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PART 1

PART 2

NATURAL PHILOSOPHY AND MOUNTAINEERING IN SCOTLAND, 1750-1850[1]

D. B. Horn*

I must first define a little more closely the problem to which I have addressed myself in this paper. Many of the climbers of whom I intend to speak used methods or had objects in climbing which would have led to their immediate expulsion from the purist and specialist mountaineering clubs of the twentieth century; but nevertheless they were the pioneers who blazed the trails for their successors. Also with one or two exceptions I must leave the Lowlands out of account and concentrate on the Highlands. While I should not care to say that none of the Highland mountains had been climbed before the eighteenth century, no records of such ascents have survived. We do indeed hear of a mad laird in Glenlyon who is said to have climbed Stuich an Lochain and of a lovesick maiden, jilted by Mackintosh of Moy, who gave her name to one of the Cairngorm corries. From these instances we may perhaps conclude that our simple-minded forefathers regarded habitual wandering over the high hills as one of the clearest symptoms of a disordered mind.

Nevertheless the native Highlanders occasionally visited the high tops, especially in the course of a deer drive. Stevenson's line about the hunter home from the hill is historically accurate; but it seems improbable that the hunters would often reach the actual summits. If a mountain range formed the boundary between two clan territories there may have been something corresponding to the "riding of the marches". Sometimes too the most convenient route for traffic passed over or near a mountain top, as in the case of the Minnigaig crossing from Blair Atholl to Kingussie or some of the Mounth roads from Deeside to Angus, but for obvious reasons such routes avoided high exposed ground whenever possible. In war, too, small groups of Highlanders sometimes

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took to the mountain tops, as in Cameron of Lochiel's resistance to Cromwell's troops in the Protectorate period.

There may also have been a special reason for climbing certain mountains. Early nineteenth century tours from Glasgow to Inverary often state that at one time the Cobbler had been the highest point in the domains of Clan Campbell and that on succeeding to the leadership of the clan the new chief was required to climb Ben Artur and seat himself on the topmost crag. If he failed, the chieftainship passed to the next heir who had the courage and skill required for the climb. If this represents a genuine tradition and not a picturesque invention, we may perhaps regard the Celtic chiefs of Scotland as the original founders of a Scottish mountaineering club. There are similar stories about Norse kings.

I conclude therefore that down to the early eighteenth century the actual summits of the Highland mountains were almost as unknown to the Highlanders as they are in the main to their twentieth century descendants. Nor were they climbed by the few English and other foreign visitors who penetrated the Highlands and left accounts of their travels. Their attitude on the whole is that of E. Burt who wrote (Burt 1754:II,6, 10): "The summits of the highest mountains are mostly destitute of earth, and the huge naked rocks, being just above the heath, produce the disagreeable appearance of a scabbed head". He opined also that the Highland hills are "a dismal gloomy brown, drawing upon a dirty purple; and most of all disagreeable, when the heath is in bloom".

This attitude changed, however, in the course of the eighteenth century. At approximately the same time, four quite distinct categories of climbers began to resort to our Scottish hills.

1. A mixed category of persons who sought the tops in the course of their everyday duties e.g. deerstalkers, shepherds, guides, fencers or dykers, or else with a view to financial gain e.g. the land surveyors who spent long periods in making surveys of highland estates and the rather later early nineteenth century cartographers.

2. The second class of climber was the sportsman. Here the prototype was Colonel Thornton, a Yorkshire squire who had studied at Glasgow University, who kept a careful record of his activities which was published twenty-two years later in 1804.

3. The third type of climber was the mere tourist, who, often

unaccompanied by a guide, was beginning to climb the more accessible mountains in the second half of the eighteenth century. As yet these ascents were rare except in the case of Ben Nevis and Ben Lomond. The earliest English tourist who came to Scotland for the specific purpose of climbing our hills, was Thomas Wilkinson of Yanwath, an acquaintance of Wordsworth's. I must however add that Wilkinson's actual performance, like that of many of his successors, fell far short of his ambitions.

4. Finally, there was a fourth class of early climber consisting of men whose primary object in mountaineering was the pursuit of some scientific inquiry. As Sir Walter Scott's friend, John Stoddart, remarked: "Natural philosophers of late have not infrequently been travellers. They have displayed great talents and industry, they have accumulated much valuable matter, and their labour has richly deserved its reward; but high merit in this, as in all other lines, is rare . . ." (Stoddart 1801:I, ix).

It should perhaps be observed that my third and fourth categories are not entirely water-tight. While tourists climb inspired by a subjective desire to see out of the way places and perhaps to boast afterwards to less privileged mortals, the scientist is dominated by a determination to observe and record facts about the external universe. But motives are often mixed and it is sometimes difficult to say whether a particular climber on a particular climb was more scientist or tourist.

This sudden invasion of Highland hills by a horde of scientists was not of course a local phenomenon: it was part of a much larger and general movement. Whereas the medieval student had meditated in the seclusion of his study, on such problems as the exact number of angels who could dance on the point of a needle at any given moment of time, his seventeenth century successor was beginning to take an interest in laboratory work and indeed to realise that the whole external world could become his laboratory. As early as the sixteenth century we hear of a Zurich naturalist who resolved "to climb mountains for the delight of the mind and the proper exercise of the body" and made an early ascent of Pilatus (Styles 1951:276). G. W. Young argues that it was assumed mere adventure in mountaineering was unworthy of a grown man's interest unless undertaken for a serious scientific object: hence "the few adventurous Swiss who first explored their

own glaciers all bore the cloak of professional titles" (Young 1957:8-9). Thus the brothers De Luc in 1765 tried to climb the Buet near Geneva in order to observe variations in air-pressure and the boiling point of water at various heights. When the abbé Murith climbed the Velan in 1779 he carried the usual barometer and thermometer, although he did the climb chiefly because attracted by the mountain. It was Dr. Paccard who made the first ascent of Mount Blanc. When de Saussure, who had previously made unsuccessful attempts to reach the summit, followed in Paccard's footsteps next year (1787) he spent 4½ hours on the top and conducted numerous experiments. The instruments he carried to the top included a barometer, thermometer, hygrometer, electrometer and apparatus for determining heights by boiling water (Engel 1950:28-49).

Sir Joseph Banks climbed Hecla during his scientific expedition to Iceland (Cameron 1952:58). When serious climbing in the Pyrenees began in the French revolutionary period, the pioneer Raimond carried his instruments for observations with him. In England, however, in the seventeenth century, Thomas Johnson, who is reputed to have made the first ascent of Snowdon in 1639, was not a natural philosopher but a botanist, intent on compiling a complete illustrated description of all British plants. When he and his friends reached the summit of Snowdon "we sat down" he recorded "in the midst of the clouds, and first of all we arranged in order the plants we had, at our peril, collected among the rocks and precipices, and then we ate the food we had brought with us" (Raven 1947:289-290).

In Scotland the first physical experiment which necessitated hill-climbing seems to have been made by George Sinclair as early as 1670 (Sinclair 1683:207-9).

> Upon Tuesday the 19 of July 1670 [he stated] the following experiment was made. In the middle marches between Scotland and England there is a long tract of hills . . . amongst the which the mountain Cheviot is famous beyond and conspicuous above all the rest for altitude . . . The North side of this mountain is pretty steep, yet easie to climb either with men or horse. The top is spacious, large and broad and all covered with a Flow-moss, which runs many miles South. When a man rides over it, it rises and falls. 'Tis easie to thrust a lance over the head in it . . . Upon the highest part of this Mountain was erected the Torricellian Experiment for weighing of the air, where we found the altitude of

the mercurial cylinder 27 inches and an half. The air was dry and clear and no wind. In our Valley-Countreys, near to the sea-coast in such weather we find the altitude 29 inches and an half. When this difference was found, care was taken to seal up closely with Bee-wax, mixed with turpentine, the orifice of the vessel that contained the stagnant mercury and through which the end of the pipe went down. This being done with as great exactness as could be, it was carried to the foot of the mountain in a frame of wood, made on purpose, and there opening the mouth of the vessel we found the mercury to rise an inch and a quarter higher than it was. The reason of this strange phenomenon must be this, namely a greater pressure of the air at the foot of the hill than upon the top, even as there is a greater pressure of water in a surface 40 fathom deep than in a surface 20 fathom deep. 'Tis not to be doubted but if the root of the mountain had been as low as the sea-coast or as the surface of Tweed at Kelso, the mercurial cylinder would have been higher . . . This experiment lets us see that the pressure of the air seems to be as the pressure of the water, namely the further down the greater and the further up the less and therefore as by coming up to the top of the water there is no more pressure, so by coming up to the top of the Air there is no more weight in it; which in effect says that the air hath a determinate height as the water hath. From this experiment we cannot learn the determinate height of the air, because the definite height of the Mountain is not known. I know there are some who think the air is indefinitely extended, as if forsooth the firmament of fixed stars were the limits of it, but I suppose it is hard to make it out.

So far as I know this experiment in physics was not followed up in Scotland for nearly a century; but from the 1760s scientific curiosity was the impulse which produced many of the earliest recorded ascents of our Highland hills. That there was great need of such first-hand enquiries by competent scientists is evident from the kind of information which was available about the Highlands in the seventeenth century. Much of this was collected by Walter Macfarlane and published by the Scottish History Society. These papers include, for example, an anonymous and undated description of Strathspey (Macfarlane 1908: 240-4): "Here is the famous hill called Kairne Gorum, which is four miles high. Here it is said, there are minerals; for gold hath been found here. This hill aboundeth with excellent crystall. Much deer and roe here." The author then refers to the red-handed spectre of Glenmore which "lately in '69" fought with three brothers in succession who all died.

Even taller stories circulated about the far north-west,

such as the constantly repeated yarn (Fraser 1699:230-2) about Meal-fuor-vouny, a mountain a mile high on Loch Ness-side and containing a loch near the top which was a mile deep. Fraser claimed also that in Glen Affric there was

> a lake of fresh water, called Lochan Wyn or Green Lake, 18 foot in diameter, about a fathom deep. This lake is always covered with ice, summer and winter. The next mountain, north of that, is called Scúre-in-Lappich; on the top of it there is a vast heap of white stones like chrystal, each of them bigger than a man can heave. They will strike fire like flint and have the smell of sea-wrack . . . Upon this mountain is found also oister-shells in plenty, scallop and limpet-shells, yet 20 miles from any sea. Round about this hill grows the sea-pink, in Irish teartag: it has the taste and colour of that grows upon our sea banks.

When John Walker, Professor of Natural History at Edinburgh, was collecting material for his *Economical History of the Hebrides and Highlands of Scotland*, posthumously published in 1808, he could apparently find nothing better than Fraser's letter and copied it laboriously into his note-book (E.U.L. Dept. of MSS., Dc. 2.37).

The earliest scientists to penetrate this mysterious region were primarily interested in botany. Edward Lhwyd, former keeper of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, travelled in 1699 through Cantire, Argyll and Lorn and visited several islands. "In the Highlands" he recorded (Lhwyd 1713:97-101) "we found the people everywhere civil enough; and had doubtless sped better as to our enquiries had we had the language more perfect". While "going up one of the high hills of Mull we found Rhodia Radix [and other plants] and (which I had never seen grow spontaneously) *Alchemilla Alpina quinquefolia*".

In the 1760s Professor John Hope was offering prizes to his students at Edinburgh for the best collection of Scots vegetables and it was he who persuaded the Commissioners on the Forfeited Estates to finance a series of tours of Scotland by James Robertson (1767-71). Hope described Robertson as "one of the assistant gardners [at the Edinburgh Physic Garden], a young man of promising genius (tho' then illiterate)". In exchange for a grant varying from £40 to £50 each year to cover his expenses, Robertson spent the summer months on tour, made the first recorded ascents of many well-known "Munroes" and brought back specimens for the College Museum (S.R.O. Forfeited Estates Papers). His MS.

Journals, which give no ground for his patron's charge of illiteracy, are partly missing but those for 1767 and 1771 (N.L.S. MSS. 2507-2508) show that he was interested in natural philosophy as well as natural history. For example, in 1771, on the advice of George Clerk Maxwell, Clerk to the Commissioners, he examined the heat of the different springs he met with in ascending mountains, "being of the opinion that the degree of cold would be found to increase in proportion to the height of the springs".

Hope's influence was, however, felt in another way. He himself accompanied Pennant and Lightfoot on Pennant's second tour of Scotland in 1772 and perhaps introduced Lightfoot to the Rev. John Stuart, whose father was the well-known minister of Killin and who had himself been one of Hope's students. By 1772 Stuart was familiar with the tops of many Highland hills and guided Lightfoot to some of these summits.

The botanists did not long have the hills to themselves. A party of astronomers chose the summit of Ben More (Perthshire) to observe in 1769 the transit of Venus (Robson 1814: letterpress relating to Plate No. 16). Other observations were made from Siberia to the Cape of Good Hope and from California to Tahiti but the results seem to have been disappointing.

This preliminary incursion was soon followed up. In 1772 the Rev. Nevil Maskelyne, the Astronomer-Royal, proposed to the Royal Society that they should try to measure by astronomical observations the attraction of some hills in this kingdom. When Maskelyne was being considered for appointment as Astronomer-Royal, the supporter of another candidate had asserted that Maskelyne's "moral character as a clergyman is infamous; his intrigues with the black women [on Barbadoes] were notorious to the whole island by his letters to them being publicly handed about", while his professional competence as an astronomer was also called in question (Jucker 1949:328). The Royal Society already possessed most of the instruments required and George III graciously allowed them to use for Maskelyne's project the residue of the funds he had contributed towards the cost of observing the transit of Venus. Therefore, in the summer of 1773, a certain Charles Mason was sent to make a preliminary inspection of suitable mountains. Schiehallion was found to be most convenient for the purpose. It was of sufficient height, tolerably detached from other hills, and considerably larger from east to west than from north to south. In 1774 Maskelyne spent four months on the mountain.

An observatory was constructed for him halfway up the south side of the hill, where the attraction of the mountain would be at its greatest, and then it was moved across the summit by twelve men, who took a week to the job, and re-erected halfway down the north face. The observatory consisted of a circular wall five feet in diameter with a conical roof for the quadrant, a square tent for the transit instrument and a bothy for the residence of the observer. There Maskelyne completed his observations while his assistants below with their theodolites were busy calculating the shape and dimensions of the hill with the aid of cairns specially erected on the summit ridge. During his residence on Schiehallion Maskelyne received numerous visits from the neighbouring gentry and also from university scholars interested in the experiment (Maskelyne 1775: 500-42).

The object of the exercise was clearly explained by Sir John Pringle, Bart., in his presidential address to the Royal Society on 30 November 1775. Pringle (1783:91-136) began by pointing out that the idea was to test the Newtonian theory in a way originally suggested by Newton himself. Bouger and Condamine in 1735 had already tried to do so on Mount Chimboraço in Peru, but "their observations not only varied from one another, but seemed to be little satisfactory to themselves".

The zenith distance of a star on the meridian being observed at two stations under the same meridian, one on the south side of a mountain, the other on the north; if the plumb line of the instrument be attracted by the mountain out of its vertical position, the star will appear too much to the north by the observation at the southern station, and too much to the south, by that at the northern station; and consequently the difference of the latitudes of the two stations will be found, by these observations, greater than it really is. And if the true difference of their latitudes be determined by measuring the distance between the 2 stations on the ground, the excess of the difference, found by the observations of the star, above that found by this measurement, must have been produced by the attraction of the mountain, and its half will be the effect of such attraction on the plumb-line at each observation, supposing the mountain attracts equally on both sides.

Maskelyne's calculations seemed to show that the mean density of the earth was about double that of the mountain. "All doubts about an universal attraction must at last be terminated, and every philosopher, in that respect, must now

become a *Newtonian*". Pringle concluded that "we have the pleasure to find the doctrine of *universal gravitation* so firmly established by this finishing step of analysis, that the most scrupulous now can no longer hesitate to embrace a principle, that gives life to Astronomy, by accounting for the various motions and appearances of the Hosts of Heaven".

Maskelyne's own conclusions (Maskelyne 1775: 500-42) were that (1) Schiehallion exerts a sensible attraction; (2) its density is about half the mean density of the earth; and (3) the density of the internal parts of the earth is much greater than near the surface. Unfortunately his measurements appear to have been vitiated by fundamental errors. Nevertheless his work was used by Charles Hutton in his celebrated calculations of the mean density of the earth (Hutton 1779:689-778), a problem which is still of interest to geologists.

Maskelyne had travelled to Scotland in the company of a fellow-member of the Royal Society, Colonel William Roy, a man of many parts who at this time was keenly interested in experiments to measure heights by the use of a barometer. The pioneers here were the Swiss brothers De Luc who had published tables based on their observations on the hills above the Lake of Geneva. The elder brother emigrated to England in 1773 and was appointed Reader to the Queen (Engel 1950:31). I do not know whether there was personal contact between De Luc and Roy, but when Roy visited Maskelyne in 1774 he climbed to the top of Schiehallion and took barometer readings on 11th and 12th July and calculated the height at 3,281 feet (O.S. actual 3,547). Subsequently Roy employed junior engineer officers and civilian volunteers to take similar observations from Faragon, Ben Lawers, Ben y Gloe and Ben More (Perthshire) as well as from several of the Pentland hills. Roy (1778:69-70, 127, 137) gave full details and made the suggestion that "reasonable accommodation" should be provided for an observer who should live a whole year on the top of Ben Nevis and make regular observations (Roy 1778: 118).

Later when the Rev. George Skene Keith opened up the Cairngorms his primary object was to calculate the heights of the various summits. He made Braeriach, Cairntoul and Ben Macdhui 4,280, 4,285 and 4,300 feet respectively and reckoned that Cairngorm did not exceed 4,050 feet. We cannot but be impressed by the accuracy of his results. It was these observations which first displaced Cairngorm from its age old pride

of place amongst the Cairngorm summits. Also Keith despatched his son to climb Ben Nevis and take observations there which convinced Keith that Ben Nevis was higher than any of the Cairngorms, although more than a generation was to pass before this was finally established (Keith 1811:641-53).

Roy, however, has other claims to our attention. As early as 1747 Watson and Roy with eighteen assistants had begun a general survey of Scotland, but the outbreak of the Seven Years War had prevented the completion of this task. Roy at the end of this war continued to press for its completion, but when the War of American Independence broke out it meant the end of his hopes for a proper survey of the whole of Britain (Macdonald 1917:202-5). Ultimately his work was taken up and carried to a successful completion by the Ordnance Survey.

In a foreword to the official *Account of the Observations and Calculations of the Principal Triangulation*, etc. published in 1858, the Superintendent expressed regret at the necessity of using hill stations to determine latitudes since these were necessarily inaccurate; but "the summits of mountains were necessarily selected for the communicating points in the triangulation". The *Account* is a severely practical compilation, though official reticence breaks down when we are told that "the ascent [of Ben Lomond] is by no means difficult and the prospect from it on a clear day is not only very extensive, but extremely beautiful and magnificent". Occasionally information was supplied as to the best route to the summit of the mountain. The observations were made by engineer officers who often spent long periods on the mountain tops. Thus one party remained on Ben Nevis, "the roughest and highest" mountain in Scotland, from 1st August to 14th November 1846 and another on Ben Macdhui from 6th June to 16th August 1847. From Ben Macdhui, Ben Nevis was observed 39 times, Scour na Lapich 35, Largo Law twice etc. (Ordnance Survey 1858:*passim*).

A much clearer picture of the life of an ordnance surveyor is offered by the quite unofficial *Memoir of the Life of Major General Colby* (Portlock 1869:*passim*). Colby spent much time from 1813 to 1822 on ordnance survey work in Scotland. Fortunately he was "in manners and habits . . . singularly simple and temperate, being as much at home and as satisfied on the mountain top with the most ordinary fare, as in comfortable winter-quarters with corresponding good cheer". He was interested in the use of instantaneous light signals for survey purposes and one of his assistants about the year 1816

"won a prize by throwing the sun's rays from a concave mirror from, I think, the top of Slioch to the Clova hills in Kincardine-shire, through some glen or other, thus enabling these spots to be fixed accurately for mapping" (Mackenzie 1952:142).

From a journal kept by one of his assistants, Major R. W. Dawson, in 1819, we get some idea of Colby's methods. He joined Dawson at Huntly after

> having travelled through from London on the mail coach, with a rest probably of only a single day at Edinburgh, the journey occupying at that time four or five days and nights. This was Captain Colby's usual mode of travelling: neither rain nor snow nor any degree of severity in the weather would induce him to take an inside seat, or to tie a shawl round his throat; but muffled in a thick box coat, and with his servant Fraser, an old artilleryman at his side, he would pursue his journey for days and nights together, with but little refreshment and that of the plainest kind—commonly only meat and bread, with tea or a glass of beer (Portlock 1869:132).

Once established on their mountain top the observers could only take observations in certain circumstances, often after weeks of waiting. "It may be imagined" his biographer tells us, "how perplexing it is at such times to receive visitations from the gentry of the neighbourhood, which otherwise would be highly acceptable". Colby, we are told, received visitors, even the humblest, with kindliness as a rule, but "nothing appeared to annoy him more than the approach of visitors when we were really at work, and whatever might be their rank, he would then scarcely speak to them or show them even common attention" (Portlock 1869:137-8).

When not actually making observations, Colby used to set off with some of his men on what he called a "station-hunt" i.e. a pedestrian excursion to explore the country to erect objects on the tops of some of the principal mountains and select those which, from their position and circumstances, should be preferred for future encampments. Returning on 21 July 1819 from one of these station hunts in which he had walked 513 miles in 22 days Colby set out two days later with a fresh party of soldiers.

> Captain Colby having, according to his usual practice, ascertained the general direction by means of a pocket compass and map, the whole party set off [from the top of Corryhabbie] as on a steeplechase, running down the mountainside at full speed, over Cromdale, a mountain about the same height as Corriehabbie, crossing several beautiful glens, wading the streams which flowed

through them, and regardless of all difficulties which were not actually insurmountable on foot.

In this manner 39 miles were covered in the first day and 40 in the second day. On the third day Creag Meaghaidh was apparently climbed and Colby remarked that "the view of the Alps, is in my opinion scarcely more imposing than this". On the fifth day they "bagged" Scour Ouran, above Loch Duich, but on the seventh the summit of the Coolin hills defeated them.

Not being provided [Dawson explains] with ladders or ropes the perpendicular rock at the summit effectually baffled our efforts for several hours to find a crevice by which to ascend it. We gained, however, a ridge which reaches out from the perpendicular cliff with a superb column at the extremity of it, and so narrow is this ridge that we were obliged to sit astride upon it, in which position little more than the strength of an infant was required to hurl a stone to the bottom of the corrie on the south side without impinging upon the face of the cliff, a depth of about 2000 feet. After admiring for a while the magnificence of the prospect and the dreary and all but chaotic scene around us, we returned to our inn, gratified above measure with what we had seen, though disconcerted with our professional failure.

Next day, however, Scour-na-Marich was successfully climbed and a large pile built upon it. Ascents of Slioch and other hills to the east of Loch Maree followed and the party returned to their base at Corryhabbie having walked 586 miles in 22 days, including Sundays and days on which they could not travel owing to bad weather (Portlock 1869:139-48). The party then did further work north of Inverness and held a farewell feast at which the chief dish was a plum-pudding nearly 100 lbs in weight. Colby and his chief assistants attended, but withdrew after partaking of the pudding and drinking "Success to the *Trig*" (Portlock 1869:153-4).

But the ordnance surveyors were far from being the only surveyors in the Highlands. The Commissioners on the Forfeited and Annexed Estates employed a whole army of them to make accurate surveys and many of these estate plans are preserved in the Scottish Record Office. Great noblemen followed this example, partly at least with the hope of being able to draw an increased revenue from their lands. Such estate plans were used by the early nineteenth century cartographers and covered many of the highest Highland hills. Other surveyors used their specialised knowledge and skill to

produce guides for tourists. Thus Charles Ross (Ross 1792:10) explained that "having made an actual survey of the county of Dumbarton and lake of Lochlomond, I am enabled to give a more minute account of the whole than those who have preceded me". Another surveyor, John Ainslie, produced *A Travelling Map of the Roads through Scotland* price 2/- with some assistance from the Commissioners. Another, James Stobie, published a map of Perthshire to show *inter alia* "hills and considerable rising grounds with the perpendicular heights of some of the most remarkable above the level of the sea", while Taylor and Skinner also applied for financial support in publishing their well-known road book, which they state had cost £1,433 sterling to produce (S.R.O. Forfeited Estates Papers).

From the point of view of hill climbing the most interesting surveyor was John Williams, who was a native of Wales and originally bred a miner. Subsequently he served as a soldier in the Dutch service before coming to Scotland as an adventurer at Leadhills (*circa* 1760). Soon he transferred his attention to coal at Carlops on the Newhall estate and elsewhere. His plan for "a coal progress" through Scotland (N.L.S. MS. 1810) attracted the attention of the earl of Buchan, who records that "as he seemed to me a worthy man and possessed of a great deal of practical knowledge in geology, though without much science, I invited him to reside with me some little time at Kirkhill and put such books into his hands as I thought might be useful to him". Buchan then found him employment in Sutherland at Brora and Dunrobin and subsequently as "overseer of the coal" at Gilmerton, near Edinburgh. He spent the summers of 1770-75 prospecting for mineral wealth on the forfeited estates, but the results were so disappointing that on 26 Feb. 1776 trials on all estates were abandoned by the Commissioners (S.R.O. Forfeited Estates Papers). Williams, however, had kept voluminous notes of his various surveys and later published them (Williams 1789). Shortly after the publication of this work he went to Italy to search for coal and copper mines and died soon after his arrival. Williams was perhaps the first man to call attention to the problems raised by vitrified forts and brochs (Williams 1777), though it cannot be said that he carried the enquiry very far, being content to associate these structures with Fingal and the Fingalians.

During the summers of 1770-75, when he was regularly employed by the Commissioners, he began by examining

"some of the high hills marching with Badenoch on the east side of" Corryarick (July 1770) and in September 1770 he hired special guides at 1/6 a day to show him the marches with Strathdearn (i.e. the upper reaches of the River Findhorn) and Badenoch. At the beginning of 1772 he was specifically instructed by the Commissioners "to examine the different sorts of stones particularly on the tops of high hills" and his climbs in 1772 include the second recorded ascent of Ben Wyvis and in 1774 the second recorded ascent of Ben Nevis. He had spent much of the summer of 1774 on Gulvin engaged on various surveys and trials but dashed down from the head of Locheil on 7 and 8 September 1774 "going to Fort William and going to the head of Benevus". His expenses included "To a man going to the head of Binevus to assist in carrying meal and provisions 1/6" and "To a bottle rum, mutton, bread and cheese for Binevus 4/6" (S.R.O. Forfeited Estates Papers). "My mind" he later stated (Williams 1789:121) "was overwhelmed in amazement at the vastness and singularity of the prospect around me. When I turned my eyes westward, perhaps no man who has not been there in a clear day ever witnessed a prospect more full of real sublimity and grandeur, yet highly pleasing and agreeable".

In the accounts of some early climbs there are references to the physical-physiological effects of altitude. William Burrell who made in 1758 the first recorded tourist ascent of Ben Lomond stated that when he got "within 100 yards of the top I had the misfortune to be seized with a dizziness" which prevented him from accompanying his friends to the actual summit. While Burrell was "creeping down on all fours" his heartless friends "feasted very heartily on the summit" (N.L.S. MS. 2911). And the Rev. James Bailey, Vicar of Otley in Yorkshire, who in 1787 made the first recorded tourist ascent of Ben Nevis, claimed that his party "had felt the usual sensations of a contraction of the chest and a difficulty of breathing on the summit of the mountain" which he attributed to a diminution of density in the atmosphere and also to "the rigid and increased frigidity on the summit" (N.L.S. Ms. 3295, fo. 281). He added that had they had the foresight to have provided themselves with a barometer and thermometer these might have been sources of additional amusement, so the symptoms were apparently not very serious. A trained scientist, Dr. Macknight, on the other hand reported that "so far as I could judge from my own sensations, the rarity of the air at

this altitude [the summit of Ben Nevis] had no perceptible influence on respiration" (Macknight 1811:336).

So far as I know the first record of the Brocken Spectre being seen in Scotland was when Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, Mr. Macpherson Grant, Junior, of Ballindalloch, and an unnamed man reached the summit of Ben Macdhui at 3 p.m. on 10 October 1830. The tops of Ben Macdhui, Cairntoul and Braeriach stood out clear above a level curtain of mist and when the party descended towards Loch "Etichan" they saw a bright rainbow accompanied by the Spectre (Macpherson-Grant 1830:165-6).

There is also an early record of an "electrical storm" at the top of Ben Nevis. The Rev. Dr. Macvicar of Moffat, Sir Walter Trevelyan and some friends were caught in a snow shower while a sort of hissing and crackling, such as proceeds from a strongly charged Leyden jar, was heard on all sides and continued for upwards of 1½ hours. The electrical discharge was noticed on an umbrella belonging to one of the party while Sir Walter's hair and beard stood stiff and erect on end. "The hissing noise indicated that the electric fluid was positive and was streaming from the mountain in pencil-jets characteristic of that state" (MacVicar 1825:312-16).

If it cannot be claimed that the study of natural philosophy was greatly advanced by the excursions to the hills of Scotland to which I have devoted this paper, I believe that I have said enough to prove that the natural philosophers took their fair share in exploring our Highland mountains and putting them on the tourist map.

NOTE

[1] This paper was originally given as a lecture to the Physical Society of the University of Edinburgh. With the kind permission of the Editor I have thought it better to leave the text unaltered.

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MAC A BHUTLER

James Ross

Bho chionn móran tìd' air ais bha uachdaran as a' Ghaidhealtachd—chan urra mi innse dhuibh gu dé 'n t-àit' a robh e—ach bha'm butler a bh'aige bh'e aige poile mór agus 's e duine gasd' onorach a bh'ann agus bh'e còrdadh ri mhèistir glé mhath. Ach bha mac aig a' bhutler agus nair a thàinig esan go aois suas gu'n deanadh e feum a' frithealadh as an tigh mhór, chaidh e fhéin a thoirt a stigh ann.

Cha robh e uamhasach fad ann nuair a chaidh móran do dh'obair òir is airgid air chall agus cha robh fios cà robh ad. Ach rinneadh a mach gur h-e 'n gille òg a dh'fhalbh leotha 's gun do ghoid e ad. Agus bhruidhinn an t-uachdaran ri athair agus thuirt e ris gu feumadh e 'n gille chur air falbh oir neò mar a cuireadh e air falbh e gu feumadh ad falbh le chéile agus gu feumadh an teaghlach uile falbh 's gu feumadh e fear ùr fhaighinn na àite.

O dheònaich athair an gille chur air falbh agus 's ann a dh'fhalbh e leis orson a chur go ciùird an àiteiginnich. Agus ràinig e Baile Ghlascho leis, agus an oidhche ràinig e thàinig fear a bhruidheann riu air an t-sràid le chéile, dh'aithnich e gur e coigreich a bh'unnta nach biodh e faicinn. 'S thàinig ad ann a seanachas agus dh'fhoighneachd e dheth gu dé 'n gnothach a bh'aige dha na bhaile. "Thàinig mi leis a ghillesa," as esan, "feuch a faighinn a chur far an ionnsaicheadh e ciùird."

"A wel ma tha," as an duine, "ionnsaichidh mise ciùird da."

"Dé chiùird a dh'ionnsaicheas tu dha?" thuirt athair ris.

"Tha robaigeadh," as esan.

"Wel gu dearbha chan eil mi smaoineachadh," as athair, "gum bi sin glé dhoirbh dhut, oir 'se leithid sin a chur ann a seo e." 'S dh'inns e dha'n duine mar a rinn e.

"Sin mar as fhìor fhèarr e," as esan.

Ach lìrig athair an gille dha na robair [K 301.1]. Agus dh'fhalbh e leis agus bha àite neònach aig na robairean as a

THE BUTLER'S SON

A MASTER THIEF STORY FROM SKYE (Aa.- Th. 1525)

James Ross

A long time ago there was a laird in the Highlands—I cannot tell you where he was—but the butler he had had been with him for a very long time. He was a fine honourable man and his master was very pleased with him. But the butler had a son and when he grew up to the age at which he could be useful for service in the big house, he was brought in there.

He was not very long there when a lot of gold and silver articles went missing and nobody knew where they were. But it was made out that it was the young boy who had taken them and had stolen them. And the laird spoke to his father and said to him that he must send the boy away or else if he didn't send him away they would both have to go together with the whole family, and that he must get a new man in his place.

The father agreed to send the boy away and he himself went with him in order to apprentice him to a trade in some place. And he reached the town of Glasgow with him, and on the night he arrived, a man came to speak to both of them in the street, recognising that they were strangers that he didn't normally see. They talked and he asked him what business brought him to the town. "I came with this boy" said he, "so that I could put him where he could learn a trade".

"Well" said the man, "I will teach him a trade".

"What trade will you teach him?" said the father to him.

"Robbing", said he.

"Well, indeed, I do not think", said the father, "that that will be very difficult for you since it is something like that that has put him here." And he told the man what he had done.

"That makes him all the better", said he.

The father handed the boy over to the robber [K 301.1]. And he went with him, and the robbers had a queer place

robh ad a fuireach—cha robh fear-sa na aonar idir ann, bha treud ac' ann.

(i) Ach nair a fhuair an gille fo anail 's ann a thug fear dhiu mach oidhch' e orson sealltainn da mar a dh'obraicheadh e gnothaichean 's gun deanadh e shùilean as a' bhaile. Dh'fhalbh e go bùtha mhór watchmaker ann a shin. Agus chaidh iad a stigh le chéile 's thuirt e ris an duine taobh thall a chuntair gu robh e ceannach uaireadair—gun tàinig e air son uaireadair a cheannach. Agus rinn e leth-char innse seòrsa bha dhìth air—'se uaireadair òir a bha dhìth air. Chuir an duine nall bocs' air a bheulabh as a robh uaireadairean 's sheall e orra 's, "O bheil seòrs eil' agad?" as esan. "O tha," as an duine. "O seall dhomh tuilleadh dhiu," thuirt e. Nair a thionndaich an duine chùlabh bha esan a caimhead air na h-uaireadairean 's 's ann a chuir e té dhiu sìos na mhuilichinne. Agus thàinig an duine nall leis a bhocs' eile 's sheall e unnta. "O," as esan "cha dean gin dhiu sin chan eil iad freagarrach arm," as esan. "O mar a h-eil," as an duine, "chan eil cothrom air."

Ach dh'fhalbh e, agus dh'fhuirich an gill' òg agus nair a dh'fhalbh a robair 's an t-uaireadair aige 's ann a thuirt e ris an fhear a bha air cùl a' chuntair thall, "A faca tu," as esan, "an obair a rinn an duin' ad?" "Gu dé rinn e?" as an duine ris. "A dhiall!" as esan, "chuir e té dhe na h-uaireadairean agad na mhuilichinne 's dh'fhalbh e leatha."

Chunntais an duine na h-uaireadairean 's nach ann a bha uaireadair a dhìth air ceart gu leòr 's ruith e mach orson polisman—as deodhaidh an duine ach cha robh 'n duine ri fhaicinn. 'S nair a fhuair an gill' òg air falbh e chuir e 'n ceann ann a fear dhe na bocsaichean agus chuir e fo sheacaid e 's dh'fhalbh e fhéin agus ghabh e rathad eile—cha b'e a rathad a bh'e a smaoineachadh a ghabh a' fear a chaidh as deodhaidh a' robair a ghabh e.

Ach ràinig e 'n t-àit' a robh ad a' fuircach, na robairean, agus chaidh e stigh. "A dhiall!" as a' robair ris, "a faca tu nise cho sgiobalt' agus a dh'obraich mi siod? Bheil thu smaoineach' gun d'rachadh agad fhéin air a leithid a dheanamh?" "A, bh'e glé mhath," as an gill' òg, "ach cha chreid mi nach d'rinn mise cheart cho math riut;" 's thug e 'm bocsa mach fo achlais 's chuir e air a' bhòrd e 's e làn uaireadairean.

(ii) Ach bha sin mar sin. 'S ann ann an ceann oidhche na dhà dh'fhalbh ad a rithist 's chaidh iad a mach air an dùthaich orson tigh as a robh beairteas ann a sin a robaigeadh. Agus fhuair ad a stigh gun duine 'ga faireachadh. Bha ad a' falbh

where they lived—this one wasn't alone at all, there was a gang of them.

(i) When the boy was rested, one of them took him out one night to show him how to work things, and to acquaint him with the town. He went to a big watchmaker's shop there. And they went in together and the robber said to the man who was on the other side of the counter that he had come to buy a watch. And he gave a brief description of the kind of watch he wanted—he wanted a gold watch. The man put a box of watches over in front of him and he looked at them and "Have you got another kind?", said he. "O, yes" said the man. "Show me some more", said he. While the man turned his back, he was looking at the watches and he put one of them down his sleeve. And the man came over with the other box and he looked among them. "O", said he, "none of these is suitable for me." "O, if they aren't", said the man "it cannot be helped."

The robber went away and the young boy stayed. And when the robber had gone with the watch he said to the man who was over behind the counter, "Did you see", said he, "the work that that man did?" "What did he do?" said the man. "He put one of your watches in his sleeve", said he, "and he went off with it."

The man counted the watches and wasn't he short of a watch right enough. He ran out to get a policeman and to chase the man but the man wasn't to be seen. And when the young boy got him out of the way he put the lid on one of the boxes and he put it under his jacket and he himself went and took another road; it was not the road that he thought the man who had gone to chase the robber had taken that he took.

He arrived at the place where the robbers were staying and he went in. "Did you see now", said the robber to him "how neatly I worked that? Do you think that you would be able to do such a thing?" "It was indeed very good" said the young boy, "but I think I have done every bit as well as you", and he took the box out from under his oxter and he put it on the table, full of watches.

(ii) That was that. It was after a night or two that they went off again and they went out to the country in order to rob a house there in which there were riches. And they entered the house without anyone hearing them. They were going about

agus bha seilear as an tigh agus 's ann a chuir ad an gill' òg sìos air ròp dha'n a' seilear a bha sin feuch a faigheadh e ionmhas ann. Cha robh e fada shìos nair a dh'fhairich muinntir an taighe rudeiginnich 's dh'éirich ad agus theich na robairean 's fhuair ad an casan leotha gun bhreith orra. Cha robh fios aig an fhear òg gu dé dheanadh e—cha robh chollas air gu robh duine shuas a bheireadh suas air a ròp e na ròp fhéin ri fhaicinn na bu mhù. Ach th'e collach gu robh rudeiginnich aige—las e maidse na rudeiginnich agus sheall e. Chunnaic e ann an còrnair as an t-seilear seice damh na mart a bh'air a feannadh agus na h-adhaircean 's a chuile rud a bh'ann orra 's na casan. Agus chan fhacaidh e rud a b'fheàrr na suaineadh ma'n cuairt da fhéin. Agus rug e air té do chasan a' bheothaich as gach laimh 's thòisich e air bualadh 's air slaiseadh a chuile sian a bha ma'n cuairt da 's rinn e *noise* is fuaim a bha uamhasach. Ach th'e collach gun tainig cuideiginnich as a chionn 's dh'aoibh ad ris, "Cò tha sid?" "Tha mis'," as esan. "Cò thusa?" "Tha," as esan 's e 'g ainmeachadh an fhir bu mhios' air ainm, "'s mis' e," as esan; "agus mar a toir sibh dhòmh-s' iuchraichean an taigh agus gu faigh mi mach a seo," as esan, "bheir mi si'péin 's an tigh lium air m'adhaircean." Sheall an duine sìos, th'e collach gu robh solus air choireiginn aige 's chunnaic e chuis uamhais a b'uamhasaiche chunnaic e riamh shìos ann a shin 's cha robh ach iuchraichean a thilgeadh 'ga ionnsaidh 's thòisich e air fosgladh dhorsan gos an d'fhuair e mach. [K 521.1]

(iii) Nair a fhuair e mach tha mi creidsinn gun do thilg e na h-iuchraichean an dala taobh ach lean e ris an t-seicidh—thug e leis i. Rainig e a' chùil as a robh na robairean a' falach agus dé 'n obair a bh'aca—bha ad an deodhaidh móran dhe'n an ionmhas a fhuair ad a chreic agus gu dé 'n obair a bh'aca ach a dol reite chéile ma chuairt da roinn. Agus chuir e cheann a stigh 's na h-adhaircean air toll air choireiginnich agus thug e sgleogan leis na casan air àiteiginnich agus dh'eubh e riutha gu math àrd—"Fàgabh agam fhìn e," as esan,"'s fhada bha sibh ag oibreachadh dhomh 's ga chosnadh." Ach dh'fhalbh a chuile fear, a' fear nach beireadh air a bhogha bheireadh air a chlaidheamh chaidh ad an eamach 's an iar 's mas briobadh e shùil cha robh duine beò aig air a làraich 's bha 'n t-airgiod aig ann a shiod na thorran. Ghabh e stigh, 's chruinnich e chuile h-aona sgillin ruadh dheth agus thug e leis e. [K 335.0.12]

Dh'fhalbh e agus rinn e air tigh athair an uairsin. Ràinig e dhachaidh. "O a mhilltear thruaigh," as athair, "gu dé chuir

and there was a cellar in the house and they lowered the young boy down into that cellar on a rope so that he could get valuables there. He wasn't long down when the people of the house heard something and they got up and the robbers fled and got clean away without being caught. The young one didn't know what to do. It didn't seem that there was anyone up there who could haul him up on the rope and the rope itself was not to be seen either. But it seems that he had a match or something that he lit and he looked around. He saw in a corner of the cellar the hide of an ox or cow that had been skinned and the horns and everything on it and the legs. And he couldn't see a better way than to wrap it around him. And he took one of the legs of the beast in each hand and he began to knock and strike everything that was around him and he made a noise and din that was dreadful. And it seems that somebody came above him and shouted to him "Who is that?" "It is I" said he. "Who are you?" "O", said he, naming the worst one by name, "I am him and if you do not give me the keys of the house in order to get out of here I will take you and the house along with me on my horns." The man looked down. It seems that he had some light and down there he saw the most awful apparition that he had ever seen. There was nothing for it but to throw keys to him and he began to open doors until he got outside. [K 521.1]

(iii) When he got outside, I believe that he threw the keys aside, but he kept the hide—he took it with him. He arrived at the den where the robbers were hiding and what were they doing but that they had sold much of the wealth that they had got and what were they doing but quarrelling about sharing it. And he put his head with the horns in through some hole and he banged with the legs at some other place and he shouted to them very loudly "Leave it for me" said he "you have been working a long time for me and earning it." Everybody fled, the one who couldn't seize the bow would seize the sword and they went in all directions and before he could blink an eye there was no living soul in the place and the money was there for him in heaps. He went in and gathered up every single brown penny and took it with him. [K 335.0.12]

He went then and he made for his father's house. "O you destructive rascal", said his father, "what sent you home here?

'achaidh a seo thu? Caillidh mise m'àite" as esan, "agus bi againn ri falbh uile gu léir." Ach co-dhiù thàinig e go cluais an uachdarain gun tàinig e oir nèo chunnaic e fhéin e, chan eilios agam-sa có aca agus chuir e fios air athair.

"Nach do shaoil lium," as esan, "gun do chuireadh do mhac air falbh," as esan, "go ciùird." "O rinn mi sin," as esan "ach cha robh e fad air falbh nair a thill e." "Wel, cha b'urrainn e ciùird ionnsachadh", thuirt e, "as an tìde bh'e air falbh." "A wel tha mi smaoineachadh gun do dh'ionnsaich e glé mhath i," as athair, "tha chollas air gun d'rinn e glé mhath o bh'e air falbh." [F 660]

(iv) "'S gu dé chiùird a bh'ann?" "Bha robaigeadh," thuirt e. "A wel ma dh'ionnsaich e chiùird cho math sin," as esan, "theirig dhachaidh agus can ris," as esan, "gum bi peilear agam-sa ro cheann a màireach," as esan, "mara goid e leis a' siota bhios fodham-sa agus fo na bhean na air cadal as a' leabaidh a nochd." [H 1151.3]

"A wel," thuirt athair ris, "ceart cho math dhut a dhol agus a dheanamh an dràsda," as esan, "oir chan eil sin na choimeas a dheanamh."

"Cha dean mi 'n dràsd' e," as esan, "gos a fairlich e siod air. Ach ma dh'fhairlicheas e air," thuirt e, "nì mi e."

Nair a chaidh athair dhachaidh dh'inns' e dha na ghill' e 's cha do ghabh an gille sian air. Ach dh'fhalbh e agus nair a thàinig an oidhche, 's bha corp as a' chladh a chaidh a thiodhlaigeadh latha na dha ro na sin. Agus dh'fhalbh e 's throg e e 's fhuair e aodach leis fhéin agus chòmhdaich e 'n corp suas leis 's chuir e air a ghualainn e 's dh'fhalbh e go tigh an uachdarain feadh na h-oidhche nair a bha chuile neach air gabhail ma thàmh. Fhuair e fàradh 's chuir e ri uinneag an t-seòmbair chadail aig an uachdaran 's aig a bhean e. Agus nair a chuir e ris an uinneig e bha ròp aige 's cheangail e air a' chorp gu h-ìseal e 's chaidh e suas as an fhàradh 's bh'e a' slaodadh a' chuirp leis. 'S fhuair e 'n uinneag aig seòmbar cadail an uachdarain a throgail. Agus chuir e 'n ceann aige ris an uinneig [K 362.2.1*]. "Tha seo air tighinn," thuirt an t-uachdaran, "ach ma th'e air tighinn chan fhalbh e mar a thàinig e." Bha gunn' aige ri thaobh asa' leabaidh agus bha esan a bha muigh a' cur a stigh ceann a' chorp, ga chur bìdeag is bìdeag ach nair a fhuair an t-uachdaran a leth gu math a stigh air an uinneig loisg e urchair. 'S ma loisg, thilg a' fear a bha muigh—thug e putag dha 'n a' chorp a stigh 's rinn e glag aig bonn na h-uinneig air a' làr. Agus leum an t-uachdaran a mach as a' leabaidh.

I will lose my place and we shall all have to go." But anyway it came to the laird's ears that he had come or else he himself saw him, I don't know which and he sent for his father.

"Did I not understand", said he, "that your son was sent away to learn a trade?" "O I did that", said the other, "but he wasn't long away when he returned." "Well, he couldn't learn a trade", said he "in the time that he was away." "O well, I think that he learnt it very well", said his father, "it seems that he did very well while he was away." [F 660]

(iv) "And what trade was it?" "Robbing" said he. "O well, if he learnt his trade as well as that", said he "go home and say to him", said he "that I will put a bullet through his head tomorrow", said he, "if he doesn't steal the sheet that will be under my wife and I sleeping in the bed tonight." [H 1151.3]

"O well", said the father to him, "you might as well go and do it just now", said he, "because he hasn't got the ability to do that".

"I will not do it just now", said he, "until he fails to do that. But if he fails I will do it."

When his father went home he told this to the son and the boy was not put out in the least. He went off when the night came and there was a body in the churchyard which had been buried a day or two before. And he went and raised the body and he got clothing belonging to himself and he dressed the body up with it. He put it on his shoulder and he went to the laird's house during the night when everyone had gone to rest. He got a ladder and placed it against the window of the bedroom of the laird and his wife. And when he put it to the window he had a rope and he tied it to the body down below. He went up the ladder dragging the body with him. And he managed to raise the laird's bedroom window and he put its head against the window. [K 362.2.1*]

"Here he comes", said the laird "but if he has he will not go as he comes." He had a gun by his side in the bed and the one who was outside was putting the head of the body in, bit by bit, and when the laird made out the side of its head coming in at the window he fired a shot. And as he did, the one who was outside gave a little push to the body and it made a thump inside below the window on the floor. And the laird jumped out of bed. "I must", said he, "go and put him out

"Feumaidh mi," as esan, "a dhol 's a chur as an t-sealladh an àiteiginn," as esan, "'s cha gabh sinn oirnn gun tàinig e riamh; ga brith dé their daoine cha ghabh sinn oirnn gu faca sinn riamh e 's cha bhi ceasnachadh mór ma dheodhainn," thuirt e.

'S ann mar seo a bha. Dh'éirich e agus dh'fhalbh e leis a' chorp. Agus th'e collach nair a fhuair an gill' òg a bha muigh an t-uachdaran air falbh leis a' chorp dha ghiùlain, dh'fhalbh e fhéin 'na ruith a stigh 's bha fhios aige rathad a ghabhadh e gu math leis an eòlas a bh'aig' as an tigh an toiseach. 'S ranaig e seòmbar cadail an uachdarain 's na mnatha agus, "A," as esan, "tha bhiast ad uamhasach trom," as esan, "ri ghiùlan," as esan, "chan eilios 'am dé gheibh mi as an cuir mi e, cè dhomh," as esan, "a' siot' tha seo air a' leabaidh," as esan, "agus cuiridh mi ann e 's falbhaidh mi leis." Fhuair e siota 's dh'fhalbh e. Bha dùil aig a bhean gur h-e 'n duine ceart gu leòr a bh'ann ach cha robh i fada nair a thàinig e agus bha i 'g iarraidh siot eile chuireadh i air a' leabaidh. Bha leisg orra muinntir an taighe chur air an cois, luchd frithealaidh, agus a rithist cha robh i orson gu faighte mach gu dé thachair, 's ann a bha i 'g iarraidh rud a chuireadh i air a leabaidh. "A dhiall!" thuirt an duin' aice, an t-uachdaran rithe, "dé chuir air do chois an dràsd' thu?" "Nach eil mi 'g iarraidh siota chuireas mi air a' leabaidh," as ise. "Nach tug thu fhéin leat a' siota," as ise, "dol a thiodhlagadh an duine bha siod a mharbh thu a' tigh'n a stigh air an uinneig."

Thuig an t-uachdaran an uairsin go robh 'n gill' òg tuilleadh 's a chòir air a shon 's gum b'fhèarr dha fuireach sàmhach. Bha athair as an t-seirbheis agus chan eilios agam-sa gu'n dé 'n tù a chaidh an gill' òg fhathast. Cha chuala mi 'n còrr ma dheodhainn.

NOTES

This story was recorded from Samuel Thorburn, or *Sammy Shomhairle*, of Waterstein, Glendale, Isle of Skye in July 1953 (RL 365). He heard it over forty years ago from his father, *Somhairle Beag*, who was a well known local story teller. (There is another version of the same tale, recorded from the same man in June 1957, on RL 37).

The story is a variant of an internationally known tale. Stith Thompson says of it ". . . the story of The Master Thief is much more than a casual group of clever thefts. As a well-defined folktale, it appears to have a wide geographical distribution with clearly recognizable relationships from area to area, and a literary history going back at least to the Renaissance. Because of the interesting affinities between this tale and many other stories of thefts and because of the extremely wide circulation which this tale has experienced over the world it would be interesting to know much

of sight somewhere, and we will never let on that he ever came; no matter what people say we will never let on that we ever saw him and there won't be much questioning about him."

That is how it was. He got up and went away with the body. And it seems that when the young lad who was outside got rid of the laird, he went running inside and well he knew which way to go because of the knowledge he had of the house before. And he reached the bedroom of the laird and of his wife and "O" said he, "that beast is awfully heavy to carry. I don't know what to get to put him in. Give me", he said, "this sheet on the bed," said he, "and I will put him in it and go with him." The wife thought that it was her husband right enough, but it was not long till her husband came and she was looking for another sheet to put on the bed. She was loath to waken the household, the servants, and again she did not want what happened to be discovered, and she was looking for something to put on the bed. "What", said her husband the laird to her, "are you up for at this time?" "Do I not need a sheet for the bed", said she, "and did you not take away the sheet yourself," said she, "to bury that man you killed as he was coming in at the window."

The laird then understood that the young boy was too much for him and that he had better just keep quiet. His father remained in service and I don't know yet which way the young boy went. I haven't heard any more about him.

more about its history and development than we do now, when no really adequate study has been devoted to it." (1951:175).

The following notes are limited to a brief description of the story as it occurs in Scottish Gaelic.

Type 1525 in Scottish Gaelic [1]

Inclusive of the above, fourteen variants have been traced to date, nine of them hitherto unpublished. These are listed A-N below.

The beginning of the career of the master thief and the circumstances under which he begins thieving

In three of the versions, A, E and K, the central character is a habitual thief whose father is forced by a superior to send him away. In J he is a drunkard, in H he is the innocent victim of the minister, the trade of

thieving being forced upon him on pain of death. Some tellers introduce moral overtones at this point and the accounts of parental resistance to such a trade vary. In A there seems to be resignation to the inevitable and in E the father will not accept the responsibility of acting on the gentleman's advice that his son should take up such a trade without asking the son, Billy, to decide. The strongest parental resistance is in B and I where the would-be thief has to resort to a trick to persuade his mother that he must take up thieving as a profession. In F alone he is the master of the clever retort (J 1250) and this is what makes the landlord advise his father to make him a professional thief. The trade of thieving does not appear in D, and in G the story opens with the doings of professional thieves.

Journey and Return

In six of the versions, A, E, F, H, J and K, there is a journey and a return home. The time which the thief has spent away from home is not always explicitly stated but the general implication is that it was short. There is considerable variation in the accounts of the actual journey and apprenticeship. A is unusual in that no less than three of the feats are performed while the thief is away from home prior to his return. In E and F one feat is performed, while in H, J and K the chief episodes open with his return. In B and I, both closely similar versions, the thief simply leaves home to take up his career.

The nature of the feats and tasks and the circumstances under which they are performed

In five of the versions, B, C, G, I and L, the feats performed by the master thief are not tasks set by another person but are suggested by himself. In one, D, his master bets his landlord that he can perform them. In most of the versions the feats are performed at the expense of somebody who is in a superior position to the thief's father or master. When they are set by the superior the punishment for failure when stated is expulsion or death (A iv, H i, ii and iii, J and K). No rewards are offered, but in four versions, C, D, E and K, he marries the superior's wife or daughter [Q 91.1*]. In two versions only the thief loses his life (B and I) and in none is he actually sentenced to death.

Feats of thieving not set as tasks

1. Stealing of watches from a shop by a ruse. Unique to A. [K 341].

2. Plundering of house or inn in which the master thief is trapped and deserted by his accomplices. This episode occurs in two versions, A ii and E i. In both he escapes by disguising himself in a cowhide and pretending to be the devil [K 521.1, K 152].

3. Plundering of thieves' den (A iii, F i). In both cases the disguise of the cowhide as devil is used [K 335.0.12].

4. Plundering a room of nuts, food, valuables. B i and ii, G iii, iv, I iii. The thieves generally hide in roof or loft. Ruses used are stampeding cattle (B i, G iii) and raising a false alarm by tying a cowhide to his master's coat tails (B ii, I iii).

5. Theft of wedder, goat, ox. B iii, iv, v; G i, ii; I i, ii; L. Accomplished by two ruses.

(*a*) Leaving shoes at different points in the path of the man who is carrying or leading the animal (B iii; G i; I i; L), [K 341.6].

(*b*) By bleating like a goat or sheep at the place where the first animal was lost (B iii, iv, v; G ii; I ii), [K 341.7].

Set tasks

1. Theft of horse or horses from carters or ploughman. E ii, H i, J i. Always done by the ruse of using rabbits with broken legs [K 341.5.1].

2. Theft of horse or pony from guarded stable or room [H 1151.2]. C i; D i; E iii; F iii; H ii; J ii; K i. Excepting one version (C i) this is invariably done by making the guards drunk [K 332]. This is carried out by disguise as packman or soldier [K 311.17+] and pretending to be drunk. In C i the device of lowering a dead body down the chimney is used [K 362.2.1, K 341.3].

3. Abduction of laird's daughter, bishop's daughter. C ii; D ii. Achieved by disguise as woman [K 311.16], (*a*) as princess, (*b*) as a captain's sick sister. An accomplice is used in both cases.

4. Stealing of bed sheet [H 1151.3]. A iv; E iv; F iv; H iii; K iii. Accomplished in all versions by the use of a dead body which the laird shoots and leaves the house to bury.

5. Stealing of tablecloth with six people playing cards on it [H 1151.3*]. Unique to K ii. Very similar to the episode of plundering the thieves' den (Nos. above). Drops through the ceiling on to the table in cow hide [K 335.0.12].

6. Abduction of bishop or minister. C iii; H iv. Abduction in both cases by "angel" disguise of salmon skins [K 311.2].

7. Riding and not riding, clad and not clad. Task [H 1053.1, H 1054.1]. Unique to F ii. Accomplished by riding a sow and dressing in a net.

The episode of hanging by deception [K 852] is confined to B and J. The accidental hanging episode with which J closes [N 334.2] is also found in B in its longer form, coming after the Rhampsinitus story [Aa. Th. 950] into which it develops. This linking of the two types in B and G is interesting in view of the fact that the present storyteller tells a good version of the Rhampsinitus story separately and knows it under another name.

Two distinct strains are evident in this medley of variants. The most prominent is Type 1525 A involving the journey and return of a son and a series of clearly set tasks which call for great ingenuity. While there is no journey and return in C and D there is the normal triumvirate of characters and in D the clearly defined superior who is the master thief's victim.

The other strain is that of Type 1525 D, which does not involve activities against a home background and in which the chief character spends his career among thieves. The episode involving the theft of the goat, wedder or ox, accomplished by means of the shoe and the bleating trick, is never a set task for the thief as is the theft of the sheet and the stabled horse. The plundering of the room of nuts or valuables by ruses are also clear thefts and are not found as tasks. The use of the dead body always occurs with the tasks as does the ruse of pretending to be drunk. The devil disguise of the cow skin is usually found with the thefts, although in one case (K ii) it is used to accomplish a set task. This episode is, however, very similar to the plundering of the robber's den of A iii and F i.

Version N (Aa. Th. 1525 M, *Mak and the Sheep*) is one of a group of stories accompanying songs which have deception as their chief purpose. In this case a sheep stealer is pursued after he has stolen a lamb. As the pursuers approach his home he dresses the lamb up as a baby, puts it in a cradle and sings the lullaby which is sung in connection with the story. This is a quite distinct offshoot of the main type and, to the best of the writer's knowledge, is not known other than as an explanation for the origin of a song. Another song sung to a keg of whisky dressed up as a baby in order to deceive pursuing Excisemen (RL 1104.4) has a similar explanatory story. Yet another, *The Lament for Seathan* (RL 1082.1) has a story which says that the lament was sung by Seathan's wife in order to delude his pursuers into thinking that he was dead.

Abstracts of Variants

B. *An Gille Carach Mac na Bantraich* (The Shifty Lad the Widow's son). J. F. Campbell 1860:I, 320-51.

This story was obtained from John Dewar of Arrochar in June 1860. Its first half is a variant of the type with which we are concerned but it develops into a story of the Rhampsinitus type (Aa.-Th. 950).

The chief character is a widow's son who has a good education and who wants to take up thieving as a career, against his mother's wishes. He stays away from church on a Sunday and as he hides he shouts *meàirle, meàirle* "thieving, thieving." His mother thinks that this is a sign that her son is fated to be a thief. She apprentices him to the Black Thief of Achaloinne (K 301.1) while prophesying that he will be hung.

(i) They go to a rich farmer's house on Halloween and hide in loft. Shifty Lad stampedes cattle and the company rush out to calm them. Shifty Lad steals nuts (K 341).

(ii) The company returns to the room. Shifty Lad ties a cowhide to his master's coat tails and then cracks a nut loudly. The people hear and come looking for them. The Black Thief runs with the hide behind him. He is recognised and chased while the Shifty Lad plunders the money chest and steals food (K 341).

(iii) Shifty Lad bets his master that he will steal a wedder being taken to a wedding. Accomplished by leaving one shoe in the herd's path and another shoe some distance further on. Herd leaves wedder to return for the other shoe to make the pair (K 341.6).

(iv) Herd is again sent to the hill by his master, this time for a goat. Shifty Lad hides in the wood where he stole the wedder and bleats like a sheep. Herd leaves goat to recover what he imagines to be the lost wedder and goat is stolen (K 341.7).

(v) Herd is sent for an ox. Shifty Lad and the Black Thief go to the same wood and bleat in different places, one like a goat, the other like a sheep. The herd leaves the ox to investigate and it is stolen (K 341.7).

(vi) Thieves become drovers and they make a big profit. On the way home they pass a gallows and the Shifty Lad recalls his mother's prophecy and suggests that they try hanging to see what it is like. Shifty Lad tries first and is lowered at a signal. His master tries and the Shifty Lad hangs him (K 852).

The story then develops into the Rhampsinitus type (Aa. Th. 950) with the motifs of breaking into the King's storehouse (K 315.1); the

trapping and beheading of accomplice (K 730, K 407.1), followed by several chase episodes. The Shifty Lad marries the King's daughter (Q 91.1) and is finally hanged accidentally on Dublin Bridge (N 334.2).

C. *Mac an Tuathanaich Albannaich* (The Son of the Scottish Yeoman). Written down in 1859 by the Rev. T. MacLauchlan from Donald Maclean, a native of Ardnamurchan, Argyll, then living in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh. (Campbell 1860: II, 239-57.

The master thief in this case is the youngest son of a Scottish farmer who takes service with the "Provost" of London (*Probhaisd Lunnain*). The story is in three episodes, each involving a feat of thieving, suggested by the thief himself.

(i) His master covets the horse of the Bishop of London and he wagers his life that he will steal it. The bishop accepts and places the horse in a room guarded by men who are drinking. The thief finds a habitual criminal who becomes his accomplice. He takes him to the hangman who provides them with a dead body and rope. The body is lowered down the chimney by the neck (K 362.2.1) and the guards think it is that of the thief (K 341.3). They begin to lead the horse out of the room and the thief, waiting by the door takes the bridle pretending to lead the horse back to the stable (H 1151.2).

(ii) He bets that he will steal the bishop's daughter. Bribes tailors to give him dresses made for the king's daughter. With his accomplice of the previous night he gains entry to the bishop's house disguised as the princess and her maid of honour (K 311.16*). Pretending to take her for greater safety to the royal palace, he takes her instead to his own bed in the Provost's house.

(iii) He bets that he will steal the bishop himself. Dressed in luminous salmon skins (K 311.2) he goes to the bishop's church after midnight and begins preaching. Bishop is summoned and thinks he is an angel and goes with him in return for a promise of forgiveness. Thief finally marries bishop's daughter (Q 91.1*).

D. No title. Heard by Campbell in September 1859 as he walked along a North Uist road with a drover called Donald MacCraw (Campbell 1860: II, 257-60).

The scene in this version is laid in Ireland. The thief is the servant of a smith who works for a laird or landlord. The story is in two episodes.

(i) The landlord comes to have his "powney" shod. The smith bets that his servant could steal it (H 1151.2). He goes towards the guarded stable at night with three bottles of whisky and pretends to be drunk. Guards find him and in handling him discover a bottle. They drink it and discover the second and third. Thief takes the pony when they are drunk (K 332).

(ii) The smith bets that his servant could steal the landlord's daughter. No time limit is set and the servant goes to a seaport where he takes a ship's captain into his confidence. He dresses up as a woman (K 311.16) and the ship sails to the landlord's house. The captain tells the landlord that he has a sick sister. She is invited to sleep in the daughter's room. The daughter is deceived into going for a walk with the thief. She is taken to the smithy.

The thief finally marries the daughter (Q 91.1*).

E. *Bilidh* (Billy), Mackay 1940:118-29. This version was collected by Campbell in 1859 from Roderick MacNeill, Barra. The characters are a tenant farmer, his son Billy and a gentleman. Billy is a habitual thief (K 301) and the gentleman suggests that he learns thieving as a trade (K 301.1). He goes away and apprentices himself to a thief. From this point the story falls into four episodes.

(i) Thief takes Billy to an inn and lowers him down the chimney (K 316). Deserts him when the booty is sent up. Billy finds a cowhide which he puts on and creates a commotion (K 484). The master of the house takes him for a devil and buys him off (K 152).

