certain improvements as a condition of tenancy, and officials known as "improvers" were employed to advise the Duke and the tenants. But in some directions Archibald Campbell, whose long life (1693-1790) spanned the greater part of the eighteenth century, was ahead of his noble neighbours, and especially in cattle-breeding. His experience in enclosing land at Minard, in breeding selectively for better types of horses and cattle, and in making use (from 1740) of such techniques as "speaving" poorer beasts (an idea that he picked up from Galloway land-owners) is discussed by him in a letter that he addressed to Archibald Campbell of Stonefield, Sheriff Depute and Justice Depute of Argyll, on February 1744. The original of this highly interesting letter is among the Stonefield papers at Register House, and a copy exists at Kilberry Castle. It was written with the intention that it

should be brought to the notice of the new (i.e. 3rd) Duke. Knockbuy stresses the importance of enclosing ground as "absolutely necessary" to any improvements in stock, and advises that the enclosures at Inveraray should be employed as a kind of nursery, supplying " the Gentlemen of the Shire" with carefully bred animals, which "would soon spread a breed of fine black cattle over the whole shire". A similar plan might be applied to horses. Knockbuy's recommendations range widely over the economic field. It would be interesting to learn precisely what direct influence they had on the Duke. It is surprising that he makes no allusion to potatoes. As early as 1735 this new crop, which was to play so great a part in the future development of the Highlands, appears in Knockbuy's rentals as an item in the payment of rents, and in 1736 the entry against the name of one tenant on the Kilberry estate (Knockbuy was one of the guardians and executors for the heir Colin, 7th of Kilberry)—"to John McVretnie for Seed Butatos £4"—makes it clear and beyond doubt that potatoes were being cultivated. Archibald Campbell married Grizel, daughter of the 5th Kilberry, and their grandson eventually succeeded to Kilberry in 1798 on the death of Colin, the last of the old line of Kilberry.

[4] MacDonald notes: "So lately as 30 years ago the general average of the cattle of Skye and Mull brought as high prices as those of Islay; but for the last ten years these two islands have sold their cattle at an average of £6, while that of Islay has been £8.10.0.: and the highest price obtained for whole parcels or droves have been frequently in the proportion of two to one." (1811: 423-4).

[5] Tenants with the specific title of drovers first appear in the rentals in 1764, when Tunns is " sett to Patrick McKellar, Drover, a seven years tack . . . £25.0.0." In 1781 Charles Young, drover, rented Achaghoile at Minard, for £58.13.6d. and Upper Carron for £15.2.0. In the same year John McKellar, drover, rented Achabhialich and Kilmichaelbeg for £73.5.6. In 1760 these two farms had been in the hands of nine tenants at rents totalling £35.15.10. Much of the increase in rent would be due to the introduction of sheep. They first make their appearance in large numbers in 1762, when the laird commenced sheep-farming. I have no direct evidence that the drovers took up sheep-farming, but it is not unlikely that they used their higher ground for sheep. Lowland sheep-masters made several attempts to rent farms from Knockbuy in the seventies, but he resisted their offers, as he was not sure of their financial standing (Knockbuy Papers). He proved wise in the event, as most of them appear to have gone bankrupt in the period of the American War of Independence. (Sinclair 1794 [XIII]:655). On one occasion a drover prevented a sheepmaster gaining entry to a farm:—"North Moninirnich set to Lanarkmen but possessed violently by Patrick McKellar, Drover, who suspended my charge of removal which I have not discussed. The rent Patrick paid before was £28.2.0. but the new rent is £41 besides fox-money." (Knockbuy Rentals 1770).

Knockbuy, on the evidence of his letter of 2nd February 1744, was already looking ahead to the day when sheep stocks in Argyll might be made more profitable. But there was one great obstacle.

. . . "Till the fox is destroyed on the continent of Argyllshire, as in the Isles thairof, their can be very little improvement to be made of our sheep." Nevertheless he advises breeding from good rams and commends the proprietors "to be att pains to understand the methods us'd by the most considerable sheep stockers in the Low Country".

[6] The only good cattle raised in North Knapdale, at the period when the drover brothers were operating, were those of the tacksmen. The cattle of the small tenants were "scraggy and impoverished beasts" (Sinclair 1793 [VI]:263). They must have been poor indeed if a three or four year old weighing 360 to 400 lb. was esteemed good (Smith 1805:251). But the brothers would be dealing in the island cattle also. It should be noted, in further explanation of the story told by Dugald, that agreements made at this period between drovers and farmers were often of a fairly elastic type. Farmers might sell to drovers at a certain price but stipulate that the drovers should pay them more if prices at the tryst were higher than those agreed upon (Haldane 1952:28).

[7] A story which Dugald told about his uncle Hugh MacLellan, unfortunately not recorded in sound, described Hugh coming with cattle over the Colintraive ferry. The cattle were frightened by the noise of their hooves on the wooden pier and scattered. They were lost for some time. Hugh sent a telegram home to Barmolloch: "Cattle retreated. Hugh defeated. Send reinforcements." Hugh MacLellan, I am told by Mrs. Ann MacDougall, was not a man to be easily beaten.