(ii) Billy returns home and is set a test by the gentleman (H 1151). He must steal a horse from carters. This he does by releasing rabbits with a leg broken near the carters (K 341.5.1). He takes a horse when they chase the rabbits.

(iii) Stealing a horse from a stable guarded by five people (H 1151.2). Billy approaches the stable at night with four bottles of whisky in his pockets. He pretends to be dead drunk. Guards find the whisky and when they are drunk he takes the horse (K 332).

(iv) He must steal the bed sheet from under the gentleman's wife under pain of death (H 1151.3). He digs up a dead body as in A above and dresses it up. He climbs to the gentleman's roof and lowers the body down the chimney. (K 362.2.1). Gentleman shoots it and when he goes away to bury it, Billy impersonates him and goes to bed with his wife. He smuggles the sheet away. The gentleman admits defeat. He goes away and Billy gets his house and wife (Q 91.1*).

F. *An Gille Dubh* (The Black Lad). Archibald Campbell 1885:226-73. Characters: Laird, tenant and son, *An Gille Dubh.*

In conversation with the laird, the Black Lad shows a facility for making clever retorts (J 1250). The laird asks him where his parents and sister are and he replies: "My father is out hunting and what he does not kill he takes along with him, my mother is winnowing the meal we ate last year, and my sister is mourning the laugh we laughed last year." Laird advises father to send him away to become a professional thief (K 301.1). From this point the story falls into four episodes.

(i) On his return home the Black Lad discovers a thieves' hut and hides in loft. Thieves return and dispute about the spoil. Black Lad puts on oxhide and shouts (K 335.0.12). Thieves flee.

(ii) Returns home and is summoned by laird (F 660.1). Set tests—to go to the laird riding and not riding, clad and not clad. He succeeds by riding sow while wearing an old net (H 1053.1, H 1054.1).

(iii) Stealing of horse from stable (H 1151.2). Succeeds by making guards drunk (K 332).

(iv) Stealing of bed sheet (H 1151.3). He lowers a dead body down the chimney (K 362.2.1). Laird shoots it and thief takes sheet while the laird buries body. Wife not present.

G. *Donacha Bàn and his Men.* Campbell Mss. Vol. XVI, p. 67. Collected from John MacNair in 1860.

The characters are a group of thieves and the story opens with their betting whether a certain feat of thieving could be accomplished (K 305).

(i) A *cirinn* (glossed as "gelding goat") is being taken to a wedding. A young member steals it by means of the shoe trick as in B iii and I i (K 341.6).

(ii) A wedder is stolen by him by using the bleating trick as in B iv (K 341.7).

(iii) With his master he stampedes cattle to get a share of nuts at a Halloween party as in B i (K 341).

(iv) On the return of the guests he ties dried skins to his master's coat tails and raises alarm. As B ii.

At this point the thief leaves his master and takes service with a carpenter in Ireland and the story then enters the Rhampsinitus phase (Aa.-Th. 950) ending with the thief's marriage to the king's daughter (Q 91.1).

H. *Mac an Tuathanaich* (The Farmer's Son). Recorded by Calum Maclean in September 1941 from *Seumas Iain Ghunnairigh* (James MacKinnon) of Northbay, Barra. This synopsis is made from the collector's transcript in Irish Folklore Commission Ms. No. 1029, p. 240 *et seq.*

Characters: a minister, a poor tenant and his son.

The minister dislikes the tenant and he forces him, on pain of death, to send his only son away to learn thieving (K 301.1). Boy goes away for a time and then returns. Minister hears of his coming (F 660.1*) and tasks are set on pain of death (H 1151).

(i) Stealing of ploughman's horses while ploughing. Boy takes two rabbits, breaks the legs of one and releases it near the ploughman. Ploughman chases it a short way and catches it. Boy then releases another without its legs broken. He takes the horses while the ploughman chases it out of sight (K 341.5.1).

(ii) Stealing of *am ponaidh buidhe* "the yellow pony" (H 1151.2). Pony has eight guards, two on its back, one holding the head, one the tail, and two guarding each of its flanks. Boy buys seven or eight bottles of whisky, disguises himself as a packman (K 311.17*) and pretends to be drunk. He stumbles into the stable. Bottles are found by guards as in D i and the pony is stolen when they are drunk (K 332).

(iii) Stealing of bed sheet (H 1151.3). Uses dead body which is shot at window as in A iv (K 362.1*). While minister is away burying it he impersonates him and goes to bed with his wife. He pretends to wriggle with cold and steals sheet.

(iv) No task set but boy decides to steal minister. He dresses in salmon skins as in C iii (K 311.2) and goes to minister's church at midnight. Minister is summoned after he is heard preaching in many languages. Boy pretends to take him to heaven in a sack (K 711). Takes him instead to a cliff top and threatens to throw him over if he molests him further.

I. *An Gille Carach* (The Shifty Lad). Recorded by Calum Maclean from *Aonghas Barrach* (Angus MacMillan), Benbecula, in December 1948. Synopsis taken from collector's transcript in Irish Folklore Commission Ms. No. 1155, p. 3 *et seq.*

The chief character is a widow's son called *An Gille Dubh* (The Black Lad) who wants to learn the trade of thieving against his mother's wishes and deceives her as in B i. He is apprenticed to the Shifty Lad.

(i) The King is having a great party. They see a man going to the palace with a wedder on his back. Black Lad steals it as in B iii by the shoe trick as in B iii and G i (K 341.6).

(ii) King orders man to get the very best wedder on the hill and not to let it go until he reaches the palace. Stolen by bleating trick as in B iv and G ii (K 341.7).

(iii) King's banquet proceeds. They enter and hide themselves above the room. Alarm raised in similar manner to G iv and the Black Lad plunders the room.

(iv) They become drovers and the Shifty Lad is killed in the "hanging game" as in B vi (K 852) which takes place at the Great Bridge of Ireland.

(v) Meets King's daughter and as they are out walking he suggests that they try the hanging game again. Black Lad is accidentally hung (N 334.2).

J. *Mac a' Gheamair* (The Gamekeeper's Son). Recorded by Calum Maclean from Alasdair Stewart, Travelling Tinsmith. Synopsis taken from the School of Scottish Studies Sound Archive, RL 867 B 1.

Scene laid in neighbourhood of Dunvegan, Skye.

Characters: MacLeod, his gamekeeper and the gamekeeper's son, who is addicted to drink.

His father is forced to send the son away but he returns home and begins drinking again. He is set tasks by the chief on pain of expulsion of self and father.

(i) Stealing of ploughman's horses while ploughing. Accomplished by use of rabbits as in E ii and H i (K 341.5.1).

(ii) Stealing of guarded "pedigree mare" (*sic*) out of stable (H 1151.2). Thief takes two bottles of black tea and two of whisky. Offers the guards whisky while he drinks tea. Guards get drunk (K 332).

K. *Mac a' Ghàrnalair* (The Gardener's Son). Recorded by Calum Maclean in December 1959 from *Aonghas Beag Mac Aonghais 'ic Eachainn* (Angus MacLellan), South Uist. Synopsis taken from the School of Scottish Studies Sound Archive, RL 1651.

Characters: laird, gardener and gardener's son.

The son steals (K 301) and the father is forced to send him away. He returns in a year. Laird asks him what he did and is told thieving (K 301.1, F 660.1). He is set tasks under pain of death.

(i) Stealing of guarded pony from stable (H 1151.2). He exchanges clothing with an old soldier (K 311.17*), conceals whisky about his person and collapses in midden by the stable. Guards find him and get drunk (K 332).

(ii) Stealing of tablecloth with six people playing cards on it (H 1151.3+). He goes at night dressed in a cow's hide and begins to make a hole in the ceiling. Quarrel develops about cards and he drops through the ceiling with a shout. All faint or flee (K 335.0.12).

(iii) Stealing of a bed sheet (H 1151.3). He uses dead body as in A iv and H iv (K 362.2.1*) and removes sheet as in H iv.

Laird drowns himself with chagrin and the son of the gardener marries his lady (Q 91.1*).

L. *Fear a' goid muilt* (A man stealing a wedder). Recorded by Calum Maclean in May 1953 from Archie Cameron.

One episode only. A man steals a wedder by the trick of leaving one shoe and then another (K 341.6).

M. *Borran.* Written down by Donald J. MacDonald, South Uist from his father's recitation (Duncan MacDonald).

Identical with E in all respects except for different name of chief character.

N. A story explaining the origin of the song *Maol Ruainidh Glinneach Thu,* recorded by the writer in June 1960 from Nan MacKinnon, Vatersay. [Aa.-Th. 1525 M, *Mak and the Sheep*] S.S.S. RL 583. B. 11.

LIST OF MOTIFS

Motifs which are not in the Stith Thompson Index in the form in which they are found here are given the closest approximate number, and indicated with an asterisk, thus K308*. This is in accordance with the advice given in Thompson 1955: I, 25.

F 660	Remarkable skill.
H 1151	Theft as a task.
H 1151.2.1	Task: stealing horse when owner has been forewarned.
H 1151.3	Stealing sheet from bed on which person is sleeping.
H 1153.3.2*	Stealing tablecloth while people are playing cards on it.
J 1786.1	Man costumed as demon; thieves flee.
K 152	Thief masked as devil is bought off by frightened owner.
K 301	Master thief.
K 301.1	Youth learns robbery as a trade.
K 305	Contest in stealing.
K 308*	Apprentice surpasses master as thief.
K 311.2	Thief disguised as angel.
K 311.16	Thief disguised as girl.
K 311.17*	Thief disguised as old soldier, packman.
K 316	Theft through chimney.
K 332	Theft by making owner drunk.
K 335.0.12	Owner frightened away by thief disguised as devil.
K 341.5.1	Theft of horse by letting loose a rabbit so that drivers join in the chase.
K 341	Owner's interest distracted while goods are stolen.
K 341.3	Thief distracts attention by apparently hanging himself.
K 341.6	Shoes dropped to distract owner's attention.
K 341.7	Animal's cry imitated to distract owner's attention.
K 362.2.1*	Thief lowers corpse down chimney. Householder shoots corpse (Not in Motif Index. More W.H.).
K 521.1	Escape by dressing in animal skin.
K 711	Deception into entering bag.
K 852	Deceptive game: hanging each other.
N 334.2	Hanging in game accidentally proves fatal.
Q 91.1*	Wife or daughter of laird, daughter of bishop won by clever thief.

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JEAN ARMOUR'S "DOUBLE AND ADIEU"

Thomas Crawford*

The Aberdeen folk-singer Jeannie Robertson includes in her repertoire the following version of the English folksong "Rolling in the Dew" (Robertson 1960):

I

"O what wad ye dae if I were to lay ye doon,
Wi' your reid and rosy cheeks and your curly black hair?"
"I'd be fit enough to rise again, kind sir," she answered me,
Rolling in the dew maks a milkmaid fair.

II

"What wad ye dae if I were tae bairn ye,
Wi' your reid and rosy cheeks and your curly black hair?"—
"For you wad be the daddie o't, and I wad be the mither o't, kind sir," she answered me,
Rolling in the dew maks a milkmaid fair.

III

"But what wad ye dae if I were to run away,
Wi' your reid and rosy cheeks and your curly black hair?"
"For the deil would run after you, kind sir," she answered me,
For rolling in the dew maks a milkmaid fair.

This is considerably earthier than the "polite" version, "Dabbling in the Dew", now current in England, and sung, for example, by the Sussex singer Shirley Collins (1957):

I

"O where are you goin' to, my pretty little dear,
With your red rosy cheeks and your coal black hair?"
"I'm goin' a-milkin', kind sir," she answered me,
For its dabblin' in the dew makes the milkmaids fair.

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II

"Suppose I were to buy you, my pretty little dear,
A green silken gown and a ribbon for your hair?"
"O no kind sir, with that I don't agree,"
For it's dabblin' in the dew makes the milkmaids fair.

III

"Suppose I were to buy you, my pretty little dear,
Fine shoes and silken hose and a carriage and pair?"
"O no kind sir, with that I don't agree,"
For it's dabblin' in the dew makes the milkmaids fair.

IV

"Suppose I were to wed you, my pretty little dear,
With your red, rosy cheeks and your coal black hair?"
"O then I'd be your wife, kind sir," she answered me,
And it's dabblin' in the dew makes the milkmaid fair.

Hamish Henderson, in his note to Jeannie Robertson's recorded version of "Rolling in the Dew", quite correctly treats the song as a typical instance of folk-song borrowing. Both words and tune pass from one nation to the other, and are transformed in the process:

> Scotland, like Ireland, has a rich store of English folk-songs which have found their way into alien surroundings and have become acclimatized to a greater or lesser extent among the bens, glens and bothies. *Rollin' in the Dew* is a curious example of a song which is in process of assimilation, and still bears unmistakeable marks of its southern origin. (Henderson 1960).

Jeannie's words are much closer to a West of England version in the Baring-Gould MSS (Reeves 1960:85) than they are to Shirley Collins':

Where are you going, my pretty fair maid,
With your red and rosy cheeks and your nut-brown hair?
Oh 'tis I am going a-milking, kind sir, she answered me,
A-rolling in the dew makes the milkmaid so fair.

Shall I go with you, my pretty fair maid?
Yes 'tis you're kindly welcome, kind sir, she answered me.

Supposing I should lay you down, my pretty fair maid?
Oh then you must help me up again, kind sir, she answered me.

Supposing you should prove with child, my pretty fair maid?
Oh then I must find a father for it, kind sir, she answered me.

Supposing I should run away, my pretty fair maid?
Oh then I must run after you, kind sir, she answered me.

Supposing I should run too fast, my pretty fair maid?
Then the Devil shall run after you, kind sir, she answered me.

The Shirley Collins version itself appears to be connected with the bowdlerised texts purveyed by Cecil Sharp early in the present century. In *Folk Songs from Somerset* (Sharp and Marson 1905:67), Sharp states that the "words and air" were "from Mr. John Swain, of Donyatt." However, the words actually printed were not the traditional ones, but were specially composed for the occasion by Marson. This illustrates another process which occurs again and again in the history of popular song: poetical creation in the folk-song medium, by means of the retention of some old elements, the recombination of others, and the transformation of the song by means of "amendments", "emendations" and the invention of new stanzas. Marson's stanza i and his refrain are traditional. The "green silken gown" and the "carriage and pair" ("grey gallant pair"), common to the Collins and Marson versions, probably go back to an earlier polite text: but Marson's last three stanzas seem entirely his own:

IV

Suppose I were to feast you, my pretty little dear,
With dainties on silver, the whole of the year?
O no sir, O no sir, kind sir, she answered me,
For it's dabbling in the dew makes the milk-maids fair.

V

O, but London's a city, my pretty little dear,
And all men are gallant and brave that are there—
O no sir, O no sir, kind sir, she answered me,
For it's dabbling in the dew makes the milk-maids fair.

VI

O fine clothes and dainties and carriages so rare
Bring grey to the cheeks and silver to the hair,
What's a ring on the finger, if rings are round the eye?
But it's dabbling in the dew makes the milk-maids fair.

Marson's stanzas—essentially those of an "art" song, a literary incrustation on the folk tradition—received additional currency from being reprinted in (Baring-Gould and Sharp n.d.:48), a work "made to the requirements of the Board of Education", and no doubt many people who learnt them at school now regard them as genuine folk words.

In his *English Folk-Songs*, Sharp printed yet another version, embodying some lines from the nursery-rhyme text in Halliwell's *Nursery Rhymes of England* (1842). He there notes (Sharp 1920:xxiii-iv) that "the traditional words, which vary but little, are very free and unconventional"; that sometimes it is "strawberry leaves" that "make the milkmaids fair", as in the text in *Mother Goose's Melodies for Children* (Boston, ed. 1719); and that the song is very popular "all over England". Now G. and P. Opie (1952:282-3) note that "in one of the early broadsides in the Pepys collection 'Strawberry leaves make maidens fair' is given as the tune to *A Merry New Jigge*, so the song would seem to have been known in the reign of James I."

Cecil Sharp preserved some of the original versions in his MSS, from which it is clear that they belonged to the same complex as the Baring-Gould MS and the Jeannie Robertson songs. Here is one which Sharp took down from John Swain on Christmas Day 1909 (Reeves 1958:100):

Where shall I meet you my pretty little dear
With your red rosy cheeks and your coal black hair
I'm going a-milking kind sir she answered me
But it's dabbling in the dew where you might find me.

Shall I carry your pail then my pretty little dear
O no sir O no sir I'll carry it myself

Suppose I was to kiss you my pretty little dear
That would be no harm sir she answered me

Suppose I was to throw you down my pretty little dear
So you must help me up again kind sir she answered me

Suppose you're in the family way my pretty little dear
You'll have to stand the father of it sir she answered me

Suppose I was to run away my pretty little dear
Then I must run the faster kind sir she answered me

Suppose I was to run too fast my pretty little dear
O the divil would fitch you back again she answered me

"Roving in the Dew" in Butterworth (1913*a*:18) is a conflation of two versions, one supplied by Mrs. Cranstone of Billingshurst, the other by Ralph Vaughan Williams. In some ways it is like Sharp's nursery version, and it is interesting that Butterworth's stanza v runs:

"Suppose I ran away from you, my pretty fair maid,
Red rosy cheeks and coal-black hair?"

"The devil may run after you, I will stand and laugh at you,
For roving in the dew makes the milk-maids fair."

Now in his note to "The Posie" in the Interleaved *Scots Musical Museum* (Laing MS II: 210-11) Burns says that he got the tune from a song which he took down from "a country girl's voice", and that at the same time as he recorded the tune he took down the words. He gives three specimen stanzas:

There was a pretty May & a milkin she went,
Wi' her red, rosy cheeks & her coal-black hair:
And she has met a young man a comin o'er the bent,
With a double and adieu to thee fair May.

O whare are ye goin, my ain pretty May,
Wi' thy red rosy cheeks & thy coal-black hair;
Unto the yowes a-milkin, kind Sir, she says,
With a double & adieu to thee fair May.

What if I gang alang wi' thee, my ain pretty May,
Wi' thy red, rosy cheeks & thy coal-black hair;
Wad I be ought the warse o' that, kind sir, she says,
With a double & adieu to thee fair May.

Dick (1908:124) erroneously rejects this note as spurious. The MS exists in the Laing Collection, University of Edinburgh, and its existence was brought to the attention of the general public in 1922 by Cook.

Writing to George Thomson on 19 October 1794, Burns identified the "country girl" as Jean Armour: " 'The Posie', is my composition; the air was taken down from Mrs Burns's voice.—It is well known in the West Country, but the old words are trash". (Ferguson 1931:II 266).

It would appear, then, that a song with certain affinities

to one which Hamish Henderson states is still, in the 1960's, "in process of assimilation", was well known in one part of Scotland nearly two hundred years ago, for Jean Armour's ditty belongs to the same total complex as Jeannie Robertson's "Rollin' in the Dew". Nevertheless, they are not the same *song*. Jeannie Robertson's song is descended from those English versions with "Rolling in the Dew" in the refrain, and containing a stanza stating that the Devil would chase the young man if he were to abscond. Jean Armour's song goes back to those English songs with "Dabbling in the dew" in the refrain, and is unlikely to have contained a reference to the Devil. Burns would never have transcribed "Dabbling in the Dew" as "With a double and adieu" if either he or Mrs. Burns had access to a printed source. Furthermore, had the version orally transmitted in the eighteenth century Ayrshire contained a reference to Burns's favourite character, the Deil, we can be fairly sure that he would not have omitted to transcribe at least that stanza, and that he would probably have had a higher opinion of the words.

It is interesting to notice, as typical of the folk-process, that the English dairymaid has been transformed into a ewe-milker; and this very transformation seems to reflect the social conditions of the early eighteenth century rather than those of Burns's own time, when Ayrshire cattle were already beginning to dominate the agricultural scene (Handley 1953:73, Strawhorn 1950-4:155-7). It seems possible, then, that the actual borrowing may have taken place, at the very latest, in the first half of the century: this would allow time for the song to become "well known in the West Country". The refrain "With a double and adieu to thee, fair May" suggests that the very idea of "dabbling in the dew" was alien to the Ayrshire lasses of the time, owing to the disappearance of pre-Reformation May Day customs; and possibly, even, that the verb "dabble" was an unfamiliar word. As taken down by Burns, the refrain may have the connotation "with two acts of intercourse on the bent": if so, it serves to underline the ephemeral character of the sexual rencontre, which is so much a part of the traditional English versions. The sense of "double" here may be that of double, *sb* 6, in the N.E.D.: "A sharp turn in running, as of a hunted hare; also of a river; fig. an evasive turn or shift in an action, argument, etc." The N.E.D. quotes Johnson, Rambler No. 96, "The quick retreats and doubles which Falsehood always practised"; and it cites Scott for

allied senses of both the noun and the verb, thus showing that the connotation was familiar in Scotland. "Dabble" does not occur at all in Reid's *Concordance to Burns*.

It would appear, then, that a song from this complex entered Scottish oral tradition at least twice. The earlier song derived from that large class of variants with "Dabbling in the Dew" in the refrain; the later one, from the "Rolling in the Dew" group. On each occasion the song became transformed into a genuinely Scottish song, reflecting, in ways that are often indefinable, Scottish rather than English ironies and ways of looking at life, as in the indescribable assurance of "I'd be fit enough to rise again," as sung by Jeannie Robertson, or the peculiarly Scottish sauciness, arising from the intonational associations of the dialect words, in Jean Armour's "Wad I be ought the warse o' that". It is interesting to note, as a further illustration of the complexities of popular lyric, that yet another song existed in Burns's Scotland with close affinities to the "Dabbling in the Dew" group. It is "Kind Hearted Nancy" in Herd 1776:176, and it comprises a light-hearted flyting dialogue between Nancy and "Sla cow'rdly Wilsy," in which the girl always gets the better of the argument. Burns either did not know this song, or had forgotten it, or failed to make the connexion between it and Jean Armour's words. Stanzas iv-vii run as follows:

But what gif I shou'd lay thee down?
Quo' WILSY, quo' WILSY;
What gif I should lay thee down?
Quo' sla cow'rdly WILSY.

And what gif I can rise again?
Quo' NANCY, quo' NANCY;
And what gif I can rise again?
Quo' kind hearted NANCY.

O but what if I get you wi' bairn?
Quo' WILSY, etc.

If you can get it I can bear't,
Quo' NANCY, etc.

In stanzas viii-xi Wilsy asks where they'll get a cradle ("There's plenty o' wood in Norway" is the answer), and a cradle-belt (" Your garters and mine"); and the last stanzas, xii-xv, return

to a course which is parallel to that of the "Dabbling in the Dew" group:

Then whar'l I tye my beastie to?
Quo' WILSY, etc.

Tye him to my muckle tae,
Quo' NANCY, etc.

O what gif he should run awa'?
Quo' WILSY, etc.

Deil gae wi' you, steed and a',
Quo' NANCY, etc.

He would be a bold critic indeed who would pronounce *Kind Hearted Nancy* other than a Scottish song, yet its forbears too are English; it has been influenced by the same question and answer sequence as in the Baring-Gould and Cecil Sharp MS versions of "Dabbling in the Dew".

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APPENDIX

The Cornish Version of "Rolling in the Dew"

In the journal of an institution so much concerned with Celtic literature as the School of Scottish Studies it may be of some interest to readers to note that there exists a Cornish version of "Rolling in the Dew", one of the more striking of the pitiful fragments which constitute the relics of the Cornish language in the post-mediaeval period. This is found in a manuscript written by the Cornish antiquary Thomas Tonkin in 1725, and purporting to have been recorded in 1698 from the singing of one Edward Chirgwin or Chygwyn of Carclew according to a note in the *Archaeologia Cornu-Britannica* (1790) of William Pryce, who printed the song from Tonkin's MS. An account of this poem by "H.W.L.", with an edition, will be found in *Y Cymmrodor* 6 (1883), pp. 89 ff.; and also in H. Jenner's *Handbook of the Cornish Language* (London 1904), p. 36 f. It will be noted that this version belongs to the group which attributes the cosmetic properties in question to "strawberry leaves", not "dew"; as in the Pepys collection.

The poem begins *Pelea era why moaz, moz, fettow, teag,* and the refrain is *Rag delkiow sevi gwra muzi teag.* In the second

lines the Tonkin MS. reads *gen agaz peddn du ha agaz blew mellen*, "with your black head and your yellow hair", but Pryce apparently knew a version which read *gan agaz bedgeth gwin*, "with your pale face", for the first four words, which makes better sense in the context; the "black head" agrecs, however, with the "black hair" of the Scots and most of the English versions. The following is a translation:—

"Where were you going, fair maid," said he,/"with your pale face and your yellow hair?"/"Going to the well, sweet sir," she said,/'for strawberry leaves make maidens fair."

"Shall I go with you, fair maid," said he,/"with your pale face?" etc./"Do if you wish, sweet sir," etc.

"How if I lay you on the ground,/with your pale face?" etc./"I'll get up again, sweet sir," etc.

"How if I get you with child,/with your pale face?" etc./"Then I will bear him, sweet sir," etc.

"Whom will you find to father your child,/with your pale face?" etc./"You'll be his father, fair sir," etc.

"What will you get for clothes for your child,/with your pale face?" etc./"His father shall be tailor, fair sir," etc.

KENNETH HURLSTONE JACKSON

CHEESE-PRESSES IN ANGUS

Greta Michie and Alexander Fenton*

There is no doubt that cheese has figured largely in the economy of Scotland from early times. It frequently formed a large part of the rent paid both to monastic and lay landlords, and an export tax brought money into the national exchequer at the rate of two ounces of bullion per five hundredweight of cheese in the reign of Charles II (*A.P.S.* VII:252). It was also one of the staple foods when cereals were scarce before the eighteenth century introduction of the potato. The Highlands clearly produced cheese in large quantities, since it was said in 1605 that the Highlanders were able to supply the Lowlands with cheese after a bad harvest (Craig 1909:447), and it is recorded in an Icelandic saga, *Hákonar saga hins gamla*, that *Hákon* laid a tax of 300 cattle on the island of Islay which was paid partly in meal and partly in cheese (Vigfusson and Unger 1860:III, 227). This was in 1263, as Hakon was sailing back to Orkney after his defeat at Largs. There is no doubt that much of this cheese was made from ewes' milk, though cows' milk, skimmed (Donaldson 1697:88-91) and sometimes mixed with the milk of ewes or goats, was also common. One mid-seventeenth-century Midlothian writer said quite dogmatically that "kys milk is best for butter, and yows milk is best for cheiss" (Skene *a.*1666: f. 64), and that the cows' milk cheese of Cunningham in Ayrshire was not good. This latter remark is of interest, as it shows that already by about the middle of the seventeenth century, Ayrshire was making itself known for cheese. The innovation which gave it its famous Dunlop cheese, not superseded till the introduction of the Cheddar system from Somerset in the 1850s, was the use of whole rather than skimmed milk (McMaster 1885:215). The making of cheese of the Dunlop

* This article is based on the notes and photographs of the late Thomas Leslie Smith who died in 1960, and was a one-time jute spinner, whose interests were those of a naturalist, antiquarian and photographer. He was at work on an illustrated book on cheese-presses when he died.

type soon spread into Renfrewshire and Ayrshire, reaching the Rhinns of Galloway by the 1830s. The south-west has remained the chief dairy region of Scotland to the present day, with Ayr, Lanark, Wigtown, Dumfries and Kirkcudbright, in that order, the biggest milk-producing counties (McQueen 1961:104).

The development of cheese-making on a commercial scale forms a study in itself. So also does the part played in the country's economy by cheese-making and dairying in general as carried on in shielings in the summer hill-pastures in the Highlands, and in the Lowlands too as one goes farther back in time. Alexander Ross, M.A., schoolmaster in Lochlee, and poet, wrote in 1768 a graphic description of a shieling in the Braes of Angus, where:

> On skelfs a' round the wa's the cogs were set,
> Ready to ream, an' for the cheese be het;
> A hake was frae the rigging hinging fu'
> Of quarter kebbocks, rightly made an' new.
>
> (Ross 1938:82)

Such shielings did not long survive the introduction of sown grasses and turnips, along with the use of lime, and the enclosing and consolidation of agricultural holdings. Better feeding on the improved pasture on the farms, and the possibility of wintering cattle on root-crops led to large increases both in the quantity and quality of farm-stock, and released more milk than the calves were able to use. The surplus came to be absorbed in milk and cheese production, and farms all over the country were beginning to make cheese for their own consumption from about the end of the eighteenth century onwards. It was at this period that the heavy stone cheese-presses with which this article is chiefly concerned made their appearance. They had, of course, been known much earlier in the south-west. The Rev. David Ure, writing in 1794, said that stone presses moved by a screw were common in the counties of Renfrew, Ayr and Lanark, but were rare in the south-east. There, the characteristic press was "made of a long plank, or beam, fastened at one end, generally to a strong plank, or block of wood: the chesset is placed under the beam, nearer the fulcrum, or farther from it, according to the pressure necessary: the power is applied to the far end of the beam, or at any intermediate distance, like as in the steel-yard" (Fullarton 1793:60; Ure 1794:65-8). In Aberdeenshire, pressing might be done without any press at all, as, for example, by

Sir Alexander Gordon of Lesmoir's dairy maids in 1759. They simply put the curd into a clean cloth in the chessel and laid a flat stone on to cover the open top. A weight of 16-20 lbs. was placed on this. It was left for about three hours before more weights were added gradually. One day was all that was allotted to pressing the cheese, as compared with three or four days now.

At least one farmer's wife in Orkney still (1961) presses her cheese in this way, using simply a wooden chessel with a wooden lid, onto which stones from the beach are laid in increasing order of weight. The method is perfectly satisfactory. Though much of Orkney's milk is channelled into the two creameries there, many farms still like to make their own cheese, sometimes using what seem to be old-fashioned methods. This is explained when one remembers that it was not until between the two World Wars that Orkney made its entry into the dairy industry, and indeed it was only about the 1920s that milk-houses began to make their appearance to any extent on farms there.

The heavy stone presses, then, first appeared in the south-west, and were adopted on farms generally for the non-commercial home production of cheese from about 1800 onwards. Their hey-day lasted throughout the nineteenth century, and their decline came about the time of the First World War, with the establishment of large creameries working on pooled milk supplies, the importation of foreign cheese, and the penetration of grocers' vans, selling the mass-produced article, to all parts of the country (see, for example, Wheeler 1961: 147-55).

During the period between the two World Wars cheese-making still continued to some extent in the country districts. In 1925, for example, 145,000 cwt. of cheese is estimated to have been made in Scotland, of which 10,000 cwt. was consumed on farms. Cheese-making tended to increase after 1939 when petrol rationing restricted the movements of vans, and cheese itself was rationed. The Government encouraged home production of cheese, and College of Agriculture leaflets were issued on the subject. In spite of this, home cheese-making is virtually dead at the present time, though judging by the eager demand for it from those who do still make it, there is no doubt that there are ready local markets, and that small-scale local production is worthwhile and might be encouraged. One may note the analogy of home-made cheese in Scandinavia, which

competes well on the market with other cheeses. Unfortunately, however, cheese-presses are now rapidly becoming museum pieces, and are beginning to be collected in the manner of objets d'art. Although the following notes provide a typology of cheese-presses in Angus, it must be emphasised

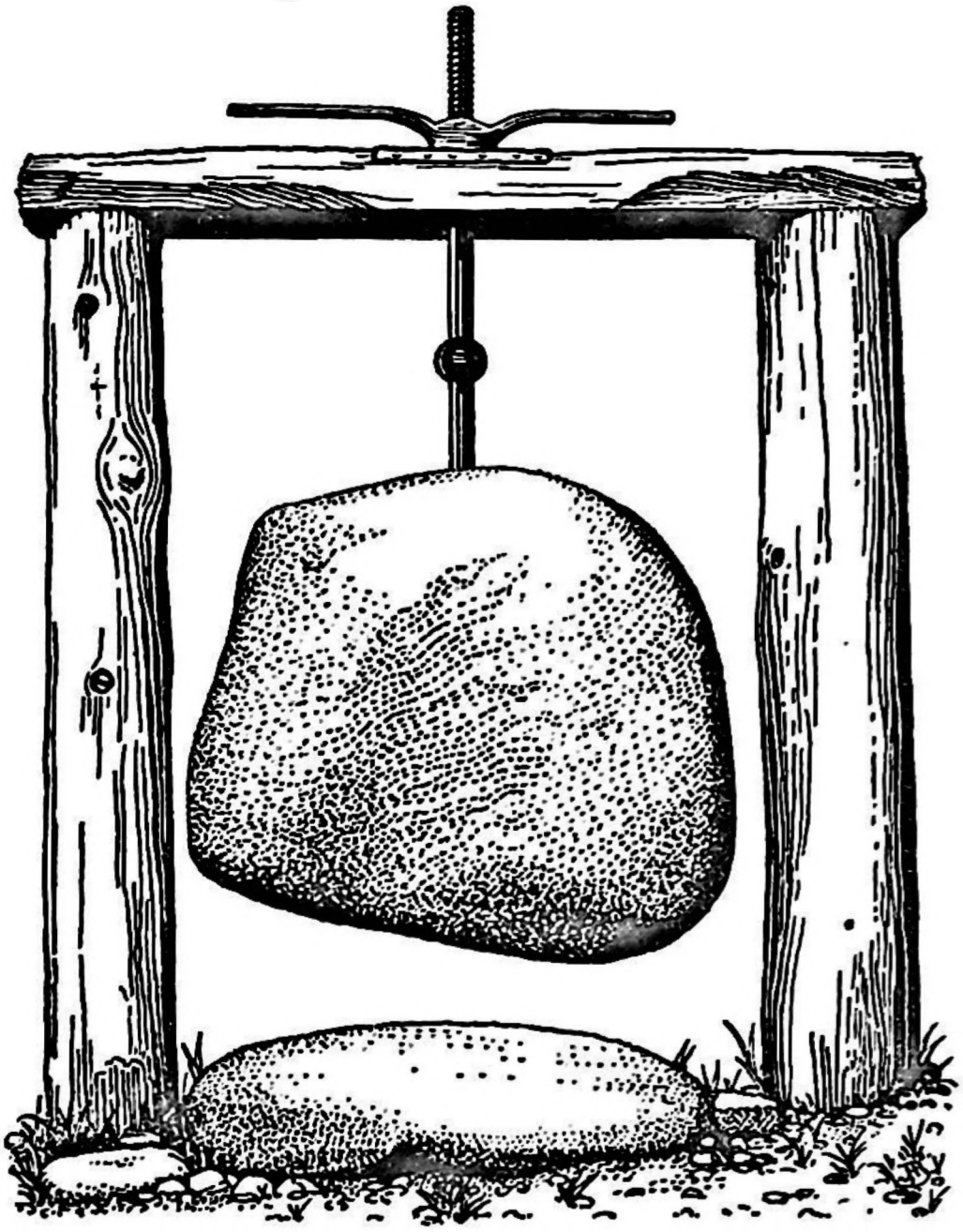

FIG. 1—An unshaped boulder in a wooden frame, from Crossbog (Glen Clova).

that their importance does not lie in variation of type, but in the fact that they represent one of the many fast disappearing means which helped towards the self-sufficiency of a rural community.

No doubt one of the earliest types of press was simply a wooden tub—known as a "chessard" in Angus—onto whose lid weights were placed as described above. It is not practicable to apply as much pressure as is desirable in this way, and the

invention of a mechanical device for doing this is a logical development.

One of the simplest types of mechanical press is a hillside boulder suspended within a wooden frame, and moved up and down by a threaded iron screw. A number of such boulders are still to be found, sometimes serving to fill a gap in a dyke. Examples survive at Aucharroch Pendicle (Kingoldrum) and Gella (Glen Clova) and two from Kinclune (Kingoldrum) are now in the Glenesk Folk Museum. There is a complete wooden-sided press, used as recently as 1939, at Crossbog (Glen Clova) (Fig. 1).

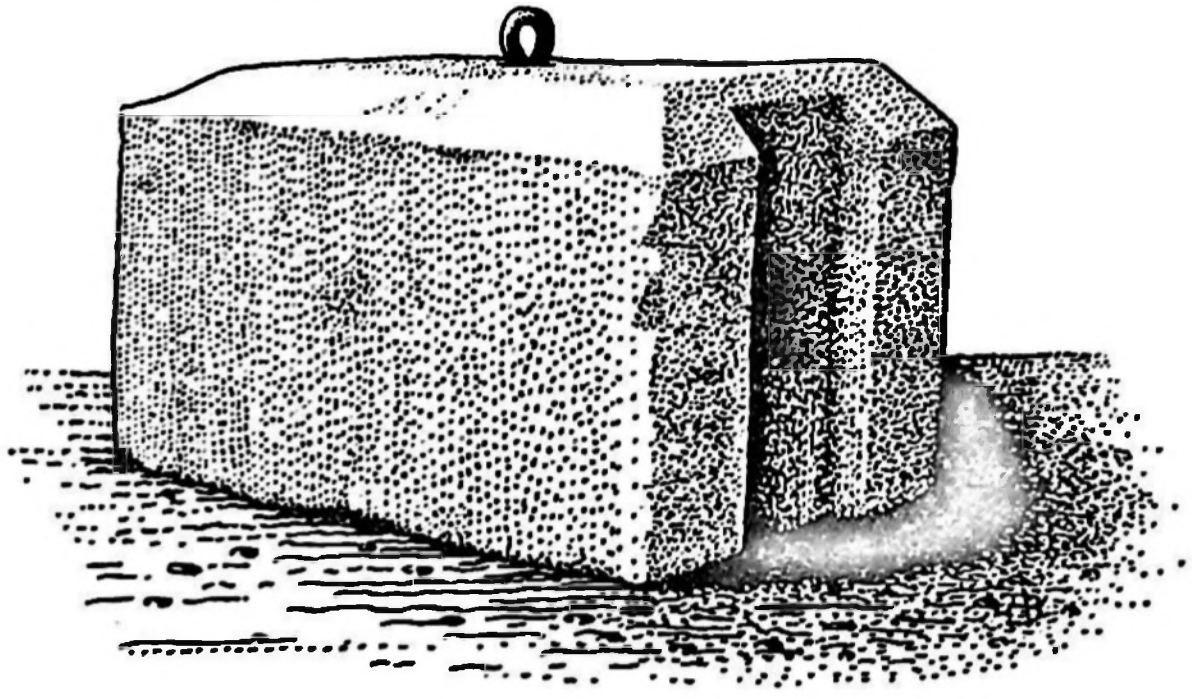

FIG. 2—A chiselled block from Kinclune (Glen Clova) with broad grooves at the sides to contain the uprights of a wooden frame. Now at the Glenesk Folk Museum.

A squared stone block in a wooden frame at Blackcraigs, Glenesk, has the rudely carved initials I.E. for Isobel Edwards who lived here. Another at Braco (Glen Lethnot) has three-inch wide grooves cut in the sides to let it run on the wooden uprights with increased stability. Two blocks from Kinclune, and Cullow (in Glen Clova) have six-inch and four-inch grooves respectively (Fig. 2).

Wooden uprights, subject to decay where they were in contact with the ground, were not entirely satisfactory, and sometimes presses were made with stone uprights and a wooden cross-piece. An early example at Tarabuckle (Glen Clova) has the initials C.H. and A.O., and the date 1829. It was a wedding present to Charles Henry and Anne Ogilvie (Pl. I,

fig. 1). The screw is single-handed, like one at Forneth, near Cluny Loch, and not double-handed as is usual.

Next in the series comes presses made entirely of stone, with the weight hanging free, as at Gallowfauld (Fotheringham), Presnerb (Glenisla) and Blackcraigs (Glenesk). This type is most common in Aberdeenshire and Banffshire. In some instances, as at Mill of Aucheen and Dalforth, both in Glenesk, there are metal guides protruding one from each upright so

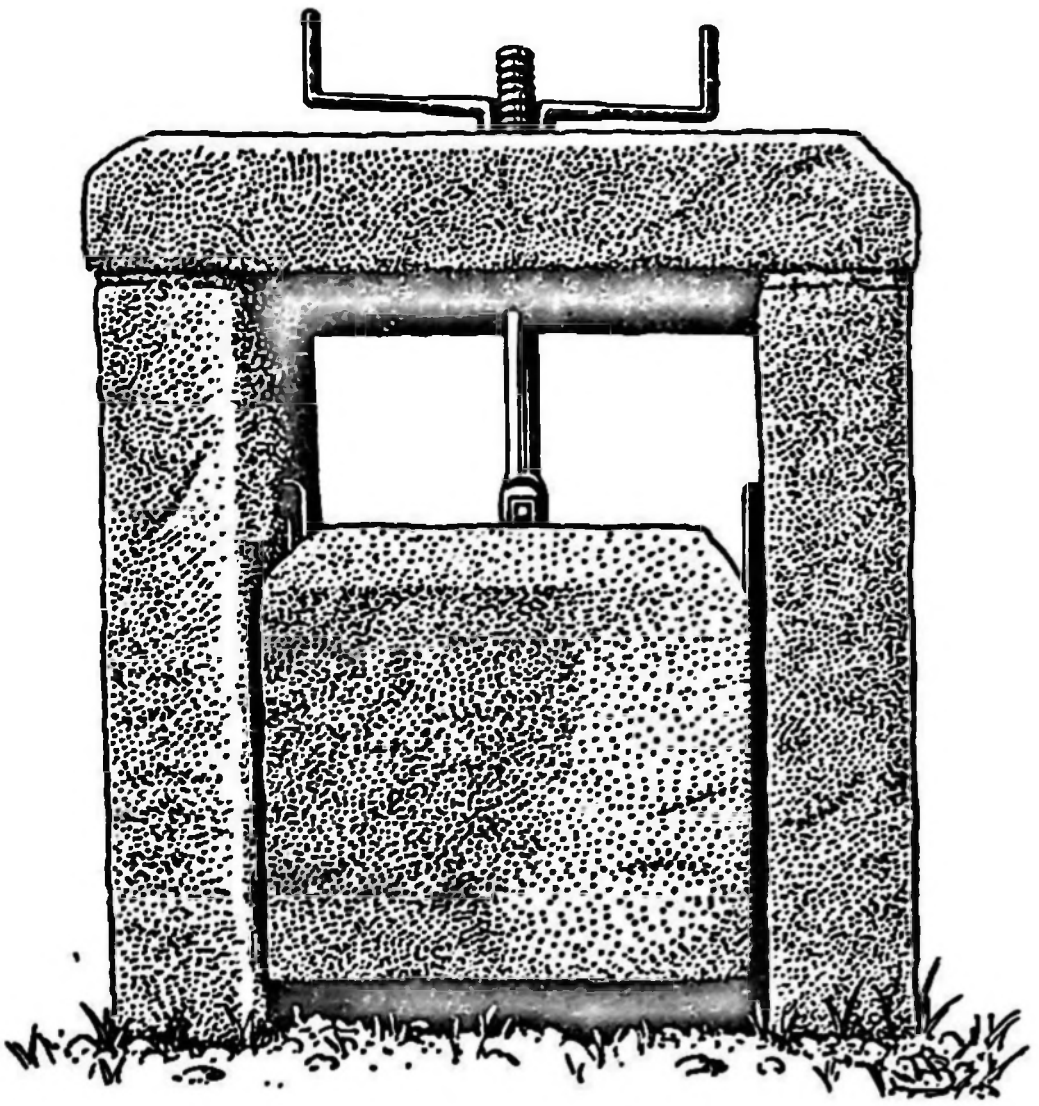

FIG. 3—A stone-framed press from Mill of Aucheen, Glenesk, with metal guides to stabilise the weight.

as to engage in a narrow groove in each side of the weight (Fig. 3). There was evidently a need to have the weight moving as steadily as possible. There would then be less danger of the press toppling over; and that this was a real danger is suggested by the numerous instances where presses are fixed to a wall by a peg of wood or iron—e.g. Turnabrane (Glenesk), Blackcraigs (Glenesk) (Plate I, fig. 2), Tarabuckle (Glen Clova)—or to a post or wall by means of an iron strut—e.g. Brewlands Cottages (Glenisla), this being a stone dated 1884, and

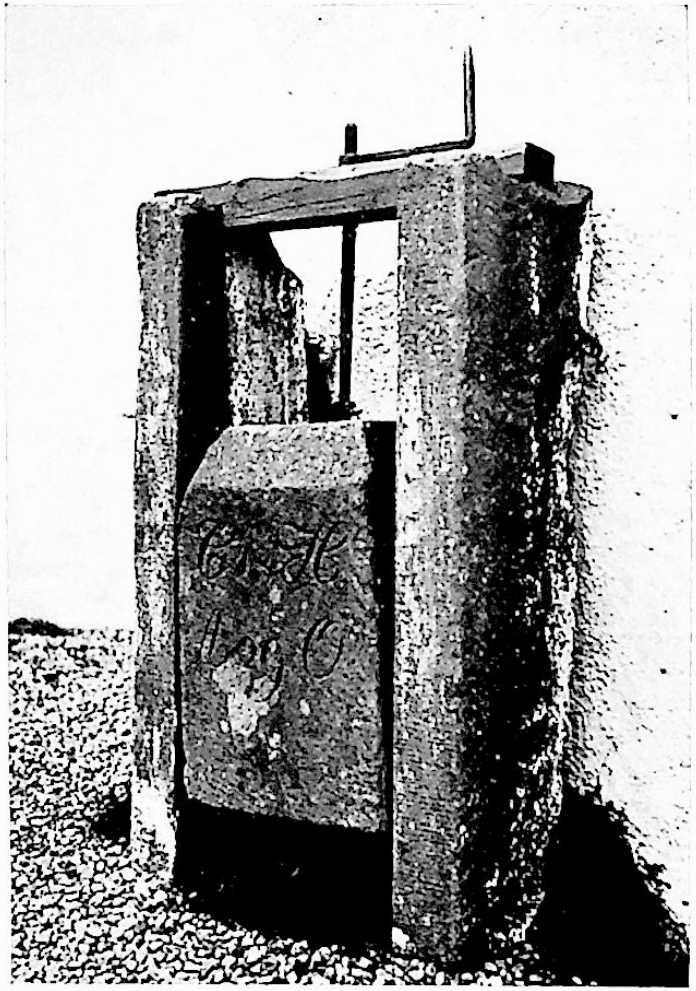

FIG. 1—A stone-sided press from Tarabuckle, Glen Clova.

FIG. 2—A wood-framed press from Blackcraigs, Glenesk, dooked into a stone wall for extra stability.

(See pp. 51-52).

a good example of the art of the maker of churchyard monuments.

Metal-framed presses follow the same pattern—some, as at Ghenty and Balintore (East Gate), have free-hanging weights, and others, as at Clintlaw and Middle Coull (Lintrathan), Auchinleish (in use in 1958) and Delnamer (Glenisla) (Fig. 4) have grooves averaging 1½ inches wide within which the metal

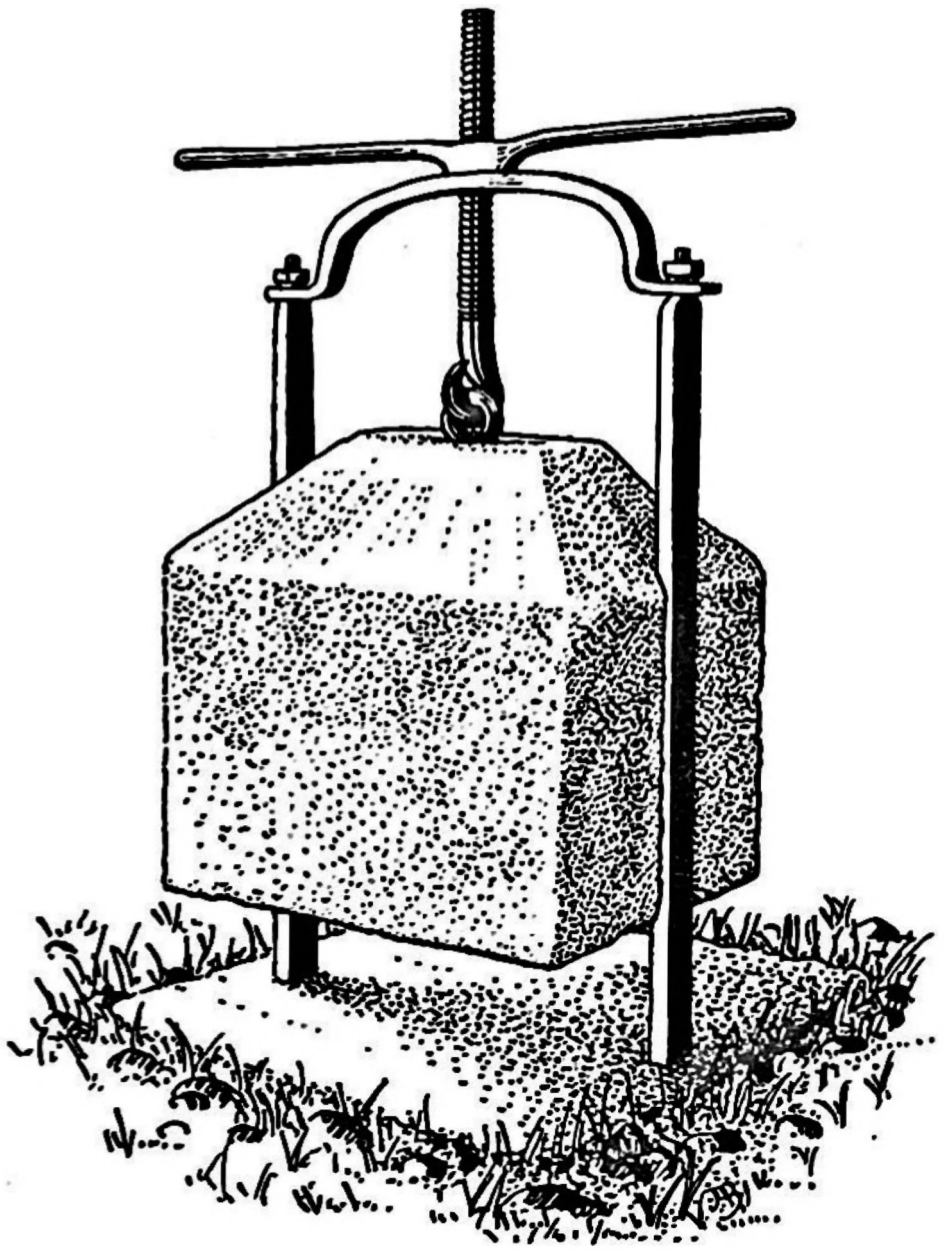

FIG. 4—A metal-framed press from Delnamer (Glenisla).

uprights lie. In each case, the lower ends of the uprights are sunk into a heavy stone sole. This is easily the commonest Angus type.

The arrangement at Cairnleith (Kingoldrum) where the press is set sideways on to a wall, and has one end of the crossbar actually in the wall, is not often found. It also occurs in stone at the smithy at Belts, in the parish of Auchterless, Aberdeenshire.

So far the presses under discussion have been worked on the threaded screw principle, but there are some in which pressure is applied on the steelyard principle, using weights on the end of a bar or lever. Such presses were manufactured by firms such as Wallace of Castle Douglas. There is one at Cortachy Castle.

Besides these large, fixed presses, numerous smaller, portable presses are to be found. The one from Braeminzion (Glen Clova) (Fig. 5) is known to have been made before 1890, when

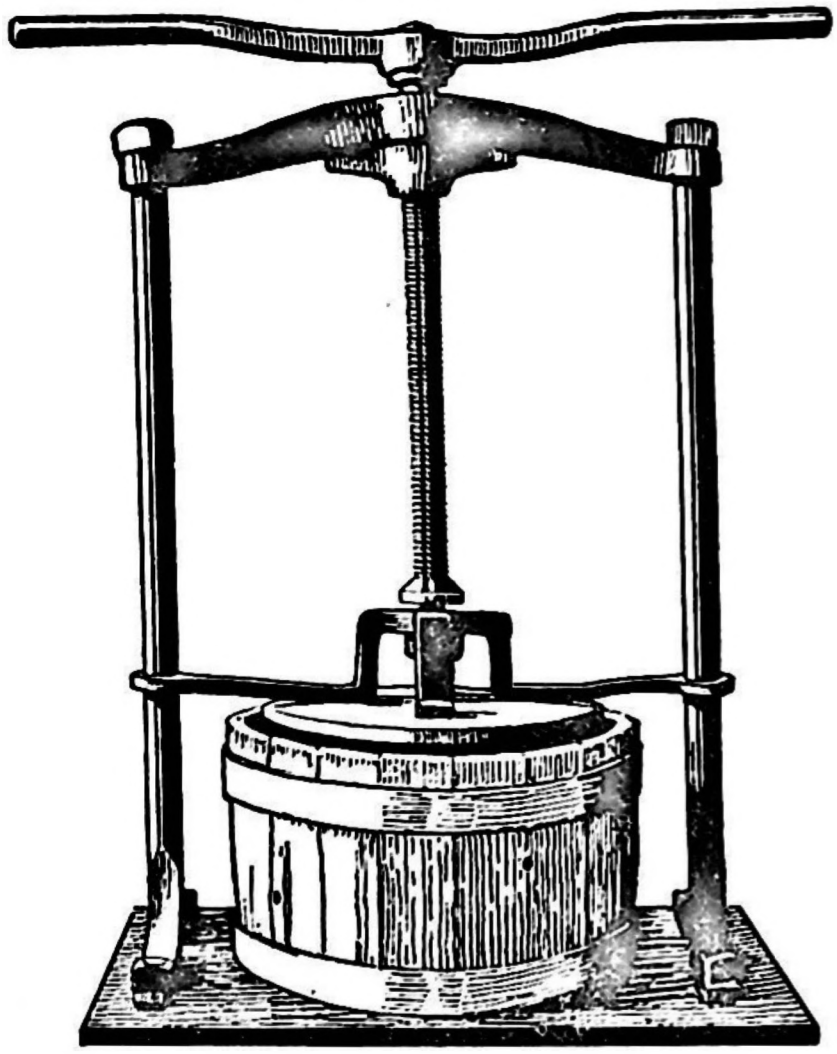

Fig. 5—A portable press from Braeminzion (Glen Clova).

an older stone press was not working properly, and its shape suggests that it was inspired by the larger stone or iron-framed presses. This is also true of one from Gella (Glen Clova) (Fig. 6).

A lighter type made of two threaded screws acting as uprights and two wooden cross-bars, the upper one of which can be made to press on the lid of the chessel, is preserved at the Glencsk Folk Museum. It probably came originally from Braeminzion (Fig. 7). This kind is very common throughout the North-East of Scotland.

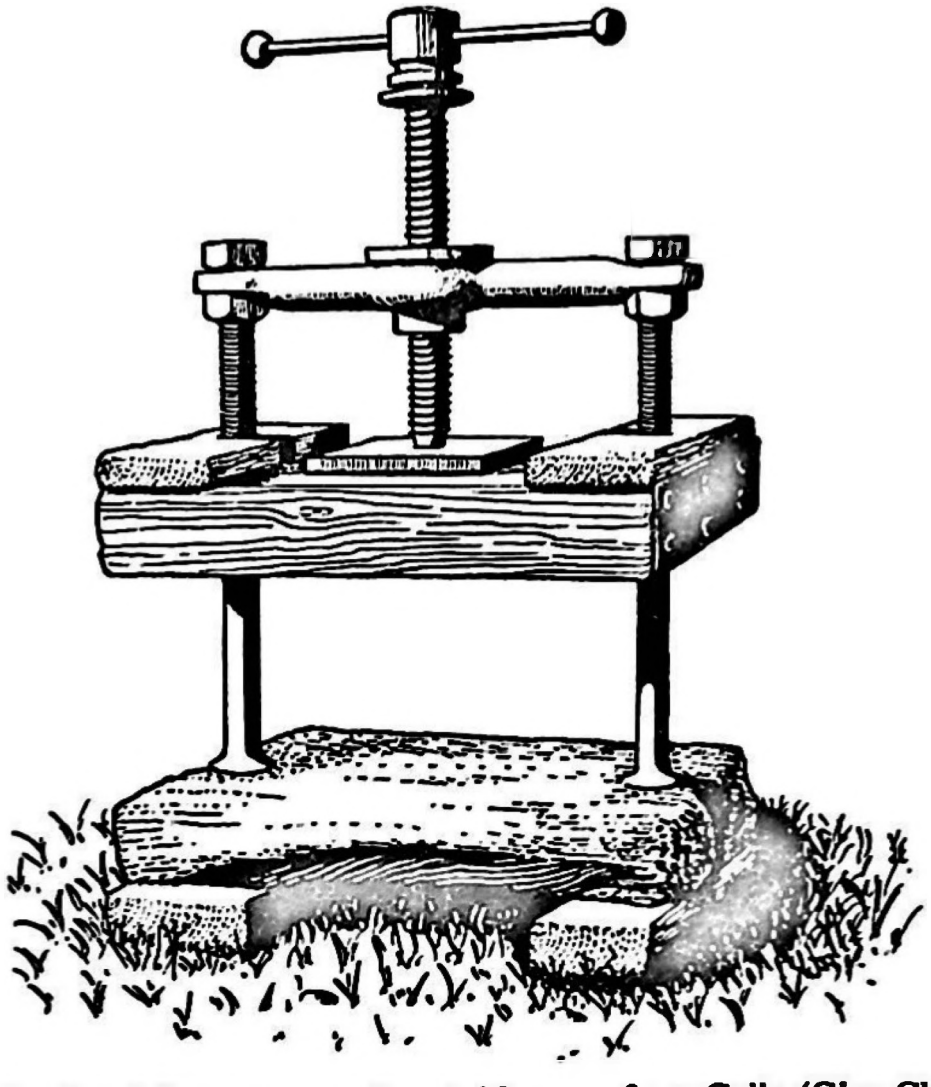

FIG. 6—An elaborate type of portable press from Gella (Glen Clova).

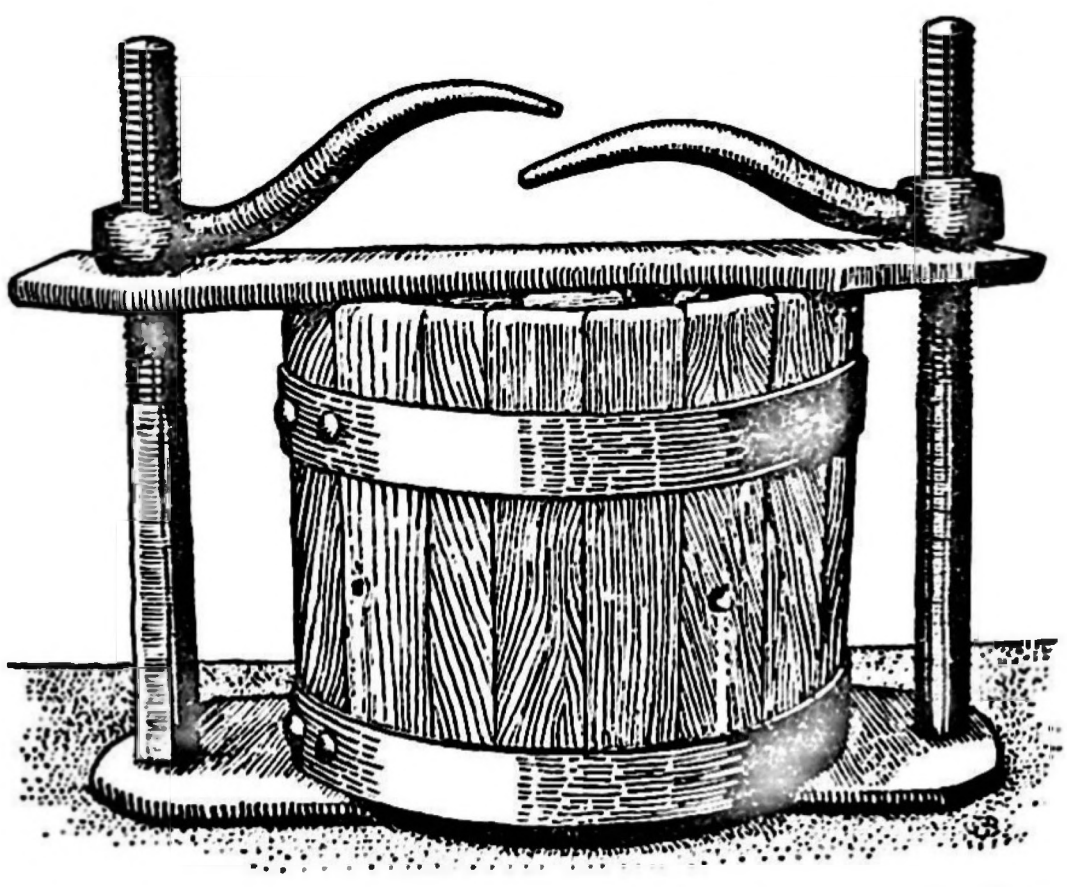

FIG. 7—A small, portable press from Braeminzion (Glen Clova). Now at the Glenesk Folk Museum.

Dated presses

Date, etc.	Place	Type, etc.
1814.	Cortachy Castle	A squared stone weight, with broad grooves in the sides suggesting use in a wooden frame.
1829. CH; A.O.	Tarabuckle, Glen Clova	Stone sided, with a wooden cross-bar. Charles Henry; Anne Ogilvy.
1831. J.R.	Auchavan, Glenisla	Iron-framed.
1842. J.R.	Crossmiln, Glen Clova	Stone-framed. Jane Robbie.
1861.	Crossbog, Glen Clova	Stone-framed. Brought from Gella. Illustrated in C. Gibson, *Folk-lore of Tayside* (Dundee 1959?).
1874. W.R.	Altnavournoch, Glenisla	Iron-framed.
1884.	Browlands Cottages	Iron-framed.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

The sketches are by John Brown of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland.

THE ERSKINES OF MAR AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALLOA, 1689-1825

T. C. Smout*

The importance of the improving landowner in the economic development of Scotland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has long been recognised. As the pioneers in the exploitation of mineral resources after the Reformation, as the driving force behind the great agricultural transformation after the Union, as the champions of commerce in unfree towns against the monopoly of the Royal Burghs, as patrons and shareholders in national undertakings like the British Linen Company, they contributed much to their several generations: men like Bruce of Carnock, Cockburn of Ormiston, Grant of Monymusk, the Duke of Queensberry and Sir John Sinclair will always be numbered among the great architects of national progress.

The present intention of this essay is to shift the focus from the national to the local scale, and to pose the question—what difference did it make to one community to have a succession of improving landowners living among them? The family chosen, the Erskines of Mar, is not one with a great heroic name among economic historians, nor is the community, Alloa in Clackmannanshire, as outstanding an example of mushroom growth as some that could be found. Nevertheless, the unusual diversity of the Erskine interests, comprehending commerce, mining, manufacture, farming, town planning and social welfare (though not all at once, or with an equal enthusiasm), and the very satisfactory growth of Alloa from a mean collier village in 1689 to a respectable small town with a mixed economy on the verge of a real industrial revolution in 1825, make it as interesting a test case as one could wish.

I

In 1689, when John Erskine succeeded to the titles and estates of his father Charles, Earl of Mar, the parish and barony of Alloa had already experienced at least a century and a half

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of expansion. The main medieval settlement had lain in the hamlet of Tullibody—a mile inland, off the coal measures, and away from the Mar estate. Already by 1660 the attraction of coal and shipping had left Tullibody with insufficient inhabitants to support a minister, and the chapel at Alloa had been erected into a parish church in its stead (*N.S.A.* 1845: 57).[1] Between 1600 and 1690 the population of the parish probably doubled: by the latter date it contained 2-3,000 inhabitants on nearly 5,000 acres, of which about two-thirds belonged to the Erskines (*N.S.A.* 1845:40-1; based on parish registers then existing). The output of coal from Alloa mines did not exceed 4,000 tons a year, and the trade of the town, which was a burgh of barony to the Earls, consisted in exporting it coastwise and overseas to Rotterdam and elsewhere.[2] In his *Theatrum Scotiæ*, John Slezer made a pleasant engraving of the town as it was about 1693—a collection of cottages dominated by the Earl's castle, surrounded by open fields lying in strips, with two ships at anchor in the river beyond. The plan of the new church begun in 1690 included a gallery for seamen, an aisle for colliers "and trades", an aisle for the Earl and his servants and the nave for the rural population: it neatly demonstrated the economic division of the parish (Lothian 1871).

This barony formed the central portion of the lands ruled by Earl John from 1689 to 1715. Since he had been left "more debt than estate" by his father, it is unlikely that he obtained much of the working capital he needed for its development from land: more probably it came from the fruits of high political office—he was Keeper of Stirling Castle from 1699 to 1714, Secretary of State from 1705 until 1709, member of the British Privy Council from 1707 to 1714, Scottish Secretary from 1713 to 1714. His removal from office by George I in 1714 immediately brought him into open rebellion as leader of the Jacobite venture and was followed by his attainder, and the loss of his title and estates.[3] His political career might thus be judged a tragedy and a failure, but his skill as "a very good manager in his private affairs" transformed Alloa and determined the main lines of its eighteenth-century advance.

Earl John's activities comprehended four basic improvements which he carried out successively or at the same time: the transformation of his own house and gardens into a residence commensurate with his position as the most powerful man in Scotland; the beautification of the town so that it should not

shame the house; the improvement of the port; and the construction of a large reservoir to provide a head of water for his mining machinery.

The first in time, and in his affections, was the improvement of the castle and precincts, for which he brought to Alloa the best craftsmen, masons and smiths he could discover, and started a quarry to provide building stone. Apart from this, his enthusiasm for ornamental groves and avenues designed to frame a "prospect" at each point of the compass, though of little direct economic consequence to Alloa, started a fashion in arboriculture that helped to transform the appearance of most parishes in the Scottish lowlands during the eighteenth century (*O.S.A.* 1793:594).[4]

This completed or well under way, he began to improve the appearance of the adjacent village: some houses were pulled down, some were rebuilt, some roads were straightened and widened, and a broad, paved avenue lined with limes and terminating in a gravel walk was led from the town, past the castle gates and down to the harbour.[5] All this awoke much contemporary admiration. "The town of Allaway is larger and better built, though a village, than most borough-towns", wrote Macky within eight years of the Earl's attainder; "There is one street that runs down to the harbour, the broadest and best pav'd of any I have seen next to Edinburgh, with rows of lime-trees down to the river, as at Dundee and the towns of Holland" (Macky 1729:179). Defoe was equally complimentary: calling it "spacious" and "well-built" (Cole 1927: 800-1). Fifty years later the writer of the Statistical Account remarked that "the late Earl seems to have been particularly attentive to the healthiness of the town" and that the lime avenue afforded "an agreeable shade in summer, and a comfort and shelter in winter" (*O.S.A.* 1793:595). Burghs with less enlightened landlords could not boast as much. At Bo'ness, "the town involved continually in a cloud, the houses were blackened with soot, the air impregnated with vapour, and strangers were struck with the Pandemonium appearance of the place"; but then, "His Grace the present Duke never resided in the parish" (*O.S.A.* 1796:428-9, 425).[6]

Earl John next turned his attention to the harbour. This, apart from the coal deposits, was the greatest natural asset to Alloa, for a shelf of rock bisecting the Forth just above the town prevented big ships proceeding to Stirling, while the depth of water just below the shelf—17 to 22 feet at spring tides—was

greater than that on the bar at Leith, and certainly more than any other harbour west of Queensferry; a ship of 300 tons could easily be accommodated, which was not the case in most harbours on the Firth. Throughout the seventeenth century the exploitation of these advantages had been retarded by the customs system, by which Alloa was treated simply as a "creek" of the port of Bo'ness—a circumstance which obliged every skipper making a report, and every factor or merchant paying dues, to travel ten miles down the river to the customs house. Alloa was consequently much less frequented by traders than it should have been, and in 1700 paid little more than one fifth of the tax paid on Bo'ness for the communication of trade to unfree burghs.[7]

It was therefore a red-letter day for Alloa when the Earl of Mar in 1710, having obtained a Commission for his brother to "order the customs at the port of Bo'ness", secured separation of the head of the Forth from Bo'ness precinct, and arranged for a customs house to be erected in Alloa itself (*O.S.A.* 1743:637).[8] Henceforth the port was not only freed from the magnetism of its rival down the river, but also had a magnetism of its own which would tend to draw trade to Alloa in preference to neighbouring quays like Airth, Clackmannan and Kincardine. To follow up this tactical advantage, the Earl was "very assiduous in procuring the best tradesmen to settle in Alloa"; in a few years the town possessed two saw mills, a rope works and a sail-cloth manufactory (*O.S.A.* 1793:623n; Macky 1729:179; Cole 1927:801; Macfarlane 1748:308).[9] Of all Scottish ports only Leith, Port Glasgow and Alloa appear to have obtained these essential adjuncts for ship building and repair so early in the eighteenth century. It was not long before Alloa began to steal a good deal of the trading prosperity of its old rival Bo'ness.

The town decent and the port improved, it only remained to ensure a steady coal supply to keep commerce going. The main problem facing the landowner was drainage, for the pits at Alloa were already too deep to be comfortably tackled by the conventional method of a bucket-and-chain gin wound by horses. In 1708, the Earl considered a wind pump, but failed to find skilled wrights who could make one. In 1709 his manager was sent to Newcastle to "learn the mode of conducting colliery-operations in every department," and returned with a portfolio of drawings of English machinery. The following year, probably as a result of this visit, the services of George Sorocould,

an English or Welsh engineer, were engaged: he advised the construction of a hydraulic pump driven by a great water-wheel. None of the local burns provided sufficient head of water, and to obtain this the Earl in 1713 undertook the building of Gartmore Dam by embanking a valley north-east of Alloa and leading water into it from the Black Devon by an "aqueduct" two miles long, to form a reservoir covering 162 acres. This was a remarkable engineering feat, considering the state of technology in Scotland, and the water thus formed was for many years the largest artificial lake north of the Tweed.[10]

The importance of this work turned out to be much more than in draining the mines: in the event, the plans for a pump had to be abandoned, again for lack of construction skill in Scotland, and the new water-wheel was simply attached to a powerful bucket-and-chain gin. But in an age that had yet to make effective use of steam, the easily-regulated waters of the Gartmore Dam provided the best possible source of industrial power: thus in 1791 there were two mining engines, a set of corn mills, a snuff mill, a fulling mill and logwood mill on the stream between the dam and the town (*O.S.A.* 1793: 602-3), and around this period it was also associated with breweries, distilleries, saw mills and a woollen mill. Just as 1710 marked the beginnings of Alloa as a modern port, so 1713 marked its birthday as a manufacturing town.

There is no reason to suppose that Earl John had realised all his ambitions for Alloa when he fell so abruptly from power in the fiasco of 1715: later writers, at least, attributed to him schemes for a bottle manufactory, and for a new town quarter, west of his lime-tree avenue. By his schemes in exile for the improvement of Edinburgh and the construction of a Forth-Clyde Canal, only realised a generation and more after his death, he proved himself a man of national vision. In other ways—by his evident lack of interest in agricultural improvement and his disinclination to use steam drainage in his mines—he shared the limitations of his generation. Nevertheless, his twenty-six years of rule transformed the barony, and gave it an air of advance and prosperity that all travellers noted in the next decade. If Alloa ever wishes to commemorate its greatest benefactor, it should remember Earl John.

II

The second phase of Alloa's history covers the years from the attainder of 1715 to the start of John Francis Erskine's

administration in 1770. It was a complicated period in the management of the Erskine lands. From 1715 to 1724, the barony was in the hands of the Committee for Forfeited Estates, from which it was eventually redeemed by the former Earl's brother, Lord Erskine of Grange, and certain other relations. From 1724 to 1739 these men administered it as trustees for John's lineal descendants; from 1739 until 1766 it was in the hands of John's son Thomas, much of whose money and energy went into politics; in 1766, Thomas dying childless, it passed to John's daughter Frances who held it for eleven years [11] but had the assistance of her son John Francis as effective manager after 1770.[12] Throughout these dynastic complications the Erskines were unable to draw on either the capital resources or the influence in high places possessed by the attainted Earl: they were forced to alienate most of the old Mar territories outside the barony in order to keep Alloa in their possessions.[13] For these reasons, and because their talents and imaginations were not of the same high order as John's, they failed to leave the same stamp on the town. Nevertheless, these were a stirring fifty-five years in the life of Alloa, and the Erskines were not exactly neglectful. Much of the progress of these years was due either to their attentions, or to private enterprise building on the foundation left by John.

The growth of overseas trade definitely belongs to the latter category. The excellence of the port established by nature and the Earl of Mar soon attracted the attention of west-coast merchants who had hitherto used Bo'ness as their window on the Firth of Forth. The two towns were equidistant from Glasgow by road, both lying within about thirty-two miles, and Alloa had a distinct advantage in harbour facilities, especially for bigger vessels. Already by 1714 Glasgow merchants had business dealings with Alloa.[14] In 1726 Defoe reported "the town . . . is full of trade, for the whole country has some business or other with them . . . this is the place where the Glasgow merchants are, as I am told, erecting magazines or warehouses to which they propose to bring their tobacco and sugars by land, and then to ship them for Holland or Hamburgh or the Baltick or England as they find opportunity or market, and I doubt not they will find their advantage in it" (Cole 1927:800). Throughout the 1730's and early 1740's the local customs officers were busy granting permission for the re-export of American tobacco imported mainly at Port Glasgow and Greenock, but also at places as far apart as Dundee, Fort

William and Kirkcudbright, with occasional shipments arriving at Alloa directly from Virginia. Re-exports went to Rotterdam, Veere, Gothenburg, Christiansand and coastwise to British ports, the Glasgow house of Fogos and Mitchell being particularly involved.[15] At the same time a number of mills were erected along the stream from the Gartmore Dam to make snuff and shred tobacco leaf, and "what was called Alloa pig-tail" made the parish famous even in London itself (*O.S.A.* 1793: 602-34, 621; *N.S.A.* 1845:51).[16]

Some time in the 1740's this trade began to fall away, and by 1750 it had ceased altogether. The reasons are obscure, but it is possible that after 1744 the improvements to the harbour at Bo'ness, combined with the condition of the roads around Alloa, drew the Glasgow merchants back to their traditional outport: certainly after 1777 when Sir Laurence Dundas built Grangemouth at the eastern terminal of the Forth and Clyde Canal, Alloa lost any chance of regaining an entrepôt trade. She still had a very flourishing commerce of a traditional nature, based on the export of coals and a few manufactured goods to Holland, Germany and Scandinavia, and on the import of deals, grain, linseed, and some Iberian wine.[17] Clearly this was much larger by 1770 than it had been at the beginning of the century.

The years between 1715 and 1770 also saw very considerable additions to the town's industries, apart from the small scale saw-milling, rope-making and sail-cloth making that began in John's day and continued to flourish.[18] The tobacco processing industry was prosperous only for a short time, and by 1780 was represented by only one mill. Malt-making became very important towards the middle of the century, chiefly to supply the large distilleries at Kilbagie and Kennetpans in the neighbouring parish, though from 1760 Glenochil distillery was operating within Alloa parish. The famous glass-works was founded in 1750. A brick and tile works began to export to the Low Countries and the Baltic in the 1760's. Alloa cabinet-makers had a reputation far beyond the parish, and the weigh-beams and still-yards of Alloa smiths were in wide demand. The staple manufacture in the countryside was the weaving of woollen camblets (*O.S.A.* 1793:621-4).[19] The list shows unusual diversity for a parish of 4-5,000 inhabitants in the middle of the eighteenth century.[20]

Some of these activities depended on water-power from the Gartmore Dam, some on coal fuel from the Mar estates,

but the only occasion on which the Erskines directly meddled with manufacturing was in the important foundation of the Alloa Glass Works. The credit for this belongs entirely to Lady Frances, although it took place in the régime of her brother Thomas who is supposed to have been too busy attending to political affairs in Stirling to concern himself about the works. The choice for a bottle manufactory was an extremely good one; it was only the fourth or fifth such undertaking in Scotland; raw materials were close at hand—sand and kelp in the river, salt at Kennetpans in the next parish, coal free on the family estates (in fact a temporary crisis in coal markets made a new means of consumption very opportune); there was a ready vent for the bottles to local brewers and distillers and to Leith wine merchants down the river. Lady Frances with a sudden energy reminiscent of her father, persuaded skilled Bohemian glass-workers to immigrate from a Baltic port, and settled them on a site near the harbour to the west of the lime-tree avenue. She owned the works for seventeen years, despite a number of difficulties in obtaining further supplies of labour, and the loss of one of the mainstays of the bottle market when the Seven Years War disrupted the wine market. In 1767 she sold out to a company of merchants, who extended operations and began to export bottles; in 1791 the works housed thirty-three families on the precincts and covered four acres; to-day it is easily the largest glass-factory in Scotland, and the company honours Lady Frances for her courage and foresight as their foundress.[21]

The natural province of the Erskines, however, was not in trade or in manufacture but in coal—and here their enterprise is seen to best advantage. Between 1718 and 1723 the Committee of Forfeited estates failed to raise more than about 5,000 tons per annum, or little more than the output fifty years before. By the 1760's, output had been increased to over 15,000 tons, and by the 1780's to over 22,000 tons, or by nearly five times in sixty years (*O.S.A.* 1793:617n).[22] This revolution seems to have been largely due to the readiness of Thomas to spend money on the best machinery available, and to treat his miners as responsible human beings, instead of as the serfs and chattels they had become by Scottish law.

The first technical problem was met about 1740 with the introduction of winding gear in the main colliery shaft, which was uncomfortably deep for the unfortunate collier women who had to carry their menfolk's coal to the surface. The

machinery installed—a double water wheel with an alternating action driven off the Gartmore Dam and capable of lifting six cwt. at a time—represented an ingenious and novel solution to a familiar problem, and was a triumph for the unknown millwright who designed it. Later in the century it was much admired by English engineers and widely copied in Newcastle and Sunderland: as late as 1815 when the rotary steam engine was sweeping the board, the Alloa wheel was still described as "the cheapest and best machine for coal drawing where a plentiful supply of water can be got" (*O.S.A.* 1793:616; Bald 1812:88-9).

About 1760, the substitution of a proper hydraulic pump, such as Earl John planned to build in 1714, for the old bucket-and-chain system on the first wheel helped Thomas to make a new sinking near Alloa town. In 1764 the adoption of a Newcomen draining engine, "supposed to be one of the best", and certainly the first example of steam power in the parish, enabled yet another sinking to be made at Collyland, nearly two miles away (*O.S.A.* 1793:616-17; Carvel 1944:13). Henceforth it was possible to tap and raise far larger resources than had been available to Earl John.

There remained the problem of transporting it over two or three miles to the coast, a task traditionally undertaken by the Mar tenants with miserable carts of "a size not larger than a good wheel barrow", over country roads which degenerated into bogs every winter. In 1766 the Erskines solved the whole problem at a stroke: a wagonway, one of the first north of the Tweed, was laid over a mile and a half between Alloa mines and the quay; it was extended to Collyland in 1771. Although the first rails were only of fir, and quickly deteriorated, a single man and a horse could now take down 30 cwt. at a time —or five times as much as a man with a horse and cart. To this single improvement the writer in the Old Statistical Account attributed all the increased output between 1765 and 1790 (*O.S.A.* 1793:617n; *N.S.A.* 1845:30-1).

Thomas also showed considerable initiative in the treatment of his colliers. His proposal to give "some little education to the children" by providing a schoolmaster for the mining community was business-like as well as humanitarian: in an occupation in which children invariably followed their parents, and in which they were bound to the same mine for the whole of their lives, it guaranteed that the next generation of labourers would be better educated (and therefore more efficient)

than their fathers. The landlord's institution in 1760 of a Colliery Bailie Court, in which five ordinary colliers sat in judgment over their fellows in petty cases of discipline and dispute, also combined enlightenment and utility, for the main barony court at Alloa had become clogged with collier quarrels (*O.S.A.* 1793:614; *N.S.A.* 1845:34-5). What was striking about Thomas was that he regarded miners as capable of education and jurisdiction when most of his contemporaries wrote them off as too brutal to be capable of any kind of self-help.

By these means the Erskines guaranteed a constant and increasing supply of fuel to the developing industries of Alloa, and of export cargoes to the ships that ranged the harbours of northern Europe. This was undoubtedly the biggest debt the community owed to the landlords in these years.

III

The third and final period from 1770 to 1825 covers the administration of a man almost as remarkable, though necessarily on a narrower stage, as the great Earl John. When John Francis Erskine, as a young man of 28, resigned his commission in the First Regiment of Horse in 1770, he deliberately turned his back on the world of political and military ambition which came naturally to a man of his ancestry, and devoted the rest of his life to running the estate at Alloa—at first on behalf of his mother, after 1780 as sole proprietor in his own right. When he was restored to his grandfather's dignity as Earl of Mar shortly before his death in 1825, he had completed more than half a century of successful rule in barony, considerably increasing the extent and value of his lands, and earning a great reputation for benevolence and improvement. His feat was the greater in that the sole capital available was from land, and when he took over the administration, the finances of the estate were evidently in a critical condition.[23]

During the period of his administration, Alloa was not uniformly prosperous. In the late 1780's it met a serious check when all the neighbouring distilleries went out of operation at once, and the old country camblet weavers began to lose their trade, while the rise of a cotton industry in Stirlingshire threatened to syphon off the population—which fell by more than 350 between 1788 and 1791 (*O.S.A.* 1793:635-7). By 1800 this crisis was over: the population rose again from 4,802

in 1791 to 5,214 in 1801, 5,577 in 1821 and 6,377 in 1831. New distilleries were built in the parish in 1799 and 1806, new breweries in 1774 and 1816: a pottery, a tannery and a foundry began before the end of the eighteenth century, and the arrival of what was to become the greatest industry in nineteenth-century Alloa was signalised by the erection of Kilncraigs Woollen Mill about 1813, on a site utilising water-power from the Gartmore Dam. A graving dock was built at the port in 1790, and further stimulus to trade was provided by the Devon Iron Works erected in 1792 three miles away, using Alloa quay for its exports and imports (*N.S.A.* 1845:48 ff.; Lothian 1871:12-19; Graham 1814:361).

In all this varied industrial and commercial activity—which, after all, determined the main lines of Alloa's growth and prosperity—John Francis Erskine played no direct part. His activities were confined to improvement of the land, of the corn mills, of the coal mine, and of the appearance and facilities of the town itself. In a less energetic man such activities might have been dilletantism, but he wrought such a transformation in each that the entire life of the parish was affected in one way or another.

The revolution in agriculture came late to Alloa, considering the enterprise of the Erskines in other directions. Even in 1773 the rent-roll breathed of medieval survivals, including part-payments in barley, meal, beans, oats, geese, capons, trusses of straw and carriage-services.[24] At that date there were very few enclosures, apart from the minister's glebe, fenced and laid down to clover in 1761: the Erskine farms were small (none above 90 acres), their buildings miserable, their ground overrun with whins and weeds, scratched with primitive implements and ignorant of modern drainage and rotations—a microcosm, in fact, of old Scots farming at its worst (*O.S.A.* 1793:603 ff.).

Two things in particular helped the breakout into the forefront of Scottish agricultural progress. Firstly, the construction of the wagonway enabled the landlord to abolish carriage-services for driving coals, and presented the small tenant who had spent most of his energy carting, with the alternative of cultivating the land properly or leaving (*O.S.A.* 1793:603-4). The end of heavy collier-traffic on the roads also made communications easier to maintain for agriculture, and in 1794 John Francis embarked on a general scheme to improve parochial roads (Graham 1814:342). Secondly John Francis

succeeded in attracting to the barony an East Lothian farmer named Hugh Reoch, who proved "remarkable for his good plowing, draining and dressing of the grounds", an organiser of ploughing-matches, and a general evangelist of the new ways (*O.S.A.* 1793:604-5n). It was at this point that John Francis set out the comprehensive programme of improvements for the whole Mar estates, beginning with the outlying farms and gradually working inwards towards the centre so that the land adjacent to his castle, though the last to be improved, should be the best improved, by virtue of the experience gained from the rest (Graham 1814:307-8).

Already by 1791 the parish of Alloa could be described (admittedly by local prejudice) as one where the improvement of agriculture has been "most uncommonly rapid . . . perhaps more so than in almost any other" (*O.S.A.* 1793:604). By 1815 the transformation was complete, and the details of John Francis's work were being publicised by the Board of Agriculture. Rents in kind had long been abolished. Farms were much larger (the largest by 1791 was 457 acres, and none were below 76): leases were much longer. All the land was enclosed with walls and hedges, with liberal provision of windbreaks and timber; 80 acres of Alloa Inch had been embanked from the sea. The latest implements were used—"no plough but Small's", and six of George Meikle's new threshing machines in operation by 1791. New crops and new rotations were introduced and adapted for local conditions: lime-burning began in kilns along the coast, and sewage from the middens of Alloa was spread out on the fields. The roads, the farm buildings and offices were all vastly improved (*O.S.A.* 1793:604 f.; Graham 1814: *passim*). John Francis gained the credit that was due to him: "by the spirited exertions of that nobleman this small county at least fifty years ago held a prominent place among the most highly cultivated north of the Tweed", wrote the New Statistical Account, adding proudly (as the apogee of local achievement), "it is remembered by many that a ploughman from Alloa about that period was sent with the necessary implements to plough before his Majesty King George III" (*N.S.A.* 1845:47).

The improvement of the corn-mills was an obvious adjunct to the improvement in agriculture and characteristically an Erskine employed the best skill in Scotland. About 1780 the famous wright George Meikle undertook the reconstruction of an old mill first erected below the Gartmore Dam in 1731:

he designed a building 90 feet long, with seven sets of grindstones each adapted for a different type of milling, driven by twin wheels. As the brewers and maltsters of Alloa remained thirled to these mills for many years afterwards, the efficiency of their operation was important to one of the town's basic industries (*O.S.A.* 1793:603; Graham 1814:362).

The improvement of the coal-field was a more traditional Erskine interest than the improvement of the land, and John Francis was quick to follow the lead of his uncle Thomas. Production figures measure his progress—15,000 tons around 1760, 22,000 tons around 1790 and 48,000 tons around 1810: shortly thereafter the pits at Collyland caught fire and had to be abandoned, and a lease was subsequently taken of New Sauchy colliery in the adjacent parish: by 1840 the annual quantity raised from Alloa and New Sauchy mines was from 76,000 to 80,000 tons. The main technical changes were the improvement of the wagonway by successive steps (until a single man and a horse could bring down eight tons, or more than twenty-five times as much as a horse and cart in 1760, the adoption of complete mechanical winding, and the replacement of post-and-stall hewing by longwall, which saved more than half the coal formerly left in the pillars. The landlord was well served in these matters by his two colliery managers, Alexander and Robert Bald, who served him successively for over fifty years and were among the leading mining engineers in Scotland (*N.S.A.* 1845:28 ff.; Graham 1814:401; Carvel 1944: 14 ff.).

Equally significant was the vigour and enthusiasm with which John Francis continued his uncle's benevolence towards the miners. For their education, he was fortunate in obtaining as schoolmaster an old army sergeant, who made such an impression on his charges that even the minister in 1791 was forced to admit that the colliers, from being "an unruly set of labourers . . . remarkable for their ignorance and dissoluteness" were now "rather *above* the ordinary rate of the common people" (*O.S.A.* 1793:614-15). In 1819 the landlord erected a new colliery school-house that was teaching 180 scholars by 1840 (*N.S.A.* 1845:61). To the old collier past work and to the widow John Francis paid a small pension, and permitted and encouraged the formation of the Friendly Society among the miners in 1775. In housing, it was noticeable in 1778 that whereas there was an average of 8·1 inhabitants to a house in the town of Alloa, and 12·1 in the glassworks, there was the

very much more reasonable figure of 4·3 at the Erskine colliery (*O.S.A.* 1793:614n, 615n, 635; *N.S.A.* 1845:35).

By far the most popular act, however, was the total abolition on the Mar estates of the traditional Scottish practice of compelling the miners' wives and daughters to carry the coals for no extra wage from the hewing face to the bottom of the shaft and then in many cases up the shaft to the surface—"of all the slavery under heaven's canopy (the African slavery as it was in the West Indies excepted), this was the most cruel and oppressive both as regards body and mind". The landlord's reform—he was one of the first to make it is Scotland—was probably inspired by his manager Robert Bald, who was a passionate and influential opponent of women's labour below the surface both on humanitarian and economic grounds. To the worker and his family the end of this degradation brought inestimable benefits: "the whole style of living" was improved by the wives staying at home to attend to the house, to bring up the children and to prepare meals for the collier on his return from work (*N.S.A.* 1845:29; Bald 1812).

The final contribution of John Francis to the welfare of Alloa was only partially and temporarily successful; this was the attempt to replan the town on the lines first conceived by his grandfather. Between the 1720's, when the town received such praise, and 1778 when it was described by a visiting minister as a "poor, ill-built village", Alloa had grown overcrowded and shabby. Twenty-four years later the same minister enthused over the "gratifying spectacle of spacious streets and elegant buildings" which met his eyes, apparently in the New Town that John Francis began to lay out to the west of Lime-tree Walk in 1785 (*O.S.A.* 1793:596n; Graham 1814:189). During the nineteenth century any semblance to a town plan was swept away in the competition for building sites; the mean confusion of the Industrial Revolution swamped the old town, and created still meaner confusion in the new. It only remained for the twentieth century to throw a housing estate down on the east of Lime-tree Walk, and Pandemonium was complete.

IV

In making any final assessment of the contribution of the family of Erskine to the development of Alloa, account must be taken of strong economic and social forces that were making it progressively more difficult for a great landowner to influence

the destiny of a town. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Earl John was the only affluent man within the barony, and his pocket was generally deep enough to undertake all the schemes of improvement that the community needed. The very success of his improvements, especially to the port and the Gartmore Dam, attracted merchants and manufacturers who put capital into the town, and over whom the Erskines could exercise no control. By the second half of the eighteenth century these business-men came to determine the main prosperity of the town—they stayed if they found Alloa an attractive and profitable site for their concerns, they went away if it disappointed them, or if extraneous circumstances intervened: the landlord was left with the responsibility for agriculture and mining, and with some chance of controlling the growth of the community by the way he feued out the land to manufacturers. Direct participation in industry was abandoned by the Erskines before 1770, and in any case it would have been difficult for one family to command enough capital to make a decisive impact on industrial life at that stage in Alloa's development. Their main contribution to industry was in the supply of coal.

John Francis after his death was revered as "the late venerable Earl" who "endeared himself to his tenantry and dependents by a life devoted to their happiness, and an unremitting attention to the prosperity of Alloa" (*N.S.A.* 1845:38). In fact, although his great drive and enthusiasm still made him a power and brought great benefits to the town and parish, they cannot be considered as decisive in influencing the major lines of its future development. Nineteenth-century Alloa was essentially the creation of the joint-stock company, the engineers and brewers, the distillers, the weavers, the glass-makers, who used steam in place of water-power and who alone wielded the powers of capital that could make or break a town. Even the Mar coal mines fell into the hands of a joint-stock company after John Francis's death.

Perhaps if John Francis had had successors of his own calibre some semblance of the old force might have lingered on. In fact he was succeeded by two mediocre earls, bred in the belief of their traditional influence yet unable to understand how to maintain it in changing times. For example, the grandson of John Francis set his face against gas-light for the town, warning the populace (in a disturbingly modern phrase) that "those who throw missiles might expect to receive others in

return, and perhaps of as destructive a nature". Naturally Alloa obtained its gas-light, and the landowner merely obtained the derisive sobriquet of "the Daft Earl" (Gordon 1937:77).

Such was the story of the Erskines of Alloa, an example of enterprise exploiting a good site with vigour, and being finally ousted as the prime movers of progress by the very forces they helped to unleash. Is it, in essentials, the story of every improving landlord of the eighteenth century who strove for his burgh of barony? If not, how did the others differ? Were there any towns where industrial life was still dominated by the landlord by 1830? Were there any parishes whose natural growth was retarded by obstructionist landlords who set their face against development? How much benefit did other communities really receive from their landlords? These are interesting questions, and local historians and geographers who try to answer them will find a rich field for study and do Scottish economic history and historical geography a service.

NOTES

[1] The first reference to coal mining in the district is in 1510, of export from Alloa coastwise in 1558, and of export abroad in 1608 (Gordon 1937: 23, 33).

[2] Scottish Record Office (henceforth S.R.O.), State papers 252; S.R.O. Pre-Union customs books of Bo'ness and Blackness.

[3] Information conveniently summarised in *The Scots Peerage* (ed. J. Balfour Paul) Vol. 5 (Edinburgh 1908) 629-31; and *The Complete Peerage* (ed. 1932) 426-7.

[4] See also S.R.O. Additional Forfeited Estate Papers, 9-33.

[5] Known as John Street at the time, it is now Broad Street and Lime-tree Walk. It was probably begun in 1705—S.R.O. Mar and Kellie Papers, submission by John, Earl of Mar *et al.* 3034/1705.

[6] To do the Duke of Hamilton justice, the town of Hamilton where he resided was described in 1719 as a "fine little town"; Royal Library, Stockholm, H. Kalmeter's Journal of his travels in Britain.

[7] *Acts of the Parliament of Scotland*, Vol. 10, Appendix pp. 117, 119.

[8] See also Mar and Kellie MSS, "Commission to order the customs at Bo'ness", 1710. *Historical MSS Commission Report*, Vol. I, p. 487.

[9] Also Royal Library of Stockholm, Kalmeter's Journal. There is proof for the erection of the rope-works before 1715, and no reason to suppose the others do not date from about that time: S.R.O. Additional Forfeited Estate Papers, 9-33.

[10] There are several references and accounts of the work connected with Gartmore: in this I have followed N.S.A. 1845:8-9, and Bald 1812: 7-11. Bald had access to contemporary papers of Earl John that cannot now be found. For proof that the reservoir was filled in 1713, see S.R.O Forfeited Estate Papers, Mar. 9, Petition of Col. William Dalrymple of Glenmuir.

[11] *Scots Peerage* 5:632-5.

[12] *O.S.A.* 1793:615—"the present proprietor (i.e. John Francis) during the residence of 21 years". John Francis resigned his commission in 1770: *Scots Peerage* 5:633.

[13] *Mar Peerage: Case for John Francis Erskine Goodere Erskine* 1892, p. 68.

[14] S.R.O. Mar and Kellie MSS, Translation by Alex. Burton to Mungo Cochrane . . . 24/3/1714.

[15] H.M. Customs and Excise Office, Alloa: Customs Letter Books, 1718-1825. I am much indebted to the Customs and Excise authorities for permission to examine these interesting documents, and in particular to Mr. Lambert for his kindness and assistance in making them available.

See also S.R.O. Customs books of Alloa, from 1742: S.R.O. Mar and Kellie MSS, "Commissioners of the Customs *v.* William and Henry Fogos and John Mitchell".

[16] Customs Letter Books 1736-1750 contain several references to local snuff manufacturers.

[17] Customs Letter Books; S.R.O. Customs Books of Alloa.

[18] For evidence of their continued existence, see Customs Letter Books, 1736-44 for debentures on sail cloth exported; S.R.O. Mar and Kellie MSS, Rental for the Barony of Alloa, 1773, for saw mill; *O.S.A.* 1793: 623, for rope making.

[19] Also S.R.O. Customs Books of Alloa. Among manufactured exports should be noted bricks from 1761—to Gothenburg, Courland, Frederiksdal, Königsberg, Veere, etc., glass from 1768—to Copenhagen, Frederikstad, Flekkefjord, Hamburg and Veere; and a consignment of fine mahogany furniture to Copenhagen in 1770.

[20] Webster's survey of population gave two figures for Alloa parish in 1755—4653 and 5814 (Kyd 1952:37). Though later writers have only quoted the last, there is good reason to suppose the former is the correct one, and the latter was reached by adding the population of that part of Logie parish which lies in Clackmannanshire to the figures for Alloa proper.

[21] In this account I have followed Carvel 1953:6 ff. Mr. Carvel had access to the company's documents dating from the foundation, and ignores the unlikely story in *N.S.A.* 1845:49, of the foundation "said to have been first worked by a Danish company".

[22] Also S.R.O. Forfeited Estate Papers, Mar. 8c.

[23] S.R.O. Mar and Kellie MSS, "General view of the affairs of the family of Mar"; *Mar Peerage Case*, loc. cit. (see note 13 above).

[24] S.R.O. Mar and Kellie MSS, "Rental of the Barony of Alloa in 1773".

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TWO NORTHERN PORTS

Rosalind Mitchison

Caithness and Orkney in the eighteenth century were areas with a fairly similar economy; backward in their farming methods yet often producing corn surpluses, particularly in bear. The bear grew well on the low lands near the sea. With oats it formed the bulk of landlords' rents, and would be stored by them in granaries for two or three years until the price was good, and then shipped away. In 1762 William Sinclair of Freswick was offering for sale 3,000 bolls of bear of four different crops, from the years 1758-1761, and 1,500 bolls of oatmeal from three years, 1759-1761.[1] North country bear was considered of poor quality and not easy to sell.[2] Landowners found they got the best price by insisting on selling it together with their oatmeal. The merchants liked best to get equal quantities of the two commodities, but the landowners preferred to do as Freswick did and sell two of bear to one of meal. Even so there was usually a surplus of bear which Edinburgh merchants did not want. This might go west to meet Highland grain shortages, or be exported to Norway, Ireland or Portugal. Thurso and Kirkwall figure regularly in the list of ports receiving bounties for corn export.[3] Though they never handled the large sums in four figures which might go to Aberdeen or Montrose in a favourable year, yet together they often received a sixth or more of the total issued in Scotland, and in the years 1754-6 they together collected over £1,700, nearly half the payments for the whole country. In 1763-6 Thurso alone obtained £1,470, just over a quarter of the total. The bounties for these ports seem more regular than for other places with corn growing hinterlands, and the sums involved must have been large in the economy of small towns. It is possible that they do not correspond to the actual amounts of corn shipped, for Orkney traders in the early part of the eighteenth century practised a good deal of fraud in this matter (Marwick 1939:60-2).

Both Orkney and Caithness had fishing resources not yet fully exploited, the herring off the Orkneys and the salmon

in the Caithness rivers which could be salted down and sent overseas. After 1773 herring exports began from Caithness as well as Orkney, but they were more irregular than those from Orkney. Orkney in the later eighteenth century also developed a kelp industry. It was the richer of the two counties with a slightly larger population[4] and a better port.

The Customs Accounts for these two ports, Kirkwall and Thurso, in the Register House at Edinburgh, give something of this picture.[5] The corn ships to Norway would return with timber products, deals and balks, hazel cuts and harrowbills, barrel staves and handspikes, tar and birch bark. They would sometimes bring in salt too for the fish curing, Spanish salt which reached Scotland after a roundabout journey. From Gothenburg they would bring iron as well as timber, from Russia canvas and after 1748 flax and iron. The relative activity of the economy of the two counties is shown by the fact that Orkney could absorb more timber cargoes than Caithness. The indifference with which the North Sea crossing was contemplated is shown by the arrival on 6 May 1743 of an open boat at Kirkwall from Norway with a cargo of tar and timber, but such hardiness was dying out.[6] Ireland presented traders with a problem: there was little that could be brought back from there and ships to Ireland, if they returned direct to the north, would usually do so in ballast, though they sometimes carried hides. In June 1751 one brought five horses to Thurso. From Portugal in August 1774 came a cargo of salt to Thurso, with 1,250 lemons as well, and in April 1780 the *Happy Jean* of Wick from Bergen to Thurso added to her cargo of birch bark, timber and iron, two casks of port. In 1788 the *Jean* of Dunbar left Thurso for Venice with 230 barrels of salt cod and 6964 "Haberdeens, 14 inches and upwards" weighing 57½ tons. The exceptional nature of this journey into the Mediterranean can be deduced from the fact that the customs officials, dealing with something unfamiliar, recorded the ship's victualling bill in their accounts, the Irish beef in barrels, biscuit, pot barley, oatmeal, pease, flour and butter, the sixteen cheeses and the six casks of strong beer. In 1748 a cargo of flax and iron was delivered from St. Petersburg at Kirkwall, inaugurating a steady minor trade—imports of raw flax and exports of finished linen. Caithness was much slower in developing a linen industry. The other regular item in the Customs Accounts was the coastwise shipping of coal from the Forth and Fife ports. Here again much

more went to Orkney than to Caithness. For both ports this was only an occasional item in the forties and fifties, but by the seventies it had become frequent and more regular, Thurso using about forty tons a year, Kirkwall from three to five times this amount.

Some of the ships trading to these northern ports stuck fairly regularly to their business, but others would turn over to coastal work or follow the trade to other Scottish ports. The *Margaret* of Dundee, which left Thurso on 1 June 1751 for Belfast, arrived in Aberdeen on 10 July with a cargo of cork from Oporto, and on 28 August was back in Aberdeen from Norway. The *Providence* of Burnt Island, which took 298 quarters of bear and 42 of meal from Thurso to Bergen on 28 June 1749, left Kirkwall for Bergen again on 31 July with malt. The *Jean Francis* of Wick came into Thurso on 26 June 1750 with timber and Spanish salt from Bergen, and on 21 July she left Kirkwall for Cadiz with salted salmon.

Variety from the settled pattern of trade was introduced into Kirkwall mainly by shipwreck. The notorious dangers of the coasts of North and South Ronaldshay accounted for a lot of shipping. In 1761 the Swedish *Aurora*, from Gothenburg for Lisbon, stranded on South Ronaldshay with a cargo of iron, timber, tea and china. The tea and china, salvaged, were sent on to the Isle of Man after paying duty of nearly £1,500. An earlier wreck in 1740, said to have meant a loss of £150,000, had nearly broken the Swedish East India Company.[7] There were two other cargoes salvaged in 1761, one of wheat from Hamburg, and the other of wood ash. In 1769 the North Ronaldshay rocks accounted for a Swedish ship with timber and iron from Stockholm. In 1746 the *Two Brothers* of Boston stranded in Orkney with a cargo of furs, rum, indigo, rice, sugar and snuff, which all passed through the customs three years later.

In spite of the similar nature of the two districts, the main impressions given by the customs books of the two ports differ widely. Those for Caithness, starting in 1743, show a customs branch which rarely paid its way. By the middle of the century its establishment had risen from the cost of £45 sterling just before the Union to £155. This meant a Collector at £40, a Comptroller and a Surveyor at £30 each, a Landwaiter at £25 and two Tidesmen at £15 each. It was one of the smallest branches in the country. Yet only three times between 1743 and 1785 did the return in the duties make three figures there—in

1754 it stood at £218 of which over £80 was levied on a salvaged cargo of wood ash. In 1751 £188 came in, £80 of it from a single cargo of port, and in 1774 £106. In 1745 and the first half of 1746 no customable trade was reported. This may have been the result of political disturbances, but in the first three quarters of 1762 there was a similar blank, and the total sum levied in 1761 was under £2. In most years the total lay between twenty and thirty pounds. If it was worth having this customs branch at all its value lay in administering the corn bounties or in preventing smuggling.

The Orkney accounts are very different. In 1744, the first complete year available in Edinburgh, the total return was £2,033. This was higher than some other years of the period. In 1748 the Lady Day quarter (usually the period of least activity) is missing, and the rest of the year comes to £921. In 1753 the figure is down to £431. But in the forties it usually stood round about £1,000 and was higher in the next decade, reaching £5,850 for 1756. It did not drop below £1,000 for the next ten years, and in 1759 it reached the record height of £9,634. Since Kirkwall at this time kept much the same official establishment as Thurso it was clearly a profitable port to the revenue.

The explanation of these figures lies in the Navigation Laws. Ships from the American colonies with "enumerated" articles had to put in at a British port and pay their customs, even if the goods were eventually destined for a continental port. American traders on their way to Amsterdam, Hamburg or Rotterdam, or even to St. Petersburg or Riga, found it convenient to take a northern passage, and for them Kirkwall was the most convenient place for these formalities. So in April 1744 the *Yucatan* of Boston, on her way home from Amsterdam, called in and paid a duty of over £200 on a cargo of cable yarn, bottle cases, linseed oil, looking glasses, water glasses, screw bottles, hair brushes, earthenware, canvas and a parcel of old junk. German linens of various kinds, "Ozenbrigs" and "Ticklenbrigs", figured heavily in this trade, as did metals, steel and brass, as well as dye stuffs and painters' colours, bricks, paper, salted smelts, lemons and dried fruits, drugs, books and goose quills. Unexpected items that often occur are children's toys, skates, violins, and lots and lots of barbers' aprons. From St. Petersburg the trade would be in skins and furs, canvas, cordage and flax, iron and honey. In 1760 this trade extended northwards and the *Dublin* of New

York passed through Kirkwall on her way home from Archangel with iron, cordage and canvas. This American trade by the northern route was exclusively through Kirkwall. Thurso had none of it, and the customs of Lerwick deal solely with salt imports and fish exports.

The incoming cargoes were less varied than the outgoing. Carolina rice was the staple of the trade. In the Midsummer quarter of 1761 six rice ships docked in Orkney, three each for Hamburg and Amsterdam. In the same quarter of the next year there were four, two for Amsterdam, one for Hamburg and one for Rotterdam. Other products from the southern colonies also found a market this way: logwood, sassafras and brazil-wood. In the Midsummer quarter of 1755 the *Industry* of Leith came in from Charlestown with 3,084 hundredweight of rice, but also carrying turpentine, cotton wool, indigo, myrtle wax and reeds, and left a week later with the whole of this cargo for Bremen. Ships of this tonnage could not have used the port of Thurso even if they had wanted to.[8] Not all the colonial cargoes came in American ships or from the thirteen colonies. For instance, the *Hull* of Hull, for St. Eustatia, came in the Midsummer quarter of 1747 with cable yarn, red and white lead, paper, tea, brimstone, linseed oil, window glass, wine, brushes, olive oil and tea tables, all for the white minority of the island. But mostly it was the Americans that made the Kirkwall customs profitable. They were not only individually more valuable as cargoes, but more regular in their visits than the rest of Orkney's trade. Here are the percentage, of ships from the Americas among those bringing in foreign cargoes, and of the American share in the duties of the ports in five-yearly blocks:

Years	American percentage of ships	American percentage of customs
1745-9	47	94·4
1750-4	47	95·9
1755-9	70	98·9
1760-4	77	97·9
1765-9	21	88·3
1770-4	14	84·5
1775-9	0	0
1780-5	0	0

Usually it took the American ships from three to seven days to clear their formalities and collect any extra victual they may have needed before sailing away again, but in the summer of 1763 business grew so great that there is every appearance of a traffic jam. The *Catherine* of New York entered on 2 September

and did not leave till the 12th: the *York* of New York took from the 7th to the 22nd, and the brigantine *Recovery* of Boston from the 7th to the 27th. Four more ships were slow in clearing, the snow *Johnson* of New York being delayed a whole month. Three years later this problem was met by a large increase of staff; Orkney was henceforward to have two landwaiters instead of one, a tide surveyor, six tidesmen instead of two, and four boatmen. The dating suggests that this was the result of representations about the bottleneck in American business, but it may also have been an attempt to prevent the notorious smuggling that took place in the islands.

In any case the improvement came too late for the American trade of the port which was killed by the quarrel with the colonies. Even before non-importation and the closure of Boston the Americans saw very little reason to go out of their way to obey the Navigation Laws. The American business going through Orkney shrank rapidly after 1764, and was mostly carried on in ships of the mother country. For instance in the Midsummer quarter of 1766 the only ship on this trade was the *London* packet of London, on her way from Charleston to Hamburg with rice. In 1767 there was one rice ship, the *Belvidere* of New York, but the next year the only one was the *Chichester* of Belfast. In 1771 two rice ships came in, one American and one English, but these were the last. The annual totals of the Kirkwall customs show the story.

	£		£
1763	488	1768	535
1764	5,275	1769	71
1765	1,032	1770	532
1766	1,262	1771	3,122
1767	717	1772	70

The start of actual war with the colonies had little effect here. The trade had already ceased. Artificial only, created by the coincidence of geography and law, it rested on no real economic basis. Kirkwall was not able to do as Glasgow did and develop new manufacturing lines to replace the profits from American callers.

Yet while it lasted the trade must have had its effect on the town of Kirkwall. There would be the unrecorded profits from the sale of gear or provisions to the ships. Besides, all the valuable cargoes had to pass, even if only nominally, through the hands of local merchants. The handling of such large

scale business not only brought in money but must have made contacts for overseas trade easy for these men. Not quite all the American cargoes went through the port untouched. In 1744 some 30 casks and 10 barrels of rice appear to have been left behind at Kirkwall, presumably for shipment to other Scottish ports, for this would have been enough to have kept Orkney in rice pudding for several years. In 1766 another two barrels were left by the *London* packet. In 1764 the Boston brigantine *Fly* from Amsterdam left at Kirkwall

3 quarters of pearl barley
3 quarters of raisins
3 quarters 14 pounds, of currants
1 hundredweight of prunes
12 pounds of ginger
16 pounds of coffee
1 pound of saltpetre for dyers
14 sugar loaves
a canister of brown candy
1½ reams of foolscap
½ ream of post paper
4 reams of brown paper
1 quarter 21 pounds of caraway seeds
1 quarter 21 pounds of aniseed
1 hundredweight of liquorice
a parcel of one box of candy, 4 pounds of painters' colours, 1 pound of pepper and 1 pound of ginger
a bag with 1 quarter 21 pounds of pearl barley
a bag with 21 pounds of raisins
a bag with 21 pounds of currants
a bag with 12 pounds of coffee
8 pounds of cotton wool.

The whole of this paid duty of £17 17s. 9½d. But this was an exceptional transaction. In the great majority of cases the American ships handled only material between America and the continent of Europe.

The Orkney merchants were already importing groceries of this sort on their own (Marwick 1939:90-1), though usually through other British ports and not direct, and it is not suggested that they needed the American ships to handle it for them. But it still seems likely that the contacts made in the American trade helped other business. Kirkwall seems to have been a more lively shopping centre than Thurso in the eighteenth century, and the Caithness lairds made use of it. William Sinclair of Freswick left the money from his victual

sales in the hands of his Edinburgh agent, and so could buy his luxuries in Edinburgh. But the more impecunious Sinclairs of Mey, who had to sell their corn quickly for what they could get locally, bought their wines and other comforts, their gloves, playing cards, lemons and writing paper, and all the luxuries for which they usually failed to pay, across the Pentland Firth.[9] Perhaps they simply hoped to get better credit there than nearer home, but it seems to have been the habit of Caithness to look to the more thriving mercantile life of Kirkwall for wider trade connections.

NOTES

[1] National Library of Scotland, MS. 1460 (Mackenzie of Delvine papers), f 78. The Caithness boll measured just over three quarters of an English quarter.

[2] "Your County Barley is not a saleable commodity here, and is seldom or ever disposed of without Meal," wrote David Lothian, lawyer in Edinburgh, to Sir John Sinclair of Mey, 13 May 1765. H.M. Register House, Edinburgh, Mey papers Box xix.

[3] H.M. Register House, Edinburgh, Customs Cash Books.

[4] Dr Webster made the total for the Orkney parishes 23,302 to Caithness's 22,215, in 1755. See Kyd 1952:77.

[5] These accounts are the basis of this paper, and except where stated all the information in it comes from them. As they are not paginated the reference by port, date and quarter, and name of ship is all that can be given.

[6] Marwick (1939: 71) gives examples of similar open boat journeys in the early part of the century.

[7] *O.S.A.* VII (1793) 475-6, parish of Cross and Burness. The writer lists 16 ships, a tonnage of 4,880, lost between 1773 and 1788 in this district.

[8] The largest corn cargoes using Thurso were about 750 quarters, but the usual size was between 300 and 500. This suggests a burthen of 40 tons as the maximum convenient for the river mouth.

[9] e.g. Mey papers Box xii, account with John Dunnet.

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

A. NOTES ON SCOTTISH PLACE-NAMES

20. *Path*

A not very frequent but nevertheless not unimportant element in the place-nomenclature from the Borders to the Moray Firth is *path*. It is most commonly found as the first part of the compound name *Pathhead* which occurs at least ten times on the Scottish one-inch maps: three times in Midlothian (in the parishes of Crichton, Kirknewton and Lasswade), twice each in Fife (in Dunino and Kirkcaldy), and Ayrshire (Dailly and New Cumnock), and once each in the counties of Dumfriesshire (St. Mungo's), East Lothian (Spott) and Kincardineshire (St Cyrus).[1]

In other instances, *path* appears as the second element of names like Cockburnspath, Hexpath, Redpath, Sisterpath (all in Berwickshire), and Merrypath Rig (Roxburghshire), Bentpath (Dumfriesshire), Neidpath Hill (Selkirkshire) and Neidpath Castle (Peeblesshire). For the last four names, as well as for a number of the Pathheads no really early spellings are available, but here is the relevant earlier evidence for some of the others:

PATHHEAD Midlothian (Crichton): *Pathheid* 1591-2 Register of the Privy Seal.

COCKBURNSPATH[2]: *Colbrandespade* circa 1130 Lawrie; *Colbrandespeth* 1335-6 Bain's Calendar; *Cowbrandispeth* 1443 Horne MSS.; *Coburnspeth* circa 1485 Wallace. The first element appears to be *Colbrand*, the name of a mythological Danish giant, but an identical personal name is, of course, always possible.

HEXPATH (Gordon): *Hextildespeth(e)* 1296 Instrumenta Publica, and Bain's Calendar; *Hecspeth* 1471 Horne MSS. Old English *hægstald* "warrier" forms the first part of this name.

REDPATH (Earlston): *Red(e)peth(e)* 1296 Bain's Calendar, 1494 Historical MSS. Commission; *Reidpeth* 1509-10 Register Great Seal; *Ridpetth* 1642 Blaeu. Probably not different from the modern meaning, unless the situation justifies derivation from Old English *hrēod* "reed".

SISTERPATH (Fogo): Sisterpeth 1335-6 Bain's Calendar; *Sestirpeth* 1451-2 and *Susterpeth* 1509-10 Register Great Seal.

From Old English *Sweoster-pæð*, here probably referring to nuns.

As it is not the purpose of this note to discuss the individual etymologies of these names we shall not comment on them further here. We are rather concerned with the meaning of the one constant element in all these names, the word *path*, for we cannot simply identify it semantically with the usual meaning of *path* as we know it from common usage to-day, nor can we, for that matter as *path* is one of those "difficult" Germanic words with initial *p*, with ease ascertain its pre-Germanic history.

With this in mind I want to re-examine briefly some of the findings recently published in an extensive article on our word by H. W. Bailey and A. S. C. Ross (1961). In their paper, the authors come to the conclusion that "besides its familiar meaning, it [*path*] has also the meaning 'valley' " and that "this latter meaning is attested in Anglo-Saxon, in later Northern English and Scottish, in East Swedish dialects, and possibly, in early Dutch place-names" (Bailey and Ross 1961:107).

For our discussion we shall here concentrate on the Scottish evidence which consists largely of place-name material. There is, first of all, the geographical position of the places referred to by the names listed above. In this respect, the *Pathheads* are particularly instructive as they indicate a relative position to the *path* in question. It can be shown that every one of them lies at the top end of a fairly steep track or road leading up the slope from lower lying ground. The names containing *path*—or rather its Northern Middle English form *peth* —as a second element are more difficult to assess, as obviously the settlement to which the name of the track was transferred could come into existence either at the top (Cockburnspath) or at the bottom (Redpath) of the slope which it ascended.

We do, however, also have a number of early references to the appellative *peth* itself, many of which do not seem to leave any doubt about the meaning of this word in Scotland. In 1496 we find this entry in the *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland* (I, 297): "To drew the Gunnis in peththis and myris"; similarly in 1558 (X, 344): "In gettyng and convenyng of oxin at the pethis". The phrase "pethis and muris" occurs again in 1544 (*Maitland Club* 1833; for this and the other excerpts see also Bailey and Ross 1961:113), quite obviously referring to parts difficult to negotiate during a journey, like tracks up steep slopes, and bogs; and as late as 1957 the *People's Journal*

reported from Banffshire that "the older folk of Gardenstown will welcome the provision of a new handrail at the Strait Path, the steep stair leading from the shore to the higher part of the village". None of these references, nor any others whose interpretation is clear, points to a meaning "valley", or the like, for Scottish *peth*. Nor can we accept for Scotland the meaning "a hollow or deep cutting in road" given by the OED on the basis of an incomplete, and therefore misleading, quotation from Patten's account of Somerset's expedition in which he explains the place-name *The Peaths* in Berwickshire from the fact that travellers have to ascend steep banks on either side of a valley "not by going directly, but by *paths* & foot ways leading slopewise". Unfortunately, Patten's etymology is not included in the OED quotation which gives the erroneous impression that the name derives from the valley itself. Without wanting to prejudice the semantic interpretation of material from other areas or languages, we therefore fully subscribe to the draft definition of *Peth* of the *Scottish National Dictionary*[3] for the (not yet published) part dealing with the letter *P*. This reads "A steep track or road, gen. leading down into a ravine (and up the other side), 'a footpath on an acclivity' which follows the contour of the slope."

NOTES

[1] The modern map also has a Pathhead in the parish of Cruden (Aberdeenshire), but as Alexander (1952:98) states that the older name was *pothead*, it is doubtful whether this name should be included here. A lost Pathhead is mentioned for the parish of Livingston (West Lothian) by Macdonald (1941:80); it is recorded twice during the last decade of the seventeenth century.

[2] The early spellings of this and the next three names have been competently collected by Miss May G. Williamson in her Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis on "The Non-Celtic Place-Names of the Scottish Border Counties (1944, p. 154-5), and are here quoted from this unfortunately unpublished work.

[3] The Editor, Mr David Murison, very kindly placed at my disposal the MS. collections for the SND and also generously allowed me to quote from his editorial notes.

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B. NOTES ON COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

Fear a' Churracain Ghlais

Seo mar a chuala mise bh'ann ma dheaghainn Fear a' Churracain Ghlais nan trì boghannan caorach (*sic*) 's na naong[1] saigheadan seilich a' dol a dh'iarraidh Nighean Rìgh Locha Tréig agus mar a faigheadh e i, i bhi aca fhéin.

Dh'fhalbh e agus rànaig e 'n caisteal agus bhuail e 'n dorus. Thanaig an dorsair 's dh'fhoighneachd e có bh'ann 's thuirt e gu robh esan, Fear a' Churracain Ghlais nan trì boghannan caorach (*sic*) 's na naong saigheadan seilich a' dol a dh'iarraidh Nighean Rìgh Locha Tréig agus mar a faigheadh e i, i bhi aca fhéin.

Chaidh an dorsair suas agus thill e nuas agus chuir e mach té 'ige ach dh'aithnich esan nach e Nighean Rìgh Locha Tréig a bha sen-ach 's thuirt e:

"Mar an cuir sibh," as esan, "a nuas ugam i 'n ceartair, a' chlach as àirde bhios as a' chaisteal 's i 's ìsle bhios ann an ceartair."[2]

"Tha," as an dorsair, "trì rudan agad ri dheanamh ma faigh thu i. Chiad rud," as esan, "tha fuamhaire mór a' fuireach as a' ghleann ad shuas air a bheil seachd cinn agus feumaidh tu mharbhadh." "Ceart gu leòr, ma tha," as esan.

Dh'fhalbh e 's bha e siubhal gos an do rànaig e 'n gleann, 's chùm e suas an gleann agus rànaig e taigh an fhuamhaire. Bhuail e aig an dorus. Thànaig a' fuamhaire mach 's dh'fhoighneachd e có bha seo. Thuirt e gu robh esan, Fear a' Churracain Ghlais nan trì boghannan caorunn 's na naong saigheadan seilich, agus dh'iarr e air tigh'nn a staigh. Chaidh e staigh 's shuidh e agus dh'éirich a' fuamhaire agus chuir e cnot air an dorus. Dh'éirich Fear a' Churracain Ghlais agus chuir e fhéin cnot air an dorus. Dh'éirich a' fuamhaire agus rinn e lasgan cridheil gàire chuir an taigh air chrith. Dh'éirich Fear a' Churracain Ghlais. Rinn e fhéin lasgan cridheil gàire. Chaidh an taigh air chrith. Leum na cnotan far an doruis, agus, 'n uair a leum, 'm bad a chéile gun deach e fhéin agus a' fuamhaire.[3]

Bha iad bogan eabair a mullach chreagan is chnoc agus 'n uair a bu lugha bhiodh iad fodha bhiodh iad fodha cho nan gliùinean agus 'n uair a bu mhutha bhiodh iad fodha bhiodh iad fodha go na sùilean gos ma dhéireadh thall an do smaointich Fear a' Churracain Ghlais gu robh e miosg a

The Man in the Little Grey Cap

This is how I heard it happened concerning the Man of the Little Grey Cap of the three bows of rowan and the nine arrows of willow going to seek the Daughter of the King of Loch Treig and if he might not have her let them keep her themselves.

He set out and reached the castle and knocked on the door. The porter came and asked who was there and he said that it was he, the Man of the Little Grey Cap of the three bows of rowan and the nine arrows of willow going to seek the Daughter of the King of Loch Treig and if he might not have her let them keep her themselves.

The porter went up and came back down and sent out a woman to him but he recognised that that was not the Daughter of the King of Loch Treig and he said:

"Unless you send her," said he, "down to me at once, the stone that is highest in the castle will be the lowest one in it presently."[2]

"You have," said the porter, "three tasks to perform before you get her. The first task:" said he, "there is a great giant living in that glen up yonder who has seven heads and you must kill him."

"Very well, then", said he.

He set out and kept going till he reached the glen and he kept on up the glen till he reached the giant's house. He knocked at the door. The giant came out and asked who was there. He said that it was he, the Man of the Little Grey Cap of the three bows of rowan and the nine arrows of willow, and he asked him to come inside. He went in and sat down and the giant rose up and put a bar on the door. The Man of the Little Grey Cap rose up and put a bar on the door himself. The giant rose up and gave a hearty peal of laughter which made the house tremble. The Man of the Little Grey Cap rose up. He gave a hearty peal of laughter himself. The house trembled. The bars leaped off the door and, when they did, he and the giant set upon each other.[3]

They made bog and mire on the tops of rocks and hillocks and when they sank least they sank up to their knees, and when they sank most they sank up to their eyes until at long last it occurred to the Man of the Little Grey Cap that he was among his enemies and far from his friends and he tripped the heels

naimhdean agus fad o chàirdean agus chuir e bacag aotrom aighearach air an fhuamhaire agus chuir e dhruim ri talamh.[4] Thug e mach an claidheamh agus shad e na seachd cinn dheth.

Thill e air n-ais go Loch Tréig 's bhuail e aig an dorus agus dh'fhoighneachd an dorsair có bh'ann, 's thuirt e ris gu robh esan, Fear a' Churracain Ghlais nan trì boghannan caorunn 's na naong saigheadan seilich agus gu robh e 'tilleadh air n-ais a' rithist—gun do mharbh e 'fuamhaire.

"*Well*," as esan, "tha dà rud agad ri dheanamh fhathast. Tha," as esan, "bann-fhuamhaire ann an gleann eile agus fcumaidh tu ise mharbhadh an toiseach."

Thill e air n-ais. Rànaig e far a robh bhann-fhuamhaire 'fuireach. Chùm e suas agus chual' e bhann-fhuamhaire 'tighinn. Ma bha 'fuamhaire air a robh na seachd cinn fiadhaich bha 'chailleach seachd uairean na b' fhiadhaiche. Chuile turus a bha i 'séideadh a h-anail bha i 'ga chuir air n-ais trì cheumannan agus a chuile turus a bha i tarrainn a h-anail 'ice bha i 'ga tharrainn 'ice ceum.[5] Ach a dh'ainneinn sen-ach chùm Fear a' Churracain Ghlais reimhe agus am bad a chéile gun deach e fhéin 's a' chailleach.

Bha iad bogan eabair a mullach chreagan is chnoc 's 'n uair bu lugha reagh iad fodha reagh iad fodha cho nan glùinean agus 'n uair a bu mhutha reagh iad fodha reagh iad fodha go na sùilean, gos ma dhéireadh thall smaointich Fear a' Churracain Ghlais a rithist gu robh e miosg a naimhdean agus fad o chàirdean agus chuir e bacag aotrom aighearach air a' chaillich agus chuir e 'druim ri talamh.[3] Chuir e chas air a h-amhaich agus dh'fhoighneachd e: "Dé", as esan, "d'éirig, a chailleach?" "O tha," as ise, "éirig mhath. Lig thus' air mo chois mi. Tha trùng òir agus trùng airgid agam-sa as a' ghleann ad shuas agus 's ann leat iad."

"'S ann liom sen," as esan, "agus do cheann comhla ris," agus shad e 'n ceann dhith.[6] Ach ma shad bu shuarach an t-sabaid a bh'aige reimhe seach an t-sabaid a bh'aige 'n uair sen a' cumail na (*sic*)[7] ceann on cholainn gos an do reoth an fhuil.[8]

Thill Fear a' Churracain Ghlais air n-ais go na chaisteil agus bhuail e 'san dorus a rithist 's dh'fhoighneachd an dorsair có bh'ann 's thuirt e gu robh esan, Fear a' Churracain Ghlais nan trì boghannan caorunn 's na naong saigheadan seilich a' dol a dh'iarraidh nighean Rìgh Locha Tréig agus gu do rinn e 'n dà rud a dh'iarradh air a dheanamh ma thràth.

of the giant lightly and gaily and laid him on his back on the earth.[4] He drew his sword and cast the seven heads off him.

He returned to Loch Treig and knocked at the door and the porter asked who was there and he told him that it was he, the Man of the Little Grey Cap of the three bows of rowan and the nine arrows of willow and that he was returning again —that he had killed the giant.

"Well", said he, "you have two tasks to perform still. There is," said he, "a giantess in another glen and you must kill her first."

He went back again. He reached the place where the giantess lived. He kept on going up and he heard the giantess coming. If the giant with the seven heads was fierce the hag was seven times fiercer. Every time she breathed out she drove him back three paces and every time she breathed in she drew him one pace towards her.[5] But despite that the Man of the Little Grey Cap kept going and he and the giantess set upon each other.

They made bog and mire on the tops of rocks and hillocks and when they sank least they sank up to their knees and when they sank most they sank up to their eyes until at long last it occurred again to the Man of the Little Grey Cap that he was among his enemies and far from his friends and he tripped the heels of the hag lightly and gaily and laid her on her back on the earth.[3] He placed his foot on her neck and asked: "What", said he, "is your ransom, hag?" "O", said she, "a fine ransom. You let me up. I have a chest of gold and a chest of silver in that glen up yonder and they are yours."

"That is mine," said he, "and your head along with it." And he cast off her head.[6] But if he did, the struggle he had before was trifling compared with the struggle he had then, keeping the head away from the body till the blood congealed.[8]

The Man of the Little Grey Cap returned to the castle and knocked at the door again and the porter asked who was there and he said that it was he, the Man of the Little Grey Cap of the three bows of rowan and the nine arrows of willow going to seek the Daughter of the King of Loch Treig and that he had performed the two tasks that he had been asked to perform so far.

Thuirt an dorsair ris gu robh aon rud eile aige ri dheanamh fhathast. Chan'eil cuimhneam dé 'n treas rud a bh'ann ach tha cuimhneam gu robh cunntais air gun do chuir e crioch air a' ghnothach sen cuideachd agus gun do thill e air n-ais agus gun d'fhuair e nighean Rìgh Locha Tréig airson a pòsadh; 's thug e dhachaidh i agus bha iad gu toilichte riamh as a dheaghaidh sen.