[8] The road to Lagg was building and still incomplete in 1805. The chief proprietor, Campbell of Jura, challenged the right of Campbell of Islay to use the new road for the passage of his cattle to the ferry at Lagg, alleging that his droves were entitled to use the old hill-track only. Campbell of Islay, when he sold his estate in Jura to this proprietor, had made it a condition that the ferry charges from Islay to Jura and from Jura to the mainland should not be altered without his assent. He had not, however, foreseen what the consequences of his own improvements might be. MacDonald, in a footnote in the Appendix to his *General View*, 618-9, brings these out significantly: "In former times, the cattle exported from Islay for the mainland markets, were never strong enough for the journey until the middle of June, the driest and best season of the year. They were then driven by herdsmen thro' Jura by a hill-road (the shortest possible way) which went between the back of the farms, which are all on the eastern shore, and the mountainous ridge which occupies the middle and western parts of the island. They had freedom of pasturage gratis . . . during this journey. [This was one of the rights he reserved at the time of the sale.] In consequence, however, of the late improvements carried on in Islay, the cattle of the proprietors and tenants are much earlier ready for the market than June, and indeed, are exported all the year round; and they are also much heavier and more unwieldy than they were in former times, and consequently cannot travel along the hill road."

The following items, from the Knockbuy cattle-dealing accounts in 1739-40 refer to Islay:—

Dugald MacDougall at about 80 years of age.

		£. s. d.
Bought from Shawfield 343 Stotes at 30 Sh. pr. peice and one at Ilay at 16 Sh. 8 p.	344	515. 6. 8.
Bought from Sundries in Ilay in May, 1739	369	532. 8. 5½
Their fferrieing from Ilay to Jura		5. 2. 4½
Their proportion of £13.15.11 of Charges		3.15.11.

[9] Information from Col. George Malcolm of Poltalloch and Mr. John MacLachlan, Poltalloch. The latter recalls that a right to free grazing existed also on the greens at Kilmartin and Ford.

[10] Some of the trysts appear in this almanac of 1916 as still regulated by the Julian Calendar. Strontian, for example, falls on the Friday following the third Thursday in June, Old Style. For drovers and farmers accustomed to the New Style the day would be a Tuesday instead of a Friday. Gaelic speaking Argyllshire people know Falkirk as *An Eaglais Bhreac* "the speckled church", and one man over ninety applied this term to the Falkirk Tryst itself.

[11] The divergence of the new road from the old is particularly noticeable a quarter of a mile south of Inverbeg Inn; the latter crosses a crumbling eighteenth century bridge and climbs the slope of the hill whilst the new road follows a course nearer the loch.

[12] I omitted to question Dugald MacDougall about the first night's halt, but his daughter believes that it was at Brenachoille farm which lies beside the old hill-road a mile from its junction with the main road. Another informant, Dugald MacIntyre, made use of this stance for a Poltalloch drove about 1900, and thinks it probable that Dugald stayed there on occasions. However, drovers often varied their halts, and Duncan MacColl, now of Crarae, for many years farmer at Claonairi, near Inveraray, believes that he sometimes used the stance on the farm of Auchnagoul, which lies on the slope above the Bridge of Douglas. The last drove he recollects there was from Turner's farm at Kilchamaig near Whitehouse, Kintyre. Archie Campbell, Arrochar, mentioned in the text, also tells of staying a night at Auchnagoul with the drove from Oban. He recollects, too, that Auchindrain, which lies at the junction of the hill road and the Inveraray main road, was used by drovers and that the drovers' payments helped the crofters there to pay their rent.

[13] Information regarding the right of grazing cattle at Inveraray from Mr. Donald McKechnie, Bridge of Douglas, who further informs me that this right applied to the Cross Green and survived well into the nineteenth century.

[14] The drovers won their action against the Earl of Breadalbane for interrupting the stance rights on the Moor of Rannoch in the Court of Session in 1848, but the decision of this court was reversed on appeal to the House of Lords.

[15] Information from Mr. Archie Campbell, Arrochar, aged 56.

[16] Dugald MacIntyre, Lochgilphead, aged 81 or 82, who took Poltalloch cattle to Falkirk, describes this as common practice.

[17] Informant, Robert Kerr, aged 69, inn-keeper at Inverbeg. He was brought up in Glen Fruin and was formerly the policeman at Luss.

[18] In 1739 Knockbuy purchased "from Duchra, including ½ Crown Lucks penny, 41 cattle £63.10.10".

[19] Information from Mr. Alan Cameron, editor of the *Oban Times*.

[20] Information from Duncan Currie, Tibertich, retired shepherd aged, 78. Mr. Currie went with Kilchamaig cattle to the Falkirk Tryst, and was present at the last market in 1901. He saw railway trains and Glasgow for the first time, and with immense enjoyment, on this occasion. His father, at one time a Mull shepherd, had accompanied droves of cattle from Falkirk Tryst into England.

[21] Informants, Miss Campbell of Kilberry and Mr. John MacLachlan, Poltalloch.

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