I recorded this text (S.S.S.RL.922.2) in North Uist in December, 1955, from my cousin Donald MacDougall, blacksmith, of Struan Ruadh, Malacleit. In all, I have recorded from him a total of twenty-four items of oral narrative, all of them interesting, and a number of songs. He is now aged about fifty and learned this tale as a boy from his grand-aunt and grand-uncle, Christina and Angus MacRury, also of Struan Ruadh.

Although some of the motifs which figure in the text occur also in other tales (see notes), it has certain unique features and I have not encountered anything quite like it in published sources. For example, I know of no other instance of a hero or character with a name like "The Man of the Little Grey Cap, of the Three Bows of Rowan and the Nine Arrows of Willow." And, again, the formula wherein the hero says that "if he may not have the princess they may keep her, but if they do, etc.", is an unusual one.

Admittedly, the winning of a princess by the successful accomplishment of various tasks is a commonplace in international tales (compare Aa.-Th.577, etc.) but this usually occurs only as an episode in a longer story. Further, the tasks accomplished by the Man of the Little Grey Cap are not of the kind usually found in types such as Aa-Th.577.

The text is unfortunately incomplete, the narrator having forgotten what the third task was. In this connection, it is interesting to note an incident which must have many parallels in the transmission of popular tales: Donald MacDougall told this tale to the late Angus MacLeod, tailor, also of Malacleit, who was himself an excellent story-teller. Having learned it, MacLeod added a third task of a fight with a bull for the sake of "completeness". He probably invented this episode, but it is just possible that he may have transposed it from another story. (See also Note 3 below.) Fights with bulls are not very characteristic of Gaelic tales, but one does occur as

The porter said to him that he still had one more task to perform. I cannot remember what the third task was but I do remember that it was accounted that he accomplished that mission also and that he returned and that he got the Daughter of the King of Loch Treig in marriage; and he took her home and they lived happily ever after.

a task in the quest for *Nighean Dubh Gheal Dearg* "The Daughter of Black White Red" (Campbell 1890:59). This tale, incidentally, bears a further resemblance to the present text in that the Son of the King of Erin goes to seek a princess and is given tasks to perform. His other tasks are, however, of a much more usual type, such as cleaning out a byre, which has not been cleaned for seven years (Augean stables), catching a wild horse, etc. All the tasks are accomplished in the regular way by means of magic help, and, in fact, the story as a whole differs widely from that of *Fear a' Churracain Ghlais.*

NOTES

[1] In the Sollas area of North Uist the form [nʌ́:ŋ] is regularly used by some speakers for *naoi* "nine"; it is, for instance, my own pronunciation. It can also be heard as [nʌ́:ŋŋ] and [nʌ́:ŋǵ], the last occurring most often when pronounced in isolation.

I cannot say what the exact distribution is, but the common North Uist form is [nʌ́:ɣ].

[2] Compare "The Battle of the Birds" (Campbell 1890:28, 41): The cook's son and the butler's son are sent out in turn in an attempt to deceive the giant who has come to claim the prince. On discovering their identity the giant returns and threatens the king: "Out here thy son, or in a twinkling the stone that is highest in the castle will be the lowest."

[3] Compare "The Lad of the Skin Coverings" (MacDougall 1891:38, 52): Fionn and the Big Lad enter a house in which they find eighteen score and eight *amhaisg* (mercenaries), who spring up and each put a bar on the door: the Big Lad puts on one bar so firmly that all the others fall off. *The amhaisg* all give a great peal of laughter: the Big Lad gives a laugh which drowns all theirs. On being asked, they say that they are laughing at the prospect of playing football with his head: he answers that he is laughing at the prospect of braining all of them—which he does.

This makes better sense than the episode in the present text. As a matter of fact, when Donald MacDougall first told me this story he added, without prompting, that he thought there was something about *amhaisg* at this point. He later withdrew this, again without prompting. This suggests two possibilities:

(*a*) That here we have a trace of the missing third task, a fight with *amhaisg*, fused with the first task of killing a seven-headed giant. This seems not unlikely.

(*b*) That the episode of the *amhaisg* belongs to another tale, in which case the incidents of barring the door and of laughing were probably not an original part of the story of *Fear a' Churracain Ghlais*.

[4] This Wrestling Run occurs in a number of Gaelic tales with slight variations. For further references see MacKay 1940:xv, 232.

[5] Compare, amongst other occurrences, "Conall Cra Bhuidhe" (Campbell 1890:116, 126). Conall, telling his own story, relates how he stole the spear of the snoring giant and "every time he breathed in, I thought I should go down his throat, and, when he breathed out, I was just as far back again."

[6] This motif also occurs in a number of Gaelic tales. The defeated ogre reveals where his or her "ransom" is to be found and is immediately put to death. The hoard usually consists of "a chest of gold and a chest of silver", sometimes with the addition of the "White Sword of Light" and vessels of salve. The motif generally occurs in association with the Wrestling Run (see note 3, above).

[7] A slip on the part of the reciter.

[8] For further references to the motif of the Self-Returning Head (Thompson Motif D 1602. 12, etc.), see MacKay 1940:38.

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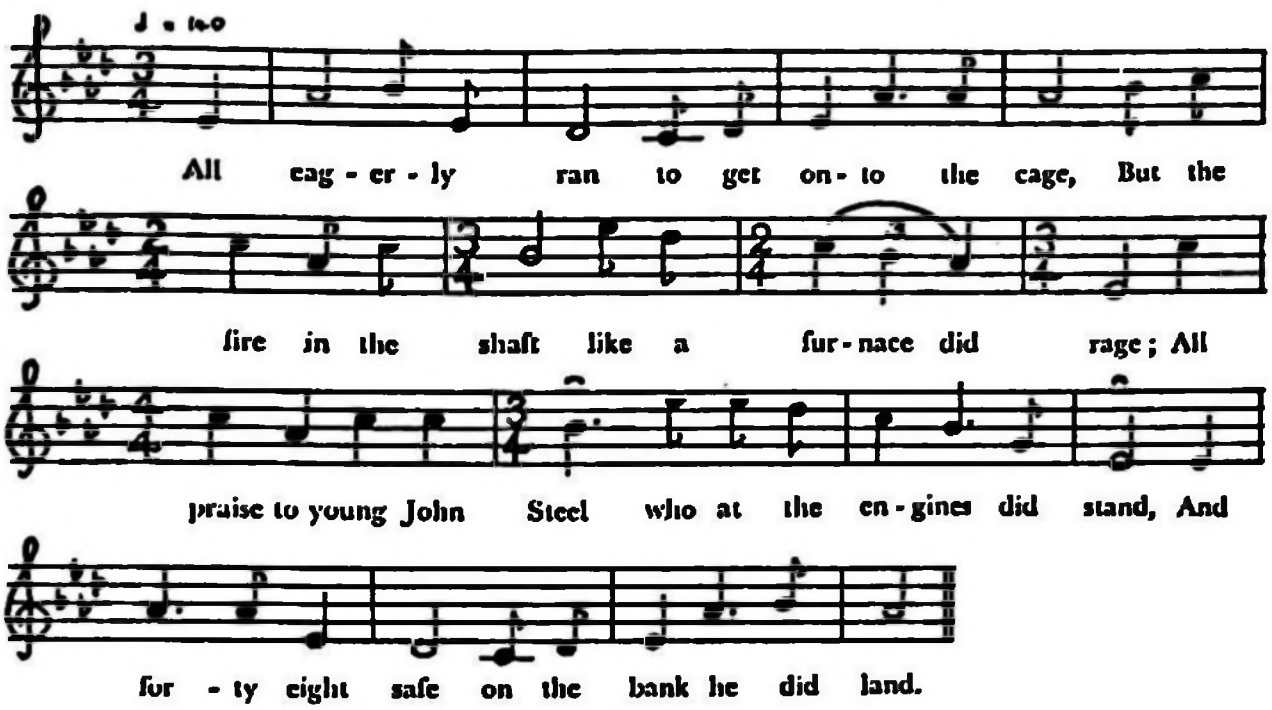
DONALD A. MACDONALD

A Colliery Disaster Ballad

The Scottish miners have a rich folk-song, much of which understandably reflects the arduous nature of their work, and its ever-present perils. Disasters like the Blantyre Explosion of October 22nd 1877 and the Donibristle Moss Moran Disaster of August 26th 1901 have been movingly commemorated in rough-hewn ballad stanzas. The following song, never previously recorded, was obtained from Rab Morrison, a 53-year

old miner, who is at present working in the Woolmet Colliery, Midlothian.



It was 18 and 70, Aprile the ninth day;
Ninety-six men and boys for their work took their way.
In health and in strength down the shaft they did go,
Never dreaming of how many would lie low.

For about twelve o'clock on that same fatal day,
"The pit-shaft's on fire!", the roadsman did say.
And quick through the workins the alarum he gave,
All praying to their maker their sweet lives to save.

All eagerly ran to get on to the cage,
But the fire in the shaft like a furnace did rage.
All praise to young John Steel who at the engine did stand,
And forty-eight safe on the bank he did land.

William Ralston, William Rushford and young David Muir,
By that terrible disaster you will see them no more.
Patrick and Peter M'Comiskie, aye, and Swanson likewise,
By that terrible disaster in their cold grave now lies.

Now widows and orphans who are now left to murn,
By that awful disaster they will never return.
But God is so merciful, as all mankind knows,
He will share in their sorrow, and soften their woes.

Rab Morrison, the singer, was born at Northrigg, two miles from Armadale, West Lothian. His father was a miner. He started working in the pits when he was thirteen, getting

1/11d. a day in the Woodend Colliery. Since then he has been all round the Lothian pits, and has learned songs wherever he has gone.

He first heard the "Starlaw Disaster" ballad sung when he was eighteen, but he had seen the text of it before then; it was on a ½d. broadsheet which his father had "lying about the house". A young miner, Jimmy McGovern, knew the tune of the ballad, but did not have much of the text; consequently, a fair exchange was promptly effected.

Rab thought the song was about the "Blantyre Disaster"—this was, indeed, his title for it—but the facts as related in the ballad do not confirm this supposition. The date, and the names of the deceased, identify the event as the Starlaw Disaster, which happened on Saturday, April the 9th, 1870. The following account of it appeared in *The Scotsman* on the following Monday:

> A colliery accident, by which seven men lost their lives, and several others were more or less seriously injured, took place at Starlaw, near Bathgate, on Saturday. It was caused by the wood work of the upcast shaft catching fire. The alarm was given a few minutes before noon, and at this time there were 56 men and boys in the pit. The work of extricating them was carried on under prodigious difficulties, the unfortunate men being literally dragged through the flames that filled the shaft. At length the cage rope was burned through, thus sealing the fate of seven men who remained in the pit, and whose bodies were not recovered till the fire had been got under, and the ventilation of the pit restored at a late hour in the evening. Of those who have been injured, one lies in a hopeless and another in a precarious condition.

On another page of the same issue of *The Scotsman*, a more detailed account of the disaster shows that the words "all praise to young John Steel" were amply deserved. They refer to the engineman, James Steel, who saved the lives of most of his mates by raising and lowering the cage with the utmost expedition.

> The attempt to quench the fire proved utterly futile. In spite of all the water that could be poured down, the flames kept gathering strength with frightful rapidity, till they blazed out with such violence as to render it almost impossible to approach the pit-mouth. Meanwhile, the brave Steel, though exposed to scorching heat, stuck manfully to his engine, lowering and raising with the utmost precision the cage which formed the only hope of the poor miners below. Of course, only the cage in the downcast was avail-

able. The other being attached to the same drum, had made two or three descents into the roaring furnace of the upcast, when the rope yielded to the fire, and it dropped to the bottom. Fortunately, the rope in the downcast held on for a few minutes longer, though it, too, caught fire shortly after the other. Thanks to Steel's nerve and presence of mind, no time was lost, the cage, we are told, being lowered and raised in little more than a minute. For five or six trips it came up loaded with miners, 8 or 9 men having in each case packed themselves into a space intended for four. So deftly was the operation managed, that as fast as the poor fellows, running from various distances in the workings, arrived at the pit-bottom, the cage was there to receive them and whirl them aloft to safety. It may readily be supposed, however, that the passage to the open air, swift as it was, seemed all too long to the occupants of the cage. The wood-work of the apparatus caught fire; the iron-work was nearly red-hot; in the up-cast shaft, separated from them only by a thin partition, a raging furnace threatened destruction; while the burning rope by which they were suspended seemed likely every instant to give way and leave them to their fate. So far, the actual progress of the fire had been confined to the upcast, but the down-draft carried the smoke and flame over the top of the partition into the downcast, and so into the pit, rendering the air quite stifling . . . At length, after several batches of eight or nine each had been safely brought to bank, the cage on its next descent came up empty. By this time, the fire had burst through the top of the partition and was blazing in full volume from both sections of the shafts, cutting off all possibility of ventilation, and giving rise to the most serious apprehensions as to the safety of those still in the pit.

Four more men—one of whom, William Rankine, subsequently died—were brought to the surface by the heroic James Steel; then the rope broke, and all hope for the seven miners still below had to be abandoned. Here are the names of the doomed seven, as printed in the newspaper:

James McNeill (45) leaves widow and four children.
William Rushford (35), widow and five children.
John McNeil (35), widow and five children.
William Wands (22), three months married.
Peter Comiskie (27), widow and one child.
Patrick Comiskie (24), widow and one child.
William Muir (17), unmarried.

Exactly a week after the disaster, a meeting of Lothian miners (convened at the instance of Alexander MacDonald, President of the National Association of Mineworkers) was

held in the Masonic Hall, Dalkeith. MacDonald spoke ("to a crowded hall") about the Mines Regulation Bill, then before Parliament. He declared that the then prevailing system of mine inspection was a farce, and that the government inspections were mere "accident enquiries". The new Bill should, he said, provide for heavy penalties in cases where mine owners failed to provide adequate safeguards, and where culpable negligence led to loss of life.

By late April, the campaign to secure amendments to the Mines Regulation Bill, a shilling advance in wages and shorter hours had gathered such momentum that McDonald decided to issue an appeal for a one-day strike:

". . . I would take the liberty of suggesting that you would suspend labour in every colliery, in every district, in every mining county in Scotland on the 13th or 14th of May". (Page Arnot 1955:51)

Meanwhile, the balladmaker was probably already at work. The *Scotsman* report, quoted above, is proof that the song provides an excellent factual précis of the event; it is both chronicle and elegy. We may safely infer that the author was a miner-balladeer who composed the song almost immediately after the disaster. "It goes to the heart, the thought of the pitman stirred by the drama of some strike or disaster, who sits by candle-light with a blunt pen in his fist, staring at a piece of paper on which he has written the opening phrase: 'Come all ye bold miners . . .', and who wrestles by scratch and score with his rough, stubborn muse, till day dawns and the pit buzzer blows, and another ballad has come bawling or timorous into the world." (Lloyd 1952:17).

One of the dead miners, as we have seen, was a boy of seventeen. No wonder, therefore, that the unknown balladmaker chose for his tune a variant of a familiar Scottish tune for "The Bonny Boy is Young But He's Growing"—the exquisite elegiac ballad, not in Child, which Cecil Sharp called "Still Growing". Although it has been collected all over the British Isles, and in America, "Still Growing" is very likely of Scottish origin. Robert Burns collected a fragment of it, and "embellished" it with other stanzas of his own composition (Johnson 1792: No. 377). James Maidment prefaced the version ("The Young Laird of Craigston") which he printed in *A North Countrie Garland* (1824) with a circumstantial historical note identifying the "bonnie lad" with John Urquhart, Lord Craigston, who was married to a girl several years his senior,

and died in 1634 while still a youth. Maidment's version retains some prosaic details ("He's likewise possessed of many bills and bonds") which suggest that it is in fact an 'ancestor' variant of "Still Growing" as it now circulates, and not merely an early Scottish localisation.

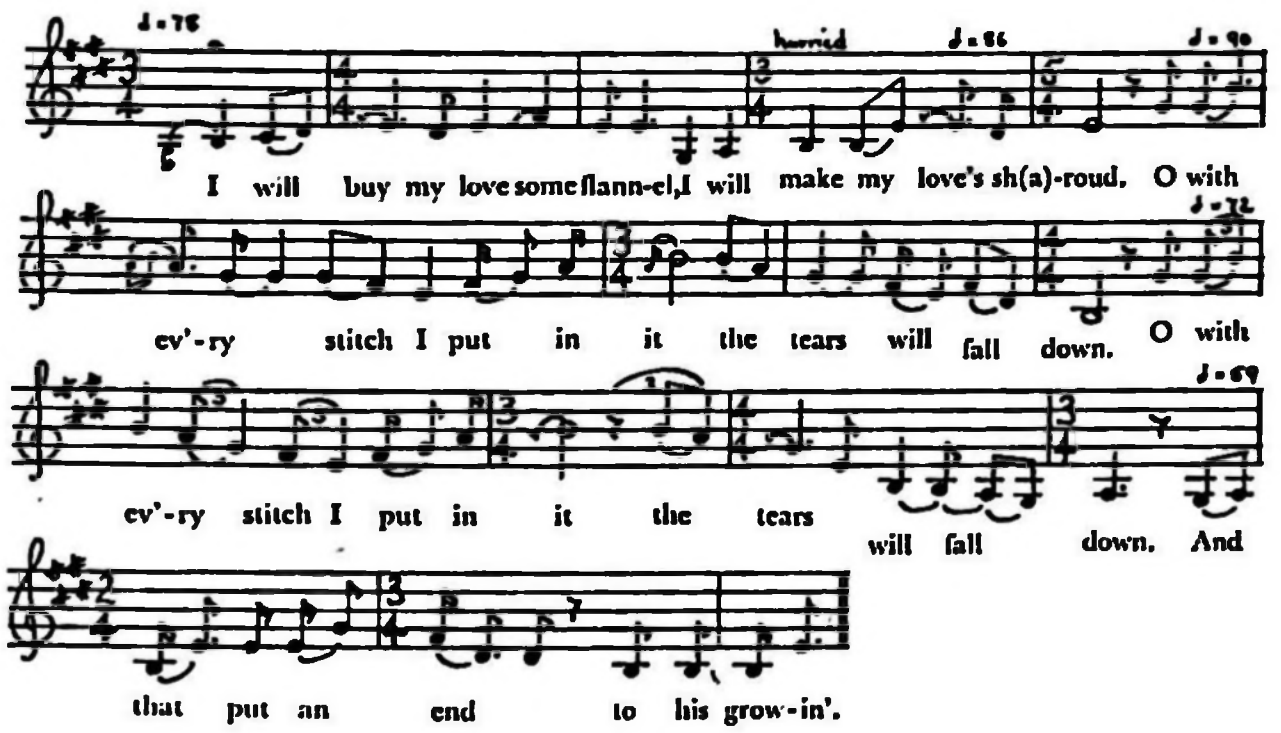
In 1960, I recorded from Lizzie Higgins (daughter of Jeannie Robertson, the Aberdeen ballad-singer) a version of "Still Growing" which she had learned in the tattie-fields of Angus. The text of this version is as follows:

O father, dear father, pray, what is this you've done?
You have wed me to a college boy, a boy that's far too young.
For he is only seventeen and I am twenty-one.
He's my bonny, bonny boy, and he's growing.

For we were going through college, and some boys were playing ball
When there I saw my own true love, the fairest of them all.
When there I saw my own true love, the fairest of them all—
He's my bonny, bonny boy, and he's growing.

For at the age of sixteen years he was a married man,
And at the age of seventeen the father of a son.
And at the age of twenty-one he had become a man,
But the green grass o'er his grave it was growin'.

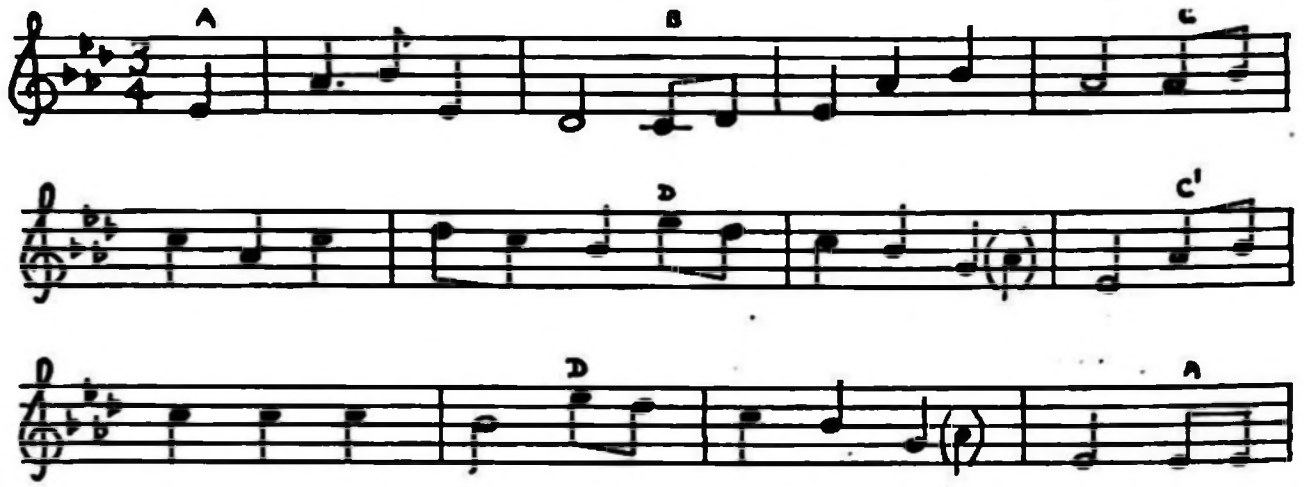
I will buy my love some flannel, I will make my love's shroud;
With every stitch I put in it, the tears will flow down.
With every stitch I put in it, the tears will flow down,
And that put an end to his growin'.



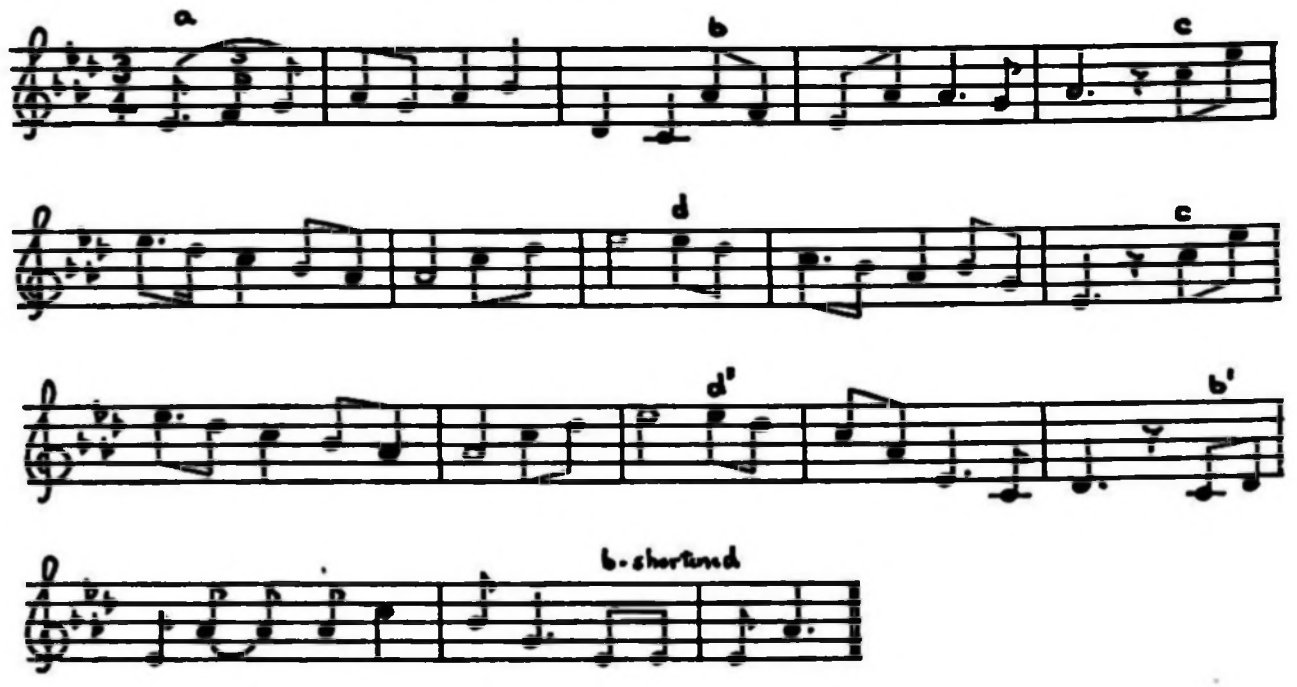
I am indebted to my colleague Miss Gillian Johnstone for the following note on the resemblance between Rab's tune for the "Starlaw Disaster", and the haunting melody for "The Bonny Boy" sung by Lizzie Higgins:

The resemblance between these two tunes is indeed striking, and may be seen very obviously in the norms. It must be realised that these "norms" never actually occur in performance, and may never have occurred; but on the evidence of all the renderings for the several verses, and taking into consideration the normal pattern of spoken word-stresses, it is possible to find a version which may form a kind of ideal, purely conceptual, of which all actual renderings are variations. In the norm here I have transposed Lizzie Higgins' tune from E^{b} to A^{b} to facilitate comparison.

Norm 1 (Rab Morrison, "The Starlaw Disaster")



Norm 2 (Lizzie Higgins, "The Bonny Boy")



Both melodies have a simple 4-line structure, the first AB, CD, C^1D, and AB, and the second a little more complicated, ab, cd, cd^1, b^1 b-shortened. There are two main differences between them, in phrase endings and in degree of ornamentation, and I would like to suggest that these are modifications of a single tune under the influence of two very different traditions of singing style and applied to two different types of song.

Rab Morrison has the classical ballad style, where the melody is the vehicle for the words but does not enhance them except in a very general way. It is a narrative style, with a steady, fairly fast movement, carrying the listener through a series of events in different moods, moods which are rarely commented on by the singer in his rendering. The structure of the song is foursquare, each line considered basically a unit, as in spoken ballads, and each mid-line phrase ending carrying the melody directly on to the next phrase. Lizzie Higgins, in contrast, has a much slower, more declamatory, expressive way of singing, and this demands ornamentation. Not only are all possible gaps in the basic melody filled with repeated and adjacent notes, but grace-notes are found in addition to these. "The Bonny Boy" is a one-mood song, and the melody has a dramatic shape of its own. It opens prosaically, not even a modulation disturbing or quickening the even flow of the first line. This turns out to be an effective introduction to the bold emotional heights and depths of the second and third lines. The song finishes with a quiet tailpiece of a fourth line, in a delicate contrasting rhythm, its finality and pathos emphasised by the shortened last phrase. The second and third lines have a four-part structure of their own, with a sustained climax in the middle of each which is perfectly borne by the repeated notes at the end of the first phrase and beginning of the second. The modulation at the end of the third line provides a breakwater for the emotion and prepares the listener for the relief and balancing effect of the fourth.

Thus the modifications of the norms evolved in the different singing styles are seen to be functional, and the two songs, basically so alike, perhaps indeed the same, turn out to be in detail and effect so very different.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am indebted to Mr George Hamilton, Gilmerton, for drawing my attention to this item in Mr Morrison's repertoire.

HAMISH HENDERSON

Transcriptions and Musical Notes by GILLIAN JOHNSTONE

Some Gaelic Place-Rhymes

Printed below are some fine examples of Gaelic place-rhymes which have reached the archives of the School of Scottish Studies recently.

The first of them was kindly sent to me in 1960 by Mrs M. C. Macfarlane of Taynuilt who learned it from her father. It refers to the small farms in Glen Lonan and Glen Luachragan on the south side of Loch Etive and, according to Mrs Macfarlane, did not serve "any particular purpose but was just a play on the vowel sounds emphasising positions of the various place."

Clacha dubh an aghaidh sruth
Aig bun a' bhruthaich bhòidhich;
Bàrr-a-goillein 'n oir na coille
'M moch an goir an smeòrach;

Barra-glas a' bhruthaich chais
's e laiste leis an neòinean;
Dùn t-samhnachain nan samhnachan
Far nach gann an lòn dubh ;

Baile 'n deòra an uchd na treòir
An corraichead Mhuc Càrna;
Luachragan nan cluanagan,
A' tuathrachadh gu sàile.

Clachadow facing the stream
At the foot of the beautiful slope;
Barguillean at the edge of the wood
Where early sings the thrush.

Barglass of the steep slope
Which is ablaze with daisies;
Duntanachan of the large river trout
Where there is no scarcity of blackbirds.

Balindore in the breast of the ploughed land
In the steepness of Muckairn;
Luachragan of the small pastures
Lying northwards towards the sea.

Another rhyme was recorded by my colleague, Mr Donald A. MacDonald in October 1962 from Mr Peter Morrison of Sandbank, Grimsay, North Uist. Mr Morrison, now 73, used to hear his mother sing it when she was spinning. It is item RL 1897 A.2 in the School of Scottish Studies Sound Archive, and refers to places in North Uist.

Refrain 1 { Hó-ro Iolaraidh, Iolaraidh, Iolaraidh
Hó-ro Iolaraidh, 'm Baile Sear, Bearnraidh.

'S fhada bhuam Lìrinnis, Càirinnis, Grìminnis,
'S fhaha bhuam Lìrinnis, 'm Baile Sear, Bearnraidh.

Refrain 2 { Hó-ro Iolaraidh, Iolaraidh, Iolaraidh,
Hó-ro Iolaraidh, baile ceann tràghad.

Tao' siar, tao' siar, tao' siar Sholais,
Tao' siar, tao' siar, tao' siar Sholais,
Tao' siar, tao' siar, tao' siar Sholais
Beinn Dubh a' Chaoil, Aird a Bhorain.
(Refrain 1 & 2)

Fraoch a Ròmaidh 's muran a Bhàlaidh,
Fraoch a Ròmaidh 's muran a Bhàlaidh,
Fraoch a Ròmaidh 's muran a Bhàlaidh
'S fhada bhuam Druim Dubh Bhaile Ràghaill.
Refrain (1 & 2)

Mo bheannachd fhìn do thìr na lochan
Do thìr an fhraoich 's nan daoine cosant'
Do thìr an àigh is b' àird' a moladh
Do thìr mo ghràidh far 'n tàmhainn sona.
Refrain (1 & 2)

Refrain 1 { Hó-ro Illeray, Illeray, Illeray,
Hó-ro Illeray, Baleshare, Berneray.

Far away from me are Liernish, Carinish, Griminish,
Far away from me are Liernish, Baleshare, Berneray.

Refrain 2 { Hó-ro Illeray, Illeray, Illeray,
Hó-ro Illeray, township at the head of the shore.[1]

The west side, west side, west side of Sollas (three times)
Beinn Dubh of the Strait, Ard a' Mhòrain.

Heather from Ronay and bent from Vallay (three times)
Far from me is Druim Dubh of Balranald.

My own blessing to the land of the lochs,
To the land of the heather and of the industrious people,
To the land of joy, whose praise was highest.
To the land of my love where I would rest in happiness.

Another version of the same song was contributed to our archives by the Rev. William Matheson (RL 1335 A.5).

W. F. H. NICOLAISEN

NOTES

[1] This probably refers to Illeray and is taken in that meaning here. Mr Morrison, however, considers it to be a "lost" name.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank my colleagues Mrs Agnes MacDonald, Mr Donald A. MacDonald and Miss Marion MacLeod for the extensive help so freely given in the transcription, translation and general preparation of the Gaelic texts.

Examples of the Toirbhsgeir Tusker, or Peat Knife in Antiquity

This note is intended to illustrate the assistance that ethnological studies (in their material aspect) can bring to archaeological interpretation. I have selected a small group of implements which are an element in two large Iron Age hoards (plus one other find of the same period) found in the Border counties. These appear to me to have been both misdescribed and misinterpreted. I have endeavoured to correct the description and provide I think a more realistic interpretation.

The hoards concerned were found at Eckford, Roxburghshire, and at Blackburn Mill, Berwickshire, and both have the disadvantage of being nineteenth century "accidental" finds. They, together with the Oxnam, Roxburghshire, find also illustrated, are preserved in the National Museum of Antiquities. These metal work hoards were considered at length by Curle (1931-2:314 *et passim*) and comprehensively catalogued

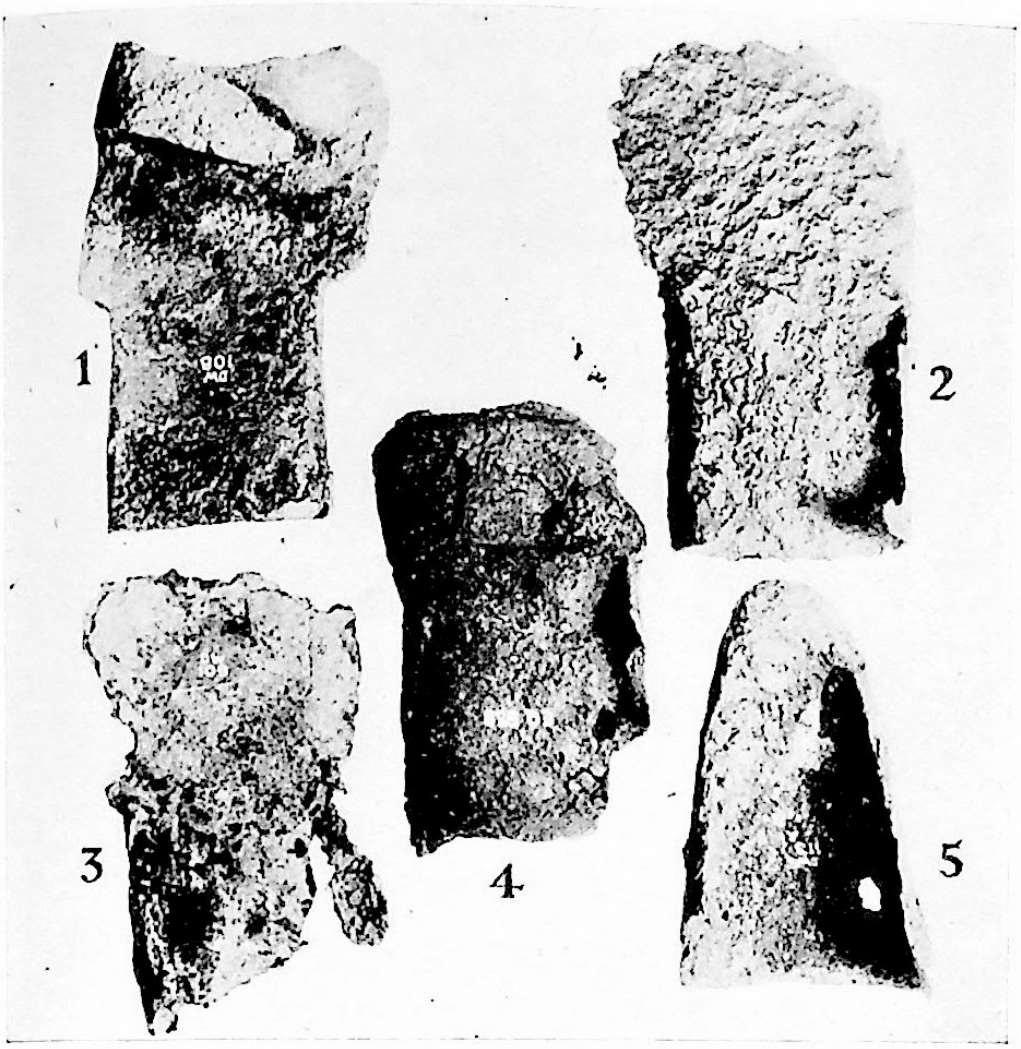


FIG. 1—Implements from Iron Age hoards.
(See p. 103).

FIG. 2—Peat spade from Glenuig, Moidart, Inverness-shire.
(See p. 105).

and illustrated by Piggott (1952-3:1-50). The particular elements with which this paper is concerned and which are illustrated by photograph (Pl. II) have been considered in isolation to the remainder by Payne (1947:82-111) and by Stevenson (1960:1-5).

I shall consider the objects which are enumerated 1-5 in Pl. II, fig. 1, individually as they have been described by the authorities cited. I give the National Museum reference in brackets with each item.

1. Blackford Mill (DW 108).

Curle—a hoe.

Piggott—a peat knife (although describing the wing or cutting blade—now folded over—as a foot rest). Further it is suggested that the close resemblance of this object to the modern implement may indicate intrusion.

Stevenson—A winged peat spade and considers its comparable state of preservation to other items in the hoard and indeed its character, as compared with 2, 3, and 4 below, to argue for contemporaneity.

2. Eckford (DWA 9).

Curle—a hoe or ploughshare.

Payne—a ploughshare—although the broadest early socketted share in Britain.

Piggott—a ploughshare with comparable examples from Traprain, and nos. 3, 4, and even 5 in this text.

Stevenson—casts doubt on the ploughshare interpretation and considers this object with nos. 3 and 4 below as comparable to 1 and similar in nature as possible narrow blade spades.

3. Blackford Mill (DW 109).

Piggott—sees this fragmentary example as a corroded form of 1 (this would cast doubt on the possibility of intrusion but thinks it comparable to his ploughshare 2.

4. Oxnam (EQ 538). (Found under a Roman cairn and probably of similar period.)

Payne—ploughshare.

Piggott—a comparable example of ploughshare to 2.

5. Blackford Mill (DW 113).

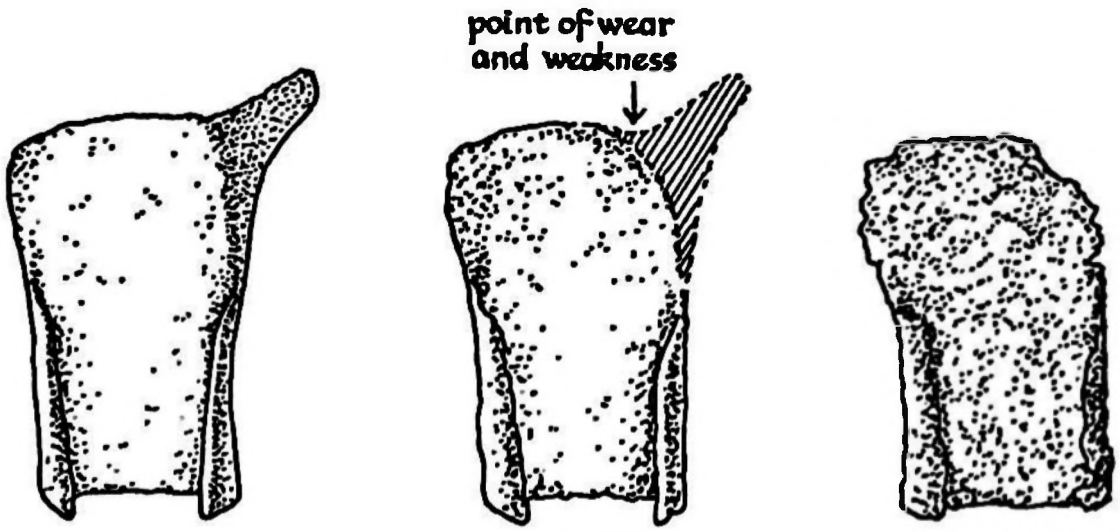
Curle—a ploughshare (or sock in normal Scottish usage).

Payne, Piggott—both accept this interpretation.

Certainly this object may be eliminated from the present assessment; although Piggott states otherwise it appears to this writer to bear no resemblance to any of the other items illustrated, being of thick cross section, pointed and of relatively massive proportions where the others are thin and blade-like.

In fact, despite Payne's supposition of a horizontal plough sock without turning capacity, nos. 2, 3 and 4, even when corrosion has been allowed for and it appears uniform, have always been blade-like objects, flat ended, and thin in cross section and would, if used as plough socks, have buckled on stones in a short space of time. Furthermore, the presence at that time of probable ploughsock 5 would seem to obviate any need for such flimsy devices. From their shape and their proportions the objects 2, 3 and 4 would appear to be blades and it is possible to argue with Stevenson that they were narrow blade spades. I should like to carry the matter a stage further, however.

Object 1 possesses a characteristic wear profile as the normal focus of wear on the peat knife is at the angle of wing and blade—the other edge of the blade receives virtually no wear at all. This wear is also concentrated on the lines of weakness in the implement where the wing has been folded at right angles to the blade. The initial stage of breakage or of corrosion tends to be either the fracture of the relatively flimsy wing itself as in 1 where the tip has disappeared, or the separation of the whole side of the blade with wing. I have endeavoured to represent the stages of this latter disintegration below.



TOIRBHSGEIR (peat knife)

Possible stages of corrosion and wear.

The striking characteristic of the corrosion pattern I indicate is the effect created of unbalance on the blade—a bulging or flaring to one side. This is I think quite obvious in the photographs of objects 1, 2, 3, 4 and it should be noted that as the reverse face of object 1 has been photographed in respect to the others, all four in fact flare in precisely the same manner. I would suggest then that while 1 is a peat knife at the middle stage of disintegration, 2, 3, and 4 are also probably peat knives which have lost their left hand face (as the user sees the implement) and that in fact all are left hand wing/right footed implements such as are in common use today (see Pl. II, fig. 2). In common use that is in the Highlands; the Border peat spade of recent times has been very much more a true broad spade.

It is no part of this note to consider the evolution of peat cutting in the Borders; that must await further evidence and research. This note merely seeks to demonstrate that it is possible to use the remarkable continuity of Iron Age technology to the present day, to interpret early objects in terms of current or recent usage.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

The photograph, Pl. II, fig. 1, is published by kind permission of the Keeper of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh. Fig. 2 on the same plate was taken by Prof. Ian Whitaker in May 1959.

IAN A. CRAWFORD

Sgeulachd Mhicheil Scot

'Se droch dhuine a bh'ann am Mìcheal Scot. Bha an diabhal aige mar each 'ga mharcachd. Bha e 'g obair anns an dòigh sin ùine mhór. 'Nuair a bhiodh iad a' dol bharr sàile dh'fhaighneachdadh an t-abharsain do Mhìcheal dé'n dòigh a bh'aige air a mharcachd feuch am faigheadh e a shradadh bharr a mhuin. Dh'éigheadh Mìcheal, "Marcaich thusa dhiabhuil na 's àirde." Ach co-dhiù mar a thuirt mi roimhe bha e 'g obair anns a dòigh so ùine mhór.

Bha sagart ann agus bha e ag ionnsachadh ann an colaiste, 's mu 'n deach e do'n cholaiste bha leannan aige. Bha e 's an cholaiste gus an d'fhuair e na bòidean. Dh'fhalbh e an sin as a' cholaiste 's thug e aghaidh air tighinn dhachaidh. Thàinig e gu tigh-fuirich agus thuirt e ris fhéin gu'n caitheadh e an oidhche ann. Dh'iarr e seòmar dha fhéin 's an tigh. Bha e leughadh 's an t-seòmar gun duine ach e fhéin 'nuair a dh' fhosgail an dorus 's thàinig boirionnach a stigh, agus sgàil air a h-aodann. Thog esan a cheann 's sheall e oirre ach cha d'thuirt e guth rithe.

"Cha n'eil thu 'g am aithneachadh idir," ars' ise.

"Tha mi smaointeachadh gu bheil mi 'gad aithneachadh," ars' esan. Co bh'ann ach a sheann leannan.

"'S fhearr dhuit," ars' ise, "na gnothaichean a ghabh thu a leigeil dhiot agus pòsaidh mi fhìn 's tu fhéin."

"Cha n'eil sin furasda dhomh," ars' esan.

"Tha e furasda gu leòr," ars' ise, "ma thogras tu fhéin."

Laigh i air leis a' bheul gus an tug i air làmh-sgrìobhaidh a chur ri pàipear gu'm pòsadh e i. "Nuair a fhuair ise sin dh' fhalbh i 's ghearr i mach air an dorus. An déidh dhi falbh smaointich esan gu'm b'e spiorad o'n dcomhan a bh'innte air a chur g'a bhuaireadh. Chaidh e dhachaidh a là-ar-na-mhài-reach agus dh'innis e dha athair an rud a rinn e agus thuirt e gu'n robh e falbh feuch am faigheadh e greim air a' ghealladh a thug e dhi.

"Falbh," ars' athair, "gu Mìcheal Scot agus ma tha fios aige [*sic*] duine 's am bith air an droch àite tha fios aige-san c'àite bheil e."

Ach co-dhiù ràinig an sagart Mìcheal Scot agus dh'innis e dha a' rud a bha e 'g iarraidh.

"Cha n'eil fhios agam-sa a laochain c'àite a bheil e na's motha na th'agad fhéin gcd a bha mi fichead turas ann. Ach co-dhiù ma dh'fhalbhas tu air a shon cùm t'aghaidh ris an àird a tuath."

The Tale of Michael Scot

Michael Scot was an evil man. He had the devil for a horse to ride and he acted in this way for a long time. When they went across the sea, the Adversary used to ask Michael how it was that he was able to ride him, so that he could shoot him off his back. Michael would cry, "Mount higher, Devil!" Anyhow, as I have already said, he acted in this way for a long time.

There was a priest who was studying at a college, but before he had gone to college he had had a sweetheart. He remained at college until he took his vows. Then he left college and made to return home. He came to a lodging-house and said to himself that he would spend the night there, and asked for a room. He was reading in his room all alone when the door opened and a woman came in with a veil over her face. The priest raised his head and looked at her but he said nothing to her.

"You don't recognise me at all," said she.
"I think I recognise you," said he.

Who was it but his old sweetheart. "You'd better renounce these things you've taken," said she, "and you and I will get married."

"That's not easy for me," said he.

"It's easy enough," said she, "if you want to."

She nagged at him until she made him write it down on paper that he would marry her. When the woman got this she bolted out of the door. After she had gone it came into his mind that she was a spirit come from the Devil to tempt him. The following day he went home and told his father about the thing he had done and said that he was going off to see if he could seize the pledge he had given her.

"Go to Michael Scot," said his father. "If anyone knows of the evil place and where it is, he does."

Anyway, the priest came to Michael Scot and told him what he was looking for. "I have no more idea where it is, my boy, than you have yourself—though I have been there twenty times. But if you do go looking for it keep your face to the north."

Dh'fhalbh an sagart. Bha e a' falbh 's a' siubhal a là 's do dh'oidhche 's cha robh tuar air dad fhaighinn. Thàinig e an sin gu gleann. Bha e a' faighinn droch fhàileadh an t-saoghail as a' ghleann. Chunnaic e brugh de thigh ann an ceann a' ghlinne. Chaidh e stigh. Bha seann duine liath a stigh.

"'S math a tha fios agam-sa," ars' an seann duine, "ceann do sheud agus do shiubhail."

"Tha mise," ars' an sagart, "gu math toilichte as a sin. An urrainn dhuit innse dhomh," ars' an sagart, "dé 'n t-astar a th'agam ri dhol fhathast."

"Cha téid thu fad 'sam bith tuilleadh," ars' an seann duine. "Cha n'eil e ach beagan air an taobh thall dhe so. Chì thu clach ghorm anns an talamh agus 's e sin an dorus, agus bheir thu leat a' choinneal so agus lasaidh tu i. 'Nuair a dh'fhosglas an dorus éighidh tu air a h-ainm-se Catriona Nic Leóid—agus mur a bi i ann no mur a bi i deònach am pàipear a thoirt dhuit teannaidh tu ceum a stigh leis a' choinneil."

Dh' fhalbh an sagart 's ràinig e an leac is bhuail e i.

Dh'fhosgladh an leac, las esan a' choinneal 's dh'éigh am fear a bh'air an t-slabhraidh rud 's am bith a bha e 'g iarraidh a ghreasad uige.

Dh'éigh an sagart air Catriona Nic Leòid 's thàinig naoidh naoidheannan a bhean a h-ainme chon an doruis. Cha robh i an sin idir. Dh'éigh e a rithist 's thàinig naoidh naoidheannan eile 's cha robh i ann idir. Dh'éigh e rithist 's thàinig naoidh naoidheannan eile 's bha i an sin.

"Thoir dhomh," ars esan, "an gealladh a thug mi dhuit."

"Cha tòir," ars ise, "agus is mi nach tòir." Theann esan ceum a stigh leis a' choinneil. Dh'éigh am fear a bh'air an t-slabhraidh.

"Greas uige rud 's am bith a tha dhìth air no théid thu ann an leaba Mhìcheil Scot a nochd." 'Nuair a chuala Catriona so shrad i an gealladh chon an t-sagairt.

"Matà," ars' esan, "o'n thàinig mise an so—'s gu'n toireadh Dia gu sàbhailt as mi—feumaidh sibh leaba Mhìcheil Scot a shealltainn dhomh."

Dh'fheuch iad dha i 's bha ballachan deighe air an dara taobh dhith agus gabhail uaine as an taobh eile.

Dh'fhalbh an sagart a mach 's thug e aghaidh air an taobh as an tàinig e. Thill e dhachaidh a thigh athar agus an gealladh aige. Chuala Mìcheal Scot gu'n tàinig e agus ghabh e cuairt g'a choimhead.

Off went the priest. Day and night he journeyed on and there was no sign that he was going to find anything. Then he came to a glen, and he kept being aware of the most unpleasant smell in the glen. At the head of the glen he observed a mound of a house. He went in and there was an old grey-headed man inside.

"I know the object of your journey very well," said the old man.

"I'm glad to hear that," said the priest. "Can you tell me how far I've still got to go?"

"You don't have to go much farther," said the old man, "it's only a little way beyond this. You will see a dark-blue stone in the ground: that is the door. Take a candle with you and light it. When the door opens, call her by name—Catriona MacLeod—and if she is not there or is unwilling to give you the paper, step one pace forward with the candle."

The priest went off, came to the flagstone and struck it and the flagstone was opened. The priest lit the candle. The person working the (door-) chain called out to hurry up and announce to him whatever it was he wanted.

The priest called for Catriona MacLeod and nine times nine women of her name came to the door. She was not there at all. He called again and another nine times nine came and she was not there at all. He called again and another nine times nine came and there she was.

"Give me the pledge I gave you," said he.

"No," she said, "not I."

He moved in a step with the candle. The person working the chain shouted, "Hurry up and give him whatever he wants or else you will go to Michael Scot's bed tonight!" When Catriona heard this she tossed the pledge to the priest.

"Well now," said he, "since I have come here—and may God bring me safely out of it—you must show me Michael Scot's bed."

They showed it to him: it had walls of ice on the one side and green flame on the other.

The priest left and went back the way he had come. He went home to his father's house with the pledge in his possession. Michael Scot heard of his arrival and came to see him. Michael

Dh'fhaighneachd Mìcheal dha ciamar a chaidh dha.

"Chaidh glé mhath dhomh-sa," ars' an sagart, "ach 's e mo thruaighe thusa an là a dh'fhàgas tu so."

"Am faca tu an leaba agam?" arsa Mìcheal Scot.

"Chunnaic," ars' esan.

"Bha fios agam," arsa Mìcheal, "gu'n robh i ann, ach cha do leig iad fhaicinn dhomh fhéin riamh i."

"Ach a Dhia Mhóir," arsa Mìcheal, "thoir thusa dhomhsa maitheanas air son na rinn mi. Cha dean mise car gu bràth tuilleadh ach a' falbh air mo dhà ghlùin ag iarraidh maitheanas air Dia gus an tuit mi marbh."

Thionndaich e ris an t-sagart, 's thubhairt e.

"'Nuair a bhàsaicheas mise," ars esan, "ni thusa teine 's caithidh tu ann mo chorp agus loisgidh tu mi. Chì thu calman agus fitheach a' tighinn. Ma bheir am fitheach leis an luath, caithidh tu air falbh leis a' ghaoith i. Is ma bheir an calman leis i gabhaidh tu cùram dhi agus tiodhlaicidh tu i."

'Nuair a bhàsaich Mìcheal loisg an sagart a chorp agus cha b'fhada gus an deach e 'na luath. Thàinig fitheach agus thàinig calman 's bha iad a' seòladh os cionn luath Mhìcheil. Thuirt am fitheach ris a' chalman.

"Dé chuir thusa an so? 'Sann dhomh-sa a rinn e a h-uile car a rinn e riamh."

"'S ann," ars' an calman, "ach 's ann dhomh-sa a rinn e an car mu dheireadh."

Theirinn an calman air an luath 's thug e leis làn a bheòil. Ghabh an sagart cùram de'n luath 's thiodhlaic e i.

Bha cràidheach ann agus bha e 'g aoradh do Dhia ann an uamha creige fad fichead bliadhna agus eun a' tighinn uige le bhiadh a Flaitheanas. An là bha so bha an t-eun fada gun tighinn agus dh'fhaighneachd an cràidheach dha dé bha 'g a chumail.

"'S mór sin," ars' an t-eun, "an rud a bha 'gam chumail an diugh. Bha banais agus mór shòlas againn ann am Flaitheanas an diugh agus anam Mhìcheil Scot air tighinn ann."

"Mìcheal Scot," ars' an cràidheach "duine bu mhallaichte a bha riamh air an t-saoghal agus mise an so ag aoradh do Dhia o chionn fichead bliadhna."

Dh'fhalbh an cràidheach 'na mheall teine do na speuran.

Fhuair e àite Mhìcheil Scot ann an Ifrionn agus fhuair Mìcheal Scot aite-san ann am Flaitheanas.

asked him how things had gone with him. "Very well for me," replied the priest, "but God help you the day you leave here!"

"Did you see my bed?" asked Michael Scot.

"Yes," he said.

"I knew it was there," said Michael, "but they never let me see it myself. Oh God," said he, "forgive Thou me for all I have done. I will never do one thing ever again but go about on my two knees asking forgiveness from God till I drop dead!"

He turned to the priest. "When I die," said he, "you will make a fire and you will cast my body on it and burn me. You'll see a dove and a raven approaching. If the raven bears away the ashes, scatter them to the winds, but if the dove bears them away, take care of them and bury them."

When Michael died, the priest burnt his body and it soon turned to ashes. A raven came and a dove came and they sailed above Michael's ashes.

"What sent you here?" said the raven to the dove. "It was for me he did everything he ever did."

"Yes," said the dove, "but it was for me he did the last."

The dove descended on the ashes and bore away a mouthful. The priest took care of the ashes and buried them.

There was a holy man worshipping God in a rocky cave for twenty years, and a bird used to come to him with food from Heaven. One day the bird was late in coming and the holy man asked it what had kept it late.

"No small thing," said the bird, "is that which has kept me late today. We had a feast today in Heaven and great joy with the arrival there of the soul of Michael Scot.

"Michael Scot!" said the holy man. "The most accursed man who ever lived—whereas I have been here worshipping God for twenty years!"

The holy man went off in a blaze of fire to the skies.

He got Michael Scot's place in Hell and Michael Scot got his place in Heaven.

This "Tale of Michael Scot" is taken from the MS collection of folk-tales made in Eriskay in the thirties by Mr. Donald MacDonald, a native of the island and now schoolmaster there. He made this collection on behalf of the Irish Folklore Commission in Dublin whose library now houses the original MS. The text given here is printed *literatim* from a microfilm copy kindly presented to the School of Scottish Studies by the Director of the Commission, Prof. J. H. Delargy.

The story is an international folk-tale—"The Devil's Contract" (Aa-Th. 756B)—schematised as follows (Thompson 1961:260-1):

1. *Journey for the Contract.* (a) A boy who has been sold to the devil before birth journeys to hell to get back the contract. (b) A hermit from whom he has asked the way, directs him to a robber, his brother. (c) The robber takes him to hell.

2. *The Fires of Hell.* (a) In hell the youth obtains his contract and (b) sees the fiery bed or chair prepared for the robber.

3. *The Penance.* (a) Thereupon the robber does penance until his staff puts forth fresh blooms and fruit; assured of forgiveness, he dies happy.

4. *The Hermit.* (a) The hermit is astonished but reconciles himself to God's judgment; or (b) blasphemes God and is damned.

The story is well known in Ireland, but of the seven versions[2] cited by Thompson (loc. cit.) only four conform at all closely to the archetype. A journey to Rome (in all but one, to visit the Pope) appears in four versions, in two of them this being made on the Devil's back. In one of these, the Devil keeps urging his rider to utter certain words (the reciter did not know what they were) which, if spoken by the rider, would enable the Devil to hurl him into the depths of the sea.

This motif of the magic journey on which a man is borne on the back of an evil spirit (Thompson 1956:374) appears in the only other Michael Scot story known to me in Gaelic: *Mar a fhuair Mìchell Scot fios na h-Inid as a Ròimhe agus a chuir e crìoch air a' bhi' dol an sin g'a sireadh.* ("How Michael Scott obtained knowledge of Shrove-tide from Rome, and how he caused the going there for the purpose of ascertaining the knowledge to cease.") (Campbell 1889:46-53). George Buchanan is the hero in a version in the School of Scottish Studies Archive (RL 1493.A 1). It is also touched on in the story-teller's introduction to the present tale. In each tale the

supernatural steed tries to dislodge his rider either by obtaining the secret of his "horsemanship" or by making him utter certain words. In the notes to the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Sir Walter Scott retails some of the stories of Michael Scot that were still current in the lowlands at that time. (Logie Robertson 1926:64-5). In one of these Michael Scot makes a journey to Paris, where he is carried on the back of his familiar demon in the shape of a black horse. Here again the request for the formula appears. As in the Gaelic story of Michael Scot's ride, the required formula is the Paternoster—evil spirits being known to disappear at the mention of God's name. But Michael Scot only replies, "What is that to thee? Mount Diabolus and fly!" The words ascribed to him in the introduction to the present story are strikingly similar.

It is probable then that this international motif of the journey on a demon's back first became associated with Michael Scot in the lowlands, whence it was borrowed into Gaelic. How he came to be associated with 756B is more difficult to answer. The use of his name here may be quite fortuitous: it is sufficient that Michael Scot was a noted wizard. On the other hand, unless it is a coincidence that some Irish variants of 756B contain the episode of the journey to Rome on the devil's back, we may suggest that there existed a Gaelic-Irish ecotype of 756B in which this journey is a motif. That is to say, a story was known which told how Michael Scot travelled on a demon's back; hence it was natural that his name should be introduced in other tales that contained the same motif. Which of these interpretations is true remains, in the absence of much more evidence, obscure.

The motif of the raven and dove, though integral to 756B, does not appear in the Irish tales cited by Thompson, but it is known elsewhere in Scottish Gaelic tradition, particularly in the story of the death of Coinneach Odhar (MacKenzie 1909: 79; *cf.* MacDonald 1961:183).

NOTES

[1] At the end of his transcript of the story presented here, Mr. MacDonald gives the following details about collecting it:

"I obtained 'Sgeulachd Mhicheil Scot' from Duncan MacInnes (73) a fisherman, residing at Rudha Bàn, Eriskay, Isle of South Uist. Duncan is better known as Donnachadh Nan Sgeulachdan (Duncan of the Stories) and he is one of the few that are left in Eriskay of the really good story-tellers.

I wrote this story down on July 12th, 1933."

[2] The versions, all from *Béaloideas*, are: Vol. 1 (1928) 304-5: "Brian Bráthir" (in Séamas Ó Duilearga "Measgra Sgéal ó Uíbh Ráthach"); 4 (1934) 64-5: "An Flaithbheartach" (in Mairtin Ó Cadhain "Sgéaluigheacht Chois-Fhairrge"); 14 (1944) 209-11: "Déan Breathnach, an Locharnach" (in Seán MacGiollarnáth "Sgéalta ó Mhicheál Breathnach"); 18 (1948) 74-7: "Seomra Ó," and 77-9: "Breithiúnachas Aithrighe" (in Seán Ó Dubhda "Díoghlaim Duibhneach"); 21 (1951-2) 65-73 and 73-8: "An Seomra I n-Ifreann" *a* and *b* (in Seán Ó Súilleabháin "Scéalta Cráibhtheacha"). See also Séamas Ó Duilearga, *Leabhar Shedin Í Chonall* (Baile Átha Cliath 1948) 420-2.

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JOHN MACINNES

C. OTHER NOTES

The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow (Child 214)

Writing well over fifty years ago, the great collector of Scottish folk-song, Gavin Greig, held that " 'The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow' is unquestionably the most widely known of our old ballads," (*Folk Song of the North-East*, Peterhead, 1907-09, No. LVII). This he maintained on the basis of his direct personal contact with folk tradition, in apparent contradiction of the then extant published records. In Francis James Child's definitive collection, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, for example, *The Twa Sisters*, *Lord Randal*, *Lamkin*, *Sir Hugh*, and *Mary Hamilton* are all represented by more versions than *The Dowie Dens*, and *The Elfin Knight* and *The Cruel Mother* by an equal number.

In our own day, however, the collecting done by members of the School of Scottish Studies has borne out Greig's contention. *The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow* (also known as *The Braes o' Yarrow*) is indeed the classic ballad most frequently collected in Scotland today, being represented in the School's archives by more than twenty versions. These have been gathered from all sections of the country, and exhibit a great deal of fascinating variation within the basic type. So well known is the ballad, that it has appeared in several instances as one of the few Scots songs in the repertoires of native Gaelic singers.

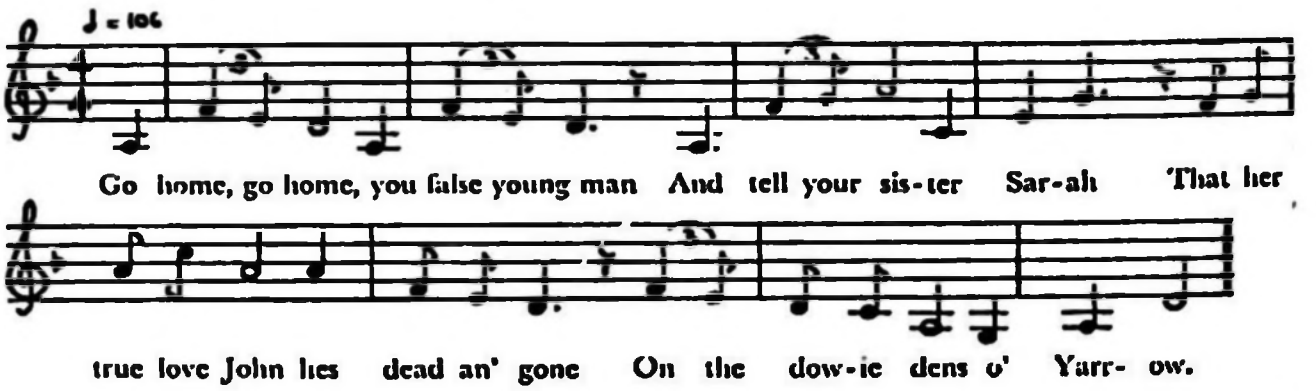
One of the finest versions in the School's collection is the following, collected from John Adams of Glenlivet, in October, 1953, by Hamish Henderson. Mr. Adams indirectly attested to the popularity of the ballad by recalling that it was one of the few songs his father had chosen to write down from his own extensive repertoire, forty years earlier.

The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow

There lived a lady in the north,
You could scarcely find her marrow;
She was courted by nine noblemen,
And the ploughboy John o' Yarrow.

As he cam' ow'r yon high, high hill,
And doun the glen so narrow,
T'was there he spied nine armed men,
Who fought with him at Yarrow.

It was three he slew, and three withdrew,
And three lay mortally wounded,
But this fair maid's brother stepped in behind,
And stabbed his body thorough.



Go home, go home, you false young man,
And tell your sister Sarah
That her true love John lies dead and gone,
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow.

Oh she went ow'r yon high, high hill,
And doun the glen so narrow,
T'was there she spied her brother John,
Returning home from Yarrow.

Oh, brother dear, I've had a dream;
I fear it will prove sorrow;
For I dreamt that you were spilling blood,
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow.

Oh, sister dear, I can read your dream,
And I fear it will prove sorrow:
Your true love John lies dead and gone,
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow.

Her hair it being three quarters long,
And the color o' it being yellow,
She twined it round his middle sma',
And bore him home from Yarrow.

Oh, daughter dear, dry up your tears,
And give up all your mourning,
For I'll wed you to a better far
Than the ploughboy lad o' Yarrow.

Oh, father dear, you may hae seven sons,
Though you wed them a' tomorrow,
There's nae a fairer flour in a' the lond
Than the ploughboy o' Yarrow.

Oh, mother dear, go mak' my bed,
And make it soft and narrow;
For the lad that died for me today,
I'll die for him tomorrow.

Now this fair maid, being sore with child
To the one she loved so dearly,
Has turned her pale face to the wall,
And died with grief and sorrow.

I am engaged in a study of *The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow* in Scottish tradition, and would be indebted to any reader who could supply me with a version or versions of it. Information regarding the history of the ballad, details of when, where, and from whom the version was learned, and comments on the ballad's popularity in any Scottish community would also be most useful, and will be gratefully acknowledged.

RICHARD BAUMAN

The music was transcribed and prepared for publication by Miss GILLIAN JOHNSTONE

Book Reviews

Scotland, from the earliest times to 1603. A New History of Scotland, Vol. I. By William Croft Dickinson. Nelson. 1961. vii+408 pp., with a map. 42s.

This book, the first volume of a two-volume *New History of Scotland*, covers in one broad sweep the entire field of Scottish history to the year 1603. Starting with an introductory chapter in which briefly he discusses general historical and geographical trends and influences, the author passes from the prehistoric inhabitants of Scotland to the people and customs of the Scotland of James VI, interspersing his narrative of political events—which must be seen as a framework rather than as a direct contribution to the political history of Scotland—with passages on the Church, administration, constitutional development and social life in country and town. To do all this in the course of one volume implies that the late Professor Dickinson was writing for the general reader, not the historical specialist, and this position he makes quite clear at the outset. It is essentially as a general work that his achievement must be judged.

In the earlier chapters Professor Dickinson has relied largely on the acknowledged work of other experts, which he has absorbed and translated into a clear and concise narrative of the beginnings of Scotland. But interesting although this is, one almost wishes this preliminary had not been necessary; for it is not until he reaches the twelfth century and the story of feudal society and Normanised administration that the author begins to display his own interests by the vitality of his writing. This vitality persists in all the passages on administration, central and local, and is particularly in evidence in the chapters on burghal organisation and everyday life in the burgh, subjects on which he himself has contributed much of our present knowledge. In the chapters on the medieval Church a lucid account is given of ecclesiastical organisation, monastic and secular; but, from the very beginning, there seems to be a tendency to emphasise those aspects of the Church and its government which developed into the abuses which made the Reformation necessary. This is, of course, permissible as a general theme; but there is insufficient description of the positive contribution the late medieval Church had to offer, and hence the reader does not gain a full and balanced picture. Yet, when he comes to the Reformation itself, Professor Dickinson gives a clear, fair and well-balanced account of that complex political and religious situation, which, within the limits of its conciseness, should be compulsory reading for all students of this controversial topic. This is a remarkable achievement when one considers the difficulty, once the sixteenth century is reached, of compressing quantities of complicated historical material into the mould required by a volume of this type.

Individual readers will inevitably find points for disagreement in the treatment and emphasis given to the various subjects, but this is one measure of the stimulus that reading this book can give. And those readers knowledgeable in particular periods or subjects will equally inevitably find minor points of fact or minute detail which are inaccurate. For example, it is not strictly correct to say (p. 81) that after 1237 frontier administration was conducted by Wardens of the marches of the two countries; these officials did not exist until the fourteenth century, and, prior to this, frontier negotiations were carried out by the sheriffs of the border counties as part of their normal shrieval functions. Again, the emphasis given (p. 375) to the parliamentary enactment in 1587 of the terms

of the General Band, an administrative device for controlling the turbulent borderers, obscures the fact that the General Band had been used for at least 35 years before this with a considerable degree of effect. But these, and such as these, are trivial points in themselves, and the fact that they can be made should in no way blind us to the greater achievement of Professor Dickinson's work.

In his foreword the author hopes that his volume will "stimulate interest and help to further the study of Scottish History". The careful reader will in fact find himself stimulated to ask questions throughout. Is there more to be learned about the medieval trade of Scotland, and to what extent did it fluctuate from period to period? How did some families improve their social position at the expense of others, and what was the basis of their increasing power in this upward social surge? Again, while on the subject of social mobility, is there any historical evidence to support the hypotheses of the geographical movements of people made by Dr. Nicolaisen in the course of several of his place-name studies in this very periodical? Was Scottish foreign policy completely dominated in the later medieval period by the concept of the French alliance? What was the nature of the Scottish "civil service" in the sixteenth century, who staffed it, and what effect did these men have on the Scottish administration? These are some of the random thoughts of one reader only. To answer them much more basic historical research will have to be carried out; and, if Professor Dickinson's book stimulates historians to try to find out the answers to these and other similar questions, he will indeed have performed an additional noble service for Scottish history.

Professor Dickinson has written, within the limits of a single volume, the history of medieval Scotland made necessary by his own life-time. He does not supersede the existing political narrative of Hume Brown, but supplements it with an account of these subjects which have interested Scottish historians throughout the first half of this century and which reflect many of the broader historical interests of the present day. This, based partly on his own meticulous scholarship and partly on the work of others, is presented in a lucid but authoritative manner; even when the subject becomes controversial or complex, the narrative, without simplification, retains its unobtrusive confidence. This volume can be read with profit by all—by the general reader interested in the story

of his own country, by the schoolboy or university student as a textbook, by the specialist in search of stimulation.

THOMAS I. RAE

The Northern Isles. Edited by F. T. Wainwright. Pp. xii+224. Edinburgh: Nelson. 1962. 30s.

This is a volume to be welcomed with real pleasure, for, to paraphrase Matthew Arnold's famous definition of criticism, it is a summary of the best that is known and thought to-day about the early history and prehistory of those northern isles of Scotland, lying on the outer fringe of the western world as it was known of old. In dealing with periods regarding which written records are either scanty or entirely lacking, a certain degree of speculation is inevitable, yet this work is as factual and objective as such a study can well be.

It is a composite work, the outcome of one of those Summer Schools of History and Archaeology inaugurated and organised by the late Dr. F. T. Wainwright whose early death was a tragic loss to Scottish research, and to whose work a Preface by Mr. Stewart Cruden pays a well-deserved tribute. He was not only Editor of this volume, but a main contributor also, and his team of other experts could not have been better chosen.

After a brief Introduction by the Editor the first contribution is a short chapter on the Physical Background by Professor A. C. O'Dell of Aberdeen University. This is an admirably clear statement of the facts, though a reference to the Old Man of Hoy scarcely holds water. Since on early maps he can find no mention of the name, he suggests that this conspicuous sea-stack may well be the result of comparatively recent coast-erosion. In a short note on the name, however, in a *Festskrift til Dag Strombäck* (1960) I drew attention to its older name—The Stower—which represents the O.N. *staurr*, a pillar or post &c., a name which may be compared with Bod Storr in Skye which has also been Englished to The Old Man of Storr. Thus the stack must have existed there long ago when Norsemen applied that name.

The next four chapters may be considered briefly together: The Earliest Inhabitants, by the late Professor V. G. Childe; Neolithic Structures in Shetland, by Mr. C. S. T. Calder; The Bronze Age, by Professor Childe also; and The Brochs and Broch-Builders by Mr. J. R. C. Hamilton, whose name is so closely linked with the Jarlshof excavations in Shetland. It

is regrettable that in these chapters are certain mutual discrepancies which might have been reconciled had the Editor survived to make a final revision.

The earliest inhabitants of these isles—a long-headed race (now commonly referred to as Megalithic, from the nature of their tombs) are generally held to have arrived sometime about 1500 B.C., and Mr. Calder in fact specifically states in regard to Shetland that their surviving evidence, structural and industrial, suggests that they settled on these shores about the middle of the second millennium before Christ. Besides many of their burial cairns Mr. Calder has been instrumental in bringing to light some of their actual house-sites, of which some sixty have now been identified, as well as two other foundations which he regards as sites of temples. The presence of a somewhat larger structure adjacent to one of those temples has led Mr. Calder to suggest that it may have been a dormitory for the temple priests. That site is locally known as the 'Benie Hoose", but, if dating from Neolithic times, it is an astonishing coincidence that *beni-hus* is cited in Jakobsen's Dictionary as an Old Shetland term for a chapel (= O.N. *bæn-hús*, prayer-house or chapel)!

In addition to those house-sites themselves, Mr. Calder has found attached to some of them a number of field systems bounded by stone dykes. And that those Neolithic settlers cultivated such fields and grew grain he has proved conclusively by finding not only their rough stone implements and trough-querns, but at one house-site on the Ness of Gruting in Whalsay "a large quantity of barley preserved in a carbonised state", and containing seed that remained recognisable as such after some 3,500 years! It had lain undisturbed under a bed of pure peat-ash nearly two feet thick. Those house-sites, he says, are separate from each other, but the majority form groups along the seashore in positions akin to the crofts of to-day.

Bearing in mind the above facts supplied by Mr. Calder as to the age and siting of such huts, the second paragraph of Mr. Hamilton's chapter seems curiously at variance. "The open farm-steads", he writes, "the temple buildings, the chambered tombs reflect the rich and successful colonization of the islands in the generally peaceful conditions of the *late third* and second millennia B.C." And he continues: "The siting of the small farm-steads on high ground, now barren peat-clad moorland, belies the warmer and drier climate of the Sub-Boreal phase, when seafaring, too, up the Atlantic coastal route

from Iberia to Shetland was freer from prolonged gales and storms." Can the above predicate—belies—by any chance be a misprint for—betokens? The whole paragraph indeed might well have benefited from an editor's revision.

The only Neolithic house-sites so far known in Orkney are those revealed by Prof. Childe at the famous hamlet of Skara-brae and the kindred but more ruinous site of Rinyo in Rousay. In his classic volume on Skarabrae (1931) he could push the origin of that settlement back only to an upward limit of 500 B.C. At a later stage, however, his discovery at Rinyo of pottery of the type characteristic of the early chambered cairns enabled him to push back that site as well as Skarabrae a millennium or so further to a period more or less contemporary with those cairns, i.e. roughly to the middle of the second millennium B.C. Now from some of these cairns, e.g. Unston, evidence of agri-culture has also been found in impressions of seeds of barley on some of the pottery found therein. So apparently those first Neolithic settlers in Orkney were grain-growers also as were those in Shetland. Yet strangely enough at Skarabrae, which was excavated with meticulous care by Childe, he could find no certain evidence of grain-growing any more than of the use of metal of any sort. And Mr. Calder in fact suggests that the Shetland colonists must have by-passed Orkney, a conclusion by no means easy to understand.

In Prof. Childe's first chapter the most striking (and from him not a little surprising) suggestion is that the motive force which drove those first megalithic folk all the way from the Mediterranean west and north even to these northern isles of Britain was a spiritual urge comparable to that of Christian missionaries later. He returns to that idea twice, and in regard to their remarkable tombs writes: ". . . the tomb should be compared to a church rather than a castle. The leaders would owe their status and authority to spiritual prestige rather than temporal power. They would indeed be comparable to the Celtic saints who journeyed about and gathered around them lay disciples from a devout peasantry. Some such hypothesis of missionaries from the south-west winning the allegiance of a British peasantry by their reputation for sanctity or magic power would neatly explain the transfer to Orkney of a peculi-arly British or Britannico-Hibernian material culture combined with rather exotic idealogical equipment".—An interesting if not very convincing hypothesis.

The Bronze Age of these isles is a rather nebulous period, its

most conspicuous surviving monuments being the rings of Standing Stones at Stennes in Orkney, and the early huts at Jarlshof in Shetland. Childe's chapter on this period is comparatively brief, probably in view of the fact that in previous works he had dealt more fully with the relics and problems of that age.

The longer chapter following on the Brochs and Broch Builders by Mr. Hamilton is (apart from the second paragraph already mentioned) a most penetrating and suggestive discussion of all the knotty problems arising in connection with those gaunt towers and their relation to hill forts and other kindred structures. Nowhere else can one look for a better summary of the main facts, even though after all the broch problem remains a conundrum.

Dr. Wainwright's chapter on the Picts and Scots which follows may be regarded as in large measure a condensation of the matter previously appearing in his *Problem of the Picts*, the first volume emanating from the studies of his Summer Schools. But his next chapter on the Scandinavian Settlement, the longest and perhaps most generally interesting in the book, is something of a *tour de force*. Here his wonderful powers of assimilation and his acquaintance with the whole subject and its extensive literature are most impressive, and result in a luminous survey containing little that might call for serious criticism.

The choice of Mr. Ralegh Radford for the chapter on Art and Architecture—Celtic and Norse—was also most happy. One of Britain's most distinguished archaeologists and a man of wide experience, through his peculiar acquaintance with early Celtic remains both in Ireland and Britain he has been able to shed much light on the origin and nature of the numerous Celtic church remains in these northern isles. For several years now he has also been engaged on unravelling the tangled complex of Celtic and Norse remains on the Brough of Birsay in Orkney, and has there been brought into close personal touch with the subject here discussed.

A brief chapter by the Editor on the Golden Age and After deals with the Saga period and subsequent history of the isles, and a still briefer Appendix on the St. Ninian Isle excavations brings the composite volume to a close. It should be added, however, that the 19 pages of References and Abbreviations at the end are most instructive and greatly enhance the usefulness of the book, while bound up therewith at the end are also

24 illustrative plates of quite first rate quality. Altogether this composite work will be found indispensable by all students of Scottish history and of these northern isles in particular. And it is singularly pleasing to record that the volume is dedicated to the memory of Professor V. G. Childe whose work in the field of Scottish archaeology together with that of his great predecessor Dr. Joseph Anderson, has done so much to bring *lux in tenebris.*

HUGH MARWICK

Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830. David Craig. Pp. 340. London: Chatto and Windus. 1961. 30s.

The strength and weakness of Dr. Craig's work are illustrated by the statement with which he begins his book. He wishes (p. 11) "to form a 'social history' of literature for Scotland from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century" and "to find particular facts and particular passages of poetry or fiction in which the life of the people seems to reveal itself most genuinely, and hence to give actuality to themes such as community, society, class, speech-idiom, tradition—which are so apt to remain vague." The concept is bold, and particularly in the chapter on "Religion in Scottish Fiction", Dr. Craig obtains valuable results. On the other hand, he is attempting in fewer than 300 pages to write the history of a century and a half of literary and social activity. Inevitably his book leaves an impression of incompleteness, and sometimes arbitrariness. The concepts "life," "people", "community", "society", "class", are partially subjective, and so necessarily vague. Dr. Craig's attempt, often anachronistically in terms of Marx (1818-83) and Engels (1820-95), to impose precision, does not always convince. Dr. Craig too is overdependent on the work of Van Wyck Brooks, recently characterised by the American scholar Leslie A. Fiedler as "finally a nostalgic and sentimental evocation of our past, more decorative than insightful, more commemorative than analytic" (*Contemporary Literary Scholarship*, ed. L. Leary, New York, 1958, p. 163). Dr. Craig's treatment of language is inadequate, and he seems almost unaware of the bulk of earlier Scottish literature. He makes amazingly few specific external comparisons, even with later eighteenth century and early nineteenth century England and its literature. On p. 19 he classifies Pope (1688-1744) and Fergusson (1750-74) as contemporarics. To some extent this typifies an over-easy approach to chronology and period.

Dr. Craig's study is in three parts, "Vernacular Literature: the Popular and 'Polite' Publics", "Scottish Fiction and Society" and "Language". The second of these achieves most, but the first is the more important as establishing a general background for the whole. Dr. Craig begins with the concept of "The Old Communal Culture", which he holds, remained insulated from "the more refined manners and ideas which the educated classes were learning from France and England". The expression of this culture he traces by way of "The Piper of Kilbarchan" back to "Peblis to the Play" and "Christis Kirk on the Green". Noone denies that eighteeenth century Scottish poetry derives partly from this tradition. Dr. Craig ignores, however, firstly the varied stylistic possibilities of the vernacular, exploited particularly by Fergusson and Burns, and secondly the other traditions of Scottish writing which remained influential during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One might instance in particular the work of Gavin Douglas, Sir David Lindsay and Alexander Montgomerie. Nor were either Fergusson or Burns particularly insulated from English and French manners and ideas. Dr. Craig's thesis sometimes leads to him misread the evidence. Thus on p. 93 he writes, "Again, in 'The Epistle to Davie' Burns evokes in sharp detail the hardship which was commonplace to the labourer:

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When bones are crazed, and bluid is thin . . ."

He quotes in illustration anecdotes from Hugh Miller (1802-56). Burns, however, intended to evoke, not the hardship of the labourer, but the possibility of himself becoming a beggar, a recurring theme which for Burns held some attractions.

Dr. Craig's treatment of the novel is better; I have already mentioned Chapter VI, "Religion in Scottish Fiction". The greatest weakness of the section is Dr. Craig's tendency to prescribe subjects, and afterwards to criticise the novelists adversely for failing to write in accordance with his prescriptions. "We wonder, 'Did no novelist see anything in *that*, or *that*?'" (p. 140). Dr. Craig's arbitrariness of chronology reappears, for instance in the sentence (p. 146), "By the second half of the century Russia had her Tolstoy, with his intimate knowledge of Moscow and St. Petersburg (as well as of the country), and England her George Eliot and Dickens, with their knowledge of the provincial town and of London," and

in his tendency to treat Stevenson (1850-94), Scott (1771-1832), Dickens (1812-70) and Disraeli (1804-81) as contemporaries falling equally within the period he has chosen to discuss.

In general, the best parts of Dr. Craig's book are incidental. His plan is too ambitious for his resources. Scottish literary studies require at present more detailed and precise investigations in more limited fields.

JOHN MACQUEEN

Scots in Sweden. Jonas Berg and Bo Lagercrantz. Pp. 102. Stockholm Nordiska Museet and Swedish Institute. 4s.

Scots in Sweden was written by the organisers as an introduction to the exhibition shown at the Royal Scottish Museum in August-September 1962, and afterwards in Gothenburg and Stockholm. The booklet, scarcely 100 pages long, does not attempt any consecutive account of Scottish-Swedish relations, but aims simply to give the background information necessary to appreciate the exhibits. Biographical notes on the principal Scots who settled in Sweden or served in Swedish armies are supplemented by a minimum of historical comment.

Lacking adequate secondary sources, the authors had to lean heavily on Th. A. Fischer's unsatisfactory volume *The Scots in Sweden* (1907). (Compare Fischer pp. 71-77 with Berg and Lagercrantz, pp. 25-27, and pp. 94-98 with pp. 26, 28-9.) To their credit, however, Messrs. Berg and Lagercrantz, have managed to supplement or amend Fischer on several matters: the biographies of the Stockholm merchant Blasius Dundee, of the diplomat Andrew Keith, of the soldiers Samuel Cobron and David Drummond (who is not mentioned at all by Fischer); the career of the Tottie family from Jedburgh; Colin Campbell's part in founding the Swedish East India Company; the Scottish artisans in Stockholm; and the Scots in the Danish armies in Sweden in 1502 and 1520-1523.

Several of Fischer's less convincing ideas have been retained. Among the Scottish inhabitants of the port of Ny-Lödöse, both books give Jacob Leslie (or Lesle, lessle, etc.). Now a word "lessle", variously spelt, frequently appears in sixteenth-century Swedish court and port books as a corruption of the diminutive "lille", and was often used to distinguish a man from his father. Unless the christian name is Scottish, or there is other clear evidence, it is safer to assume that "lessle" is used in this sense rather than as a Scottish surname.

Equally doubtful is Fischer's suggestion that a Scottish officer said to be "skilled in languages" was a Gaelic speaker. Berg and Lagercrantz, indeed, go still further, stating categorically that "he had a good knowledge of Gaelic." Although the man's name was Campbell, it seems much more likely that the language in question was German or even Swedish, since few of the Scots in Swedish service at any time came from Gaelic-speaking areas.

Berg and Lagercrantz also adopt Fischer's suggestion that the Scottish immigration to Gothenburg in the eighteenth century was a result of the Jacobite failures. Now it is true that over the years a number of Scots found their way to Gothenburg for politico-religious reasons, and that several notable Scottish immigrants were Jacobite refugees (e.g. Carnegies and Erskines). But to explain the whole tendency one would also have to consider economic factors: Scotland's economic expansion and ambitions; her population increase; and her old trade with Gothenburg, then reaching its height.

There are, in addition, a number of slips and misprints, of which the most striking is the promotion of Riccio to Cardinal. Otherwise, the booklet provided a useful and unusually detailed introduction to the exhibition.

As an independent work, however, *Scots in Sweden* is less satisfactory. The exhibition, intended for the general public, concentrated on the more spectacular objects—weapons, coats-of-arms, silverware and portraits—which gave a strong impression of the military and personal relations between the countries; trade and diplomacy, being harder to illustrate, were scarcely represented. The book shows the same strong tendency, which may be justified in the circumstances, but produces some curious results: relatively insignificant individuals are fully, treated, while important political and economic matters are barely mentioned. The main omissions may be noted:—

Although Berg and Lagercrantz deal fairly extensively with the Scottish merchants resident in Ny-Lödöse and then in Gothenburg, they say virtually nothing about Scottish-Swedish trade. Scots resident in Sweden did not necessarily trade with their homeland; yet there was an appreciable Scottish traffic in western Sweden when the Ny-Lödöse port-books begin in 1546, long before Scotland had any trade with Sweden beyond the Sound. Though interrupted by Danish wars and other misfortunes, this continued, chiefly because Scotland needed Swedish iron. In the later eighteenth century, up to 100 ships

a year, mostly carrying iron, might leave Gothenburg for Scotland.

Less than a paragraph is given to Erik XIV's suit to Mary Stuart—an incident which escaped Fischer altogether, but one of some importance. Erik's main aim was an alliance with a western power who could help defend his narrow western coast against the Danes. Although Mary, like Elizabeth of England, refused a formal alliance, the second Swedish embassy to Scotland in 1563 was followed by the arrival of the first Scottish mercenary contingent in Sweden in 1564.

Berg and Lagercrantz give a brief and dubious account of the diplomatic background to Thirty Years' War. They emphasise James VI's love of peace and Gustavus Adolphus's attempts to enlist Charles I as an ally; but ignore James's earlier diplomatic initiative. He used James Spens of Wormiston, the double ambassador between Sweden and "Magna Britannia", as an instrument for several attempts to negotiate a Protestant alliance including Sweden, Denmark, Holland, and the German Protestants. In 1623 detailed proposals were ready for ratification, but were abandoned because of the mutual suspicions of Sweden and Denmark, and Sweden's commitment in Poland. King James, at least, seems to have realised that the great religious war would be fought in Germany, and not directly against Spain or Poland.

Surely, even as an introduction to the exhibition, it would have been better to deal more fully with questions such as these. The limited space could have been better disposed, and the booklet given a wider scope. As it is, *Scots in Sweden* will be useful chiefly as a supplement to Fischer.

In addition to the main essay, there are four other pieces in the book: a Preface by Gösta Berg, director of Nordiska Museet in Stockholm; an amiable if slight Introduction by Eric Linklater; an amusing account of a Swedish dinner-party by a Scot visiting Gothenburg in 1812; and a reprint of the well-known essay which Frans G. Bengtsson derived from Robert Monro's famous account of his adventures in the German wars, *Monro His Expedition* . . . The Linklater and Bengtsson pieces weight the book still more heavily on the military side. The illustrations, mostly from Callot engravings, are excellent, and the book is as tastefully laid out as the exhibition itself.

JAMES DOW

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EMIGRATION IN THE TIME OF ROB DONN, 1714-1778

Ian Grimble

The exodus of Highlanders across the Atlantic in the eighteenth century reached its peak in 1774, and declined with the outbreak of the American War of Independence in the following year (Meyer 1961: 91-4). The only reference to the poverty of Highland emigrants during the period of spate concerns parties of people from Sutherland who had travelled to the Lowlands in search of transport. "In the beginning of June", reported the correspondent of the *Scots Magazine* in 1772 (34:395), "about forty-eight families of poor people from Sutherland arrived at Edinburgh, in their way to Greenock, in order to embark for North America. Since that time we have heard of two other companies, one of a hundred, another of ninety, being on their journey with the same intention. The cause of this emigration they assign to be, want of the means of livelihood at home, through the opulent graziers ingrossing the farms, and turning them into pasture. Several contributions have been made for these poor people in towns through which they passed." Seventy-five year old Hector Macdonald, a farmer "at Langwall in the parish of Rogart in the county of Sutherland, upon the estate of Sutherland", amplified this report in 1774 when he deposed that he was emigrating to North Carolina to improve the prospects for his children: "and in all events they can scarce be worse" (Newsome 1934:133). There is, on the other hand, the single testimony of a report in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 1773, remarking on the affluence of Sutherland emigrants.[1]

It is not always as clear as in the case of Hector Macdonald, from what part of Sutherland the emigrants came. The sheriffdom was divided during this period into three distinct areas, governed by separate rulers. In the south lay the original Sutherland earldom, which had been ruled by a branch of the Gordon family ever since they obtained it early in the sixteenth century. To the north of the earldom lay the

province of Strathnaver, slightly larger in extent, that had been ruled by the chiefs of Mackay for a very much longer period. But Strathnaver had never been erected into a barony or earldom: in the sixteenth century the Earls of Sutherland had acquired a feudal title of superiority over it, and in the seventeenth century it had been joined to the sheriffdom of Sutherland. In addition, the Sutherland Earls and Sheriffs acquired the dominium of a corridor up the centre of Strathnaver, from the earldom to the northern sea; and as this was the valley through which the Naver river runs, it lent itself to the claim that they had acquired Strathnaver, as, in a limited sense of that term, they had.

Hereupon, the inhabitants of the part of Strathnaver still owned by their chief began to call it (by the title of nobility he had acquired in the seventeenth century) Lord Reay's country, or the Reay country. In doing so, they added a further confusion to the difficulties of understanding the contemporary usage of these names. For the barony of Reay lay, not in Strathnaver, but in Caithness. It was indeed adjacent to Strathnaver, but not to Lord Reay's property there. Next to it lay the valleys of Strathy and Strath Halladale, granted long before to junior branches of the Chief's family. To the west again lay the valley of the Naver, an integral part of the Sutherland earldom; so that several estates and some thirty miles separated the barony of Reay in Caithness from the Reay country in western Strathnaver. In addition, the parish of Reay included not only the Caithness barony, but an area of eastern Strathnaver of about equal size. The meaning of the terms Sutherland, Reay and Strathnaver consequently depends much upon who uses them, and in what context. It is possible that distant observers sometimes understood the term Sutherland to comprehend the entire sheriffdom when they heard it used of the earldom, or that a reference to the Reay country was related to the parish of Reay when it concerned the Chief of Mackay's territories in the far west.

Of the three distinct areas of Sutherland, the earldom contained nearly a million acres, while Lord Reay's country was described in 1797 as being "equal in extent to the county of Fife, or any of the Lothians" (Mackay 1906:463). Here was the ancient patriarchal society on the grand scale, beyond the reach of more than the merest ripples of political disturbance or economic innovation. The whole area had been officially opposed to Jacobitism ever since General Hugh

Mackay of Scourie had helped to place William of Orange on the throne. Except in the general application of the penal statutes, it had sustained no damage through the failure of the Forty-Five. In addition, it lay the furthest distant of all the mainland counties from the new systems of agricultural improvement that were infiltrating from the Lowlands. The statement that people were forced out of Sutherland by the engrossment of farms in 1772 is indeed puzzling. It stands alone, twenty years before the next reference to such an occurrence in the *Old Statistical Account*, and over thirty years before the sheep enterprises of 1806, that caused the evictions in Edderachillis and Strathnaver referred to by Henderson (Gray 1957:88, 100).

The activity that had served longest to promote emigration throughout the sheriffdom was military service. Tacksmen received commissions in the army through the numbers of sub-tenants they could form into companies. Chiefs raised regiments that were named after them.

The Reay country to which Rob Donn belonged was entirely Calvinist, and at the time when he was born his countrymen continued what amounted almost to a private military alliance with the Calvinist Netherlands of almost a century's duration. It led to much intermarriage, the settlement of Mackays in Holland, and ultimately to the succession of a Dutchman as Chief of Mackay in the nineteenth century. In Rob Donn's lifetime, Hugh Mackay from Scourie entered the Dutch service in 1729 and was promoted Lieutenant-General in 1772. Many of his countrymen entered the same service under his patronage (Mackay 1906:291, 235).

But an altogether new field of enterprise was opened in 1732 when General James Oglethorpe, the English philanthropist, obtained his charter establishing the colony of Georgia in America. He required not merely settlers, but soldiers who would prove competent to hold the territory against the neighbouring Spaniards. That same year Patrick Mackay, who had held a Hanoverian commission during the 1715 rebellion, disposed of his property in Edderachillis and carried a number of its people to Oglethorpe's new settlement (Mackay 1906:294). In 1734 Oglethorpe despatched Lieutenant Hugh Mackay from Georgia to the Highlands to raise a hundred men "free or servants". The combined requirements of settlement and military duty were made explicit: "they farther allowed them to take 50 head of women and children".

Hugh Mackay became a Captain and commander of the new fort of St. Andrews, not without accusations in 1738 that he "exercised an illegal power there, such as judging in all causes, durecting and ordering all things according to his will". But he held the fort against Spanish attack, and Oglethorpe backed him. The murder of Highlanders in 1739 and the defeat of an expedition to avenge them perhaps helped to damp enthusiasm for any further emigration to this colony (Maclean 1900:146-69).

Meanwhile recruitment continued in more conventional directions. The Earl of Sutherland raised a regiment of which he was Lieutenant-Colonel in 1759. Charles Gordon, tacksman on his estate at Skelpick near the mouth of the Naver river, was a Captain (Mackay 1906:211; Sutherland Book I:450-1). Hugh Mackay of Bighouse in eastern Strathnaver, who was also a manager of Lord Reay's estate in western Strathnaver, received the rank of Major and was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel (Mackay 1906:204, 306). Among his fellow tacksmen and kinsmen in the Earl's regiment were George Mackay of the Scourie branch as an Ensign, Captain John Mackay of Strathy, Captain James Mackay, the tacksman of Borgie's son, and Lieutenant John Mackay who later settled in Melness (Mackay 1906:293, 313, 320, 323). Rob Donn the bard enlisted as a private, for he was merely the son of a sub-tenant. But he enjoyed certain privileges, since it was known to all by this time that it was in his power to immortalise whom he chose, both by eulogy and by satire (Rob Donn 1829:xxii-xxiii).

The Earl of Sutherland's Regiment, 1759-63, had its counterpart in Lord Macleod's Highlanders, in which Malcolm Mackay enlisted as a private to serve in India in 1777: in the Duke of Gordon's Fencibles to which George Mackay of Handa contributed a company in 1778. Others pursued military careers outside the tight-knit social nexus of the family regiments. One of Handa's brothers was a captain in the 31st Foot before his death in 1773, another became a Major of Artillery in India, a third a Captain in the 42nd Highlanders who fought in the American War of Independence (Mackay 1906:268, 331-2). William Polson, though he was a grandson of the Rev. John Mackay, Lairg, and nephew of the Rev. George Munro, Farr, and of the Rev. Aeneas Sage, Lochcarron, chose the profession of arms and died in America in 1755 as a Captain in the Virginia Rangers (Mackay 1906: 295).

Most of the evidence of military service in Sutherland during this period concerns the families of tacksmen who obtained commissions. It is not easy to estimate the numbers of their sub-tenants who were drained into the ranks, or the proportion of these who subsequently returned to their own land. But the comment of Rob Donn is suggestive. Three of his poems lampoon men whose success with the girls is attributed to the absence of competition, while so many of the young men were away in the army (Rob Donn 1899:174-6, 254-7, 329-30). A fourth concerns Donald Mackay, who had joined Lord MacLeod's Highlanders by 1778 in order to escape from charges of "criminal correspondence" with five different girls before the Church Session. It appears that he had engaged in day-labouring for a wage, an activity for which it has been suggested that the Highlanders of this period had a strong aversion (Rob Donn 1899:409; Adam 1922: 169-71).

'Nuair thigeadh am foghar,
Có dheanamh a' bhuain?
Có dheanamh an ceanghal,
No stucadh na sguab?
Có chuireadh na siomanan
Ceart air na tudanan,
Ach am boc luideach,
Na'm faigheadh e duais.

(Rob Donn 1899:409)

(When autumn came, who worked at the harvest? Who did the binding and the stooking of the sheaves? Who put the ropes aright on the stacks, but the rascally buck, if he were paid for it.)

It appears likely that there was an actual shortage of such day labourers in Rob Donn's country, whether or not men were unwilling to do this kind of work.

Another of his poems concerns two men who fled into hiding when Lord Reay tried to force them into the army: the bard does not seem to have disapproved of such a use of his chief's authority, and merely exploited the comedy of the situation. It can be assumed that the army press gangs did not menace this remote area, as they were notorious for doing on the fringes of the Highlands, and it is evident that there would have been little point in their entering a land of such extensive recruitment. Rob Donn only mentions them once, in the context of a drover who went to Crieff with cattle and

was taken by a press-gang there (Rob Donn 1899:423, 227; Adam 1919:146-7).

Over twenty years after Rob Donn's death, James Anderson wrote to Captain Kenneth Mackay, one of Lord Reay's factors: "I think they must see little who does not see this country approaching rapidly into a state of *depopulation*, and that by the very means once thought favourable, I mean the volunteer establishments. Such effect has the smattering of exercise upon the rising generation, aided by their pay, which is all converted into dissipation, that not one individual able to lift a drumstick now remains unenlisted in Durness. And I'm told the case is pretty similar in other parts of this estate, though not quite so bad." By 1798, when Anderson wrote this letter, it is less surprising to read his proposal that some land east of Durness "would make a kind of small sheep farm—perhaps sufficient for supplying the farm produce wants of Rispond family" (S. R. H. Reay MS. 74). Anderson held a lease at Keoldale, south-west of Durness, where Kenneth Sutherland had been tacksman in Rob Donn's day, and a factor to Lord Reay so popular that Rob Donn had honoured him with an elegy at his death (Rob Donn 1899:28-31). The comments of James Anderson resemble those of the bard over a generation earlier, and suggest the conclusion that at no time during the second half of the eighteenth century could the pressure of over-population have been a cause of emigration, in the world that Rob Donn knew.

A different cause was put forward by an observer in 1773: "the extravagant rents extracted by the landlords is the sole cause given for this spirit of emigration" (*Scots Magazine* 35: 557). Rob Donn's landlord at the time of Culloden was a personage very different from those chiefs of Mackay, his forbears, who had defied the government in Edinburgh over so many centuries. The third Lord Reay wrote of the Duke of Cumberland, from Edinburgh, in 1746: "I hope by his prudent and wise direction he'll fall on proper methods to make these idle ignorant people useful subjects, which will make him famous to posterity, as it is easier to conquer than to civilise barbarous people" (Mackay 1906:456). The contrast between these words and Rob Donn's probably reflects, as well as any at this time, the growing rift between barbarous (or, in its original sense, Gaelic speaking) clansmen and their civilised (or, in its original sense, town-dwelling) chief.

Tha mi faicinn bhur truaighe,
Mar ni nach cualas a shamhuil,
A' chuid a' s fèarr de bhur seabh'gan,
Bhi air slabhruidh aig clamhan,
Ach ma tha sibh 'n ar leòmhan,
Pillibh 'n dòghruinn s' 'n a teamhair,
'S deanaibh ur deudach a thrusadh,
Mu 'n tèid bhur busan a cheangal.
(Rob Donn 1899:84)

(I observe your misery as something unprecedented; the best part of your hawks chained to a kite. But if you are lions, retaliate in good time and have your teeth ready before your mouths are muzzled.)

Such was the difference in sentiment possible in 1747 between Mackay chief and Mackay bard. It would not have been surprising if some Gaelic poet had likened his people's relationship with their chiefs as "hawks chained to a kite", but this was certainly not Rob Donn's meaning. Throughout his life he retained a profound belief in the chiefship: a fact of some significance considering the number of people, less eloquent, whose views he probably reflected. He trusted that any stresses might be eased by good advice, which he was not backward in giving himself. He asserted the bard's traditional privilege of addressing the highest in the land when he chose, and while this feature of the old order remained intact, he perhaps assumed that all its other amenities would do so too.

When Donald, fourth Lord Reay died in 1761, Rob Donn made an elegy that reveals impressively what the chiefship meant to him.

'S i so nollaig a's cianail'
A chunncas riamh le mo shùil;
'S soilleir easbhuidh ar Triath oirnn,
An àm do'n bhliadhna tigh'nn ùr;
Ceann na cuideachd 's na tàbhuirnn,
Luchd nan dàn, is a' chiùil,
N' a luidhe 'n eaglas Cheann-tàile,
'S an rùm tha mhàn fo'n ùir.

(This is a Christmas as melancholy as I ever looked upon with my eyes. The loss of our chief is brought home to us as the new year approaches, the apex of society and of hospitality, of the men of poetry and music, lying in the church of Kintail, his authority interred in the underground vault.) It is the

immemorial image of the leader of the patriarchal society in which Rob Donn still trusted, and he was specific about the virtues required.

'N uair thigeadh àm na Féill-Màrtuinn,
Is cunntadh Rainnt thugad féin,
Bhiodh do shùil ris gach pàipeir
A chuireadh 'n clàrc as a dhéigh;
'S maith a dh'aithnicheadh tu'n t-airidh,
'S an neach a thàrladh 's an fheum;
'S e do pheann a bhiodh èasgaidh
Gu dubhadh mach an cuid féich.

Na'm bitheadh gionaich 'n ad nàdur,
C' uim' nach deanadh tu tòrr,
Leis na thogtadh do reinnt dhuit,
'S le do phension d'a chòrr:
Nuair a gheibheadh tu'm meall ud,
'S ann leat a b'annsa gu mòr,
Iomhaigh Dhé air bochd aoidheil,
Na ìomgaigh 'n Rìgh air an òr.

(When the time of Martin's Festival would arrive, and the assessment of your rents, your eyes would examine every paper prepared by the clerk; well you knew the worthy person who happened to be in want, and your pen would be ready to cancel their arrears. If you had been by nature avaricious, what a fortune you might have made with what would be collected in rent for you, and with your pension in addition. When you acquired that hoard, more dear to you by far was God's image smiling in a poor man's face than the likeness of the King on a golden coin.)

But there is a querulous note towards the end of the elegy.

'S fhusa 'dhùrachd na 'earbsadh
Gu'n tig ni's feàrr 'n ad dhéigh.

(It is easier to wish than to be confident that better will come after you.) Perhaps reflecting how entirely his patriarchial society depended upon the accidents of succession, Rob Donn ended with the threat:

Ach 'n uair their mi 'n dàn bròin so
Do dhaoinibh mòr' as do dhéigh,
Mur bi 'leithid r' a inns' orr',
Cha bheag an aoir e dhoibh féin.
(Rob Donn 1899:6-10)

(But when I recite this sad poem to the great men who come

after you, unless the like can be told of them, this song of praise will become a satire on them.)

In 1768 the fifth Lord Reay died in Edinburgh, leaving an idiot brother to be chief until his death in 1797, when a cousin succeeded who sold the entire estate and left the country (Mackay 1906:216, 232). In 1766 the young Earl of Sutherland died at Bath, leaving as his heir a baby girl. Her claim to the earldom was not established until 1771[2]; she was brought up by a grandmother who belonged to Edinburgh; and she did not visit Sutherland at all until she was seventeen years old. Rob Donn's patriarchal society had been shattered. The two vast estates could no longer appear even to a poet's imagination to be presided over by Gaelic fathers of their people when they were administered by lawyers and trustees. At least five years passed before Rob Donn composed the sombre opening of his elegy for the dead Earl.

Rugadh mis' anns a' gheamhradh,
Measg nam beanntaichean gruamach;
'S mo cheud sealladh do'n t-saoghal,
Sneachd is gaoth mu mo chluasaibh;
O'n chaidh m' àrach ri aghaidh
Tir na deighe, gu tuathail,
Rinn mi luathaireach tuiteam,
'S rinn mo chuislidhean fuaradh'.

(I was born in the winter among the lowering mountains, and my first sight of the world, snow and wind about my ears: since I grew up looking upon a land of ice, a northerly land, my health declined and my veins were chilled early.) The chill air of his homeland was something he had not, apparently, noticed in happier times. Now, too, when a great deal of fresh thinking was necessary, Rob Donn fell back upon the excuse that his talent for poetry had deserted him. He only made this elegy, he declared, because the last Gordon Earl was lying in his tomb without anyone having commemorated him in the traditional manner.

Chrìoch mi sgur do na dàintibh,
Chionn mo thàlann bhi géilleadh;
Ach cha'n fhuil'ngeadh mo nàdur
Dhomh, bhi 'n am thàmh air an aobhar-s'—
Ceannard Teaghlaich Dhun Robain,
'N luidhe 'n Abaid Dhun Éidin,
Gun aon fhocal aig filidh
Dèant 'n a shiorrumhachd féin da.

(I made an end of composing poetry because my talent was forsaking me; but my nature would not permit me to remain silent on this theme—the head of the Family of Dunrobin, lying in the Abbey at Edinburgh, without one word being composed for him by a poet in his own country.)

Since Rob Donn belonged to the Reay country, it is unlikely that he had any association with the subject of his elegy other than that of a soldier in his regiment; to which he pays tribute in his reference to Iarla Uilleam am Coirneal. It was probably through this association that he had visited Dunrobin castle and inspected Earl William the Colonel's portrait. It is interesting in being the earliest portrait of a Gordon in Highland dress, painted about a hundred years after a member of this family had urged its proscription throughout Sutherland.[3]

Fhuair mi 'dhealbh air mo leth-taobh,
'N a sheasamh 'm breacan an fhéilidh.

(I found his portrait beside me, standing in his kilt and plaid.)

For the rest, Rob Donn could only elaborate the standard compliments about the virtues of the Earl and of his ancestors: doubtless he spoke with complete sincerity about the Earl himself, who appears to have been popular in his country. The poet concluded:

Bidh mi dùnadh an dàin so,
Oir tha e àrd airson m' inntinn;
Le aon athchuing do'n òigh so,
Dh'fhuireach beò mar aon chuimhne:
Tha mi'g earbsadh ri Freasdal,
'S a Righ gu'm faic, 's gu'n cluinn mi,
Thu bhi pòsda ri gaisgeach
A leanas cleachd'an do shinnsear.
(Rob Donn 1899:36-9)

(I will conclude this song, for it is a matter too lofty for my intellect, with one prayer for this little girl that she should remain alive as a unique memorial: I am confident in Providence and O God may I see and hear of your marriage to a worthy man who will continue the customs of your forbears.)

The little girl on whom the bard invoked this blessing was the Countess-Duchess of Sutherland who presided over the nineteenth century clearances.

It was in March 1771 that Elizabeth Gordon was pronounced Countess of Sutherland, and that her guardians

acquired the legal control of her estate. It was in June 1772 that the correspondent of the *Scots Magazine* noticed the "poor people from Sutherland" trailing south to embark for America. The condition of the two hundred passengers who sailed in the *Adventure* for North Carolina on the 19th August 1772 was not remarked upon, probably because they embarked in Loch Eriboll where there was no stranger to comment on their appearance (*Scots Magazine* 34:515). The following year the brig *Nancy* took a further consignment of emigrants from Dornoch to New York (*Scots Magazine* 36:157-8).

The factors of the Sutherland estate blamed the native tacksmen for luring them away in terms almost as harsh as later factors used of those tacksmen who resisted the same trend when the population was no longer required by the estate. Captain James Sutherland, the general commissioner, identified one of the ringleaders as George Mackay of Mudale, son of the tacksman-poet John of Mudale. His property lay west of Ben Klibreck, within the territories of the Sutherland earldom in Strathnaver. "I do not hear," wrote the commissioner in February 1772, "of any embarking in this scheme but the subtenants of those who have large highland tacks, except George Mackay at Mudale (at the head of Loch Naver) and a young lad of the name of Macpherson." By June the commissioner was reporting from Edinburgh that "George Mackay at Mudale has been here to freight a ship for two hundred people from Strathnaver", and by the 26th June he learned "that 350 or 400 are engaged and paid their freight for that Strathnaver ship, and that there is from 60 to 100 that is to travel on foot to Glasgow that cannot get a passage in the ship for want of room". The manner in which so many people were able to pay for their passage is indicated by another of the commissioner's complaints. "Ken: Scobie has money to buy the emigrants' cattle, which enables them to put their dreams about America in execution, yet he has not money to pay the Countess her rent" (Home 1960:xxiv-xxv, xxx).

The dream of America was a dream of escape from oppressive overlords. It was stealing over a people deeply attached to their native land, to whom the old patriarchal order had been so precious that they had been capable of placing in it an almost unlimited trust. In the case of the most distinguished poet in the Sutherland earldom, that limit had been reached. Donald Matheson (1719-82), who farmed in Kildonan, was an almost exact contemporary of Rob Donn

(1714-78). While Rob Donn composed his belated elegy for the dead Earl, Donald Matheson commented instead on the consequences of his death as he observed them from within the earldom.

Tha mi faicinn deuchainnean
An tràthsa air gach laimh,
Teaghlaichean bha urramach
Air leagadh mhàn an ceann,
Seirbhisich 'nan Uachdarain,
Is oighreachan 'nan clann;
An talamh làn de dh'éigin,
A Dhé, có sheasas ann!

(I am seeing hardships now on every hand, families who were respectable with their heads brought low, servants in the role of landlords and young children as heirs; the land full of distress—O God, who can endure it?) Carolina, the destination of the *Adventure* from Loch Eriboll in 1772, appeared to Matheson as a promised land prepared by God for his afflicted people.

Ach tha mi faicinn faileas
De nithe bh'ann bho chéin,
'N uair bha pobull Israeil
'San Eiphit ann am péin:
Thug e le làmh làidir iad
A mach bho Pharaoh féin,
A's dh'fhosgail e an cuan doibh,
'N uair luathaich e 'nan déigh.

(I am seeing the shadow of things that happened long ago, when the people of Israel were in distress in Egypt. He took them with a strong hand away from Pharaoh himself, and He divided the sea for them when Pharaoh hastened after them.) Here are words that echo Hector Macdonald's deposition as to why he left Sutherland for North Carolina.

Tha uachdarain 'nan daorsa
Do dhaoine anns an àm,
'Gam fuadachadh 's 'gan teannachadh
Gu tìr ni maith do 'n clann;
Ach moladh a bhi gu bràth
Do'n Tì is àirde glòir,
Fhuair a mach am fosgladh ud
'S a dheasaich doibh an lòn.

(The landlords are enslaving people at this time, oppressing and evicting them to the land that will bring our children good. Oh praise be to Him of highest glory, who opened a way out there, and prepared sustenance for them.) The last verse of the poem touches upon two important aspects of emigration, the strong deterrent of the journey itself, and the encouragement to those who had remained at home, when the first letters arrived from emigrants who had survived the journey.

'S e mo bharail air na càirdean
Tha 'n tràthsa fada uainn,
Gu'n dean Dia an lìbhrigeadh
Bho chumhachd gaoith a's cuain;
A's ged [nach] 'eil dàn mar dhurachd
Aig uaisle an taobh tuath,
Gheibhear an cuid litrichean
A's teisteanas am buaidh.

(Matheson 1851: 271-3)

(My expectation for the kinsfolk now far from us is that God will deliver them from the power of wind and ocean; and although Providence may not accord with our wishes for the worthy folk of the northern Highlands, their share of letters will arrive to testify to their excellences.) (cf. *Sutherland Book* 1: 463.)

Matheson's analogy of the afflictions of the children of Israel who fled from Pharaoh did not occur only to the devout Calvinist in Kildonan. The west-coast Catholic, John Macdonald of Glenaladale, wrote in 1772 to the son of Angus Macdonald of Boisdale (both tacksmen), "your own old father is quite impatient to go—he is positive this scheme was inspired by Providence. It would make you laugh to hear how he applies to this case the story of Jacob, Joseph, Egypt, Moses etc. etc. in different ways" (Mackay 1963). Nor were such strictures on the landlords confined to Gaelic Highlanders. Janet Schaw of Edinburgh paid a visit to North Carolina in 1774 in the stateroom of the *Jamaica Packet*. She found her ship infested with emigrants from Orkney, and after listening to their stories and witnessing their circumstances, she was eloquent with anger against the "hard-hearted little tyrant of yonder rough domains". On another occasion she exclaimed, "it is needless to make any comment on the conduct of our highland and island proprieters", and during a storm at sea

she reflected, "but what rest remained for the iron-hearted, who forced age and infancy into such distress?" Perhaps she did not know that she was speaking of her neighbour in Edinburgh, Sir Lawrence Dundas (Schaw 1939:34, 37-8, 49).

Between the Orkney islands to which Janet Schaw referred, and the Highland world of Rob Donn, lies Scotland's most northerly Lowland county of Caithness. Here James Hogg from East Lothian rented a farm which he found so unprofitable that he left it in 1773 to settle in North Carolina. His testimony is of peculiar interest because he was an incomer, not a hereditary tacksman. He was eager to introduce modern methods of agriculture. "Others, with too much justice, complain of arbitrary and oppressive services, of racked rents, and cruel taskmasters; but Mr. Innes, my landlord, did everything in his power to render my possession convenient and profitable" (Boyd 1927:421-4). The Innes family of Sandside had purchased their property from the first Lord Reay early in the seventeenth century (Mackay 1906:137).

Hogg blamed his failure upon the depredations of the native people, who "were extremely addicted to theft and pilfering, the constant attendants of slavery and poverty", and on the total failure of the law to protect his property. The men against whom he obtained convictions were Gaels, one of them from as far away as Glenmoriston, and in Hogg's own account there appears a little of the immemorial antipathy between the Gael and the busy incoming Saxon with a propensity for litigation. Rob Donn freely admitted that he was more than once in trouble with the tacksmen of his pastoral country for shooting deer in the hills (Rob Donn 1899:141); but the destruction of crops was a more serious matter for a working farmer, and James Hogg's placing of the blame is all the more striking. When he left, local people clamoured to accompany him, and over two hundred and fifty emigrants set sail with him from Thurso. "I rejoice in being an instrument, in the hand of Providence, to punish oppression, which is by far too general; and I am glad to understand that already some of these haughty landlords now find it necessary to court and caress these same poor people, whom they lately despised, and treated as slaves or beasts of burden" (Boyd 1927:421-4). Hogg blamed individuals who had injured his livelihood and even set fire to his house, but his final condemnation was reserved for the hereditary masters who had reduced them to such behaviour.

One of those who sailed with him from Thurso was a William Mackay, listed as one "of the heads of families or principal emigrants . . . from the parish of Reay in the counties of Caithness and Sutherland" (S. H. C. Hogg MS. 1774 f.1). Hogg later deposed that "the first time I saw him, to the best of my memory, was in the house of Mr. Pope, Minister of Reay; when talking of the emigration which was then the sole topic of conversation all over that part of Scotland, the said Mackay told us that those who had emigrated the former year from his county, viz. Strathnavern, had written such favourable accounts of Carolina, setting forth the richness of the county, the cheapness of living and the certain prospect of bettering their fortunes etc etc, and advising all their friends to follow them, that half the people of his county, he believed, would emigrate if they were able" (S. H. C. Hogg MS. 5 Nov. 1773, ff. 2-3).

Those who accompanied Hogg were unfortunate. Their ship was wrecked off Shetland, where the survivors starved while Hogg engaged in fresh litigation with the owners in Edinburgh over the responsibility for their passage and maintenance. But the misfortune led to the preservation of some interesting details. The ship *Batchelor* sailed with 234 emigrants in addition to 32 sucking children, besides the family of James Hogg, and the crew. By the 28th October 1773, eleven of these had died, leaving a total of 255. The list of heads of families and principal emigrants who in 1774 supported the process against the owner and captain of the *Batchelor* gives their parishes of origin (S. H. C. Hogg M.S. 1774 f. 1; Second list of passengers).

Halkirk	1	Rogart	2	Tongue	4
Reay	11	Kinbrace	6		
		Kildonan	4		
		Clyne	2		
		Farr	4		

This list of principal emigrants is not complete, and the number in each family varied to an unknown degree. The details preserved among the Hogg papers should be compared with those that reached the Public Record Office.

For a government order of 1773 had instructed all customs officials in the kingdom to give particulars of emigrants, and of their reasons for leaving the country. The stranded passengers of the *Batchelor* thus offered the Lerwick port authorities

an early opportunity which they seized with what appears to have been an unrivalled enthusiasm. Thirty-one depositions (some of surprising length) were forwarded, covering the circumstances of over 125 individuals, or about half of those who sailed. Ten heads of families who gave evidence had left the Sutherland estate, seven had left the Reay country, five that of Mackay of Bighouse, while one each came from Rosehall and Achany and the remaining seven from Caithness (Newsome:130-8).

Of the latter, the three "upon the estate of Mr. Alexander Nicolson, Minister at Thurso" made particularly severe accusations of rack-renting and oppressive services (Newsome 1934:131, 132, 135). It was told of Rob Donn that he once met Nicolson in Thurso, who enquired how a new minister at Tongue was doing. "He is doing what you never did or will do", Rob Donn is said to have answered: "he is doing his best" (Rob Donn 1829:xxxv). The bard's severity is amply explained by the Lerwick depositions.

The five statements from the Mackay estates in eastern Strathnaver are similar in their condemnation. "The services," said one of several William Mackays, "were oppressive, being unlimited and arbitrary, at the pleasure of the factor; and when, by reason of sickness, the declarant could not perform them, he was charged at the rate of one shilling per day" (Newsome 1934:134).

Of those who had left the estates of Lord Reay, Aeneas Macleod brought the most severe complaint. "Being near the house of Tongue, he was harassed and oppressed with arbitrary services, daily called for without wages or maintenance." Alexander Morison likewise deposed that "the tenants were in various ways oppressed by Lord Reay's factors". But these were relatively isolated strictures in the total evidence of the seven witnesses from Lord Reay's estates, compared with those of Nicolson the minister's former tenants, or those of eastern Strathnaver. Of the other five emigrants from the parish of Tongue, one "hath been taught to read, write and cypher, and goes to Carolina in hopes of being employed as a teacher or as a clerk". A fourth left "because the small farm he possessed could not keep a plough, and he could not raise so much corn by delving as maintain his family and pay his rent". The remaining three were all shoemakers, one of whom "left his own country as his employment was little, and he had no hopes of bettering his circumstances in it". The second "goes

to Carolina upon assurance that tradesmen of all kinds will find large encouragement". The third had been "assured by his friends who contributed among them the money required to pay his passage, that he would find better employment in Carolina" (Newsome 1934:135-8). There were no witnesses from Rob Donn's parish of Durness.

Of those who had left the earldom, another William Mackay deposed that he had been a sub-tenant "in a wadset of the Family of Sutherland to Mr. Charles Gordon of Skelpick, lying in the height of the country of Strathnaver. The rents were not raised" (Newsome 1934:131). But most of those who were directly at the mercy of the factors of the baby Countess had a very different tale to tell. The factors enriched themselves at the expense of their tenantry by buying cattle cheap and selling bread dear, in addition to the burdens of personal service and raised rents. "The price of cattle has been of late so low, and that of bread so high, that the factor who was also a drover would give no more than a boll of meal for a cow . . . and obliged the tenants to give him their cattle at his own price" (Newsome 1934:133-4). So said Hugh Matheson, lately of Rimsdale, and almost certainly a kinsman of the poet; but others from widely separated districts said almost exactly the same. "The evil is the greater that, the estate being parcelled out to different factors and tacksmen, these must oppress the sub-tenants in order to make a profit to themselves, particularly on the article of cattle" (Newsome 1934:136). John Ross, who said this, was making a timely escape from the country, before its factors discovered the even larger potentialities of sheep.

A study of these depositions from the Reay country and eastern Strathnaver, from Caithness and the Sutherland earldom, reveals certain widespread ills, and complaints common to them all. But the evidence from the earldom goes far to explain the contrast between the attitudes of the two bards, Rob Donn in the Reay country, and Donald Matheson in that of the baby Countess. It also fortifies a surmise that James Hogg was speaking predominantly of subjects of the earldom when he declared: "that the petitioners were and are discontented, nobody who knows them will have the least doubt: and that the spirit of emigration had seized them long before I moved in the affair is also a certain truth. . . . For a whole year before that time, all Sutherland and Strathnavern (from whence all the present emigrants come) were in an uproar about emigration, and that, in summer 1772, a ship

actually went from thence with near 300 passengers and this year also another ship with almost the same number. I do not exactly remember when I first made public my intentions of emigrating, but no sooner was it known that these discontented complainers from the farthest corners of Sutherland and Strathnaver flocked to my house by scores and dozens together" (S. H. C. Hogg MS. 5 Nov. 1773 f. 1).

While they were marooned in Shetland, certain of them sought to make James Hogg liable for their relief, since it was he who had received their passage money plus commission, and chartered their ship. He disclosed that he had been paid "the sum of £731 for passage money and provisions, and £15-9 for his trouble in finding the ship and executing the contract foresaid" (S. H. C. Hogg MS. 10 Oct. 1773). Hogg's commission was 1/6d. a head, and he seems to have been comparing this with George Mackay of Mudale's commission when he wrote: "forgive me to put them in mind that their acquaintance who hired a ship for their friends of Sutherland and Strathnavern in 1772 took 5/- per head, besides his expences of meeting with them and of two jaunts to Edinburgh, and it is affirmed, had other considerable profits too" (S. H. C. Hogg MS. 5 Nov. 1773 f. 5). Hogg argued that the emigrants should seek redress from the owner of the *Batchelor*, but it is not known whether they ever received it. Nor is it known that any of them accompanied him when he sailed to Carolina in 1774.

In the opening of that year more dreadful news arrived of the fate of those who had sailed from Dornoch for New York. "The poor Highlanders from Sutherland, who arrived here in the brig *Nancy*, have been treated with unparalleled barbarity. Near a hundred of them have fallen victims to the avarice and inhumanity of the captain. It is impossible to express the cruelty they met with while on board. Of above fifty children at the breast, and not more than four years of age, all died but one, and many of the mothers. Seven women, who were delivered on board, all died but one, with all the children.. . . . [The captain] gave the passengers only corrupted stinking water, that was of itself sufficient, in all human probability, to have destroyed their lives, with black musty meal, hardly fit for swine to eat, and this to be eaten raw. In short, it seems wonderful that any of them escaped with life. . . . The captain upon his arrival here narrowly escaped the vengeance of the law, by leaving this port clandestinely, with the utmost

precipitation, with his vessel in the night" (*Scots Magazine* 36:157-8).

A more fortunate party of emigrants sailed from Loch Broom on the 1st July 1773 aboard the *Hector*, bound for Nova Scotia. It appears that Sutherland contributed the largest single contingent, consisting of twenty individuals and heads of families, the number in two families being given as five each. Ross-shire's total was nineteen, and Inverness-shire's twelve. From Sutherland came John Mackay, who was discovered to have stolen aboard without the price of his fare. But when the captain threatened to set him ashore again, the other emigrants offered to share their rations with him, and persuaded the captain to allow John Mackay to accompany them. They had good reason, for he was a piper (Patterson 1877:80, 456; Maclean 1900:236-7, 243-4; Dunn 1953:55).

The distances between the destinations of these emigrants of 1773, North Carolina, New York and Nova Scotia, were so great that they could scarcely hope to see one another again.

'S ged rachadh iad Charolina,
No do thìr tha fo'n ghréin,
Cha b'urrainn iadsan tachairt
Ach ann nan talamh féin.

(Matheson 1851:272)

(And though they would go to Carolina, or to any land under the sun, they would not be able to meet except in their own land.) But Donald Matheson did not allow his sense of the sorrows of parting to affect his advice that everyone should leave, and his words contained the comfort that the whole world belonged to the Lord's Elect.[4]

This advice, given in Gaelic verse by the poet of Kildonan, was repeated by an anonymous Gael of Islay in 1773 in an English tract of extraordinary bitterness. "The natives of the Highlands and isles have always been remarkable for the strongest attachment to the place of their nativity, and for the highest respect towards their masters and superiors." This respect was now undermined by their rapacity. "Let proprietors of the largest estates among them, such whose fortunes enables them to figure it away in life, ask themselves if they have not used every means to estrange the affections of the Highlanders from them." The landlords had become absentees, dealing from a distance with their people "in a language strange and unknown to the most of them". The

natives were blamed "as an intractable, idle, and useless set of beings. Without means, without encouragement, at a distance from market, against climate, and soil too in many places, it is expected of them that they should cultivate and enclose wide extended heaths, rugged mountain, and large barren morasses. . . . Can it be expected that tenants upon short leases can do anything remarkable in this way, especially when, instead of that tender indulgence and encouragement requisite to bring forward agriculture in a country still lying in a state of nature, nothing is heard of but new impositions, new grassums, and a rise of rent equal to, if not beyond, what the gross produce of the ground can amount to?" (Boyd 1927:429-30, 434). The Islayman, like Donald Matheson and James Hogg, recommended wholesale removal to a land where there was no antique feudal superstructure of an absentee aristocracy to blight local initiative, and carry off its meagre capital to the Lowland towns. Looking back from the vantage-point of to-day, past the dreadful history of the Highlands in the nineteenth century, it is possible to regret that more of their countrymen did not take their advice: that the entire Gaelic race did not abandon Scotland and, strong in numbers, build a new society across the Atlantic. But they did not do so, and the testimony of Rob Donn throws some light on the contemporary attitudes with which Matheson's advice had to contend.

It is told that the two poets were reciting their verse to each other on one occasion, when Matheson asked his friend to compare their quality. "There is more piety in your poetry, and more poetry in mine," Rob Donn answered (Matheson 1851:248). There is something other than greater piety in Matheson's verse, to which Rob Donn never approached nearer than in his verses to Mackay of Bighouse, the factor of Lord Reay who died in 1770. Bighouse had invited Rob Donn to his presence to admire his new suit, and after four lines of compliment on his finery the bard concluded:

> Ach cha'n eil putan innt', no toll,
> Nach do chost bonn do dhuine bochd.
>
> (Rob Donn 1899:445)

(But there is not a button nor a buttonhole in it that has not taken money off a poor man.) On the other hand, when a herdsman was evicted from his holding, and his wife employed a Lowlander to write an English petition for them which the

factor could not read, Rob Donn saw only comedy in the situation.

> 'S mi nach earbadh gnothach trom
> Ris an Nòtair ghalld' aig Briogaiseag.
> (Rob Donn 1829:115; 1899:346-7)

(I certainly would not entrust important business to the Lowland notary Briogaiseag used.)

It is clear that Rob Donn was utterly conservative and deeply attached to the old ways. But perhaps, in days of more restricted travel, these did not appear so evidently to have been undermined in the Reay country of western Strathnaver, as they did in the Sutherland earldom or on the Caithness border. The chief of Mackay, the "Ceann na cuideachd 's na tàbhuirnn" was indeed an idiot living quietly at Skerray from 1768 until his death in 1797. But after he had grown accustomed to the humiliation, Rob Donn may have noticed less ominous consequences than Matheson, whose baby Countess lived in state in Edinburgh. It was long, in fact, since a Chief had been closely connected with the cultural life of his clansmen. Rob Donn, the son of a sub-tenant, was now the apex of a literary world containing John Sutherland the school-teacher (Rob Donn 1899:112, 184, 262, 331-7, 390-3), Alexander Cormack the baron baillie (Rob Donn 1899:94, 127, 301, 304), the minister of Reay who made a collection of Ossianic ballads before 1739 (Campbell 1872:xv), and the minister of Durness (Rob Donn 1899:20-7), whose son published the first collection of Highland airs in 1784. Pipers, fiddlers, poets and scholar-ministers flourished here, whether the Chief was in Edinburgh, writing about the barbarous clansmen who supported him in urban luxury, or living, an imbecile, in Skerray. The second was far more economical.

It is impossible to assess whether this curious accident of succession contributed to a kind of Indian summer in the Reay country, of which Rob Donn witnessed the first ten years. A land the size of Fife perhaps approached as close as it has ever done to the condition of those similar regions of Scandinavia in which there were no absent landlords: it continued in this exceptional situation for as long as the idiot Lord Reay lived, and fortunately he lived long. When he succeeded in 1768, the estate had also to support the widow of the fifth Lord Reay, who continued living until 1800 and who possessed three daughters (Mackay 1906:214-15). It had also to support

the widow of the fourth Lord Reay, who continued living until 1790, possessed two daughters, and drew £1,000 a year from the rents of one part of the estate, and 400 merks Scots from those of another (Mackay 1906:204-5; Rob Donn 1899: 266). The idiot chief added nothing to these family expenses.

There appears to have been no pressure of over-population in the Reay country to drive people abroad during Rob Donn's lifetime, and there is no evidence of engrossment of land there for sheep farms in his day. On the other hand, people emigrated as they had been doing before he was born. He witnessed the wholesale removal to Georgia from Edderachillis ten years before the Forty-Five, and the constant traffic to the Netherlands, India, and the new world thereafter. The circumstances of this traffic were not those described by Janet Schaw, James Hogg, Donald Matheson, and the correspondent of the *Scots Magazine*: though it will not suffice to conclude that Rob Donn did not witness such circumstances in western Strathnaver. He paid visits to Lewis and Skye, those centres of emigration, and visited other parts of the mainland as a drover. But he was an illiterate Gaelic monoglot, so that he was doubly barred from reading the Islayman's arguments in support of Donald Matheson's views. Also, he did not see things at a great distance; and for much that was near to him he possessed the affection that does not easily find fault. In his attitude there is probably reflected the latent optimism of a host of his compatriots, reflected also in their reluctance to leave, and their misery when they were compelled to do so.

His verse helps to illuminate another curious paradox. After the introduction of the great sheep farms, the sale of the remainder of the Mackay country to the house of Sutherland, and the vast upheavals of the nineteenth century evictions, men looked back on the earlier period as a golden age (*C.C.R.* 1884:**2**, 1614-18). Were they wrong? The remembered poetry of to-day in Strathnaver passes through the savage and poignant utterances of the nineteenth century into the elegant, untroubled poetic world of the period that preceded it, in which Matheson's is the only disturbing voice (Gunn 1899; Mackay 1962; Grimble 1962:155-60). Was Rob Donn's world, then, a mirage? Many people have said that it was, from the eighteenth century to the present day; and in four instalments in the *Scottish Historical Review*, Margaret I. Adam has used their opinions, and based confident conclusions upon

what she describes as their "intimate knowledge". These conclusions specifically embrace the Sutherland sheriffdom, yet they are almost impossible to reconcile with the eye-witness testimonies of Rob Donn or Donald Matheson, the Islayman, James Hogg or Janet Schaw. There is no evidence in her thesis that Margaret Adam knew of the existence of any of these people. As for the knowledgeable experts upon whom she depended, James Loch's *Account of the Improvements*, 1820, has been accepted uncritically, and the examination of its arguments made by scholars since 1820 has received no more attention than the most striking contemporary comment.

Behind its didactic conclusions sound the authentic voices of those times, communicating their problems, their doubts and their diverse experience. Behind its recital of the poverty, filth, laziness, and misery, there remains above all the fragrance of Rob Donn's witness to challenge modern judgments. He may have lacked foresight, his way of life may have been squalid by city standards: but in it, he and his contemporaries expressed in art more joy and richness than any have cared to do in his country since.

In 1828, Barbara Mackay, grand-daughter of the tacksman-poet John of Mudale, contributed her own picture of Rob Donn's world. "I have of late frequently heard *strangers* express their surprise, at the marked intelligence evinced in the works of a man devoid of every degree of early cultivation. To this it may be answered, that the state of society was very different then from what it is now, progressively retrograding as it has been for the last thirty years at least in this country." She wrote from Keoldale by Durness, where Rob Donn had held *céilidh* in company with the minister's sons, in the home of a factor-tacksman. She wrote almost exactly thirty years after the death of the idiot chief, and on the eve of the sale of the entire Reay estate to the house of Sutherland. "I perfectly remember my maternal grandfather, who held the wadset lands of Skerray, every post-day evening go into the kitchen where his servants and small tenants were assembled, and read the newspapers aloud to them; and it is incredible *now*, the propriety and acuteness with which they made remarks and drew conclusions from the politics of the day" (Rob Donn 1829:lix-lx). The old woman's nostalgic memories followed one another at random, oblivious of their inconsistency with the remarks already published by James Loch in his *Account*. For although she had lived into the age of factors, she was a

product of the age of bards; and she was thinking, not in terms of James Loch's values, but of those of Rob Donn.

NOTES

[1] Margaret Adam gives a further example of the affluence of Sutherland emigrants in 1772 (1919:282). But this appears to derive from *Scots Magazine* 34: 515, which relates, in this respect, to the Hebrides.

[2] Sir D. Dalrymple, *The Additional Case of Elizabeth, Claiming the Title and Dignity of Countess of Sutherland*, 1771: *Brief For The Counsel of Sir Robert Gordon, Bart.* 1771: *Sutherland Book* I, 465-7.

[3] Earl William's tartan is of the Sutherland or Black Watch sett: the yellow stripe had not yet been added to this, to compose a Gordon tartan.

[4] The similarity of thought in Matheson's poem and in the Hebridean *Oran do na Fogarraich* (*The Songs of John MacCodrum*, ed. William Matheson, 1938, pp. 196-203) is extremely arresting.

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FARM CARTS AND WAGGONS OF THE ORKNEY ISLANDS

THE INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF WHEELED VEHICLES IN ORKNEY IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

Eric J. Simpson

Earliest recorded vehicles

Lack of evidence prevents any firm conclusion as to how far back the history of wheeled vehicles in Orkney can be traced. The first Statistical Account indicates how few carts existed in early eighteenth century Scotland, let alone Orkney. The earliest written reference that I have located is for the year 1721. John Traill of Elsness in Sanday had in that year among his stock "6 oxen for carts" (Marwick 1939:22). Later references to the possession of a cart in the same island are to be found in the diaries written between 1766 and 1774 by Patrick Fea of Stove (Marwick 1930:6).

The most detailed early account is, however, in an inventory (dated 1747) of farm implements on the estate of Sir James Stewart of Burray (Marwick 1934: 47-54). Listed, along with various parts of other incomplete vehicles, were:— "a large pair of cart wheels Ironshod with the Coup of the Cart, ane ox waggon with all its furniture", "the Coup, beeam and Shilmers of ane oxen Wean", "trams and coup of a Horse Wain", and a "four wheel Tumbler". In various sections of the inventory wooden axles are listed totalling eight in all. Also included were a number of cart wheels, some ironshod, some new, some old. The large number of incomplete articles registered in the Stewart inventory leaves one with the impression that they must have been of little effective use. Sir James Stewart was undoubtedly an "improver", but perhaps his other rather violent activities prevented him from making full use of his collection of vehicles. (In 1725 he had to flee the country after being involved in a brawl in Broad Street, Kirkwall, where a Captain Moodie was murdered.

Pardoned for his part in Moodie's death, he was "out" in the Forty-Five and died the following year in Southwark gaol while awaiting trial.)

Apart from the Stewart estate inventory there is no evidence to suggest the widespread use of four-wheeled vehicles in the Orkney of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the North Isles and Mainland at any rate all written references would indicate the prevalence of carts with two wheels. The constant use of the term cart in the first and second Statistical Accounts and other records would seem to confirm this. Both Shirreff (1814:53) and Sinclair (1795:226) state that two-wheeled carts were in common use. Also it is stated in the first Statistical Account for Sanday and North Ronaldsay that "there are no waggons in these islands" (Clouston 1927: 269).

The First Statistical Account (*O.S.A.*)

By the end of the eighteenth century, according to the first Statistical Account, there must have been several hundred carts in Orkney. Mention is made of the existence of such vehicles in eleven of the sixteen parish accounts. It is probable, too, that carts would have existed in at least some of the remaining five parishes. The evidence for the most part suggests that carts were of recent origin. For the then joint parish of Stromness and Sandwick it was stated that the number of carts was 23 but "that there were no carts here 50 years ago" (Clouston 1927:103). The minister of Holm also noted that a few carts "are beginning to be used" (Clouston 1927:22). Carts were most numerous in the North Isles of Orkney; and this was possibly due to the effect of the production of kelp which was greater in the North Isles than elsewhere in Orkney.

It is noticeable, too, that with regard to the Orkney Mainland carts were more numerous in some parishes than in others. Here, too, the influence of the kelp industry was probably decisive. The district of Harray with a population of 663 possessed 20 carts whereas the St. Andrews district with an approximately equal population (675) had 40 carts —double the number in Harray (Clouston 1927:166, 165, 12). It is significant that the kelp industry was widely pursued in St. Andrews, whereas Harray is an inland parish. As to the South Isles of Orkney, there is no mention in the various accounts of the presence or absence of carts, apart from South Ronaldsay where there were 23 (Clouston 1927:212).

It may be observed in passing that while carts were becoming fairly common in Orkney, they were still comparatively rare in Shetland (Sinclair 1795:251 and Shirreff 1814:36). Even by 1841 carts were still little used in Shetland (*N.S.A.* Shetland 1845:162).

Rapid Rate of Increase

The rate at which carts were being introduced to Orkney in this period must have been very rapid. The contributor of the account for St. Andrews and Deerness observed that "till within these seven years there were no carts in these parishes but what belonged to the minister, one heritor, and two farmers. Now there are about 40 in St. Andrews alone" (Clouston 1927:8). From the late eighteenth century onward there must have been a considerable increase in the number of vehicles in Orkney. From 1795-8 the number of carts in the island of Sanday increased from 37[1] to 150 in nearly thirty years (Traill 1823:28); and by the time of the second Statistical Account Lady parish in Sanday—with slightly under half of the island population—had 118 carts (*N.S.A.* Orkney 1845: 147). A list of imports given by Shirreff (1814:53) includes for the period 1801-6 no fewer than 287 pairs of cart-wheels and also 13 complete carts. In addition oak spokes were imported in quantity—900 in the period 1801-2; and 144 in the period 1804-5. It is not unlikely that the carts imported were coup-carts of the famous "Scotch cart" type which were being exported from the Scottish Lowlands around that time even as far as Essex (Jenkins 1959:177, 174) and Ireland (Thompson 1958: section IV). It may be assumed, too, that the wheels were spoked—of the kind used for the Scotch cart.

Price of Cart Wheels

The cost of cart wheels is given in a list of imports to Stromness for the year 1792 (Clouston 1927:126). For six wheels the price was £2: 2/- each. At the time of the second Statistical Account the price of a cart was £4: 4/- (1842:60).

Size of Vehicles and Draught Animals

Reading the first Statistical Account it becomes clear that, on the whole, carts in Orkney were very small. The account for Holm mentions carts "in miniature" (Clouston 1927: 22 and 50) and for Kirkwall and St. Ola it is said that "Carts

are very small". Later references tend to confirm this. Both Shirreff (1814:53) and Sinclair (1795:226) refer to small two-wheeled box carts. It may be noted that the first Statistical Account indicates the prevalence on the Orkney Mainland of carts hauled by a single ox or bullock (Clouston 1927:8, 22, 165). A later reference confirms this (Pringle 1874: 54). On the other hand, the vehicles of the North Isles were probably larger in size, as the accounts for Stronsay, Eday and Westray refer to carts pulled by two oxen (Clouston 1927: 317 and 346). Incidentally, this practice did not survive the nineteenth century in Westray at any rate, judging by a letter (dated 25/4/61) sent to me by a Westray septuagenarian, Robert A. Harcus of Rapness, who stated that his grandmother, well over one hundred years ago, carted with a pair of oxen. He himself, however, never saw more than one ox (or milk-cow sometimes) harnessed to a cart. However, in Rousay there could still be seen in the 1920's carts with two small spoked wheels hauled by two oxen attached to a pole. My informant on this, F. Craigie who was born on Rousay, but now lives on Mainland, stated in addition that single oxen were used with similar vehicles fitted with shafts and also with coup-carts.

Oxen as a rule were kept only for the purpose of cart-haulage. The account for Sanday states—"oxen are used only for carts and few or none for ploughing" (Clouston 1927:268). Horses were only occasionally employed for drawing carts (Clouston 1927:103). The only contemporary references to the methods whereby the animals were attached to the carts are in the first Statistical Account. For Holm it was said that the carts were "drawn by an ox, yoked in the same way as a horse" (Clouston 1927:8); in St. Andrews and Deerness carts were "drawn by an ox in the shafts" (Clouston 1927:22). In the afore-mentioned letter from Robert A. Harcus of Rapness, the writer states that the oxen used for carting by his grandmother were attached to a pole by a wooden yoke.

Second Statistical Account (*N.S.A.*)

By the time of the second Statistical Account the presence of carts was evidently accepted as being part of the natural state of affairs, as there are far fewer references to them as compared with the first Account. Where reference is made, as in the Orphir account, the comment is to the effect that "carts are now in general use" (*N.S.A.* Orkney 1845:26).

Such carts were used for loads which formerly would have been carried on horse-back. For North Ronaldsay it was said—"And a still greater advantage is derived from the introduction of carts, with one or more of which every house is now supplied. Before everything had to be carried on horse-back either in sacks or in a sort of wooden creels . . ." (*N.S.A.* Orkney 1845: 110).

Roads

The scarcity of carts in the early eighteenth century can be attributed, in part at any rate, to the widespread use of boats for certain forms of transport. It is noteworthy though that in the wholly inland parish of Harray there were comparatively few carts. According to one of the contributors to the first Statistical Account a more significant factor was the absence of good roads. For South Ronaldsay and Burray it was said ". . . there was never a road made in either. Of consequence few carts are used" (Clouston 1927:207). A contrary view is, however, indicated by the contemporary account for Kirkwall and St. Ola which, after commenting on the "very indifferent" state of the roads affirmed that "since they began to use carts, however, which they have now done for some considerable time past, roads . . . afford them several signal advantages" (Clouston 1927:51, 52). It is probable therefore that the widespread use of carts in some areas—in the North Isles and in the vicinity of the two burghs of Kirkwall and Stromness, for instance—antedated the provision of well-made roads. Elsewhere the pattern of development would have been similar to that in Orphir where in 1841 the general use of carts was attributed to "the forming of the public road" within the previous twenty years (*N.S.A.* Orkney 1845:26). In the low-lying North Isles the availability of metalled roads was less essential than in a parish such as Orphir with considerably rougher terrain. For example, although there were 45 carts in Westray in the period 1795-8, some forty years later it was stated for that island that there are "as yet no highways" (*N.S.A.* Orkney 1845:130).

Distribution

As might be expected the distribution of carts within an area was decided by the size of the farm. The list of persons liable in Statute Labour Conversions in the parish of Stenness[2]

for the year 1854 is divided into three groups according to the annual rental for the farms or houses. In class *I* (rental of £2-4) 5 out of 17 had carts; in class *II* (rental of £4-8) 28 out of 29 had carts; and for class *III* (rental of over £8) there were 41 carts for 33 farms, with some possessing 2 or 3 vehicles.

Traffic Problems in the Burghs

Carts of course were widely used in the two towns of Kirkwall and Stromness. In both burghs the corners of older houses are often splayed for the easier passage of carts and pack-horses through the narrow winding lanes.

It is intriguing to note that even as far back as 1813 pedestrians had to complain about dangerous traffic. According to the records of the burgh of Kirkwall, a complaint was made against carters who rode upon their carts in the streets instead of walking by the sides of the horses. On the matter being raised again the following year a proclamation was issued forbidding the practice of riding on carts and horses in the public streets "so as not to endanger the lives of the inhabitants . . ." (Mackintosh 1887:241).

Probably the carts mentioned in the above passage were similar to the box-carts that were "in common use at the period when the single stilted plough was employed in tillage" (Gorrie 1868:300). The period referred to would have been in the 1830's and earlier. Some of the old box-carts survived to the 1860's and could still be noticed occasionally in the Kirkwall streets "creaking under a load of smoked fish and drawn by a sturdy steer".

Wooden Axles

As to the type of axle employed, the Statistical Accounts make no mention as to whether iron or wooden axles were utilised with the various kinds of cart. In the Stewart inventory

Fig. 1.—Wooden axle from National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland.

(Marwick 1934:47-54) both iron and wooden axles are listed with no fewer than eight of them wooden. The probability is therefore that many, and perhaps most, of the carts registered in the Statistical Accounts were built with wooden axles. It

is also probable that such axles were employed in Orkney until at least the close of the nineteenth century, as four rough hewn wooden axles have survived to my knowledge. One is in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (fig. 1), one in Stromness Museum, one in Tankerness House, Kirkwall, and the last is being used as a lintel in a peat-shed at Netherskaill Farm, Marwick.[3]

In no case is anything known of their origin or of the vehicles to which they had presumably been fixed. Like the Netherskaill one, the axle now in Stromness Museum when found was also serving as a door-lintel on the house of Blackhall (now demolished) in Stenness.[4] It will be obvious therefore that the age-old shortage of timber in Orkney would account for the preservation of the two latter wooden axles.

The Present Day

To conclude this section, it need only be said that carts were an essential feature of Orkney agriculture until recent times. At the present day, however, as elsewhere in Britain, carts have virtually vanished with the coming of the tractor. In Orkney the cart, with a horse in harness, is a sight now rarely to be seen.

THE ORKNEY SLED: AN INTERESTING TWENTIETH-CENTURY SURVIVAL OF PRIMITIVE METHODS OF WAGGON CONSTRUCTION

In the year 1960 photographs[5] of a waggon with solid wheels were brought to my notice. By making enquiry through the local press I was eventually able to trace this unusual vehicle and to acquire sufficient information to embark on a study of such vehicles.

Remnants of these vehicles, or sleds as they were most commonly termed, were traced in the islands of Flotta, Graemsay and Hoy. Considerable information was elicited by means of a questionnaire which was sent to likely informants and also by personal visits to Graemsay and Hoy. No complete specimen was discovered, but various parts including a number of solid wheels (fig. 2) were transferred either to Stromness Museum or to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh. The latter Museum has now restored a sled from the island of Graemsay (Pl. III).

What is interesting about this type of waggon is that it seems to have been concentrated in one particular area—namely the group of islands known as the Orkney South Isles, principally Graemsay, Hoy and Flotta. In modern times, as far as I can ascertain, no similar vehicle was used in the Orkney Mainland or in the North Isles. It should be pointed out, though, that the sled was not the only vehicle used in the South Isles, as the usual type of Scottish "coup" cart was also in common use, drawn by either horses or bullocks.

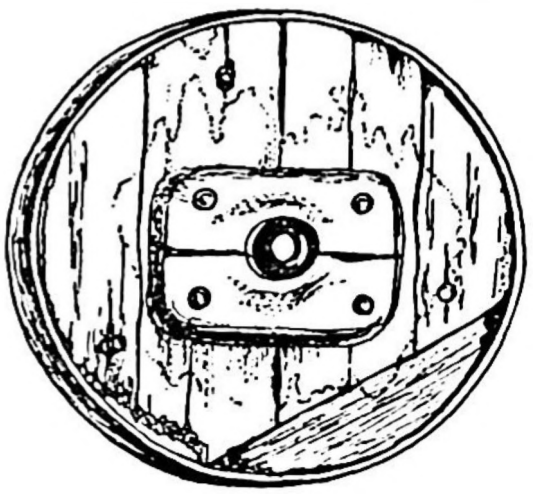


FIG. 2.—Solid wheel of Orkney *sled* (National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland.

Sleds were still being employed till fairly recent times. In Graemsay a number were in use till about the start of the Second World War; in Flotta the last one ceased to be used about 1950 (with the last ox on the island); and it wasn't till 1954 that the sled from Burgar farm, Hoy, fell into disuse. The end of the sled came fairly rapidly with the introduction of the tractor and trailer. Nevertheless, in Graemsay at least one sled was converted into a trailer—being fitted with two modern wheels and a pole.

Terminology

A wide variety of names was used for the waggons. In Graemsay three terms were used—coach, sled and hurley. According to Hugh Ritch, Graemsay, the most common were coach and hurley. In Hoy the term used most often was sled, but one Rackwick man I met frequently referred to them as sledges. In Flotta, on the other hand, the only name used was lorry. In this article I am employing the term sled as it seems to have been the most common over all.

No special names were employed for the different parts of the sled, except for "shellwing" and "backdoor" in Graemsay

and in Hoy. The shellwings (presumably the same as shelvings —a Mainland Scottish term) were extensions which could be fitted to the four sides to give extra carrying capacity. They were used in Graemsay, but not in Flotta. The backdoor was the tail-board and was always removable.

Variations

All the sleds were four-wheeled, with the one exception described below. With the Graemsay sled and the Flotta lorry, the front wheels were generally fixed and this made them difficult to turn. One solution to this was found by J. Wilson, Windbreke, Graemsay. He made a vehicle with three wheels—two at the back and the third, which protruded from the front of the sled, was able to swivel in an iron device which worked like the front forks of a bicycle. (Incidentally, the front wheel was home-made and was of the wheel-barrow type, but the rear wheels, which were spoked, were made by a wheelwright.) This problem of manœuvrability was solved in another fashion by Robert Thomson, Burgar, Hoy, who had purchased the waggon at a sale in Graemsay about 1920. As he had found the sled to be difficult to control going down steep inclines, a friend who had farmed in the U.S.A. fitted the front wheels on a turn-table with a pole to guide it, thus copying a feature from the waggons used on the prairies.

Harness

For harnessing the animals, where there was a pole fixed to the sled, as with the Burgar sled and another at the neighbouring farm of Dale, a cross-pole was used with leather straps attached to the collars of the animals. But a very different method was used in Graemsay, Flotta and the Rackwick district of Hoy. In those areas there were neither poles nor shafts. Instead the animals were connected to the sleds by chains attached to swingle-trees or "ammles". My informants in Flotta[6] stated that when one ox was in harness, only one swingle-tree was employed; with two oxen, three trees were used, the largest being termed the "twa-baist" tree ("twa-piece" tree in Graemsay). The sled was attached to the trees by chains fixed to the axles, then hauling chains went from the trees to the leather or canvas back-bands to be fastened to end-links on the "haims" of the collar. This method of harnessing was the same as used when ploughing with an ox. The

ox-collar, it may be observed, differed from the horse-collar in that the former fastened under the head instead of over.

Swingle-trees were sometimes dispensed with altogether, in Rackwick at any rate, as can be seen in Plate IV, fig. 1. Here the ox is harnessed direct to the sled.

Brakes

With regard to brakes, there were many and varied systems. One method employed in Graemsay was to have a chain fixed to the body which, when braking was necessary, could then be hooked on to a bolt on the rear wheels. Latterly, an iron shoe fixed in the same way was utilised: it could be slipped under the back wheels to act as a drag. Some of the Flotta lorries had a fixed bearer at the back end with a moving bar and a shoe to impinge on the rear wheel-rims. In some cases it was operated by a screw, in others by a lever. However, one very elementary method of braking was also employed in that island. This simply involved the users of the waggon hanging on to trailing ropes which were attached to the rear of vehicle.

In Rackwick, Harry Mowat of North House informed me that his sled had been fitted with a shoe-brake applied by lever. In addition, when going downhill he sometimes put the "ox ahint the cairt". Another Rackwick crofter, the late Hugh Ritch, Ootroo, told me that usually he just shoved a piece of wood under the wheel when he wanted to brake.

Axles

In every case that I know of the axles were of iron, though I was told that in Flotta mild steel was used occasionally. Very frequently old horse-cart axles—reduced in size—were utilised. According to my Flotta informants, the axles were bolted to the fore and aft bearers or fixed with U-bolts known as garrow-nails. The wheels were retained on the axles by the usual type of metal clip.

Wheels

The semi-solid wheels, embodying what is probably one of the oldest methods of wheel construction known to man, are the most interesting features of the Orkney sleds. Most of the sleds had semi-solid tripartite wheels, constructed of three pieces of wood held together by nails and by transverse struts

on one or both sides. In every instance the wheels were girt with iron shods or tyres, usually put on by a blacksmith. No example of a completely solid wheel has come to light.

Wheels were also often made in the form of a cross as shown in Plate IV. Examples of this kind have been found on Graemsay, Flotta and Hoy.

All the wheels found had iron bushes—some straight, some tapering. The diameter of the sled wheels varied from 24 to 27 inches for the tripartite type; and 22 to 24 inches for the cross type.

The wheels like the rest of the vehicle were usually locally made from whatever materials were available. An account of how one particular tripartite wheel (now in Stromness Museum) was constructed was sent to me following the

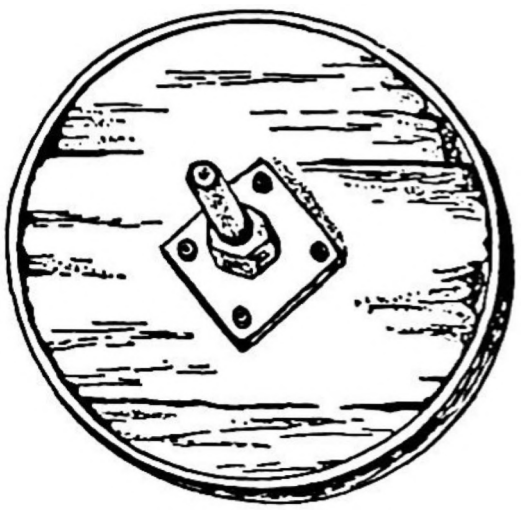
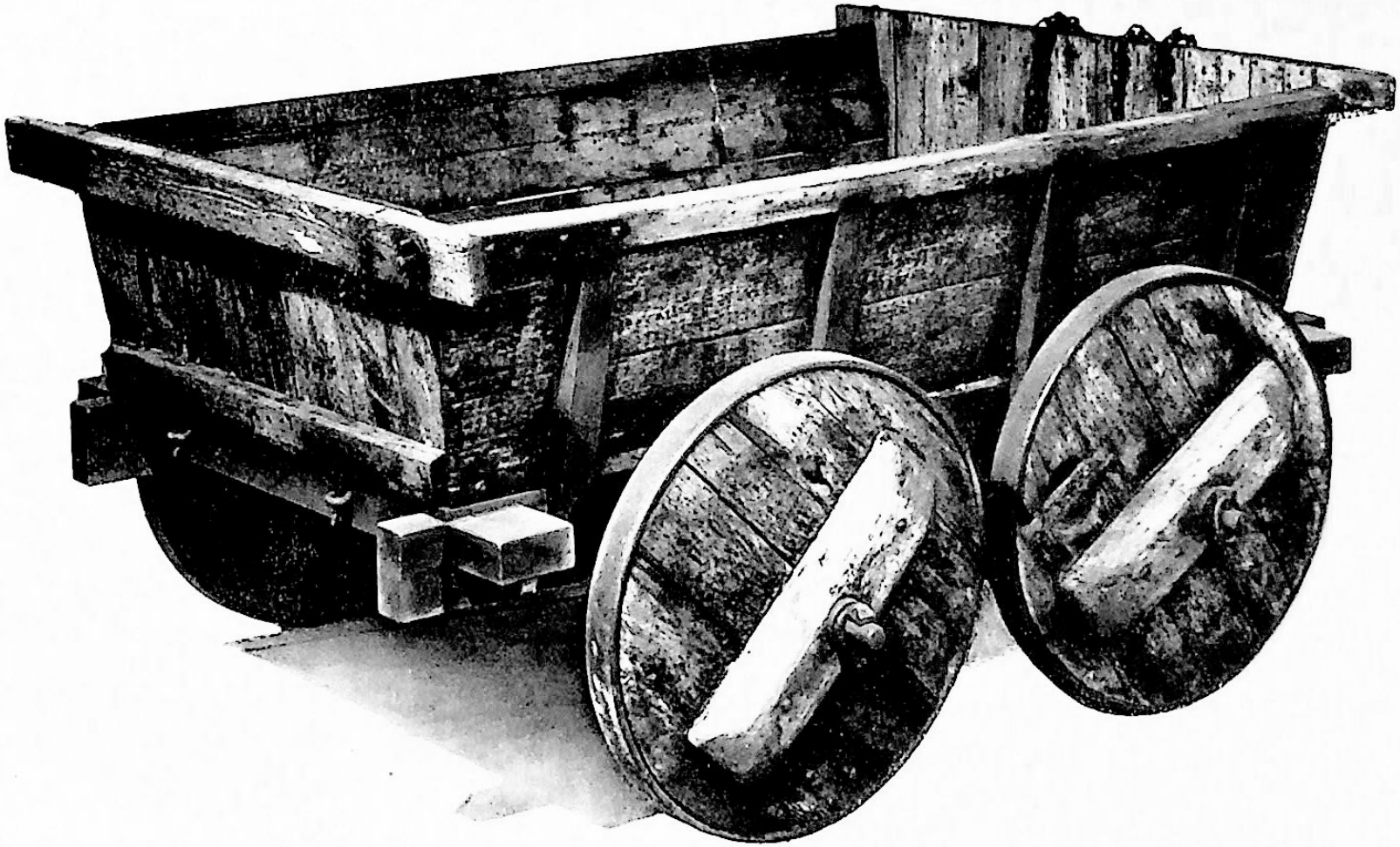


Fig. 3.—Solid wheel from Ootroo, Rackwick, Hoy

printing of a photograph in "The Orcadian". The writer, James Sinclair, Portree, stated that this particular wheel was one of a set of four made by his father—the late J. Sinclair, Dean, Graemsay. The wood used was teak taken from block ships sunk in Hoy sound; the outside hub was made from the rollers from the bottom of a trawl net, which had been washed ashore. The iron tyre was put on by the late J. Park, blacksmith, Stromness.

Another wheel (Fig. 3) came from a sled with an unusual method of construction. This particular waggon, owned by the late Hugh Ritch, Ootroo, Rackwick, did not have axles in the usual sense of the term. Each of the four wheels had its own short iron axle as a part of the wheel (in the same form as the single-wheeled barrow). Each wheel was held in a wooden frame, the inner side of which was joined to the box of the sled. Apparently there were no metal bushes for the short axle rods, which just revolved in apertures



Sled, restored, from the island of Graemsay (National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland).

FIG. 1—Ox harness and sled, Rackwick, Hoy, Orkney.

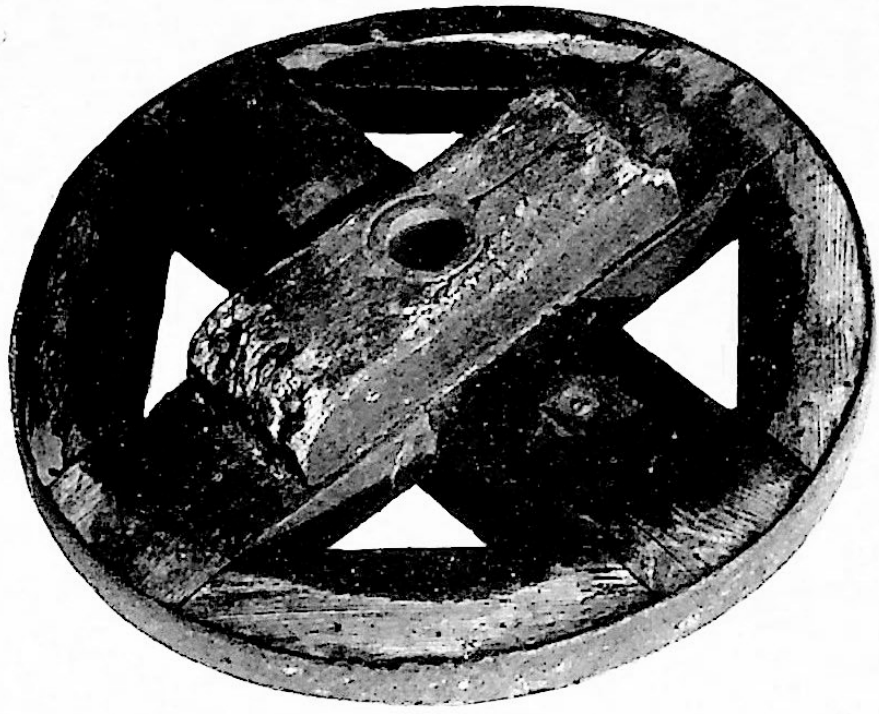


FIG. 2—Sled wheel from Graemsay, Orkney (National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland).

in the wooden frame. When the apertures were worn too wide to hold the axle-rods firmly, leather washers were inserted to tighten them up.

Draught Animals

The draught animals employed with the sled were usually oxen, sometimes one, but usually two. A mixed draught was not uncommon—with a horse paired with an ox or, sometimes, a cow. Horses in pair were also used, but my Flotta informants considered that they tended to be rather fast for the purpose. On the other hand, the Burgar sled was latterly used only with horses, and it was the owner's opinion that the horses liked it better than the ordinary cart, as there was no weight to hold up on their backs.

Antiquity

The question of the antiquity of the Orkney sled is not one that can be answered with any certainty. As has been seen, it was not till about the end of the eighteenth century that the use of wheeled vehicles became common in Orkney; and there is no definite evidence to prove that solid or semi-solid wheels were in use in Orkney during that period or indeed before. Whereas, as far as I can find, there is no record of the existence of such wheels in Orkney until recent times, it may be observed that similar wheels, a feature of the kellach type of cart of Northern Scotland—especially Ross and Moray—were frequently noted by travellers and "improvers" in that area (Burt 1754:74-78; Donaldson 1794:22; *O.S.A.* 1:277 and 14:90; Sinclair 1795:23, 101). Since, as has been noted earlier, there were considerable imports of cart-wheels and spokes into Orkney in the early years of the nineteenth century, there must have been at that time an ever increasing number of carts with spoked wheels in different parts of the county. On the other hand, the existence of a number of vehicles of a more primitive kind may reasonably be deduced from the survival of at least four wooden axles. It is probably a fair deduction that the kind of wheel attached to a wooden axle was of an equally primitive type—quite possibly a solid or semi-solid wheel.

Whether or not the sled type of vehicle was derived from the wains and waggons of Sir James Stewart's estate (see page 154), it is really impossible to say. On the one hand, it

may be significant that the Stewart estate was on Burray and South Ronaldsay—part of the South Isles group and not too distant from the islands where sleds were employed in more recent times. On the other hand, the names given to the sleds and the parts thereof bear no relation to the terminology of the inventory. Again, as has already been indicated, the incomplete nature of all but one of the Stewart estate vehicles would hardly indicate great use. It is interesting to note that nearly 50 years later the minister of the parish wrote that: "few carts are used. It is no uncommon thing to see six persons with six horses carrying to the mill three bolls of bear" (Clouston 1927:207).

From the evidence available it would appear impossible to reach any firm conclusion as to the age and antiquity of the sled type of waggon. What, however, is incontrovertible is that all the sleds whose history is known were built not so very long ago. According to the owner, the sled at the Dale was built about 1931. The sleds at North House and Ootroo were also built around that time (in the 20's or early 30's); and, as with the Dale sled, were built—in part at any rate—by the late James Moar, Hoy. Recently a Mainland joiner, A. Tait, Dounby, informed me that around 1923 he had taken an ox-waggon from Quoyness, Hoy, to his shop for extensive repair. Instead, however, he built a new one and kept the old one in his yard till it fell to pieces.

When I inquired as to when this type of vehicle was first used, no one in Hoy or Flotta would hazard an answer; but J. Wilson, Windbreke, told me that the first sled in Graemsay was made about sixty years ago and that the idea came from Rackwick, Hoy.

Origin

As to the question of origin, again there can be no conclusive answer. It is always possible that there is a connection between the Orkney sled and waggon-type vehicles in other countries. A Scandinavian influence is feasible, though if so it would have been a recent influence and almost certainly not of the Viking period. Berg (1935:146) has pointed out a certain similarity of construction between the Orkney sled and waggons of a cruder type found in parts of Sweden and Norway and other European countries as well. However, with our existing knowledge, no final verdict can be reached on this point.

Again there may have been a connection (either way)

between primitive types of Orkney vehicles and the famous Red River carts of Canada, since there were a considerable number of Orcadians in the Red River settlement, some of whom maintained close ties with Orkney (Marwick 1953:9-28). However, though the Red River vehicles had solid wheels and wooden axles, they were carts with two wheels; and, of course, the sleds had four.

Perhaps the real answer to the question of origin is that the sled was evolved in a limited area of Orkney for particular functions for which it was eminently suited. One point stressed by several of the sled owners was the handiness and convenience of a low vehicle especially for loading. Its capacity was also appreciated. Robert Thomson, Burgar, stated that his would take a ton of anything he liked to load into it. Also where oxen were widely used, then the utility of the sled can be understood. Both L. Sinclair, and the late Hugh Ritch, Rackwick, informed me that the sled was handier for oxen than the cart. Indeed the survival of the sled until recent times may well have been closely linked with the continued use of oxen. In connection with this, it is intriguing to note that on Graemsay, where sleds were once very common, most farmers went back to oxen many years ago after having been using horses. My informant on this point, J. Wilson, Windbreke, stated that the main reason for this change was the difficulty of transporting horses to and from the island at a time when there was no pier. (Incidentally, the Graemsay farmers went back to horses again before 1939, but there was only a short period before the horses gave way again—this time to the tractors.)

The question may be asked why were solid wheels preferred at a time when it would not have been difficult to provide spoked wheels. Apart from the economic advantage of using drift-wood which came readily to hand, another reason is suggested by Berg (1935:118) when he refers to the advantages of the solid-wheeled cart compared with the more usual type: "it answered excellently when driven on soft, loose ground into which the wheels could easily sink". It is significant that in the period when the sled was common, artificial roads were virtually non-existent in the areas where its occurrence was general.

My personal opinion about the origin of the sled is that it was evolved from the runner-sledges which were, and still are, used for farm work in all parts of Orkney. Even to-day

it is quite common to see, especially at harvest time, simple runner-sledges being hauled by tractors. Sometimes, instead of a runner-sledge, a platform with two small wheels at the rear is used for carrying sheaves. It would not have been surprising if in the South Isles a similar practice had been followed, only fitting four wheels instead of two, thus making a simple waggon. Indeed one type of runner-sledge used in Graemsay strongly resembles the sled—having only runners instead of wheels.

If the sled was evolved from the runner-sledge, it may be worth observing that similar conclusions have been reached about a comparable development—the evolution of wheeled vehicles from the slide-car type of sledge:—namely, in Wales (Fox 1931:185-199), in Ulster (Thompson 1958: Section 1), and in Norway and Sweden (Berg 1935:144-146).

This hypothesis that the Orkney sled evolved from the runner-sledge is supported by the very use of the term sled, which elsewhere simply means a sledge. Indeed with several of my informants the term sled was often used indiscriminately —sometimes meaning a waggon, sometimes a runner-sledge.

NOTES

[1] In the second Statistical Account it is stated (p. 47) that at the date of the old Statistical Account the whole island of Sanday contained 36 carts; but this seems to have been an error for reference to the earlier account shows the actual number to have been 37.

[2] I am indebted to Peter Leith, Appiehouse, Stenness, for showing me this list transcribed from the records in the Sheriff Clerk's office, Kirkwall.

[3] It was Alexander Fenton of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland who drew my attention to this particular axle. This was only one of the many occasions when Mr. Fenton aided me with his advice; and I wish to express my thanks for the great assistance I received from him in preparing this study.

[4] This particular axle was donated to Stromness Museum by Peter Leith, Appiehouse; and it was from him that I obtained the information on its history.

[5] These photographs, as I found later, were taken by Mrs. N. F. McMillan, City of Liverpool Museums.

For the photograph of Pl. IV, fig. 1, I am indebted to Mr. H. Mowat, Simmary, Melsetter, Orkney.

[6] My information on Flotta was procured for me by J. I. H. Fleming, M.A., who in April 1960 questioned on my behalf Malcolm Ross and Thomas Rosie then aged 77 and 72 respectively. I am grateful to Mr. Fleming for the careful way in which he assembled the necessary information. My gratitude is due also to all the informants mentioned in the text, who, in many cases, went to a great deal of trouble in their efforts to assist me with this study.

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MELNESS

A CROFTING COMMUNITY ON THE NORTH COAST OF SCOTLAND

James Coull

On the north coast of Scotland, and flanked by the broad inlets of Loch Eriboll to the west and the Kyle of Tongue to the east, lies the peninsula of the Moine. On the north-east part of this peninsula lies the district of Melness (Fig. 1) which is the home of a crofting community. The district illustrates the problems of modern crofting—problems which are basically those of adapting a traditionally communal way of life, evolved under subsistence conditions, to the economic individualism and cash economy of the industrial age. Here, as elsewhere in the Highlands, the old way of life underwent modifications and began to lose its separate identity through the ties forged with the Lowlands after the "Forty-five". The dependence on home-produced food, a fundamental binding force in the community, started to be undercut in the 1880's when cheap imported flour began to replace the old staples of potatoes and oat-meal; and the upheavals which accompanied and followed World War I gave the old way its death-blow.

In Melness there is a farm and a number of croft clusters: these are townships of varied size, but all share a big area of common grazing, and Melness is in effect one community. The district is part of Tongue parish, for which statistics have been used, although this includes other crofting districts on the eastern side of the Kyle and several farms as well.

The Moine has a rectangular outline, and stretches some 10 miles north to south and 6 miles east to west. Its surface for the great part is an old planation surface, ranging from 400 to 700 feet in elevation, and covered with blanket peat (the name *Moine* means "peat moss"). On it there are a few upstanding residual masses, and it falls sharply on all its seaward slopes. In the Melness area this slope is less steep but more complex in form: the landscape is varied with small ridges and valleys, and by the Strath of Melness—a bigger and deeper valley which runs north to south with the rock strike.

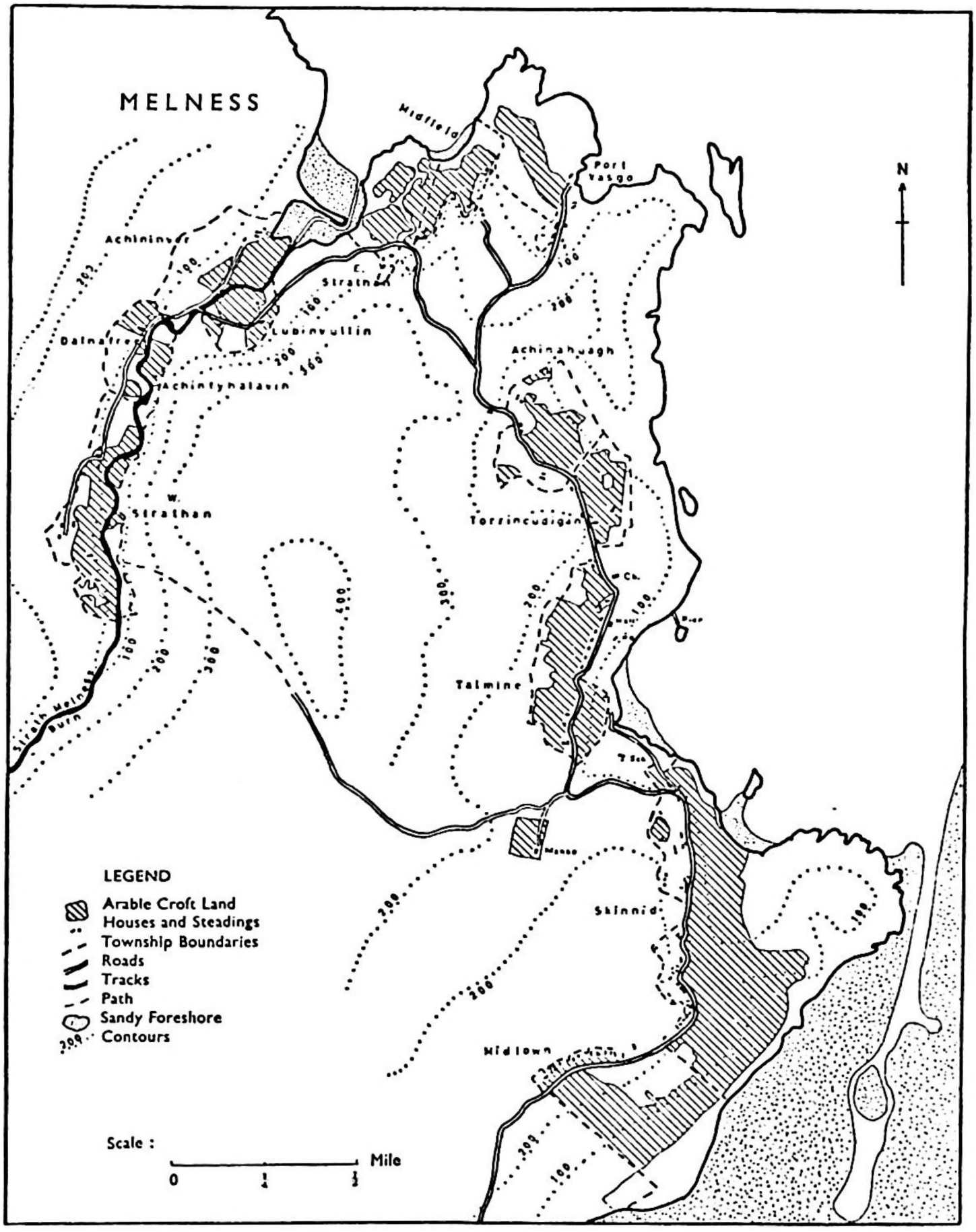
MELNESS
Middle Ia
Port Vasgo
N
Achininver
E. Strathan
Dalnafree
Lubinvullin
Achintyhalavin
Achinahuagh
W. Strathan
Torrincudigan
Talmine
Skinnid
Midtown
LEGEND
Arable Croft Land
Houses and Steadings
Township Boundaries
Roads
Tracks
Path
Sandy Foreshore
Contours
Scale :
Mile
0

FIG. 1.

Geologically, the main rock series of the area is the acidic Precambrian Moine, but there are three intrusions of more basic hornblende schist and the Strath of Melness has been partly eroded along one of these; however, these geological differences have little evident influence on the potential for man of the soils developed on the respective rocks. Within the strath there are some riverine terrace deposits, at least in part fluvioglacial; but for the most part glaciation has stripped the landscape, and bedrock is generally covered with at most a veneer of drift, while north of Talmine township rock outcrops are frequent. In general, slopes in the south part of Melness (from Midtown to Talmine) are smooth although rather steep for cultivation in part; while in the northern part the broken landscape makes cultivated land more fragmented. In the Strath, cultivated land is in varied situations: some is on terrace gravels, but it occurs also on the lower valley slopes, and also on the low deltaic flat behind the sand-bar at the river mouth.

Historical development

The story of Melness shows the development of a way of life whose origins are lost in history; although there is evidence that this area of Sutherland has been settled from early times, there is no definite record of continuous settlement before the fourteenth century. There is a tumulus of unknown date immediately south of Midtown, and the name Melness itself derives from the Old Norse *melr* "a sand bank" and *ness* "a cape" (Gunn and Mackay 1897:193); for centuries, indeed North Sutherland was debatable territory between the Norse and Gaels.

The first documentary mention of Melness records the gift of the lands of Melness and Hope to one Farquhar of the Strathnaver Mackays in 1379 (Mackay 1906:363). This was but one of the many changes in land ownership in Sutherland, however: with the wane in power of the Farquhars, most of Melness is recorded as having come under the main Mackay family of Strathnaver by 1511, and in 1624 the first Lord Reay bought the remainder of the Melness estate. At the latter date there are four pennylands recorded in Strathmelness, and the contemporary House of Melness seems to have been at the mouth of the Strathmelness Burn, at the modern Achininver (Mackay 1906:364).

No detail of the settlement pattern in Melness emerges

until 1678, for which year there is a Judicial Rent Roll of the Reay Estate preserved (Mackay 1906:473). This shows a variety in status of the tenantry recorded, and does suggest a healthier range of society than the present crofting community possesses. There are five big tenants (probably tacksmen, though not quoted as such), who pay 300, 150, 100, 80 and 80 merks in annual rent; the latter three rents were paid by tenants settled at Strathan, while the former two came from tenants at Melness House and Skinnid. In addition there was a smaller tenant at Achinahuagh (paying 45 merks), and the only small tenants recorded are at Midtown—one paying 12 merks, and three paying 6 merks. Doubtless this does not represent the whole population—presumably the bigger tenants had sub-tenants who paid them rents just as those of Midtown paid theirs direct to Lord Reay: the Roy Map (1747-55) also suggests this for it also shows in all eight groups of houses, including (for example) nine buildings at Skinnid, and also settlements at Port Vasgo and four settlements in Strathmelness.

From the later eighteenth century the position becomes a good deal clearer: by this time the forces which were to change the old order were already gathering momentum, and a society already in transition can be discerned.

Another rent roll of the Reay Estate for 1789 (Mackay 1906:477, 478) again shows big tenants at Strathan and Melness House, while there is still one tenant at Achinahuagh. But Skinnid—biggest of the modern townships—is recorded as having 21 tenants: Lord Reay had taken over the direct administration of the township, and this may well be an instance of the elimination of the middleman tacksman. At the same time there seems to have been severe pressure on the small tenantry: the Old Statistical Account records cases of oppression of the small tenantry, by tacksmen in Tongue Parish (*O.S.A.* 1792:529), and on the Reay Estate tenants' services had varied between 20 and 120 days per year (Adam 1921:12), but had recently been commuted to money rents. Another trend was the subdivision of holdings to accommodate a growing population—an instance of the very frequent reaction of the Highland tenantry to the problem of increasing numbers.

A great change was wrought in the early nineteenth century in the settlement patterns of the Reay Country of North Sutherland by the removal of the inland small tenantry to the

coasts, and the initiation of the crofting system by the parcelling out of the land of the small tenantry from the old run-rig pattern into permanent lots. This change was associated with the introduction of sheep-farming, infamous in Sutherland history, but also with other social and economic changes. Lord Reay had got into financial difficulties and between 1811 and 1824 cleared his tenants from Strathmore[1] (at the head of Loch Hope) and around the head of the Kyle of Tongue to make way for sheep and to increase the rental. Many settlements figure in the 1789 rent-roll which are unknown now, and in many places are to be seen the marks of former cultivation.

Melness, along with other districts on the opposite side of the Kyle of Tongue such as Skerray and Farr, was a recipient area for the people moved, and the result was the crowding of existing settlements, with the formation of some new ones. Thus by 1890 Skinnid had 31 crofts; and Midfield, East Strathan, Torrincudigan and Talmine appear by 1878,[2] apparently as creations of 1828-29. Midfield and East Strathan are notable in having their inbye croft land on a series of ledges and slopes facing north—broken, exposed terrain which was only settled because of population pressure. Although this redistribution of people certainly caused hardship and stress, coming as it did when the population was increasing, it is noteworthy that at least some authorities consider that under changed economic conditions of the nineteenth century the way of life based on fishing and small holdings at the coast was more viable than stock-rearing inland for small men (Adam 1921:10).

Changes were occurring too in the social order. By 1840 the tacksman system had passed away completely in the parish and there were three big sheep farms in the south part of it (*N.S.A.* 1845:177), while there was some movement of settlement towards the roads—tradition has it that about the mid-nineteenth century the houses of Midtown were moved up to the head of the crofts. The practice was growing too of housing the cattle in separate buildings—the old "black house" was declining, and does not come within the range of living memory in Melness. There were certainly some cottars in the district—116 are recorded in Tongue parish, which would give some 40 in Melness if they were in proportion to crofters.

When the picture finally becomes known in detail through the investigations of the first Crofters Commission in the last

decade of the nineteenth century,[3] it shows the usual prevalence of small men associated with the society of extremes of the West Highlands: in the Melness district were 90 crofts, from 1 to 6 acres in arable extent, the average being only 2 to 3 acres. In all, it was a situation of obvious land hunger. The crofts were grouped in 13 townships (Fig. 1), but most of them were in groups of 2 to 4, and only Skinnid, Talmine and Midtown had over 10 crofts. All the crofts of the district shared a common grazing of over 10,000 acres which extended some five miles westward on the Moine plateau; and in addition Midtown, Skinnid, Port Vasgo and Achininver had small township commons of their own. Skinnid also had some cultivated land on the common—the old lazy-beds which were held in run-rig are still visible. The crofts, townships and common grazings are unaltered to-day, although the way of life of the people has greatly changed.

As almost everywhere, the standards of crofting husbandry here have never impressed favourably. The insecurity of tenants under the tacksman system still discouraged progress at the end of the eighteenth century, although by this time potatoes had become the main crop, and much seaweed was carried up from the beach to supplement manure as fertiliser; indeed seaweed was so valuable that trips were made by boat to the island of Eilean Roan and up the Kyle to collect additional supplies. However, in 1840, croft land was still in poor heart—and it was unfenced and generally undrained, and never rested from a potatoes-bere-oats rotation: the bere yielded only about four-fold and the oats two-fold (*N.S.A.* 1845:179). Again at the end of the nineteenth century, the frequency of corn marigold and charlock in the corn was remarked (Edwards-Moss 1888:80)—also the fact that most of the work was done by women.

Memories of the early years of this century record practices which have now completely disappeared. Thus hay was cut by the crofters on the township in Skinnid, and divided into heaps, and each crofter had to select his own one while his back was turned; it was also the custom of at least some of the crofters at this time to break in some of the outrun within their crofts in winter with the spade—an exceedingly laborious task with the stony compacted soils. It was frequent too for two neighbours to team up and each provide a horse for a plough pair, and bere was grown till the inter-war years.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the stock in this area

of Sutherland were all of unimproved breeds (Sinclair 1795: 147), and of prime importance were black cattle, which were kept on the mountains inland in summer, but on the inbye land in winter (Sinclair 1795:149). In 1792 there were 2,142 cattle in Tongue parish, and 2,846 of the much less valuable sheep; horses numbered 538, and the omniverous and hardy goat was more valuable then than now—there were 714 of them (*O.S.A.* 1792:523). The small tenantry participated on a humble scale in the trade in cattle, which fetched about £2.10s. per head and were doubtless the main source of cash income.

By 1840, the introduction of commercial sheep rearing had restricted the emphasis on cattle, and the crofters had got rid of their old breeds and were raising Blackface and Cheviot-Blackface crosses, while the big farmers in the area reared pure Cheviots (*N.S.A.* 1845:179). New horse breeds were coming in too, and the Highland pony was now rare. If the breeds of stock had improved, it seems that their management had not, for all types of stock were stunted of growth: already stocking had reached a level which the land could not adequately support. Even so, sheep numbers were certainly less than now—few families had more than 12 or 15 sheep[4] before 1914. In the latter nineteenth century, most crofters kept a pig for household use, and it was customary for groups of them to take it in turn to rear bulls. In 1883, the method of disposing of stock—both cattle and lambs—was by selling them to travelling dealers from Caithness.[5]

Right up until World War I it was the custom for stock to be herded on the common during the cropping season; each township provided a herd for its own animals, but the system ended in 1915 with the erection of a substantial fence to separate the hill grazing from the inbye land, helped by a grant from the Department of Agriculture. Before this these herds, who were usually young boys or old men, were paid £2 or £3 per season. According to the grazings regulations formalised in 1896,[6] the souming on the common is one cow and follower and six sheep per £1 of rent; and in practice, this gave an average of some three cows and followers, and twenty sheep per crofter. For souming purposes, one cow was equivalent to five sheep, and one horse to eight sheep. Shielings, up on the Moine, are also said to have been used until about the turn of the century.

In 1792, the threat of hunger was obviously very real. By

this time potatoes were the staple diet, supplemented by meal, butter, cheese, milk and fish, while only the better off sometimes had milk and beef (*O.S.A.* 1792:524). However, import of grain, from Caithness, was relatively easy (Sinclair 1795: 151), and its continued importance is shown in 1849 (St. John 1884:81). In bad seasons the landlord and the government had to provide relief food, and after the bad harvest of 1782 many of the poor had to subsist largely on the cockles and mussels they could gather at low tide on the mudflats in the Kyle of Tongue (*O.S.A.* 1792:522); these indeed figured regularly in the diet of the people—they were mentioned again in 1840 (*N.S.A.* 1845:172).

Fishing has always been pursued to some extent, although attempts made to put it on a commercial basis show the usual West Highland story of very sparing success. In the late eighteenth century, the emphasis was on white fishing from small boats, for which the winter was the time of peak activity (*O.S.A.* 1792:522). In the 1830's there were attempts by the Duke of Sutherland to promote commercial herring fishing to help accommodate the men cleared from the inland straths and in 1833 each boat in Tongue parish, on the average landed 118 barrels (*N.S.A.* 1845:76); a good return by the standards of the successful port of Wick in Caithness. Success was not maintained, however, and there was no investment in the bigger boats and other equipment which would have given fishermen the range they needed in pursuing their elusive quarry. More significant was the growth of the practice of the men going to the East Coast herring fishing in summer. About 1888, nearly all the able-bodied men went to the East Coast for 8 to 10 weeks and brought back £12 to £25 for the season (Edwards-Moss 1888:80-81). However, there was a herring fishing station established in the nineteenth century, and a pier built at Talmine, and French and Dutch boats as well as those from Caithness and Sutherland landed herring.[7] A post office with a telegraph was built to aid this in 1911, but it was never of great consequence. White fishing did attain some economic importance, and continued to be a source of income until after World War II when lorries came to transport the fish; but the lack of port facilities, and of capital to buy modern boats and gear, together with a population ageing and declining in numbers, led to the final demise of the fishery.

Although the problem facing the community in this corner

of the Highlands in the nineteenth century was largely that of insufficient land, it was not this alone which ultimately led to the disintegration of the old way of life; the change involved had many components, and the Melness district shows several variations from the general Highland trend.

Thus in Tongue parish, population almost doubled in the period 1755 to 1831 (Fig. 2); by the late eighteenth century, seasonal migration to work on the Lowland harvests had begun (*O.S.A.* 1792:529), and by the middle of the nineteenth century the landlord was aiding emigration to Canada (St.

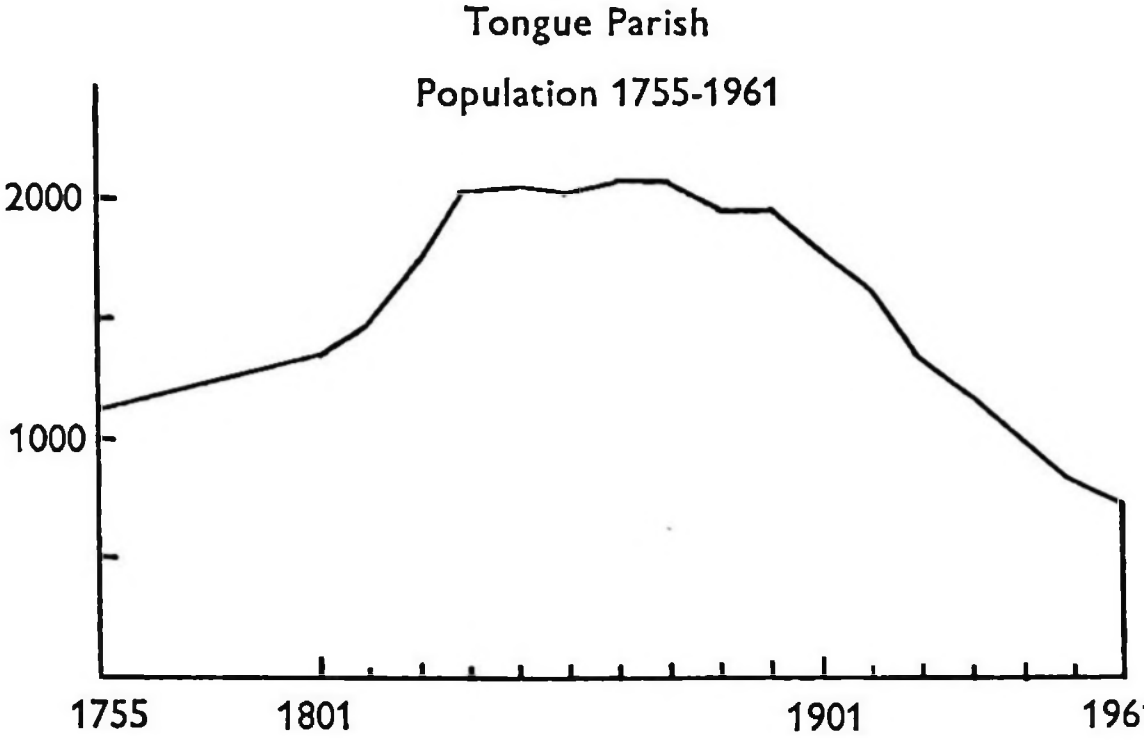

Fig. 2.

John 1884:80); and contacts with the outside world were also being increased by the summer migration to the East Coast fishing. Census figures suggest that the crash which followed the Potato Famines here was less severe than in most of the West Highlands, for the population remained steady in Tongue parish from 1831 to 1871 (Fig. 2) and only after this did the decline begin which is still unchecked to-day.

Seasonal and permanent migration were attempts to adjust to the new economic conditions of the nineteenth century, but there were also efforts to adjust internally. These consisted in part of fishing and rearing the new sheep breeds already discussed; in addition quarrying of slate and flagstone was active at Port Vasgo in 1792 (*O.S.A.* 1792:519), and also later at Midtown, but this had been virtually discontinued by 1840 (*N.S.A.* 1845:179), having proved uneconomic. Some kelp was

made in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (about 20 to 30 tons per year), but it collapsed in the 1820's and none was made after 1832 (*N.S.A.* 1845:180).

Roads were a feature of the new order, and began relatively early—they were progressing well by 1792 in Tongue parish (*O.S.A.* 1792:527); by 1840 there was a post office at Tongue (*N.S.A.* 1845:180), to which Melness was connected by a ferry across the Kyle. Mail was taken thrice weekly to Thurso, and twice to Golspie by a coach which also carried passengers. In the nineteenth century too began the coasting traffic with "shop boats" from Orkney, which speeded up commercial exchange, although in 1883 the main medium of trade were smacks from Caithness which called sporadically at Tongue, whence goods had to be carried to Melness across the ferry. The last trading smack called in 1932, for they were ousted in the inter-war years by land transport.

Local artisans still flourished in the earlier nineteenth century in the parish—there were carpenters, masons, shoemakers and smiths (*N.S.A.* 1845:177), and there seems to have been at least one of each in Melness: freer exchange in the factory age has eliminated most of these—there is only one builder and one shoemaker now. Mills at Dalnafree in the Strath and at Talmine ground the home-grown grain, but these had gone out of use by 1902.

In the decline of the old community life, formal education has played a part. Melness had its own school by 1790, and in 1840 English was generally understood by the younger people (*N.S.A.* 1845:177), and although the older members of the community still speak Gaelic as a first language, it was finally superseded as such among the school population between the wars.

Melness to-day

In Melness to-day, the decline of the crofting way of life is very apparent: the usual symptoms—neglected croft land, decreased cattle numbers, and a top-heavy population structure are all present. Apart from the crofts (with their insufficient economic basis for a livelihood now), virtually all the employment is in services. At present (1960) the total community strength is some 170: i.e. those who have a house or a croft in Melness, and who regard it as home; but about 60 of these are outside the district, and most will certainly never return apart from holidays. There are in all 65 homes in the townships

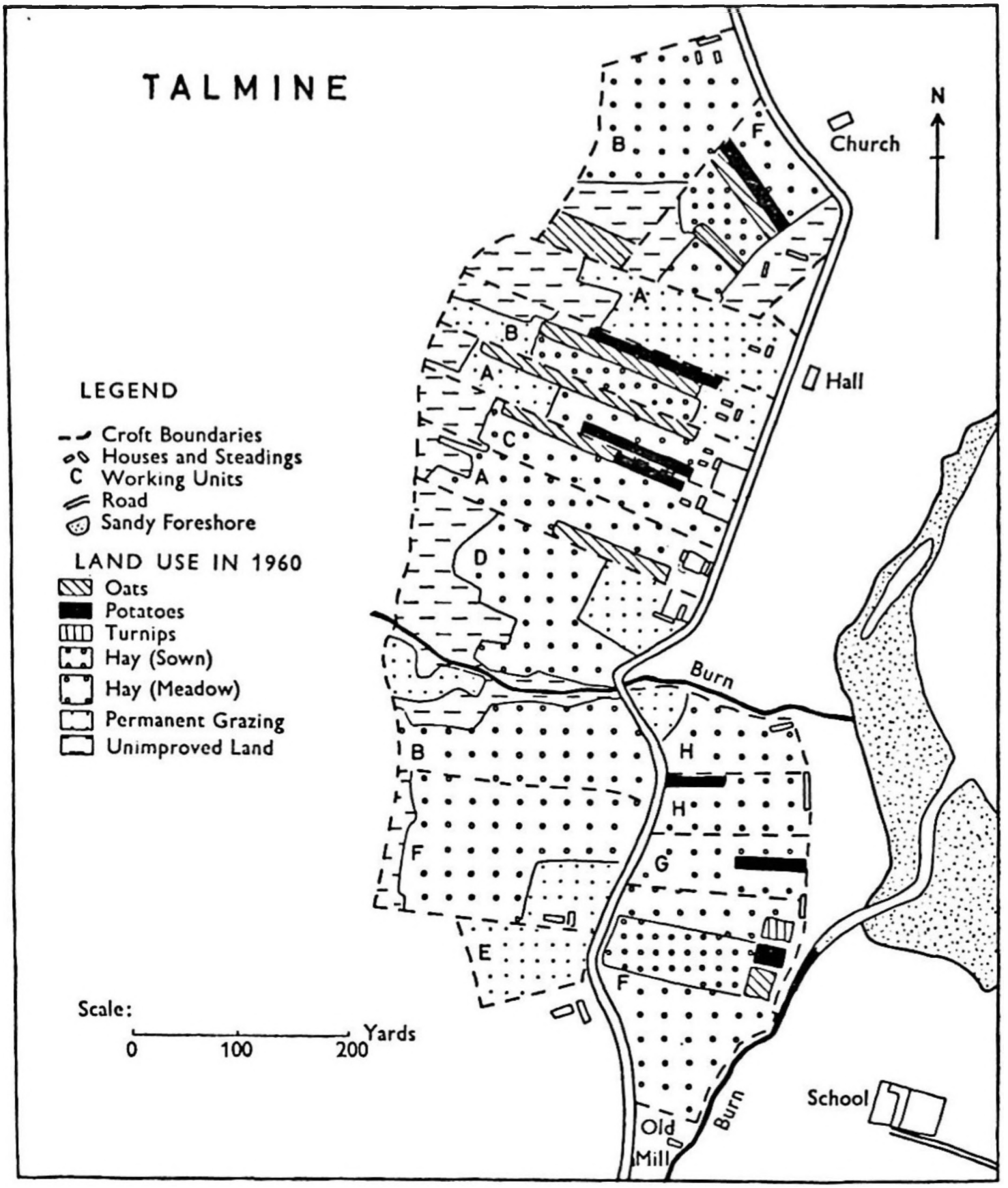

Fig. 3.

now, and 11 of these are cottars. Of the crofters, only 28 can be said to be actively working the land, and the system now is geared to the rearing of sheep for market.

The more active crofters invariably have more than one croft, although these are seldom contiguous, and they may even be in different townships: thus one Achininver crofter

has two crofts in Midfield, while one man has two at Torrincudigan and three in Talmine (Fig. 3). Significant in the south part of the district and in the Strath are the walls between the crofts—in its natural state the land was strewn with loose boulders. On the more broken terrain of Midfield and East Strathan, however, the crofts are not even fenced, and this is also found at Achininver where the land is actually still in unconsolidated strips.

The relationship of the houses of Melness to their crofts is something of a microcosm of crofting variety. Thus in Midtown and Skinnid, the nineteenth century movement of the houses upslope has actually divorced them from their crofts, for they are now sited on the opposite side of the road which runs at the head of the crofts; for the most part they have walled gardens attached which are little used. In Skinnid the houses are in aligned groups of twos and threes, not always adjacent to their crofts. Talmine is a "two-storey" township (Fig. 3)—the road runs through it at about 150 feet O.D. and there are complete crofts above and below it, all with houses at the foot of the crofts. At Midfield, East Strathan (Fig. 4) and Port Vasgo the houses are in fairly close clusters, apart from the crofts in nooks of the more rugged terrain. Port Vasgo is especially noteworthy, as nearly all its inbye land is in the bottom of a glacial meltwater channel which cuts off the small rocky peninsula of Meall Mor; it is about 500 yards long and 70 yards wide. Achininver also has its three houses in a cluster, on a terrace at about 25 feet O.D. above the low-lying delta flat on which is most of its arable land; and in the strath the houses are attached to the crofts but are fairly well dispersed.

The soils of the Melness crofts are nearly all more or less peaty and thin; the material overlying bedrock is generally a thin veneer of gravelly boulder clay, in which a shallow hard pan has formed. In the more broken terrain at the north end, part of the old arable was on more or less pure peat in hollows, and was formerly cultivated in lazybeds, but these have now been abandoned. The lowest lying part of the old delta at Achininver is very wet and has been left in lazy-beds, but the remainder gives a deep (if rather sandy) soil which is the best in the district. In the Strath, croft land is mainly on terrace gravels which are fairly well drained, if rather stony. Most of the croft land has never been artificially drained, although with the help of Crofters Commission grants, drainage has improved some of the land recently.

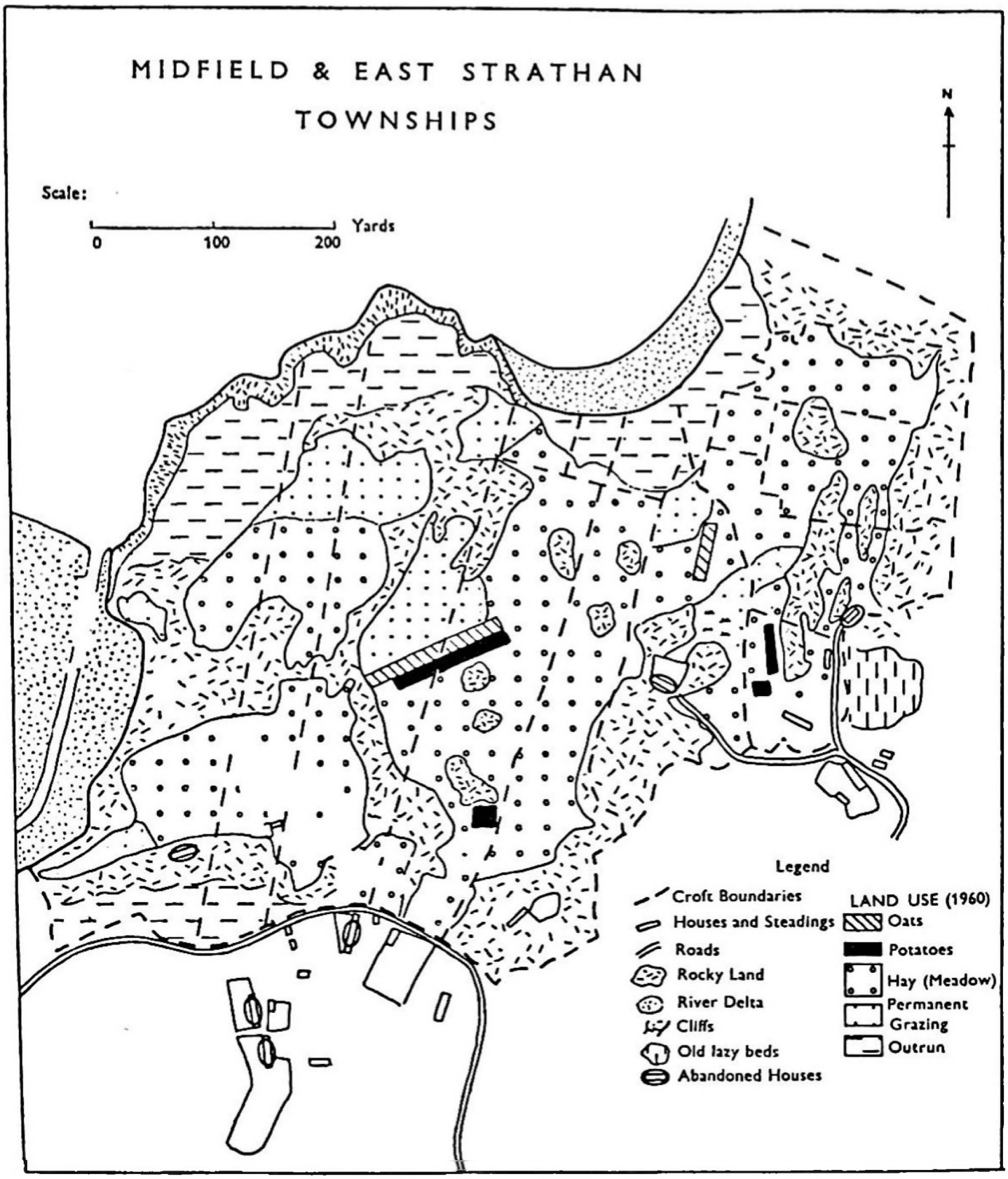

FIG. 4.

Where the land is still actively worked, it is now coming more or less into a six-course rotation, although there are often more than three consecutive years of grass between the crop of oats, potatoes and oats. Much of the hay now cut was seeded down several years ago, or may indeed come from natural grass. It is cut in late August and September for hay, and half a dozen crofters are now overcoming the uncertain autumn

weather by putting it up on tripods and fences. Oats are the only other crop of significance for the animals: potato oats as well as sandy oats now figure in the system, and with the new varieties they can still mature when sown in mid-May as opposed to the old practice in mid-April. A few turnips also are grown for stock feed, but only five crofters had patches of them in 1960. Every croft still has its own potato patch, but

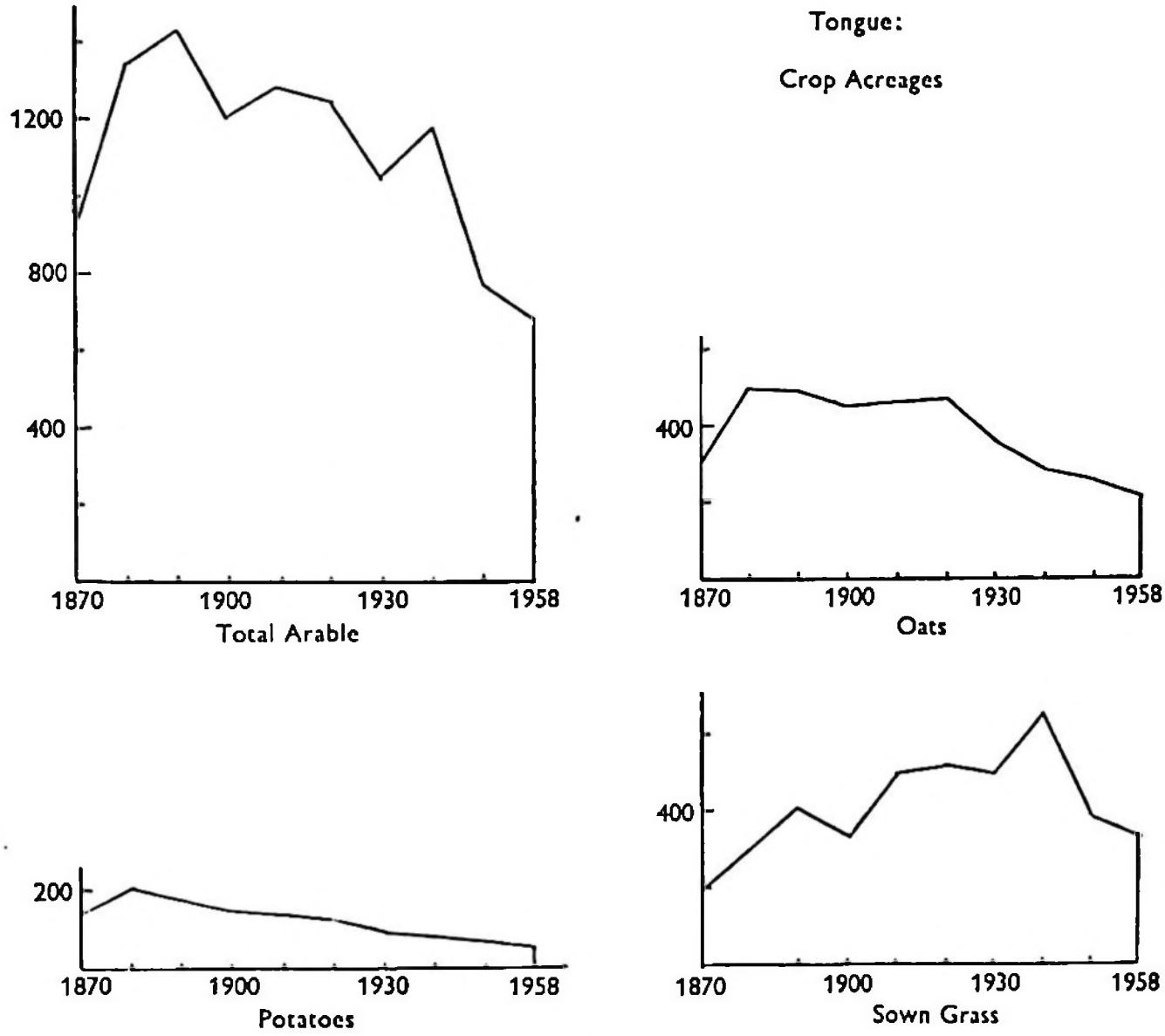

FIG. 5.

these are much less grown with the decline of the crop as a food staple. In all, however, less than a twentieth part of the inbye land is now ploughed up annually—even with the more active crofters the fraction is seldom more than one quarter (see Fig. 5). Artificial fertilisers now supplement manure on the land, and no seaweed is now applied. By far the greater part of the croft land is now under permanent grass: the better parts of this are cut for hay, the amount varying with the weather of the season, but most of it is grazed only.

Three crofters have Ferguson tractors, and one of these

now does most of the ploughing for the district on a contract arrangement. Even so, part of the land is still turned by spade for potatoes—in 1959 for example, one Skinnid crofter turned as much as half an acre. The contractor also does a good deal of mowing of the hay, but most of it is still cut by scythe, as is most of the oats. There are several small tractors and three horses still which help in the work on the land—such as taking

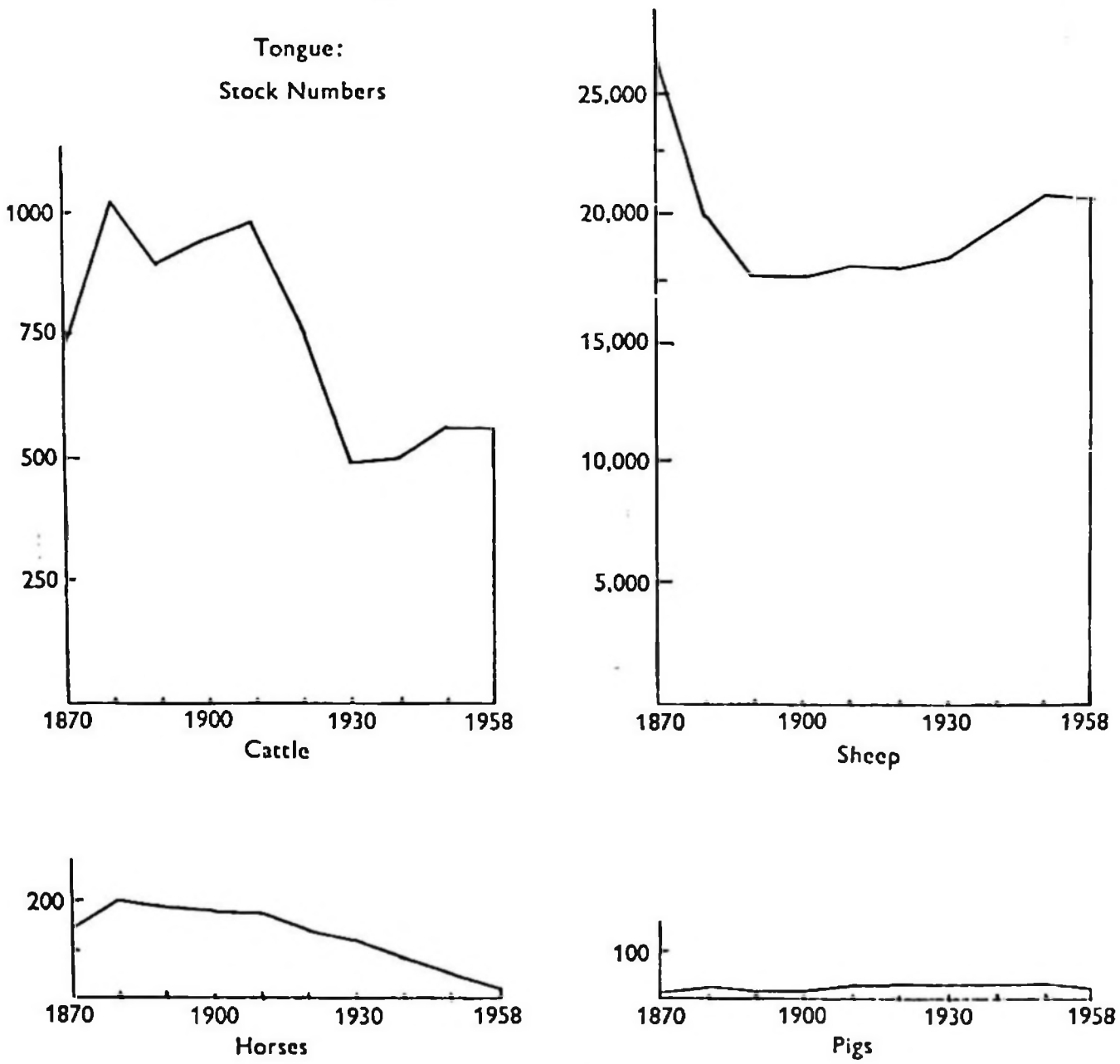

FIG. 6.

out manure or taking in hay and oats; but part of the latter is still carried on the backs of men and women.

The stock shows the modern crofting characteristic of an emphasis on sheep (see Fig. 6). A dozen crofters have as many as 60 to 100 sheep, but only half a dozen have as many as 3 cows, and there are only about 40 cows in Melness now compared with some 2,000 ewes.

The sheep are almost all Cheviots—the usual breed in the north-west mainland, and although not the best suited to this

rather bleak environment, under the present economic conditions they pay as well as any. Every crofter now looks after his own sheep, apart from the occasions of gathering (for dipping, shearing, separating the lambs from the ewes, and bringing inside the ring fence for winter), when crofters generally work with their fellows in the township.

Selling demands a long haul to market—generally to Lairg but occasionally to Forsinard, both 50 miles away on the railway in East Sutherland. Some of the crofters go to the expense of wintering their hoggs on the East Coast, although this costs about £2 per head (including freight); others keep them within the district ring fence in the winter season from 25th October to 25th May, although this means that they are in poorer condition at the end of it. According to the grazings regulations, the whole district is open to all stock in winter, but some crofters with fenced crofts exclude others than their own. Those with most sheep all give hand feed in winter—a practice which began between the wars, and is now done even in the best winters; in bad years it may necessitate the costly expedient of buying in fodder. In summer, the sheep graze on the Moine common, although there are some lost in the bogs and over the cliffs.

The few crofters who keep 3 or 4 cows have up to 10 cattle beasts with heifers and calves. Most of the cash income from cattle is now realised by selling of calves, which avoids the problem of feeding them in winter. Cattle are now mostly black polls, of the Aberdeen-Angus breed, the old Highland beasts having disappeared completely, and the objective is now beef cattle for market, little thought being given to home milk production; milk is regularly brought from Lairg—for part of the year even for those who still have cows. No bulls are now kept in the district, though formerly there were several. All crofters now depend on the bull kept at Melness House farm.

The Melness district has a big common grazing (over 10,000 acres) in relation to its size, but the part inside the hill fence, which the sheep graze in winter along with the croft land, is heavily punished now. Even in summer this part has not much vegetation—the grass is in tufts, separated by bare patches. There are some patches of bracken on the common, but drainage is so poor that it is not a serious pest.

Skinnid has a township common of 81 acres on the wing-shaped promontory which gives the township its name; it is irregular rocky terrain which provides good shelter for sheep

in winter, and has also been dusted with wind-borne sand which supports a much better sward than the general common. Two cattle per croft are allowed on this common in summer, in contrast with the other townships where cattle are either put to the hill or tethered on the crofts during the cropping season. The other township commons are of little significance now: the Midtown one (18 acres) is on coastal sand dunes and is almost all covered by marram, while at Achininver the township common (25 acres) lies on the hill between the township and the ring fence, but is also rather barren; at Port Vasgo, the cliff-top common on the Meall Mor promontory is rather better, but is only 17 acres in extent.

Ancilliaries and Services to Crofting

Productive occupations are limited to work on the land, apart from lobster fishing, in which there are only two small boats engaged, one at Talmine and the other at Port Vasgo; both have two-man crews. Before World War I, almost every family had its own boat for the inshore line fishing, but this subsequently declined. The great gale of January 1953 damaged most of the boats remaining on the beaches so badly that it almost ended the inshore fishing, although a limited amount still continues. Two of the crofters work full-time on the farm at Melness House, apart from the busy croft seasons of sowing and harvesting.

Nearly all other work is in service occupations. There are four roadmen who maintain the Melness road, and also a part of the main road along the north coast, from Kinloch to Hope; occasionally two or three other crofters get employment on the roads, too. The only other full-time worker is the shop-keeper, and part-time there are two postmen and one mail-driver; and for the school there is one janitor, one cleaner, one cook and one driver. Also, there are three teachers, the minister and a nurse, none of whom are natives of the district.

Although there are forestry plantations in North Sutherland, there is none near enough to be within daily travelling distance, and none of the Melness crofters are employed in it. The district is also unfavourably placed for the tourist trade, being off the main road; to date only two crofters cater for summer visitors, although some caravans are brought to Talmine.

More significant for the district than these home wage-earners are those who have gone away to find work. There are

about 30 of them, mostly single people, but also some with families. There are only 5 now in the Merchant Marine, the rest being scattered throughout Britain and engaged in a variety of work.

The houses of Melness are all crofter-built; most have only a single storey although some have two. A very few have roofs of the heavy Caithness slate, but most now have materials brought from further afield—asbestos slate and tarred felt. A water scheme now serves the whole district and all now have electricity. There is also a shop, a church and a little used community hall.

Fuel still consists largely of peat; all those who are physically able cut their annual supply in banks on the Moine, and it is brought to the houses by lorries hired from Tongue. Formerly, there were peats within the Melness district, and although still worked at the north end, they are virtually exhausted. Coal now supplements peat, especially with the older people, despite the freight costs.

Numbers on the school roll show that community decline has not reached a hopeless stage—there are still 30 children at the three-teacher school, although they have to go to Dornoch or Golspie in the south-east of Sutherland for secondary education after reaching the age of twelve.

The story of Melness over the last two centuries shows a common crofting theme: a struggle to adjust to a new order which has had very sparing success, as is shown by the repeated mention of debt, poverty and destitution.[8] At no time in this period has Melness ever attained any real prosperity and it still lacks prosperity—and social equilibrium—to-day.

NOTES

[1] C. C. Evidence, 1884, Vol. II, p. 1597.
[2] See 6″ O.S. map, 1st edition (1878).
[3] C.C. Report, 1891, pp. 2-6.
[4] Information from Mr. A. G. Mackay, Skinnid.
[5] C.C. Evidence, 1884, Vol. II, p. 1604.
[6] C.C. Report, 1896, p. 109.
[7] C.C. Evidence, 1884, Vol. II, p. 1601.
[8] e.g. *O.S.A.* 1792:526-7; *N.S.A.* 1845:186-7; C.C. Evidence, Vol. II, p. 1596.

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

A. NOTES ON SCOTTISH PLACE-NAMES

21. *Kilwinning*

During a field-trip to the island of Arran in the Firth of Clyde in December 1963, I was able to record what appears to be the Arran Gaelic version of the Ayrshire place-name Kilwinning. I had previously recorded from the same person, Mr. John Robertson (92) of Blackwaterfoot, other Gaelic names of some of the more important places on the Scottish mainland, particularly in Renfrewshire and Ayrshire, where Gaelic has been dead for a few hundred years—a fact which makes the recording of the Arran Gaelic pronunciation of these names all the more valuable. However, only Kilwinning shall concern us in this context, and the name as given to me by Mr. Robertson is *Cill Dingeain*. As my informant had proved most trustworthy on other occasion and as both his mother and he himself had lived and worked in Kilwinning at different times, this Arran Gaelic version of our name deserves a little closer attention.

For this purpose we first of all turn to the written story of the name. Its early phases are easily followed in Cochran-Patrick 1884, where the relevant documents are very conveniently gathered together. From these the following picture emerges:

kilwinin 1202-7 Glasgow Registrum;[1] *Kilwynnyn*, *Kilwenyne*, *Kilwynnyne*, *Kylwynnyn*, *Kilwynnyn* 1222 Dryburgh Liber;

Kilwynyn 1229 *ibid.*; . . . *Kylvynnyne* c. 1357 Reg. Mag. Sig.; . . . *of Kilwinnyng* 1482 Acts of Lords Auditors.

Subsequently *-ing* or *-yng* endings occur almost exclusively, with *-w-* and *-v-* on the one hand, and *-n-* and *-nn-* on the other as alternative spellings in the appropriate places. The present forms makes its first appearance in the middle of the 16th century, significantly in a document in the Scots vernacular.

All this points to a very consistent scribal tradition and there is no reason to believe that the various recorded forms are not attempts to represent the actual pronunciation of the name as faithfully as possible. There is therefore also little doubt that the explanation normally advanced for Kilwinning is in all probability correct. It derives the second element from the Welsh form *Gwynnion* (with lenition) of the saint's name "*Finnén*, a diminutive of the name of Findbarr of Moyville" (Watson 1926:165) who died in 579 and is supposed to have been trained at Whithorn. Kilwinning Abbey is said to be a 12th century foundation by Hugh de Morville on the spot where Findbarr's earlier church had stood.

Obviously it is not possible to relate the Gaelic form collected in Arran directly to this written tradition. The question even arises whether it contains the *same* saint's name, for in the only two other instances known to me in which *Dingan* appears in Scottish place-names it is said to be a form of the name *Ninian*: (1) There is a *Chipperdingan Well* in the parish of Kirkmaiden in Galloway which Maxwell (1930:67-8) takes to be an Anglicisation of a Gaelic *Tiobar Dingain* "Ninian's well". He claims that "St. Ninian's name is *often* rendered Dingan or Ringan, as in Geoffrey Gaimer's *Estorie des Engles*, line 96, 7, written in the twelfth century: 'Ninan aveit ainz baptizé,/Les Altres Pictes del regné:/Ce sunt les Westmaringiens/Ki donc esteienent Pictiens./A Witernen gist Saint Dinan/ Long tens vint devant Columban'". (2) In the parish of Strathblane (Stirlingshire) behind Blanefield village there is a ridge known as the Dingan Hill.[2]

Does this mean that *Cill Dingeain* too commemorates St. Ninian and not St. Findbarr? Presumably there is no objection on principle to such a parallel commemoration particularly in the light of the latter's alleged training at St. Ninian's Candida Casa. How firm, however, is Maxwell's claim that Dingan is in fact St. Ninian? Whereas the rhyming Scots form Ringan is well attested in literature and in early Scottish personal names (for some sixteenth century examples see Black 1946:

s.v. Ninian), the equation of Dingan with Ninian seems to be based solely on Gaimar's *Estorie*, and here one is tempted to think of the form with initial *D-* as the result of a misreading as it is not easily explained phonetically.

Looking at the place-name evidence alone, there is no compelling reason why Ninian should come into the picture at all. Mr. Robertson's *Cill Dingeain* for Kilwinning might contain the second person singular of the hypocoristic possessive pronoun *d'* "thy" which is evidenced for Northern Ireland and Kintyre. Arran has *t'* but then *Cill Dingeain* is not necessarily an Arran name although used in the island, and it is quite possible that the Gaelic of the south-west mainland of Scotland went with Northern Ireland and Kintyre rather than Arran.[3] Medial *-ng-* would be from -[ŋ']-<[N'], and the whole name *Cill D'Fhinnéain*, containing the Gaelic form of the saint's name whereas Kil*w*inning has the Welsh variant. The Galloway *Chipperdingan* might then be interpreted as *Tiobair D'Fhinnéain* (unless it is *Tiobaird Fhinnéain*, with subsequent metanalysis) and *Dingan Hill* as Gaelic *Cnoc D'Fhinnéain*, or the like (if the name has the same origin, that is). We might also compare *Killimingan* in Kirkgunzeon (<*-gwynnion*) in Kirkcudbrightshire which represents Gaelic *Cill M'Fhinnéain* "My Finnén's Church" (Watson 1926:165), whereas *Cill D'Fhinnéain* (= Kilwinning) would be "Thy Finnén's Church".[4]

NOTES

[1] The source abbreviations used are those recommended in the Appendix to the *Scottish Historical Review* 42 (1963).

[2] This was brought to my notice in a letter from Mr. Gilbert Innes of Killearn.

[3] Unless *t* became voiced after *l* as is evidenced in Manx (Jackson 1955:83). This was pointed out to me by Professor Kenneth Jackson whose advice also prevented me from straying into the realms of mere speculation in the present discussion.

[4] Cf. also *Kildavie* (Mull), Gaelic *Cill Da-Bhì* "Thy Bì's Church" and *Kildavanan* (Bute) the old forms of which alternate between *Kyldavanan* 1429 and *Kilmavanane* 1476 (Watson 1926:273 and 301).

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W. F. H. NICOLAISEN

B. NOTES ON COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

Goat-Keeping in the Old Highland Economy

Amid all the bitter memories of the "Forty-Five", the people of Moidart enjoyed a gleam of humour unexpectedly provided by a herd of domesticated goats. Still remembered long after goats have ceased to play any significant part in the Highland economy, the tale has a two-fold interest for us, as we shall see. Though the subject has been practically ignored hitherto, it seems likely that until the mid-eighteenth century goats may have had, for the majority of the population, the lesser tenants and cottars, an importance comparable in its way to that of cattle in the economy of the chiefs and tacksmen.

On May 3, 1746, after the return of Clanranald's men from Culloden, a naval engagement took place between two French and three English frigates at the entrance to Loch Ailort, which separates the districts of Moidart and Arisaig. Father Charles MacDonald, priest of Moidart in the 1880's, heard how

> The natives on each side of the Loch stationed themselves on knolls and on the slopes of the hills, whence they had a complete view of what was going on before them. During the hottest part of the fight, one of them, an old man belonging to Gaotal [on the Arisaig side], was heard to offer up the most fervent supplications to Heaven for the preservation, not of the French, less so of the English, but of some goats belonging to himself, and which were grazing on an island within close range of the combatants' guns (MacDonald 1889:184).

In 1959, Mr. Sandy Gillies, of Glenuig in Moidart, then 80 years of age, informed me that "Goat Island was a place grazed by goats in 1745",—indicating the grassy islet, crowned by a vitrified fort, which lies in the mouth of Loch Ailort (O.S. "Eilean nan Gobhar", NM/694794).[1] Like some other islets so named, this Eilean nan Gobhar was no doubt traditionally used in former times for summer pasturing, an alternative to the hill shieling, which simultaneously took advantage of the availability in such places of rich seasonal grazings and also protected the township's cereal crops from trespass (*cf.* Whitaker 1959:173-8).

The extreme agitation of the Gaotal tenant who owned the perilously insulated goats can now be more easily understood in the light of some hitherto unpublished references to the keeping of goats by the numerous "small tenants" of the southern parts of Ardnamurchan parish (of which Arisaig and Moidart formed the northern portion) prior to the Rising of 1745.

The barony of Ardnamurchan and Sunart was purchased from the Campbells of Lochnell in 1723, by a Peeblesshire laird, (Sir) Alexander Murray of Stanhope, his intention being to reap much-needed financial benefits from the development of lead-mines at Strontian, the woods of Sunart, and the fisheries of Loch Sunart and Loch Shiel. Unfortunately for him, Murray soon found himself in opposition to the various tenants already in possession of the lands. From the outset he tried to force the tenants to give up the keeping of goats, so as to conserve some still extensive natural woodlands for his own benefit. After a lively meeting of the principal tenants of Ardnamurchan, evidently at the "House of Mingary", on 25 September, 1723, Murray's factor, Donald Campbell, younger of Octomore, informed him that

> to oblige your whole Tennants to dispose of their Goats without the least Consideration . . . would very much irritate and provock the Country People,—

and advised him to defer the matter

> till you are better settled and fully master of your Bussiness (Murray of Stanhope Papers, I, fo. 76).

Two years later Murray tried again, this time with the various branches of the Locheil Camerons then settled in Sunart, where the principal woodlands lay. Murray maintained, among other points, that they must accept as legally binding

> That all the Goats shall be removed out of all and sundry the lands of Sunart at and betwixt [*sic*] the term of Whitsunday 1727 . . . Goat-keeping to be a nullity of tack (*ibid*, II, fo. 131-137).

In 1730, John McNivan, one of the principal tacksmen in Ardnamurchan, agreed, on behalf of himself and his subtenants in the five-pennyland of Girgadel,

> to keep no Goats upon the aforesaid lands for the better preservance of the growth of the woods in the Countrey (*Delvine Papers*, MS 1415, fo. 3-6),

on condition that they could in future maintain, in addition to their customary souming of 60 cattle, 100 sheep in place of the "60 sheep and goats" formerly permitted. This two-thirds increase in the second category implies that goats had previously made up a very substantial part of the 60 "sheep and goats", although the actual numbers are not distinguished; nor, because their value was reckoned to be equal, are they specified separately in contemporary inventories.

Other Ardnamurchan tenants accepted tacks on similar terms at this time, but in Sunart the struggle was still unresolved in 1741. John Richardson, then factor, wrote from Strontian to Murray of Stanhope's brother to urge that, with some named exceptions, the poor tenantry should be allowed by the landlord to have their goats in all other places in Ardnamurchan and Sunart, adding this revealing comment:

> I know its one of the greatest hardships that can be put upon poor tennentry to oblige them to Banish their Goats which are the principal support of their familys (*Murray of Stanhope Papers*, VI, fo. 143).

To be urged to sympathy on the further ground that "Ardslignish"—Campbell of Lochnell's fiery brother, Papist and Jacobite, who consistently opposed the Murrays, and successfully resisted all their efforts to oust him from their barony—allowed his tenants to keep their goats, despite the condition in his tack, must have had less effect with the Murrays than their own dire financial circumstances.

In the end the whole of Sunart was granted to Cameron of Dungallon (ratification of tack, 7 August, 1744), with the right to "cutt and use Birk Elder and Hasel Trees for the Houses and Buildings upon the said Lands". Subject to payment, Charles Murray retained the right to cut, sell and "manufacture" the timber and bark growing upon the estate on condition that he

> fence and inclose the said Woods with a Stake and Rice [= wattled] Hedge of Oak, or a Stone Dyke, for the space of four years after the cutting (*Delvine Papers*, MS. 1415, fo. 18-23).

The subject of the goats was not directly mentioned, but the provision for protective fencing of the woods during regeneration—at Murray's expense—doubtless marked their total victory.

Half a century later the parish of Ardnamurchan evidently retained more goats than any other in Scotland. Admittedly

it was one of the largest in the country, but even without the extensive districts of Sunart and Ardnamurchan proper, for which no figures were given, the goat population was estimated at 2,300 of which Moidart had 800, and Arisaig and South Morar 1,500 (*O.S.A.* 1798:294). Elsewhere on the mainland goats were by then "much on the decrease", though to a lesser extent in Wester Ross and Sutherland. In Perthshire goats were "entirely banished" from Clunie, "almost gone" in Blair Atholl and Strowan, while they were expressly "proscribed" in Aberfoyle, "on account of the injury they do to the woods" (*O.S.A.* 1794:124). In his summary of the statistical accounts Sir John Sinclair observed: "In the Highlands of Scotland, there were formerly more goats than sheep" (Sinclair 1826: I, 271).

The natural suitability of the goat to the Highland terrain, and some of its qualified advantages even at this period, were remarked upon by the observant Dr. John Walker, whose studies of Highland agriculture particularly covered the years 1760 to 1786, when goats were giving way to sheep in all the progressive areas.

The goat is no doubt a very ancient inhabitant of the Highlands, being naturally adapted for a mountanous and rocky country. Till of late years, when the fox came to be hunted, and a price even set on his head, the sheep were few in number, and none could be kept in safety, but what were housed at night; but the goat being a much stronger and bolder animal, and having his lodging at night in precipices and inaccessible retreats, was secure from the ravages of the fox. Large and numerous flocks of goats were, therefore, every where kept.

Though the goat is accounted an unprofitable article of stock, compared to the sheep, he is not without his advantages in a mountanous country. No quadruped better endures the extremities of heat and cold. On the most stormy hill, he needs no housing, no shelter, no smearing, nor any artificial provender. His tallow is equal to that of the sheep; his skin gives a better price, and is still more valuable, when dressed with the hair, for the purposes of knapsacks and holster. Even the hair, though neglected in the Highlands, was it shorn in due time, and properly sorted, would sell to different artists, for more than the fleece of a sheep on the same pasture. The value of his carcass in the Highlands, is but little, if at all inferior to that of the sheep, nor is he so subject to diseases and mortality. He cannot, however, bring so good a price, when exported out of the country, and must, therefore, in general, give way to the sheep (Walker 1808:II, 168-9).

On the relationship of goats to woodlands, Walker's view was that maintained from the outset by Murray of Stanhope:

> The goat is not, on any account, to be permitted, wherever he has access, either to young plantations or natural coppice. He is rather a browsing, than a grasing animal, and crops severly the young shoots of every tree and shrub. A good dry stone dyke, which is the best fence for a plantation or a coppice, is no fence against the goat, so that there is no security, but to expel him entirely from their neighbourhood (*ibid:* 2, 169).

In addition to those places where goat's milk was in demand for medical purposes (e.g. O.S.A. 1793: VII, 361, "In Summer . . . for the benefit of goat's milk [Cabrach, in Banffshire] is much resorted to from the low country by many of weak constitution"), Walker believed, optimistically as it turned out, that the goat might maintain its importance in some restricted areas of the Highlands:

> On some rocky and abrupt mountains, or where the fox still prevails, it may be still also advisable to retain him. In these cases, the breed and culture of the animal are very deserving of notice (*ibid:*2, 270),

and he here recommended the introduction of exotic breeds, one advantage of which would be to extend "the season of goat milk" till the beginning of October "instead of ending about 1st August" (*ibid*:2, 170).

Perhaps the clearest impression of what their goats had really meant to the majority of Highland families emerges from descriptions given by Boswell and Johnson of a family of Frasers in Stratherrick. They occupied the first "Highland Hut" that Johnson had seen, near the shore of Loch Ness, probably—despite the inaccurate map of their tour—in the vicinity of Inverfarigaig. It was 30 August, 1773. "The woman spoke little English, but we had interpreters at hand; and she was willing enough to display her whole system of economy" (Johnson 1775:67). There was an open hearth in the middle of the room, and the woman

> had a pot upon it with a goat's flesh boiling. She had at one end, under the same roof but divided with a kind of partition made of wands, a pen or fold in which we saw a good many kids . . . The woman's name was Fraser. So was her husband's. Mr. Fraser of Balnain allows him to live in this hut and to keep sixty goats for taking care of his wood. He was [though 80 years old] then in the wood. They had five children, the oldest only thirteen. Two were gone to Inverness to buy meal. The rest [including the father],

were looking after the goats. She had four stacks of barley, twenty-four [Johnson says twelve] sheaves in each. They had a few fowls. They will live all the spring without meal upon milk and curd, etc., alone. What they get for their goats, kids, and hens maintains them (Boswell 1936:99-101).

Johnson amplified a few points:

Meal ['by which oatmeal is always meant'] she considers as expensive food, and told us, that in spring when the goats gave milk, the children could live without it . . . By the lake [Loch Ness] we saw a potatoe-garden, and a small plot of ground on which stood four shucks, containing each twelve sheaves of barley. She has all this from the labour of their own hands, and for what is necessary to be bought, her kids and her chickens are sent to market (Johnson 1775:68).

Since these accounts say nothing directly about the winter months, nor about the use of butter and cheese, they may be supplemented by the description of the poor sub-tenants of Lochaber in a report to government about 1750. Although these people seem to have owned a few cows, they certainly had goats as well, and their economy was clearly very similar:

Their Food all Summer is Milk and Whey mixed together without any Bread, the Little Butter or Cheese they are able to make is Reserved for Winter provision, they sleep away the Greatest part of the Summer and when the little Barley they sow becomes Ripe, the women pull it as they do Flax and dry it on a Large Wicker Machine over the Fire, then Burn the Straw and Grind the Corn upon Quearns or Handmills.

In the End of Harvest and during the Winter, they have some Flesh, Butter and Cheese, with great Scarcity of Bread. All their Business is to take Care of the few Cattle they have. In Spring which is their only Season in which they work, their whole Food is Bread and Gruel without so much as Salt to Season it (*Highlands of Scotland*, c.1750:94).

Just fourteen months before Boswell and Johnson visited Stratherrick, Pennant, the naturalist and antiquary, noted in his diary the shieling habits of some people of Jura in the Inner Hebrides. Although the passage is relatively well known, attention may be drawn to the distinction between the "peasants" attending the cows, and the quite separate group of goat-herds.

July 1 1772. Jura, Sound of Islay . . . take boat at the ferry, and go a mile more [northward] by water: see on the Jura side some

sheelins or summer huts for goatherds, who keep a flock of eighty for the sake of milk and cheeses. The last are made without salt, which they receive afterwards from the ashes of sea tang, and the tang itself which the natives lap it in.

Land on a bank covered with sheelins, the habitations of some peasants who attend the herds of milch cows . . . (Pennant 1774:II, 216).

Both groups, it seems, were accustomed to take advantage of the seasonal grazing afforded by the broad shelf of the "raised beach" between the foothills of the Paps of Jura and the Sound of Islay. There is more than a hint of kelp-making also (*cf.* Crawford 1962:106), in the description of the goat-herds, but otherwise the practice is akin to that of the mountain shielings, and to the summer use of offshore islands in Moidart and elsewhere—though without the advantage, and balancing disadvantage, of the encompassing sea.

In view of the ancient prestige of cattle in Highland tradition, a conscious social distinction between the cattle-owners and the goat-keepers would seem inevitable, though this is implied rather than stated in the sources gathered here. Since the regular development of droving in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the cattle-owner had a further, financial advantage; though the effects of this varied widely, and on the whole money was notoriously scarce. This scarcity of money, as compared to stock, affected many of the principal families and, all the more, their branches. Lady Dungallon, a daughter of the great Sir Ewen Cameron of Lochiel, had to remind Murray of Stanhope how unlike Lowland conditions were the economic circumstances facing herself and her relations in Sunart. Writing from her home in Glenheurich, at New Year, 1728, she advised Murray, in a revealing passage,

lickwise to consider that its not Land-rents that maintaine me and my ffamily but the real product of Cattle and land Labouring (Murray of Stanhope Papers, III, 106).

Goats she does not mention. In the circumstances that would have been impolitic and (one suspects) undignified—therein, perhaps, lies much of the difficulty of the whole subject—but in her own case their contribution was doubtless indirect. Her relatives' defence of the Sunart goats was clearly on behalf of the "subject" population, who from time immemorial must have depended much upon the real product of goat-raising. Here it must be said that the dearth of references to

goats in Scottish archaeological literature is highly misleading, and due to the difficulty of distinguishing sheep from goats—archaeologically as well as scripturally (Cornwall 1956:35). In fact, goats are known to have been among the earliest animals domesticated in antiquity.

From the mid-eighteenth century onward, first wood preservation, then the new emphasis on sheep, and finally the clearances, all combined to eliminate the goat from the Highland economy, and if it is still remembered anywhere to-day it is likely to be thought of, as in Ireland, as a badge of poverty. We may well ask to what extent did the banishment of the goat contribute, in the mid-nineteenth century, to the plight of the unromantic, servile, but hitherto basic, population of the Highlands, whose most obvious feature was by then their fatally inadequate means of support (Gray 1957:201)?

NOTE

[1] There are at least another eight instances of this name on the Scottish one-inch sheets of the Ordnance Survey, one of them being in Ross-shire, Eilean nan Gobhar Mor (Lochalsh), the others in Argyllshire: Eilean nan Gobhar in the parishes of Kilchoman and Tiree, and Eilean nan Gabhar in the parishes of Jura, Kilfinan, Kilmartin and Morvern (2).

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I am indebted to the Librarian of the National Library of Scotland for permission to reproduce passages from the Murray of Stanhope and Delvine Papers; and to my colleague Dr. W. F. H. Nicolaisen for particulars of other instances of the name *Eilean nan Gobhar* (or *Gabhar*) occurring in the gazetteer of names on the Ordnance Survey "One Inch" maps (Scottish Place-Name Survey).

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B. R. S. MEGAW

A Uist Legend

I recorded the following variants of a local legend (S.S.S. R.L. 1959 A. 10-11) in March 1963, from Archie MacAulay and James Robertson, both of Baile Sear, North Uist.

Loch Bì in South Uist is one of the largest fresh-water lochs in the Hebrides. The present road crosses it at a point where, according to to one of my informants, there has been a causeway from time immemorial.[1]

Curiously enough, I have so far been unable to discover any versions of the story in South Uist, where one would really expect it to survive.[2]

The motif of supernatural help in accomplishing difficult tasks in a very short time is common enough in tales and legends, and a captive animal ransoming itself is listed as No. 158 in the Aarne-Thompson classification of Folk-Tale types. Thus the first variant could be classified quite satisfactorily as a version of Aa.Th.158. The second variant, which is more detailed, is rather different. Here, the unidentified companions or "relatives" of the captive bird perform certain tasks as a condition of its release.

While these texts are interesting enough in themselves it is their provenance which suggested their publication in that it illustrates remarkably well the divergences which can occur in a comparatively short period of oral transmission: James

Robertson learned the story from his father, Malcolm Robertson,[3] and Archie MacAulay learned it from Malcolm's brother, Neil Robertson. Both variants were taped in the same recording session, both informants being present throughout. Yet the result is two texts differing quite considerably in detail.

Archie MacAulay: Tha mi cinnteach gur h-ann aig Seumas as fhearr tha brath air Clachan Loch Bì na agamsa.

Bha bial-aithris a' cantail, agus tha e colach g'eil e fìor cuideachd, gad a dh'fhoighneachdadh tu dh'an a chuile duine th'aig Tuath 's a Deas ciamar a chaidh Clachan Loch Bì suas, nach' eil e furasda dhaibh innse idir. Oir chaidh a chur suas ann an dòigh a tha uamhasach neònach, a réir beul-aithris co-dhiù. Agus chan' eil duine sheallas air an àite nach fhaic gun do rinn e feum ann an iomadach dòigh.

Agus as an am a bh'ann a shiod, bha bodach air Sliabh an Iochdair, agus mar tha fhios agu uileag an diugh, dh'fheumadh ad cuairt mhór a ghabhail timcheall a' mhachaire ma faigheadh ad tarsainn oir neo cuairt mhór eile mach taobh na mòintich. Agus am bodach a bh'ann a sheo, bha e air Sliabh an Iochdair, agus aig am cadail, dé thanaig a staigh ach ian beag dh'an taigh. Agus rug ad air an ian agus gu dé thanaig chon an ian ach bridhinn. Agus dh'iarr e ligeil as.

"Cha lig," as am bodach, "mi as idir thu."

"Lig as mi," as esan.

"Cha lig mi as idir thu," as am bodach.

"Lig as mi," as an t-ian, "agus cuiridh mi clachan air Loch Bì dhut."

"Ma gheallas tu sen a dhianu," as esan, "ligidh mi as thu."

"Ma thà, ma ghabhas tu air m'fhacal mi," as an t-ian, "nì mi sen."

"Gabhaidh mi," as esan, "air d'fhacal thu, ma thà, agus ligidh mi as thu ma chuireas tu clachan air Loch Bì."

'S 'nuair a dh'éirich ad 'sa mhaduinn bha clachan air Loch Bì mar a tha e chon a' latha 'n diugh.

D. A. MacDonald: Well, well. 'S co aige bha i sen. Co aige chuala sibh i?

A.McA.: Chuala aig Niall . . . Niall brathar-athar an fhir sen, 's ann aige chuala mis' i 'n toiseach. 'N cual' thus' i, 'Sheumais?

James Robertson: Chuala.

A.McA.: 'N ann mar siod a bha i?

Archie MacAulay: I am sure that James knows (the story of) Clachan Loch Bì better than I do.

Tradition said, and it seems likely to be true too, that though you were to ask everyone in North and South (Uist) how Clachan Loch Bì was built, that it is not easy for them to explain. For it was built in a very strange way, at least according to tradition. And no one can look at the place without realising that it was useful in many ways.

And at that time, there was an old man in the Sliabh of Iochdar, and as you all know to-day, they would have to take a great circuit round the machar before they could get across, or another great circuit out by the way of the moor. And this old man was in the Sliabh of Iochdar, and at bedtime, what should come into the house but a little bird. And they caught the bird, and what should happen but that speech came to the bird. And he asked to be let go.

"I will not" said the old man, "let you go at all."

"Let me go," said he.

"I will not let you go at all," said the old man.

"Let me go," said the bird, "and I shall build a causeway across Loch Bì for you."

"If you promise to do that," said he, "I shall let you go."

"Well, then, if you take me at my word," said the bird, "I shall do that."

"I shall," said he, "take you at your word then, and I shall let you go, if you build a causeway across Loch Bì."

And when they rose in the morning there was a causeway across Loch Bì as there is to this day."

D. A. MacDonald: Well, well. And who had that one? From whom did you hear it?

A.McA.: I heard it from Neil—Neil the brother of this man's father. It was from him I first heard it. Did you hear it, James?

James Robertson: Yes.

A.McA.: Was that how it was?

J.R.: O, gu deimhin, Eairdsi, chan urra mi bhi cinnteach . . . aig a' cheart mhionaid tha seo-ach, ach chuala mi 'stòiri, 's tha mi 'smaointeachadh gur h-ann mar sen a bha i ceart gu leòr.
D.A.McD.: 'S chan 'eil fhios agu c'uin a chaidh clachan a chuir air Loch Bì an toiseach?
A.McA.: Chan 'eil. Chan urrainn duine 'sam bith . . . as na linntean tha seo sen innse.
D.A.McD.: Ach bha e ann mas deach a' rathad ann?

A.McA.: Bha. O bha gu dearbha. . . .
D.A.McD.: Fad a' rothaid a' null far a bheil a' rathad an dràsda?
A.McA.: Sheadh. 'Sann. Tarsuinn Loch Bì ann a shiod. . .
J.R.: . . . Chan 'eil mi cinnteach as idir. . . . *Well*, bha tuathanach shuas ann a . . . ris an canadh ad MacCureich[4] agus bha e feasgar a bha seo a' taiteadh agus, 'nar a thog e suidheachan, dh'fhalbh ian ionghantach a mach 'na ruith fo'n t-suidheachan, agus 's ann a dh'fhalbh esan agus rug e air, 's thug e dhachaigh e. Agus . . . chuir e 'n t-ian ann an cliabh a staigh agus, air an oidhche, thanaig . . . 'n deaghaidh dha dhol a chadal, thanaig guth chon na h-uinneig a' ràitinn:

"Mhic Cureich, lig a mach an t-isein."

Agus bha . . . 'n t-isein a' cuir ionghnadh air: cha robh e colach ri ian a chunnaig e riamh reimhe idir, agus 's ann a thubhairt e air ais:

"Cha lig," as esan, "mi mach an t-isein," as esan, "go'n tog siu," as esan, "bàthach dhomh—bàthach cheithir cheanghail dhiag."

Co-dhiù, chaidh e air sàilliu cadail agus . . . cha robh e 'faighinn mórand heth agus bha e 'cluinnteil an fhuam a muigh, agus fad an t-siubhail, fad na h-oidhche, bha e 'cluinnteil:

"Nuas sgrath nasgolb 's nach eil 'sa' choill ach fiodhagaich[5] . . . Chan fhaigh mi mar a . . . chuireas mi 's cha ghearr siu mar a sgrathas mi."

Agus 'nuair a dh'éirich e 'sa' mhaduinn, bha bhàthach air a togail—bàthach cheithir cheanghail dhiag deiseil aige gun sian ach na beothaichean a chuir innte.

Bha e feadh a dhleasdanais fad a' latha mar a bha dleasdanach dha, agus 'nar a chaidh e chadal air an oidnche rithist, chual e:

"Mhic Cureich, lig a mach an t-isein."

J.R.: O, indeed, Archie, I cannot be sure at the moment, but I heard the story and I think it was like that right enough.

D.A.McD.: And you don't know when a causeway was first built across Loch Bì?
A.McA.: No. No one in this age can tell that.

D.A.McD.: But it was there before the (present) road was built?
A.McA.: Yes. O, yes, indeed . . .
D.A.McD.: All the way across where the road is now?

A.McA.: Yes. Across Loch Bì there . . .
J.R.: . . . I am not sure of it (i.e. the story) at all . . . Well, there was a farmer up . . . whom they called MacCureich[4] and he was making corn ricks one evening and when he lifted a stook a strange bird ran out from under the stook and he went and caught it and took it home. And he put the bird in a creel in the house, and when night came after he had gone to sleep, a voice came to the window saying:

"MacCureich, let the little bird out."

And the little bird was a cause of wonder to him: it was not like any bird he had ever seen before; and the reply he gave was this:

"I shall not," said he, "let the little bird out," said he, "until you build," said he, "a byre for me—a byre of fourteen fastenings."

Anyway, he went and tried to sleep, and he was not getting much of it, and he was hearing the noise outside, and constantly, all night long, he was hearing:

"Send up a turf or a pin since there is nothing in the wood but *fiodhagaich*.[5] I cannot get enough to keep up with what I place, and you cannot cut enough to keep up with my turfing."

And when he rose in the morning the byre was built—a byre of fourteen fastenings ready for him, with nothing to do but to put the beasts in it. He went about his duties all day as befitted him and when he went to sleep at night again he heard:

"MacCureich let the little bird out."

Agus:

"Cha lig," as esan, "mi mach an t-isein gos an cuir sibh clachan tarsuinn Loch Bì dhomh."

Agus 'n uair a dh'éirich Mac Cureich maduinn a' la 'irne mhàireach bha 'n clachan o thaobh go taobh do Loch Bì.

D.A.McD.: 'S an cual' e dad an oidhche bha sen feadh na h-oidhcheadh?

J.R.: Chan 'eil mi cinnteach. Chan 'eil cuimhn' agam ma chuala mi sian ma dheaghainn sen aig a' cheart mhionaid . . . ach tha fiosam gu bheil a' stòiridh, na sgialachd, aig m' athair.

D.A.McD: 'S chan 'eil fhios agaibh có bh'ann a Mac Cureich a bha seo, a bheil?

J.R.: Cha chuala mise riamh ach dìreach gur e Mac Cureich a bh'air an tuathanach a bha seo-ach, co-dhiù.

NOTES

[1] This is improbable. Another informant has told me that there was no causeway till the road was built, and there is no sign of a causeway on the 1805 estate map (Register House plan 1040).

[2] I have since recorded a version in South Uist which refers to a different area (and which links the legend specifically to the MacMhuirich bards of Stadhlaigearraidh).

[3] Malcolm Robertson is still alive and I hope to be able to record from him during my next field trip in the Uists.

[4] MacCureich [max'kurɛç]. Variants of this form (sometimes anglicised as Currie) occur in the Uists for the name which is historically Mac-Mhuirich. Its most notable bearers were the famous family of professional bards and historians who held lands in South Uist in virtue of their duties of *seanchaidh* to the Clan Ranald family. Donald MacMhuirich, the last trained bard in either Scotland or Ireland died some time after 1722 (see Watson 1959:XVIII).

In local oral tradition the Mac Mhuirichs are remembered as magicians and warriors rather than learned men.

[5] For *fiodhag/fiodhagaich* Dwelly's dictionary gives *bird-cherry*, *wild fig*, *hard-berry*. There was apparently a taboo relating to the use of this wood as building material. In an interview with the late Dr. Calum MacLean, the late Mr. John MacDonald, Spean Bridge, one of our best informants, while describing techniques of wattle building, says that for certain cross timbers any wood could be used ". . . except the *fiodhagaich*. It is prohibited. They were full of superstitions. Any timber in the wood except *fiodhagaich*". (S.S.S. R.L.372, A.1).

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And:

"I shall not" said he, "let the little bird out until you build a causeway across Loch Bì for me."

And when MacCureich rose next day in the morning the causeway was there from one side of Loch Bì to the other.

D.A.McD.: And did he hear anything that night during the night?

J.R.: I'm not sure. I can't remember whether I heard anything about that at the moment—but I know that my father has the story—or the tale.

D.A.McD.: And you don't know who this MacCureich was, do you?

J.R.: I never heard anything—except that this farmer was called MacCureich at any rate.

D. A. MACDONALD

Birds of Life and Birds of Death

The early Celtic peoples did not draw fine distinctions between the natural and the supernatural, the animal and the human worlds. The iconography and the literatures of the pagan Celtic world are the repository of a rich bestiary in which birds are perhaps given a greater prominence than animals. The surviving fragments of what must once have been a substantial corpus of birdlore are sufficiently extensive to suggest the importance of ornithomancy and ornithomorphic concepts in the pre-Christian Celtic period. Gods and goddesses are frequently portrayed in company with birds in Gallo-Roman and Romano-British iconography, and the early Celtic literatures, reflecting as they do an essentially pagan background, provide some details as to the role played by birds in popular belief and superstitious practice. The mother-goddess who is portrayed in Celtic iconography with a bird on either shoulder[1] is reminiscent of such insular goddesses as Riannon,[2] Clídna[3] and Medb[4] who are described in the vernacular literatures as possessing magic sickness-healing, sorrow-repelling birds. The descriptions of the birds of the Welsh Riannon are particularly impressive and convey a convincing idea of the type of legend which must have circulated about the birds of the happy otherworld. In the

mabinogi of *Branwen* (Williams 1930:45) they are referred to as follows, "and you will be a long time on the road. In Harddlech you will be feasting seven years and the birds of Riannon singing to you", and (Williams 1930:46) "then they went on to Harddlech, and they sat them down and began to regale themselves with meat and drink, and even as they began to eat and drink there came three birds and began to sing them a certain song and of all the songs they had ever heard each one was unlovely compared with that. And far they must look to see them out over the deep yet it was as clear to them as if they were close to them". Again, in the *mabinogi* of *Culhwch and Olwen* the giant Ysbadadden expresses a desire for "the birds of Riannon, *they that wake the dead and lull the living to sleep*" (Jones 1949:115). Moreover, the relief from Senlis (Esperandieu no. 3850) portraying a youthful god apparently giving instructions to the geese and ravens which surround him cannot stem from concepts fundamentally different from those which gave rise to the legend of the Welsh Owein with his raven followers (Richards 1948:12f.), or the bird father of the Irish Conaire the Red with his company of great birds which, when occasion demanded, became fully-armed fighting men (Knott 1936:5). These examples could be multiplied indefinitely and are merely cited to give some indication of the wealth of birdlore in the Celtic mythological tradition.

With the coming of Christianity and the replacing of the shape-shifting, wonder-working gods by the local saints, the emphasis changes, and the bird attributes of the pagan deities are now appropriated by the clerics. The sacred swans perch on the shoulders of a servant of the Church or join in Mass with a man of God.[5] The intimate association of birds with the pagan concept of the happy otherworld and the frequent adoption of bird-form by otherworld beings made it inevitable that the concept of the bird-soul and of the singing otherworld birds, bestowers of joy and forgetfulness, and healers of pain, should be transferred with ease and with little modification into a Christian milieu, itself rich in bird symbolism drawn from many traditions and mythologies. The drawing of omens from the flight and cries of birds, however, practised by the druids, was not regarded favourably by the Church, and the early literature contains references to ecclesiastic disapproval of this custom. The following *lorica* is attributed to Columcille. "I do not adore the voices of birds, nor sneezing, nor lots in this world, nor a boy, nor omens, nor women. My druid is

Christ the son of God" (Best 1916:120).[6] And again, "the honouring of sneezes and omens, choice of weather, lucky times, the (heeding) of the voices of birds . . ." (obscure) (Todd 1848: 144).[7]

Throughout the wealth of Celtic bird mythology, the drawing of omens from birds, and the sacrifice of sacred species, a certain pattern is discernible, and it is clear that birds could have a dual significance, having both good and evil associations. Not only do certain species invariably represent good or ill, but there is a distinct repertoire of birds, often belonging to no recognisable species, which we may classify as birds of life and birds of death. Birds of life protect the living against evil forces: birds of death announce the dreaded news, or help to bring about disaster. The early Irish tales contain numerous examples of birds of both types, and it is only necessary to draw attention to one or two of these for purposes of illustration. For example, in the life of Saint Moling (Stokes 1906: 264), it is recounted how the infant saint is saved from death by a supernatural dove which comes and protects it with his wings while the mother tries in vain to murder the baby. Another tradition tells of the approaching murder of Saint Cellach when all the ominous birds joined in giving warning of the crime:—"the raven cried and the hooded crow and the wren and all the other birds then; the raven of the yew tree of Cluain Eo came" (O'Grady 1892:II, 58-9).[8] Again, in the story of *Cronan mac Imilit* (O'Ceochain 1930:33), Goll is described as fighting with the eldest daughter of Cronan. He is being worsted in the fight when a little bird speaks to him and encourages him. He overcomes his opponent. The early pagan tradition likewise contains many examples of destructive birds which bring evil and death to mankind, often in the service of some malevolent deity. The sacred feast of *samhuin* (November 1st) is a favourite time for these birds to manifest themselves and indulge in hostile activity.[9]

Traditions of "death birds" are still current in the modern Celtic world, as are stories about "birds of life" or helpful birds whose intervention benefits a particular person or family. There are many examples from Welsh popular tradition about the coming of the birds of death. Jones (Welsh Folklore 1930:200) describes an event connected with the bird soul motif, which reputedly took place in Cardiganshire in comparatively recent years, and which is typical of Celtic traditions of this kind. Two men from Cardigan, both deacons of one of

the Free Churches[10] were going to sit up with a neighbour who was very ill. It was a moonlit night and while they were going along a lane, one of the men drew the other's attention to a bird which was perching on a tree. Neither of them could identify it. One of them picked up a stone and threw it at the bird which flew away. They saw it again on another tree. A stone was again thrown and the bird disappeared. When the men got to the house and the door was opened, a bird flew in, up the stairs and out through the window. Next morning the invalid died. This death-bird seems to correspond to the Scottish Gaelic traditions of *an t-eun sìth*, a mysterious bird seen about the house in which a death is to take place, or near a person about to die. A similar bird is known as a *tamhusg* in parts of Skye, and is likewise of an indeterminate species. Other legends are known about strange, unnatural birds which herald evil. For example, there is a tradition, current at the present time in Barra, of a mysterious black bird with white in its feathers, which screams at night and is a sign of evil. This creature seems to correspond to the *sgreuchan-aitin* referred to by Martin Martin (1884:73) which he describes as being the size of a big man. The vague, although colourful way in which these inauspicious birds are described suggests perhaps that some of the mysterious malevolent otherworld birds of the early Celtic literary tradition derived from popular beliefs such as these, where birds are general rather than specific, but where they must have held a deeper religious significance than is the case to-day.

J. G. Campbell recorded several bird traditions of the above type. One, collected in Mull, concerns a tradition of the *helpful bird* (1900:99). A man in the Ross of Mull was apparently sowing his land from a sheet filled with seed oats. As he sowed, the sheet remained full. A neighbour, observing this said, "The face of your evil and iniquity on you, is the sheet never to be empty?" A little brown bird leapt from the sheet and the supply of seed ceased. The bird was the *Torc Sona* and was peculiarly attached to that particular family.

Seen against this rich background of bird lore, in which birds may symbolise both the powers of good and the forces of evil, it is interesting to consider two recently recorded anecdotes from contemporary Scottish Gaelic tradition which show the continuity and persistence of beliefs of this identical kind. Both were recorded from Nan MacKinnon of Vatersay, whose store of traditional information of every kind must be unique.

Fig. 1—Relief from Senlis (Espérandieu No. 3850).

Fig. 2—Cippus from Nevers (Espérandieu No. 2181).

The first tale deals with a "bird of life", in this case, a cock, whose presence preserves the household from evil, and whose removal causes their destruction. The following is a translation of the original Gaelic, which is given below.

"There's a story here about some people who were in an anchored vessel once upon a time in the Highlands—I don't know what part of the Highlands it was. But anyway, they were at anchor in a bay and they were there for a while and they were paying particular attention to a house which was opposite to them. Every single night about midnight a ball of fire would come and it used to go round about the house. And as soon as it would come, the cock started to crow and it would disappear when the cock crew. But anyway, they were observing this for a long time and they said to themselves that they would go and ask if they could buy the cock to see what would happen. This is what happened anyway, they went ashore on this particular day and they approached the house and they asked the woman if she would sell the cock. She said she certainly would sell it—she didn't care if someone would take it away—every night round about midnight it was waking them up crowing, and it didn't seem natural. Anyway, they got the cock and they took it away with them. And they themselves were now keeping an eye open to see what they would see, and what would happen on this night when the cock wouldn't be there to crow. But anyway they saw the fire coming as usual and going round about the house. And the next day, when day dawned, there was no trace of stone or stick of the house—it had disappeared entirely."

"Tha naidheachd ann a seo a bh' aig feodhainn a bha air acair ann a soitheach uaireiginn an t-saoghal a's a' Ghàidhealtachd—chan 'eil fhiosam dé 'm pìos 'n a' Ghàidhealtachd a bh' ann. Ach co-dhiù bha àsan air acaire 'sa' bhàgh 's bha iad greis ann agus bha iad a' gabhail beachd air aon tigh a bha 'san coinniu. A chuile uidhche riamh riamh ma dha 'r 'eug bha cnap tighinn 's bha e dol ma 'n cuairt air an tigh. Agus cho luath 's bha e tighinn bha 'n coileach a' tòiseachdainn air gairm agus bha e falbh 'nuair a ghairmeadh an coileach. Ach co-dhiù bha iad a gabhail beachd air a seo greis mhór agus thuirt iad riutha fhéin a seo gur h-ann a rachadh iad a dh'iarraidh a' choilich ri cheannach ach dé thachradh. Seo mar a bh' ann co-dhiù chaidh iad air tìr a' latha bha seo agus chaidh iad a dh'ionnsaigh an taighe agus dh' fhoighneach iad na

bhoireannach an creiceadh i 'n coileach riutha. Thuirt i gun creiceadh gu dearbh—gu robh ise coma gad a bheireadh cuideiginn air falbh e—a chuile h-uidhche ma dhà 'r 'eug gu robh e 'gan dùsgadh a' gairm 's gu feumaidh nach robh e nàdarra. Co-dhiù fhuair iad an coileach 's thug iad leo e. Agus bha iad fhéin a nisde cumail sùil a mach ach a faiceadh iad dé a thachradh an uidhche-sa nuair nach biodh an coileach ann gu gairm. Ach co-dhiù chunnaig iad an teine tighinn mar a b' athaisd 's e dol ma 'n cuairt an taighe. Agus a làirne mhàireach nuair a shoilleirich a' latha cha robh sgeul air clach na crann dhe 'n tigh—bha e air a sguabadh air falbh." (RL.1200. Recorded 2/11/58 by James Ross).

Here the cock protects the household by crowing at an unnatural hour, and they, unaware of the danger, and irritated by the noise each night, are prepared to get rid of the bird which protects them. When they part with it they are utterly destroyed. The role of the men in the boat is interesting—they nominally buy the bird out of curiosity, desiring to see what will happen with the ball of fire when the cock, which clearly has the power of repelling it, is no longer there. One can also assume that, having witnessed its apotropaic qualities, they will use it for their own protection. The cock plays a well-known role in a wide number of folk contexts as a bird which averts evil, but even here a dichotomy of character is evident. Certain cocks were reputed to have the power of keeping danger of a supernatural kind at bay, while others were themselves of evil nature. The cock was venerated in Europe as early as the Urnfield period at least, and certain cult objects from Urnfield and Hallstatt contexts are decorated with the bird which seems to have symbolised the sun (e.g. Kossack 1954: pl. 17, pl. 11, pl. 7), while it also figures on certain Gaulish coins (Roes 1938:180). Caesar testifies to its sanctity in Britain (Bell. Gall. V. 12) where he groups it with the goose and the hare. Many fragments of insular folklore illustrate its dual force. For example, when a cock was hatched in March its crow was believed to have more effect against evil spirits than that of a bird hatched in the autumn (Banks 1939: 178). On Bride's eve if, after the ashes were *smoored*, there was no trace of Bridget's wand, it was necessary to propitiate her and a sacrifice was offered to her. A cock or a pullet was usually buried alive near a place where three streams meet, and then burnt on the hearth (Banks 1939:151). A cock crowing

before midnight was believed to be a sign of approaching news. The legs of the bird were felt when this happened. If they were cold to the touch the news was death, if hot, the news would be good (Campbell 1900:257). Scandinavian mythology contains traditions of fierce otherworld cocks. In the *Voluspar* there is a bright red cock in the bird wood and a dark red cock in the halls of Hel. One may compare with this the fierce red birds which emerged from the Cave of Cruachan in Ireland, a traditional entrance to the otherworld, every *samhuin* to lay waste to the whole countryside (Stokes 1892:15; 448).

The second story recorded from Nan MacKinnon, is concerned with birds of death, and again has wide parallels in the lore of the Celtic world. The following is a translation of the original Gaelic which is given below:

"Death, death, take the only son!": "It is said that an old woman said this. She had only one son. She used always to say that should death come to claim her son she would wish to go in his stead. Anyway, the young lads who were in the township at this time went off. They used to hear her say this so often and they didn't believe her. But on this occasion they hatched a plot, they went and got a hen and plucked it alive. They put the hen into her house and the old woman was sitting beside the fire and one of them said they should stay in the corner while they put the hen inside. 'Here now is death coming for you.' But when the old woman saw *death* coming she said to herself that it *was* death, she shouted 'Death, death,' she said, 'take the only son'.

Q. Did they sometimes believe that death came in the shape of a bird? Have you heard any other stories of this kind?

A. Yes I have, and it's not long ago that they did believe this. There was a thing they called *an t-eun bàis* (the death-bird). I myself heard my own sister, the one who is dead, saying that. She heard another old woman telling her that, and she took her out one night and they were listening to it. Well she was saying that they used to hear it when someone was to be taken from the township [die]—it screamed terribly. But anyway, they believed if they saw a bird, you know, any unusual one at all, especially if it was grey, they thought it was death. There was an old man in our own place and it isn't more than twenty years since it happened, he went out one day to the byre and he saw a little grey bird in the byre and he immediately

thought that it was death coming to summon him for he was old. And he said when he got home "the messenger's come at last" he said, "the messenger's come". Well he was alive for years and years after that!"

"Aoig, aoig, taobh an aona mhac!": "Tha e air a ghradha gur e seann bhoireannach a thuirt sin. Cha robh aic' ach an aona mhac. Bhiodh i a' gràdh daonnan gad a thigeadh am bàs a dh' iarraidh a mic gum b' fheàrr leath' i fhéin a dh' fhalbh 'na àite. Cha robh ach dh' fhalbh gillean òga a bha 'sa' bhaile an turus a bha seo. Bhiodh iad 'ga cluinntinn cho tric 'ga radh 's cha robh iad 'ga creidsinn. Ach an turus a bha seo rinn iad dòigh orra, dh' fhalbh iad agus rug iad air circ agus spìon iad i agus i beò. Agus chuir iad a' chearc a stigh dha'n tigh aice agus bha a' chailleach 'na suidhe ri taobh an teine 's thuirt cuideiginn aca fuireach ann an cùl 's iad a' cur na circeadh a stigh. 'Seo a nisd an t-Aog air tighinn 'gar 'n iarraidh.' Ach nuair a' chunnaic a' chailleach an t-Aog a' tighinn, thar leatha fhéin gur e 'n t-Aog a bh' ann dh' eubh i, 'Aoig, Aoig,' ors ise, taobh an aona mhac'. . . .

Q. Robh iad a creidsinn uaireigineach gum biodh am bàs a' tigh'nn ann a' riochd eòin? An cuala sibh naidheachd 'sam bith eile air a leithid sin?

A. Chuala, chuala, 's chan 'eil an ùine cho fìor fada bhuaithe o' n a bha iad 'ga chreidsinn. Chan 'eil. Bha rud ann ris an canadh iad *an t-eun bàis*. Chuala mi fhìn mo phiuthar fhéin a' gradh sin, an té nach eil beò. Chual' i seann bhoireannach eile 'ga innse dhi 's thug i mach i uidhche 's bha iad ag éisdeachd ris. Wel, bha i 'g radh gum biodh iad 'ga chluinntinn nuair a bhiodh duine go falbh as a' bhaile—gu robh sgread air leth aige. Ach co-dhiù bha iad a' creidsinn na faiceadh iad eun, 'eil fhios agu, fear aicheanna 'sam bith, gu h-àraid nam biodh e glas, bha iad a smaointinn gur e 'm bàs a bh' ann. Bha bodach 's an àit' againn fhìn 's chan 'eil ann ach-wel, chan 'eil fichead bliadhna bhuaithe o'n a thachair e—chaidh e latha mach 'na' bhàthaich agus chunnaig e peata glas as a' bhàthaich agus shaoil e dìreach gur h-e 'm bàs a bh 'ann a' tigh'nn 'ga iarraidh, bh' e sean. 'S thuirt e nuair a thàinig e dhachaidh, 'thàinig an teachdaire ma dheireadh', os e fhéin, 'tha 'n teachdair air tigh'nn'. Wel bh' e bliadhnachan is bliadhnachan beò a deodhaidh sin." (RL 587B. Recorded by James Ross).

This explanation for a proverbial saying with the attendant information about bird beliefs of this kind demonstrates the widespread tradition of the ominous significance of certain birds, belonging to no known species, but consisting of birds of some indeterminate kind. One Welsh tradition comes very close to that contained in the first part of the above anecdote. Any bird beating against the window at night was supposedly the *ederyn corff* (corpse bird), and this supernatural bird was traditionally believed to have neither feathers nor wings (Jones, 205). This accords well with Nan's story because by plucking the hen the lads were clearly fashioning a *death bird* according to the traditional way in which it was supposed to appear. This is substantiated by the fact that when it was let loose in the house, the old woman immediately recognised it to be a *death bird.*

In these two Vatersay stories, current at the present time, we see the continuity of fragments of bird beliefs of a kind which must have circulated in Celtic areas, as elsewhere, from time immemorial. The sacred or ominous animal could be favourably disposed towards mankind, or, like other forces of the ever-present Celtic otherworld, active in opposing him. Birds of life, protectors and helpers, are matched by birds of death, bringers of evil tidings and symbolising the powers of destruction and darkness. Nan MacKinnon's two short anecdotes provide us with twentieth-century examples of these beliefs which still find some expression in the oral repertoire of the Gaelic-speaking Highlands.

NOTES

[1] Some examples from the Gallo-Roman tradition are illustrated by Espérandieu, nos. 326, 2181, 4256, 4264, 4282, etc.

[2] The birds of Riannon are described in the mabinogi of *Branwen* (Williams 1930:45 and 46); in the mabinogi of *Culhwch and Olwen* (Jones 1949: 115).

[3] For Clídna's birds see O'Grady 1892: I, 342f.

[4] For the bird Medb wore on her shoulder see Dunn 1914:88.

[5] For example, Saint Cainnech was reputedly walking by Killarney Lake in Munster when he was attacked by twelve armed men who still adhered to their pagan faith. They told him that unless he could bring it about that two swans on the lake should come immediately and perch, one on the saint's shoulder and the other on that of the leader of the armed band, he would be killed. The saint caused this to happen and the men were converted to Christianity (Plummer 1910: I, 165-6). In the story of the children of Lir, Saint Mochaomhog

takes care of the children who are transformed into swans, and they live with him and join in Mass with him. (O'Curry 1863: 113 f.). The teal was especially sacred to Saint Colman (Giraldus Cambrensis, trans. O'Meara 1951: 61). Saint Bridget was associated with the swan ("the fairy swan of Bride of the flocks" Carmichael 1928:312, from Angus MacIntosh, crofter, Dungaineacha, Benbecula), and Mary with the duck ("the fairy duck of Mary of peace", Carmichael loc. cit.). Columba likewise is frequently described as being in possession of, or turning people into, cranes (e.g. see Atkinson and Bernard 1898:187, I, 12 f; O'Kelleher 1913:260; Carmichael 1940:196).

[6] "Ní adraim do gothaib én/Na sreód na sén for bith che/
Ná mac ná mana ná mnai/Is é mo draí Críst mac Dé."

[7] "Moradh sredh is mana/Raga sin, am sona,/
Gotha én do faire/Cairi gach ceol cona."

[8] "do ghair in fhiach ocus in fhennóc ocus in dreán ocus na heoin archena ann sin . . . tánaic diu seirrfhiach ibair chluana eo."

[9] Cu Chulainn destroys the mysterious malevolent raven flock (Rennes Dindshenchas, Stokes 1894:450; Metrical Dindshenchas, Gwynn, Todd Lecture Series 10:256 f.); the man-eating birds of Gwendoleu (Bromwich 1961:17, 68); flock of destructive otherworld birds (Van Hamel 1933:3); malevolent cranes owned by the god Midir (*Book of Leinster* 117*a-b*).

[10] It may be noted that frequently in the Highlands individuals experiencing extra-normal phenomena are members of one of the stricter religious sects.

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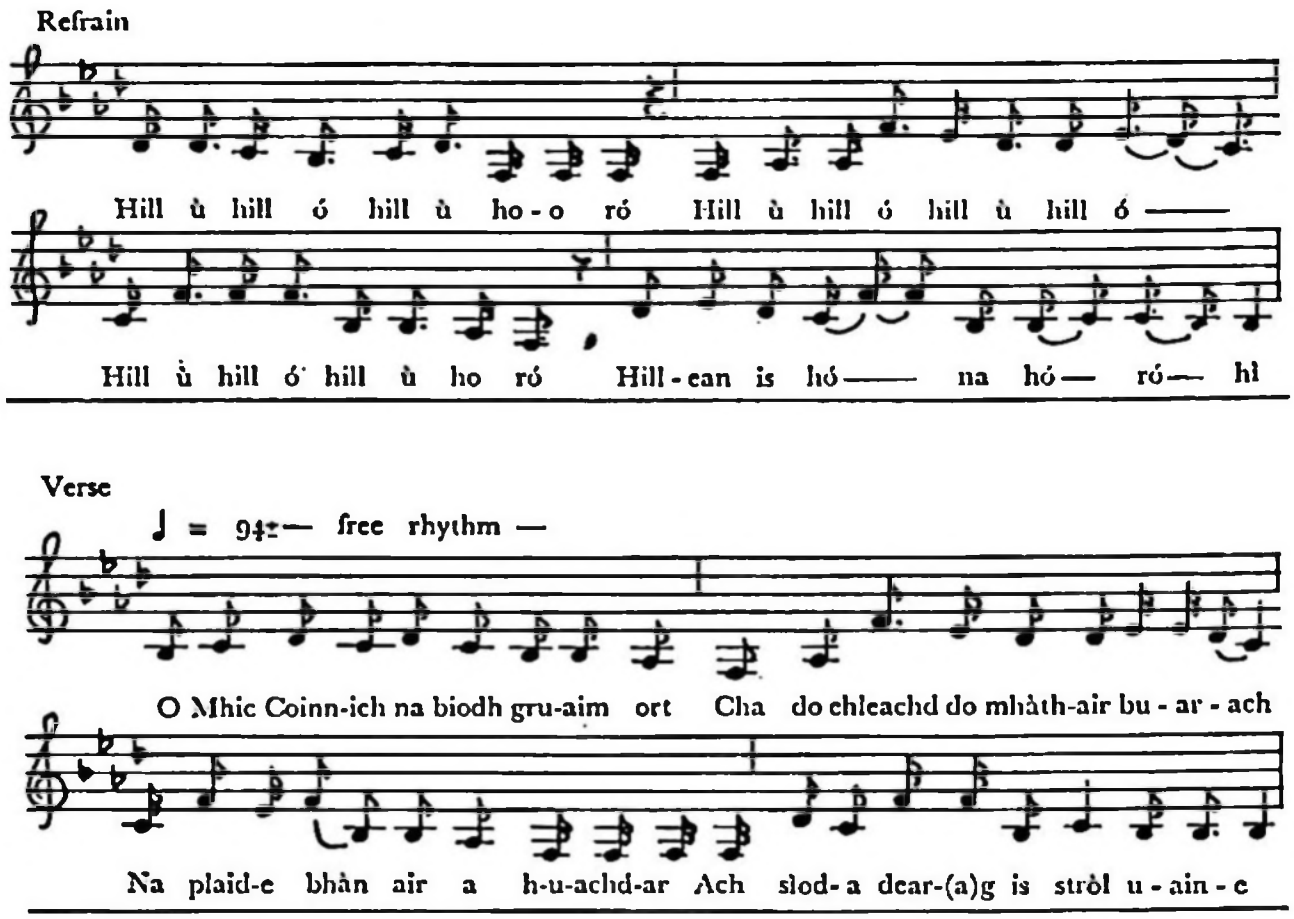
ANNE ROSS

Tàladh Choinnich Oig



O Mhic Coinnich na stròl farsuinn
Mac an t-seòid nach fhuiligeadh masladh
Feireadh tu fìon dha d' chuid eachaibh
Cruidhean de'n òr chuir o'n casan

Hill ù hill ó hill ù ho-o ró
Hill ù hill ó hill ù ho ró-o
Hill ù hill ó hill ù ho ró
Hillean is hó na hó ró hì

O Mhic Coinnich na biodh gruaim ort
Cha do chleachd do mhàthair buarach
Na plaide bhàn air a h-uachdar
Ach sìoda dearg is stròl uaine

O Mhic Coinnich fhuair thu'n t-urram
Théid thu mach gu làidir ullamh
Dh'òladh leat fìon Baile Lunnain
Mach go *Loudie* le d' chuid giullan

'S ann air Coinneach tha ghruag àlainn
'S e Righ nan Dùl a chuir blàth oirr'
Ceannachadair[1] nan each a b' àirde
Gillean 'na ruith chon a' stàpaill

Chan 'eil Coinneach ach 'na leanabh
Cha d' ràinig e aois a sheanar
Sealgair an fhéidh a's na gleannaibh
Choilich dhuibh air bharr o' mheangain

Young Kenneth's Lullaby

O MacKenzie of broad banners
Son of the hero who would suffer nothing disgraceful
You would give your horses wine
You would shoe them with gold.

O MacKenzie, do not be disconsolate
Your mother was not accustomed to handle a cow-fetter
Nor did she wear a white plaid
But red silk and green satin.

O MacKenzie, you have gained precedence
You will move out strong and well-equipped
You have drunk the wine of London Town
You go out to Lothian with your young men.

Kenneth has a beautiful head of hair
The King of the Elements has given it its sheen.
The purchaser of the tallest steeds
Youths running to the stable.

Kenneth is but a child
He has not reached his grandfather's years
Hunter of the deer in the glens
The black cock on the top of the branch.

The above is a fragment of a song recorded from Mr. Duncan Grant, Broadford, Skye in 1953. Three texts of this song have already been published, but as a melody is given with only one of these it may be of interest to compare this variant from the Isle of Skye.

The text first appeared in 1878, in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 7:118-19, where it is attributed to the nurse of Kenneth MacKenzie, Lord of Kintail ("Triath Chinntàile"). No source is given for the text, which no doubt, like the attribution, came to the contributor, William MacKenzie, from oral tradition. It is headed, like the other two printed versions, *Tàladh Choinnich Oig*.

In the Transactions of the same society for 1951-2 (41: 318-20), the late Professor Angus Matheson contributed a variant from the Dornie MSS., a nineteenth century collection of oral poetry from the west of Ross-shire. Matheson suggests that Coinneach Og is Kenneth, first Lord Kintail, and not, as William MacKenzie appears to imply, Kenneth, Earl of Seaforth, who raised the Seaforth Highlanders in 1778. This would date the composition as late sixteenth century.

However, Professor Matheson also considers that "a possibility might be Kenneth, fourth Earl of Seaforth, who succeeded in 1678 and was called *Coinneach Og*". (*ibid*). That Kenneth, the fourth Earl, is indeed the subject of the song may receive some support from a heading in a recently discovered copy of some of the Dornie MSS., made in 1909 by A. R. Forbes of New Register House, and given to the late Calum MacFarlane, Elderslie. This copy, which is now in the MS. Archive of the School of Scottish Studies, appears to contain some of the material which Professor Matheson feared was irretrievably lost. The version of *Tàladh Choinnich Oig* given in Forbes' transcript is headed:

Luinneag do Choinneach Og Triath Chinntàile leis a bhanaltrum a thog e 's a thug baine dha—4 Iarla Shiphort 1618. "A song to Young Kenneth, Lord of Kintail, by his nurse, who reared him and suckled him—4 Earl of Seaforth 1618."

Unfortunately we have no means of telling what the ultimate source of this information is. Is it a mere conjecture on the part of Captain Matheson of Dornie, the compiler of the manuscript, or did it come to him from oral tradition? If the former, its value as evidence is nil. On the other hand, if Captain Matheson is drawing here on genuine oral tradition, the actual date is unlikely to have been part of whatever information he received. Nor does Gaelic oral tradition take so much account of alien styles and titles. The Earl's Gaelic style would be simply *MacCoinnich* (Mackenzie); and although the epithet *Iarla Shìophort* might well be current among illiterate bards and singers, the fact that MacCoinnich was the *fourth* earl would not be regarded by the same people as noteworthy. At any rate the date 1618 cannot possibly refer to the fourth Earl of Seaforth, who was not born until around 1660 (Douglas: *The Scots Peerage*, Vol. 7: pp. 509-10. Edinburgh 1910). I therefore suggest that if Coinneach Og, the fourth Earl, is in fact the subject of *Tàladh Choinnich Oig*, 1618 is simply a

miscopying of 1678, the year of his succession to the peerage. On this view, the song was not composed in the late sixteenth century, as Professor Matheson thought, but in the second half of the seventeenth. But without corroborative evidence the question remains open.

A refrain and three quatrains (2, 12, 16) not in Matheson's version appear in Forbes' copy of the Dornie MSS. Of these, verse 2 is identical with MacKenzie's verse 1, verse 16 is paralleled only in the Skye variant, while verse 12 is known from no other source. I have retained the manuscript spelling.

Refrain

Hill iu, ho ro, hill iu ho ro
Hill iu hill eo hillin o
Hill iu hill o, hillin ho ro
Haoi 's na ho, he eo ho.

Verse 2

Nam biodh Brathainn mar bu choir dhi
'S fhad a chluinte sgal piob mhoir ann
'S dh'òilte fion a cornaibh òir ann
'S chluichte disnean bharr chuig meoir ann.

Verse 12

Sgeul gun fear, gun mhac, gun bhrathair
Gun leanabh beag a ni gaire
Gun coisge laoigh oidhche chaisge
Air a mnaoidh leis nach linn le m' abhachd.[2]

Verse 16

'S ann air Coinneach tha cul aluinn
Bho chul do chinn gu do shailtean
Maighstir nan each 's nan Aigeach
'S do ghillean da cuir 's na stabuill.

If Brahan were as it ought to be
Long would the blast of the great pipe be heard in it
Wine would be drunk from golden horns there
Dice would be played off five fingers

May this be told of any woman—
That she be husbandless, sonless, brotherless
With no little laughing child
Without . . . calves on Easter night—
Who does not [?] share to the full in my joy.

Kenneth has beautiful hair—
Beautiful from the crown of your head to your heels—
Master of horses and of stallions
And your young men stabling them.

Professor Matheson mentions in his introductory note that "The air to this song was recovered recently from a MacRae in South Uist by Mr. J. L. Campbell of Canna." This is presumably the air that appears in Miss Margaret Fay Shaw's *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist* (London 1955) 152-3, where four verses and a refrain are given.

For ease of identification, I have used the title *Tàladh Choinnich Oig* for the Skye variant, though Mr. Grant did not himself know the song as such. To him, it was a "song composed to MacKenzie of Gairloch."

I am indebted to my colleague, Miss Gillian Johnstone, for transcribing the melody. Verse 2 exhibits its characteristics and has been selected for printing here.

NOTES

[1] But see A. MacDonald, *Gaelic Words and Expressions from South Uist and Eriskay* (Dublin 1958) s.v. *ceannachadair.*

[2] Lines 3 and 4 are possibly corrupt. *Coisge* may stand for *coisg*, another form of *casg*, check, restrain, etc. One of its meanings is "to wean", but this hardly makes sense in the context. A possibility is *cosguirt* slaying, butchering. Whatever the exact sense may be, the ill-wish seems to imply that there may be no increase in cattle, that is, that the woman may be reduced to poverty. *Linn le m'abhachd* I have translated very tentatively, taking *linn* to stand for *lion*, fill.

JOHN MACINNES

C. OTHER NOTES

Auchindrain: A multiple-tenancy farm in Mid Argyll

That the social and agrarian organisation of traditional Highland life was based upon the "township" group, the clustered homesteads of multiple-tenancy farms, is now generally recognised. Ruins of these steadings are a familiar feature in many areas of the north and west of Scotland, but particular importance attaches to that at Auchindrain near Inveraray, which, because it remained in joint occupation until comparatively recent years, has virtually survived intact.

On the initiative of members of the Natural History and Antiquarian Society of Mid Argyll, and with the personal interest and support of the Duke of Argyll on whose estate the township lies, a trust has recently been formed with a view to its preservation as an open-air museum of a type that would be unique in Scotland. (Indeed the only parallel in the British Isles would be the village of Cregneash in the Isle of Man, part of which, with the associated fields and enclosures,

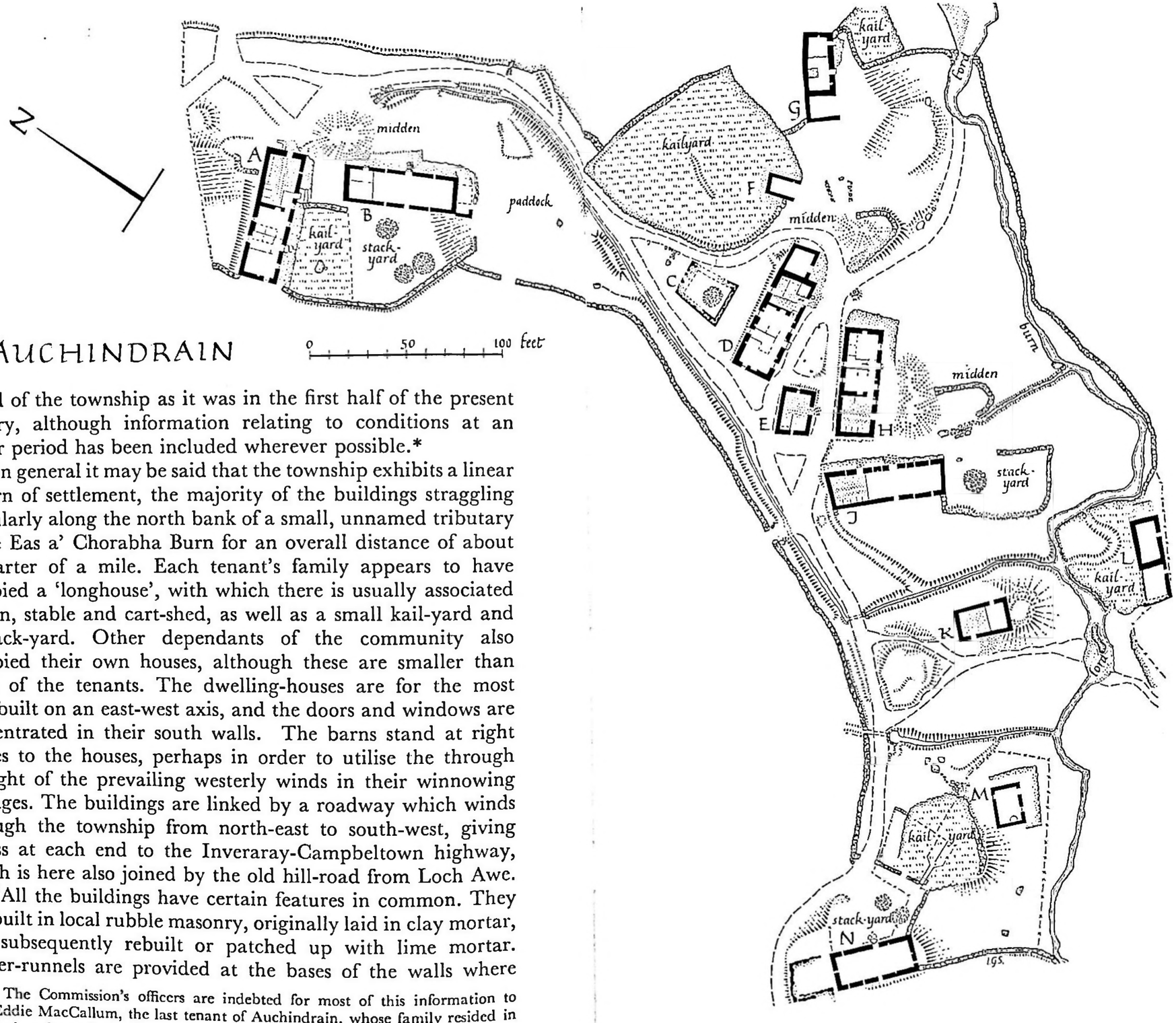
is preserved as an open-air crofting museum by the Manx Museum and National Trust.) The fine natural setting of Auchindrain is enhanced by the system of old dykes and tracks, and remains of rig cultivation including some groups of rigs that follow instead of cutting across the hilly contours. Such features could never be removed to a central open-air museum, and it is much to be hoped that the Auchindrain project will receive all necessary support.

A detailed survey of the township buildings at Auchindrain has recently been carried out by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, to whom we are greatly indebted for permission to reproduce the accompanying plan, together with the following particulars from the Commission's preliminary report.

. . .

"The township of Auchindrain, situated on the south side of the Inveraray-Campbeltown trunk road (A83) about 5½ miles south-west of Inveraray, is of considerable interest as an example of a multiple-tenancy farm that remained in joint occupation until within comparatively recent years. The continuity of occupation has ensured that Auchindrain, unlike the great majority of comparable clachans in the county, survives in a relatively good state of preservation, and the relationship of the dwelling-houses to their ancillary buildings and enclosures, and the disposition of the associated roadways and field systems, illuminates many aspects of the life of the small West Highland farming communities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

"The buildings evidently varied both in numbers and in usage from generation to generation in response to the developing needs of the community. Thus, in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the township accommodated 76 inhabitants, there was presumably an appropriate number of dwelling-houses, each with its associated outbuildings. As the community gradually declined in numbers, however, many buildings became ruinous, or were demolished or altered, while others again were reconstructed as standards of housing slowly improved. As the buildings stand to-day they illustrate the closing decades of the clachan's existence, and there is not always enough evidence to show the extent to which a particular structure has been altered or rebuilt. The following description and the accompanying plan are thus primarily a



AUCHINDRAIN

0 50 100 feet

record of the township as it was in the first half of the present century, although information relating to conditions at an earlier period has been included wherever possible.*

"In general it may be said that the township exhibits a linear pattern of settlement, the majority of the buildings straggling irregularly along the north bank of a small, unnamed tributary of the Eas a' Chorabha Burn for an overall distance of about a quarter of a mile. Each tenant's family appears to have occupied a 'longhouse', with which there is usually associated a barn, stable and cart-shed, as well as a small kail-yard and a stack-yard. Other dependants of the community also occupied their own houses, although these are smaller than those of the tenants. The dwelling-houses are for the most part built on an east-west axis, and the doors and windows are concentrated in their south walls. The barns stand at right angles to the houses, perhaps in order to utilise the through draught of the prevailing westerly winds in their winnowing passages. The buildings are linked by a roadway which winds through the township from north-east to south-west, giving access at each end to the Inveraray-Campbeltown highway, which is here also joined by the old hill-road from Loch Awe.

"All the buildings have certain features in common. They are built in local rubble masonry, originally laid in clay mortar, but subsequently rebuilt or patched up with lime mortar. Water-runnels are provided at the bases of the walls where

* The Commission's officers are indebted for most of this information to Mr. Eddie MacCallum, the last tenant of Auchindrain, whose family resided in the clachan from about 1829 to 1963.

necessary, and many of the buildings are fronted by raised, cobbled areas. All comprise a single, main storey which may incorporate a loft or half-loft, but some of the dwelling-houses have been provided with attic floors within comparatively recent times. Most of the buildings are cruck-framed, all the surviving couples, except one, being of two members, scarf-jointed and pegged at wall-head level. Most of the crucks were sawn off at wall-head level when the original thatched roofs were replaced by coverings of corrugated iron during the first half of the present century, but in surviving examples the blades are joined immediately below the apex by short, horizontal members which support the ridge poles; some also incorporate intermediate collars. Some of the barns and other subsidiary buildings were originally hip-roofed at one or both ends and incorporated crucks placed centrally in the end walls. The most recent of the longhouses, on the other hand, are gable-ended, but one at least of the older ones was originally hip-roofed at the byre end, but gable-ended at the house end.

"The typical longhouse plan comprises a 'room', closet, kitchen and byre, all disposed lineally under the same roof, with separate entrance doorways to the house and byre, but with inter-communication between this latter apartment and the kitchen. One house (H), however, seems to retain evidence of an older arrangement in which a single entrance-doorway, placed at the lower end of the kitchen, originally provided the only access to both house and byre. The 'rooms' seem always to have been equipped with stone fireplaces, set into the gable walls, but the kitchens originally had open hearths, presumably with canopied chimneys, and one of these is said to have survived until about 1850. Initially the kitchens were probably separated from the byres by wooden partitions, but with the removal of the open hearths, the wooden partitions were replaced by substantial stone walls incorporating fireplaces in chimney flues. Sleeping accommodation was usually provided by one or more box-beds in the room or kitchen."

NOTE

It is expected that a more detailed, illustrated account will be published in the second volume of the journal *Folk Life*.

EDITOR

"The Boston Smuggler" in Scotland: A Note on the Diffusion of a Broadside Ballad

England and Scotland, it need hardly be said, have constituted one of the richest folksong communities in the world for centuries. Their common stock of ballads and folksongs has nourished the oral tradition of all the countries in which their influence has been felt, most notably in those countries such as the United States, which were all but created by settlers from Great Britain. English and Scottish folklore was caught up in the steady westward flow of British culture to the American colonies and, for a time, to the United States, and still constitutes the strongest single element in American folklore. Considering the dominance of British culture and the complete lack of a native American culture from the European point of view, it is natural that this should have been so. Thus, although the dynamics of folklore diffusion would lead us to expect at least some feedback to the parent country, each incidence of a North American song which underwent the reverse process and established itself in the oral tradition of England or Scotland must be of particular interest, the more so when it has attained a comparatively high degree of popularity.

Such a song is the American broadside ballad, "The Boston Burglar", which, though unknown in England, has been recorded no fewer than eleven times in Scotland as "The Boston Smuggler".[1] The fine rendition of Jean Elvin, recorded in Turriff, Aberdeenshire by Hamish Henderson for the School of Scottish Studies in April 1952, is presented here.

THE BOSTON SMUGGLER

I was brought up in Boston,
A town you all know well;
Brought up by honest parents,
The truth to you I'll tell,
Brought up by honest parents,
And reared most tenderly,
Till I became a roving boy
At the age of twenty-three.

I started out for smuggling—
I knew it was a crime;
All the time was well engaged,
Nearly caught for many's the time.

Till at last a bold exciseman
Took courage and ran me in;
For seven long years a convict
I'll be sent to Charlestown.

My photograph was taken,
And I was sent to jail;
My parents tried, but all in vain,
To get me out on bail.
The jury found me guilty,
The clerks they wrote it down:
For seven long years a convict
I'll be sent to Charlestown.

Oh, what did my poor father think
When he saw me in the dock?
And what did my poor mother think?
She was tearing down her locks.
She was tearing down her bonny grey locks,
The tears came trickling down,
Saying, "Son, dear son, what's this you've done?
You'll be sent to Charlestown."

They put me on an eastern train
On a cold November's day,
And every station that I passed
I could hear the people say:
"Here comes the Boston smuggler,
With chains he's well tied down,
And for some crime or other
He's been sent to Charlestown."

But I've a girl in Boston,
A girl that I know well,
And when my time is ended,
Along wi' her I'll dwell.
I'll give up all bad company,
And likewise drinkin' rum,
For that has been the cause of me
Being sent to Charlestown.

All eleven texts and tunes resemble each other so closely as to be variants of a single version of the ballad. Before we consider the possible circumstances surrounding the entry of this version into Scotland, however, some background information will be useful.

The American "Boston Burglar" was not a completely American product. It was common practice among American dealers in broadsides to copy and reprint English broadsides,

sometimes verbatim, often with alterations to correspond with local conditions. "The Boston Burglar" is an adaptation of the early nineteenth century English broadside, "Botany Bay", in which place-names and circumstantial details have been changed. It is thought that a broadside printer known variously as Michael G. Fitzpatrick and M. J. Fitzgerald, was the author of the changes, probably in the 1870's.[2] The alterations are apparent when texts of the respective songs are juxtaposed. For the sake of comparison, a typical English broadside text is reproduced below, from John Ashton, *Modern Street Ballads* (London 1888) 358 f.:

BOTANY BAY

Come all you men of learning;
And a warning take by me,
I would have you quit night walking,
And shun bad company.

I would have you quit night walking,
Or else you'll rue the day,
You'll rue your transportation, lads,
When you're bound for Botany Bay.

I was brought up in London town
And a place I know full well,
Brought up by honest parents
For the truth to you, I'll tell.
Brought up by honest parents,
And rear'd most tenderly,
Till I became a roving blade,
Which proved my destiny.

My character soon taken was,
And I was sent to jail,
My friends they tried to clear me,
But nothing could prevail.
At the Old Bailey Sessions,
The Judge to me did say,
"The Jury's found you guilty, lad,
So you must go to Botany Bay."

To see my aged father dear,
As he stood near the bar,
Likewise my tender mother,
Her old grey locks to tear;

In tearing of her old grey locks,
These words to me did say,
"O, Son! O, Son! what have you done,
That you're going to Botany Bay?"

It was on the 28th of May,
From England we did steer,
And, all things being safe on board,
We sail'd down the river, clear.
And every ship that we pass'd by,
We heard the sailors say,
"There goes a ship of clever hands,
And they're bound for Botany Bay."

There is a girl in Manchester,
A girl I know full well,
And if ever I get my liberty,
Along with her I'll dwell.
O, then I mean to marry her,
And no more to go astray;
I'll shun all evil company,
Bid adieu to Botany Bay.

"Botany Bay" itself is known in American tradition[3] (not in Scottish), but its offshoot, "The Boston Burglar", has become by far the best known criminal ballad in North America. G. Malcolm Laws has written that, " 'The Boston Burglar' . . . seem[s] familiar in all ballad singing communities",[4] and Charles J. Finger "heard it from Canada to Cape Horn".[5] Nor, as we have seen, is the song confined to the Western Hemisphere.

The Scottish version of the ballad has remained remarkably close to its American original. Indeed, there is no doubt in the singers' minds that it is in fact an American song.[6] Place-names in folk-song have a marked tendency to vary as a song migrates, and the fact that all the Scottish texts preserve the Boston-Charlestown combination makes it likely that the song came to Scotland fairly directly from New England or the Canadian Maritimes, where these names would have remained familiar. This likelihood is reinforced by the fact that it was precisely these areas which maintained the closest contact with the British Isles.

There seem to be two logical routes which the song could have followed between North America and Scotland. One possibility is that it came directly, perhaps in the repertoire of a returning emigrant, or more probably, as the smuggler-

exciseman features seem to suggest, in that of a seaman. Another, less obvious, possibility is that the ballad came to Scotland via Ireland, where, due to the extremely strong ties between Ireland and New England, it has also achieved a fair degree of popularity, both in its original form and in localised versions.[7] Irish labourers came to Scotland in great numbers during the last half of the nineteenth century, for the same reasons that so many of their brethern emigrated to America. The farm servant from whom Annie Shirer, one of Greig's informants, heard the song as "a little girl"[8] may well have been one of these. Her text, going back to the early 'eighties, is the earliest Scottish version to which an approximate date can be assigned. Mr. Hamish Henderson informs me that he has heard the song from Irish singers in Glasgow, even in the present day.

Still, the Scottish version of the ballad remains unique in its distinguishing features, most notably the smuggler and exciseman, which are contained in no other versions known to the author. Pending more extensive comparison and/or the discovery of new versions, the question of the exact connection between the Scottish "Boston Smuggler" and the other versions of "The Boston Burglar" must remain open. Nevertheless, even the rough outline of the song's diffusion and transformation provides us with an insight into two important aspects of the field of folk-song—the relation of print to oral tradition, and the eclectic, shifting nature of the Anglo-American folk-song.

NOTES

[1] There are eight variants in the archives of the School of Scottish Studies, and three in the Gavin Greig collection, King's College Library, Aberdeen. I hereby acknowledge with gratitude the assistance accorded me by the King's College Library in the course of my investigation.

[2] See Sigmund Spaeth, *A History of Popular Music in America* (London 1960) 244, and Vance Randolph, *Ozark Folksongs* II (Columbia, Mo., 1948) 37.

[3] For references, see G. Malcolm Laws, *American Balladry from British Broadsides* (Philadelphia 1957) 174f.

[4] Laws 1957:50.

[5] *Frontier Ballads* (New York 1927) 88.

[6] The word "penitentiary", for example, immediately stamps it as such.

[7] Cf. the version numbered 202 in the Sam Henry Collection, Public Library, Belfast, with the one published by Colm O Lochlainn in *Irish Street Ballads* (London 1939) 88f.

[8] Gavin Greig Collection, vol. XLIX, p. 58. Greig's published version, in *Folk-Song of the North-East* (Peterhead 1909) vol. 2, no. CXXXII, is a composite text, constructed from two of his collected versions.

RICHARD BAUMAN

Tales from Barra. Told by the Coddy. With Foreword by Compton Mackenzie and Introduction and Notes by J. L. Campbell. Printed for the Editor by W. and A. K. Johnston and G. W. Bacon Ltd., Edinburgh 1960.

The Coddy—John MacPherson, postmaster of Northbay, Barra, who died in 1955—was a celebrated public figure on his native island. The boarding-house known as Taigh a' Choddy, built to accommodate the tourists who, between the wars, started coming to Barra from all the airts, was soon a centre from which the folklore and folk-tales of the island were disseminated orally through the length and breadth of Britain, and beyond. In Egypt, during World War II, I heard the story of the Weaver and the Little Weaver (pp. 81-88 in this volume) told in English by a Medical Officer who had heard it two or three years previously when out fishing with the Coddy.

Dr. John Lorne Campbell, who has put Scotland greatly in his debt by his devoted and indefatigable pioneer folklore research in the Hebrides, has done commemorative justice to the Coddy's story-telling powers in this charmingly got-up little miscellany. Nearly all the material was told in English, and taken down in shorthand by Miss Sheila J. Lockett. Dr. Campbell has written an introduction which not only provides information about the Coddy's life and family tree but also gives the reader as much as he can conveniently digest of Barra's history and present problems.

The stories themselves range from international folk-tales to yarns about the famous "Polly", the whisky ship which was wrecked off Eriskay in 1941. There are also tales and anecdotes about the MacNeils and other Highland chiefs which are a most entertaining blend of orally transmitted fact and fantasy. The concluding sections offer a fascinating gallimaufry of stories and beliefs about fairies, ghosts, second sight and witchcraft.

That the Coddy was an expert raconteur in English as well as in Gaelic is obvious even from the printed page. Indeed, for his English-speaking audience, either at Taigh a' Choddy, or around and about Barra during fishing expeditions, he seems to have developed a special style which one might term, without the least disrespect, a kind of dignified "dragoman" style. This it is which gives the little book its distinctive bouquet.

At its best, the Coddy's style has a laconic deadpan humour which recalls Damon Runyon. Here is a prison guard talking to two Barramen who are languishing in French captivity during the Napoleonic wars:

"Well, boys", he says, "I am hearing you talking Gaelic, and I am hearing you also complaining about the food. Well, I have no other alternative but to agree with you that the food is very bad". (p. 62)

Or here, MacNeil at the Battle of Bannockburn:

". . . he stripped down to his kilt only and his braces . . . he was mowing the English enemy down wholesale and retail." (p. 44)

At times he comes away with a remark of devastating epigrammatic simplicity:

"This is, of course, a traditional story which nobody could say whether it is right or wrong." (p. 104)

In the stories of supernatural folklore one feels that the Coddy's English is less adequate to his task than in the lighter tales. Occasionally he takes the easy way out, and omits passages which (if one happens to have come across Gaelic recordings of the same material) seem a genuine loss. For example, in *How Time was Lost in the Fairy Knoll*—a variant of No. 470 in the Aarne-Thompson type-index—the Brevig man who goes to the shore to look for treasures washed up by the sea catches sight of a human jawbone. In the Gaelic version recorded by the late Dr. Calum I. Maclean on 1st October 1946 (Irish Folklore Commission MS 1028, pp. 468-478), this version goes:

. . . Chan fhaca e dad sam bith ann ach claban duine a bha a' tionndadh an dràsda is a rithist 'nuair a bhristeadh a' rùid a staigh, agus dh'fhalbh e sios gu grunn a' phoirt, agus thog e an claban agus choimhead e air, agus thòisich e 'na inntinn fhéin air moladh, agus b'fhiach e sin a mholadh, àilleachd na fiaclan a bha 's a' chlaban, agus thubhairt e ris a' chlaban, "Nach briagha an fhàilt a dh'fhàgadh tu ann am bonnach mór eòrna agus clapaire math do dh'ìm Gàidhealach air", agus e a' sadadh bhuaithe a' chlabain. . . .

(Translation: He saw nothing at all but a man's skull which turned over now and then when a swell burst in; he went down to the shore of the Port, and he lifted the skull and looked at it, and he began, in his own mind, to praise—and it was worthy of praise—the beauty of the skull's teeth. And he said to the skull, "Wouldn't you leave a lovely mark in a big barley bannock with a good lump of Highland butter on it!"—and with that he threw the skull away.)

Here is the same passage, told in English and taken down in shorthand:

> He stood above the Port, and seeing nothing except a human jawbone with beautiful white teeth. The jawbone drawing his attention very much, he went down to the sea, picked it up and examined it, and said to himself that it was the finest set of teeth that he had ever seen—and at that stage he threw it away, and walked up. (p. 173)

The idiomatic difference is obvious.

For the interest of readers understanding Gaelic, Dr. Campbell gives as an appendix a transcription of a wire recording of the Gaelic version of *MacNeil of Barra, the Widow's Son and the Shetland Buck*. This story is of considerable interest, because of the picture it ingenuously but convincingly presents of the wanton and arbitrary despotism which must all too often have underlain clan chief autocracy. MacNeil takes a fancy to the Mingulay widow's son, and carries him off to Barra, in spite of his mother's distress. When the boy grows up, and has strength enough to beat him in wrestling matches, the Chief attempts to murder him by ordering the crew of the *birlinn* to put to sea in a hurricane. Later in the story, the Chief treacherously attempts to use his *sgian dubh* on a wrestling champion he has failed to beat in a fair fight.

Whatever one may think of the subsequent coming of the "Law" to *dùthaich mhic Nill*—Dr. Campbell has documented this in *The Book of Barra*—one cannot help feeling that the abolition of the heritable jurisdictions must have been greeted with some relief by the ordinary clansman. The Coddy explains the place name *Cnoc a' Chrochadair* as follows (p. 117):

> When MacNeil of Barra had somebody to hang he would notify the *crochadair* to come up, and his salary was, I understand, this: he had a little dominion there at Cnoc a' Chrochadair and it belonged to him. Hanging was his only job, and he got as salary a free croft for doing it.

HAMISH HENDERSON

Gaelic-speaking children in Highland schools. Publications of the Scottish Council for Research in Education XLVII. U.L.P. 1961.

This is a commendable book. It states its aims clearly (p. 21) and, within the restrictions of this mandate, it operates competently and informatively. It places the investigation with

which it is concerned in its historical perspective, showing why these investigation points it deals with are chosen specifically at this time (p. 16 ff.). It gives maps, tables and graphs from which one can easily read the basis and product of its research and many of the problems that arise out of it. The questionnaires used to obtain the data are given in Appendix I (p. 67). In the Conclusions (p. 63 ff.) it shows itself aware of many of the problems and concerned with effecting practical remedies. There is a short bibliography at the end.

One of the first things that strikes one on reading the book is the way in which it corroborates in detail the findings of the national Census on the steady decline in the numbers of speakers of Gaelic and also (maps, pp. 18 and 19) the diminution of the area within which Gaelic is used. The book is at pains to give a corrected picture of the general statistics of speakers within this area: to point out that there are subdivisions within it representing points of relative Gaelic strength and weakness (map 3, p. 30; table IV, p. 32). It is important to point out these facts, as they are central to any remedial plan to be put into effect. The same table and map that show us this indicate also the way in which Anglicisation proceeds and how it is most intensive in focal areas of trade and commercial activity. This ties in with the information which we get from table X, p. 44 about the relationship between the occupation of parents and the use of Gaelic by their children. The social and economic implications of these last two findings make them disturbing reading indeed.

The project that the book reports on was undertaken as a piece of educational research: cf. p. 13 ". . . the fundamental problem underlying this investigation is how best to educate a child who has knowledge of more than one language". The field of investigation was the schools in the Highland Counties and particular attention was directed to children in the first and second Primary classes and in the first year of Secondary schools. The reasons for this are given and appear unexceptionable. One of the primary problems that faced the researchers arose from the complexity of the bilingual situation—when it became obvious that the questionnaire used for getting information about Primary schools could not be used unrevised for Secondary schools (pp. 23-4). This difficulty indicates the necessity for doing a thorough analysis of the bilingual situation in all its aspects if one is to be secure in one's premises when one is investigating a restricted situation. We have mentioned

above that this survey, starting (for obvious reasons) with the counties as units, had to make a revised breakdown into smaller areas; and even taking districts as units it is found that there is no secure, one-to-one relationship between organisational units of this kind and levels of bilingualism (p. 31, par. 1). When there are widely varying levels to be found in the one school this presents a difficult teaching problem but one nevertheless, that must be tackled as real and relevant.

There are other features of this complexity that may be commented on. There is the problem of the relative importance of the home, the community and the school. There is no denying the basic formative influence of the home but we know from the study of other social patterns that as the child builds up outside contacts this tends to be a waning influence. This leads us to consider such features as to what extent the home reflects the community. One of the things that table X shows is the extent to which the homes of professional people, for example, are not integrated. One of the reasons for the finding that the Primary school, despite the use of English in it, does not have a great deal of influence on the child's use of Gaelic is that the school is not regarded in many ways—and, unfortunately, with justice—as an integral part of the community but rather as part of an external organisation. On the other hand many children when they go to Secondary school, especially Senior Secondary, have to be transplanted from their home community. They live in hostels and the contacts they make are mostly within the school so that the school, to a considerable degree, performs the function of home and community as well; and the lingua franca is English. There are good reasons for this. One of them is that the language of school has for these children always been English: they feel themselves in a situation for which English is the appropriate language and they have been trained to cope with new situations of the type with which they are faced in terms of English. Furthermore, the outside environment, the area in which the school is situated, is, usually, intensely Anglicised.

It is an important feature of bilingualism, from the linguistic point of view, and one that deserves close attention that there are situations in which the use of Gaelic by anyone has a very low probability. There is, for example, the obvious case of most technical discussion; but there are less obvious ones, for instance the register of buying and selling. One has only to linger in any shop in the bilingual area to discover that

the English content of this register is, in general, quite extraordinarily high; the highest being probably in the counting out of money.

The importance of this from the educational point of view is that one of the typical situations in which Gaelic was very seldom used was the classroom situation, for changes in legislation and changes of general attitude were not paralleled by changes in practice, in spite of the fact that Gaelic-speaking teachers returned to work in Gaelic areas. The apparent lack of damage that this inflicts on the Gaelic of children in Primary schools is no more than a testimony to the strength of the language in home and community. But in fact there is real damage done in the attitudes set up in the child which lead him to compartmentalise his use of Gaelic and stunts his growth in ability to handle it productively. One of the most urgent remedial tasks to be undertaken in the teaching of Gaelic is the gradual educating of the child in the ability to use the language in any situation.

In order to effect this several things are needed. Of these one may mention one or two. First of all it must be realised that the inadequacy to deal with certain situations is not an inherent feature of the language: it must be regarded as a "living language" and productive. Then a clear-cut decision is needed to set up a teaching programme and to implement it. One is happy to be able to say that in the most important Gaelic areas steps have been taken and are being taken to set up a practice of teaching children whose first language is Gaelic to read and write it as a first language and to be taught in Primary schools through the medium of Gaelic.

It is essential that a programme such as this should be based on the best available, relevant scientific knowledge. The value of the book under review is that it provides a basic portion of this.

DONALD MACAULAY

The Court Book of Orkney and Shetland 1612-1613. Transcribed and edited by Robert S. Barclay, B.SC., PH.D., F.R.S.E. W. R. Mackintosh, The Kirkwall Press. 1962 (also obtainable from John Grant, Booksellers, 31 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh). 104 pp. Five facsimiles. 15s.

Dr. Barclay's book is a scholarly, serviceable and interesting addition to the printed historical records of Orkney in the early seventeenth century.

For this period Orkney, like Shetland, has a remarkable collection of sources—still not yet fully exploited—including rentals, sasines, dispositions, state and ecclesiastical papers, parish registers, family papers, court records, and various maps and topographical notes. A considerable amount of this material is in print, including the first of the two "Court Books" of Shetland (1602-04) edited by Prof. Gordon Donaldson for the Scottish Record Society in 1954. Now, through the enterprise and diligence of Dr. Barclay and the Kirkwall Press we have in full the first of the four Orkney Court Books, covering the period 1612-13, transcribed from the manuscript in the Scottish Record Office.

Dr. Barclay's Introduction, written with admirable lucidity for both the general reader and the specialist, explains the circumstances in which the Court Book was written. As the result of representations by Bishop Law of Orkney, the rapacious Earl Patrick Stewart was imprisoned in Edinburgh in 1609 and brought to trial. The earldom lands were once again vested in the crown, the Old Norse law was replaced by the law of Scotland, and the Bishop took over the functions of the Sheriff that had been exercised by the earl.

The Court Book begins with a sitting of the Sheriff Court under the Bishop in the Cathedral Church of St. Magnus on 30 July 1612. Four bailies were appointed, and eight councellors and assessors—all of them, it may be noted, with Lowland Scots names.

Then several "country Acts" were passed. The first had the object of "keiping of ane civile societie . . . and repressing of all enormiteis and extortiounis" on mercat day. The second was to empower the bailies to fine "drukin men . . . and gif they have no geir to punisch thame in thair persones".

The rest of the Court Book is a clerk's record of the sittings, two in Shetland and the remainder in Kirkwall, until 1 May 1613. In Kirkwall the Court usually sat in the great hall of the Bishop's Palace.

A few other country Acts appear, about control of beggars and of swine, about price-fixing of incoming cargoes and maintaining the supply of servants, about theft, the surreptitious rooing of sheep and borrowing other men's horses without leave and cutting their tails.

Most of the sittings, however, deal with actual cases, both civil and criminal, the line of demarcation not being always clear. There is assault (blood often being drawn, according to

the record, "in great quantity"), trespass, bad debts, theft from the mill, and complicated disputes about land.

Assault or the fear of it seems to have been frequent. On p. 31 we read:

"The quhilk day James Peirsone, cowper, and Magnus Hardie, cordiner, burgessis of Kirkwall, becom cautioneris, souerteis and lawborrowis for Johne Morriell, carpentar, that Johne Drever, mariner, his wyff, bairnis . . . sall be harmeles and skaithles . . . be the said Johne Morriell . . . under pane of twa hundreth pundis . . .'

Undertakings to act as cautioners or "lawborrowis" occur every week or two in this way.

Much more lively, however, is a long case in which Thomas Setter, smith, Kirkwall, accused two timmermen in the town of damaging "ane new sex oring boit worth fiftie merkis". There is also a pertinacious Alexander Miller, possessor of the two-pennyland of Caldaill near Kirkwall, who successfully sued fifteen of his neighbours for allowing, and indeed encouraging, their bestial to trespasss on his land and eat his corn.

The editor has carried over into record study the thoroughness which has already distinguished his work in demography. His very considerable labours in preparing the text will be still further rewarded when the remaining three manuscripts have been transcribed in full. (He has already begun on the period 1614-15.) In itself, the present volume is a useful source for a variety of studies: the jurisdiction and procedure of the Sheriff Court and its position in the north of Scotland at the time; local law; social history (although here the first Shetland Court Book is more informative); family history; personal names; language. Mention of the last is prompted by the fascination of the pithy Scots legal phraseology of this and other court records of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—semi-professional, but never far from the mill, the stable, and the mercat cross; it provides some interesting material for the social history of language.

In any future transcripts of this kind, it would be useful if the glossary and the index of proper names were supplemented by a subject index; and also by an index of cases to assist in tracing the individual case from one sitting to another.

The book has a handsome cover and a well-designed jacket. It has also the distinction of having first appeared in serial form in Orkney's weekly newspaper *The Orcadian*.

A. B. TAYLOR

Sword Dance and Drama. By Violet Alford. London: Merlin Press. 1962. 222 pp. 30s.

The Sword dances which form the subject of this book are seasonal ritual dances, performed (properly) by men only, with the common characteristic that the dancers are linked by swords or suitable substitutes to form a closed ring—when the links are swords each dancer holds the hilt of his own sword in one hand and the point of his neighbour's sword in the other, giving rise to the generic name "hilt-and-point Sword dance" by which such dances are best known. The rites with which the hilt-and-point Sword dances are associated were primarily agricultural, and belonged to Midwinter, Spring, and early Summer. In the Germanic countries the dances were often performed by the Trade Guilds of the cities, but even in the cities the dances retained their seasonal character.

The best-known example of such a dance in Scotland, and the only one still extant, is the Sword Dance of Papa Stour, which was first recorded in print by Sir Walter Scott in *The Pirate* (though Sir Walter himself did not *see* the dance performed, as stated by Miss Alford). Scotland also once had a Guild example, which was performed by the Glovers' Guild of Perth before James I in 1633; this dance is now lost, but one of the costumes survives, and Miss Alford has included a sketch of it, from the original in Perth Museum.

The major portion of Miss Alford's book is devoted to a survey of the Sword dances of Europe and their associated folk-drama, based on written records and on the author's wide personal experience of traditional dancing "in its natural haunts". The survey provides for the first time a comprehensive and well-documented account of hilt-and-point Sword dances over the whole of their European range, and should be of considerable value in any discussion of the origin of these dances.

Miss Alford's own theory of the origin of the hilt-and-point dances is discussed briefly in the first part of the book. The fundamental dance-element in the dances, the closed chain, was known before the age of metal, and the use of a chain dance in agricultural rites is therefore deemed to have preceded the use of a sword dance. When metal was first discovered, its own apparently magical quality conferred a semi-magical status on those who worked it, and it is suggested that in metal-working areas the places of the custodians of the earlier agricultural rites were gradually usurped by the metal workers,

who brought the sword, the symbol of their craft, into the chain dance with them. This theory suggests in turn that hilt-and-point Sword dances should occur predominantly in areas which were prehistoric mining sites, and Miss Alford has succeeded in showing that a fair proportion of the dances do so occur. Unfortunately she gives no authorities for her identification of early mining sites, and the further omission of a reasonably complete list of such sites prevents any real assessment of the significance of her results.

Scotland receives a comparatively brief mention in the book, for definite records of hilt-and-point Sword dances are rare in Scotland. Miss Alford quotes four, from Edinburgh, Perth, Elgin, and Papa Stour. That from Perth is the Glovers' Guild dance already mentioned, and here it is a pity that Miss Alford should have reproduced one of the inaccurate transcripts from the original minute of 1633 in the Glovers' Book, all the more so since the original is given by A. J. Mill (A. J. Mill 1927), whom Miss Alford quotes on other topics. The Edinburgh dance was performed on the entry of Anne of Denmark to Edinburgh in 1590 and may also have been a Guild dance; the record from Elgin refers to a Sword dance done by five men in the churchyard in 1623, and the other record refers, of course, to the still extant Papa Stour dance.

In his *Sword Dances of Northern England* (Sharp 1911-13), Cecil Sharp added Fife and the Hebrides to the list of places in Scotland where hilt-and-point Sword dances occurred, but the reviewer has so far been unable to find his authority for these statements, though it is possible that the Hebridean record referred to the now lost "Cath nan curaidh", the "Contest of the warriors" mentioned in *Carmina Gadelica* (Carmichael 1900). A. J. Mill (*op. cit.*) states that Sword dances were once widespread over Scotland, but in the absence of supporting evidence the statement seems extremely unlikely, and it is an intriguing question why Scotland should possess the very few scattered examples which have been authenticated.

Another question of interest to Scottish readers concerns the status of the solo Sword dance Gille Callum, and Miss Alford discusses the possibility that it is a relic of some much larger ritual dance of hilt-and-point type. As a possible connecting link she quotes an elaborate Sword dance seen in Scotland about 1880 by a London resident and described by him in a letter to the English Folk Dance Society in 1924. Miss Alford comments that she only half believes the letter, and on

the several other occasions when the letter has been quoted the conclusion is always reached that the writer's description of the dance is too vague to permit of any conclusion. It is to be regretted that when the letter was received some member of the English Folk Dance Society did not walk round to interview the writer!

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T. M. FLETT

The Instructed Vision: Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origins of American Fiction. By Terence Martin. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1961. x+197 pp. $4.50.

Professor Martin's book is a detailed and carefully worked out investigation into the nature and extent of the influence exerted by Scottish Common Sense philosophy in America. Introduced by John Witherspoon, a Scottish Presbyterian minister who became President of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) in 1768, the body of thought expounded by Thomas Reid, and developed by his disciples Dugald Stewart, Lord Kames, Thomas Brown, and others, grew in America to enjoy a greater importance than in Scotland itself. Admirably suited for the practical needs of the early United States in its safe, stabilising, and conservative spirit, and the cohesive force it could bring to bear on a young society, Common Sense philosophy extended its influence into the spheres of American philosophy, theology, psychology, education, aesthetics—indeed, throughout the whole of early American culture in its formative stages. The author demonstrates how this was effected, first through the colleges and universities, and then, in consequence, among the clergymen, educators, politicians, men of law, critics, and writers of America. He is careful throughout to present concrete evidence of specific connections and influences.

As a student of American literature, however, Professor Martin's primary concern is with the effect of the Scottish philosophy on the writing of fiction in the early United States.

The metaphysics of the Common Sense school, basically and fundamentally anti-idealistic, posited an epistemological hierarchy in which the realm of the actual (equated with the real) had precedence over the realm of the possible. The imagination, as the faculty of the possible, was looked upon as dangerously disengaged from the actual, and therefore in need of strong control. Consequently fiction, a product of the imagination, was equally suspect as being likely to alienate those who indulged in its pleasures from the real world in which they had to live their lives—a doctrine not unfamiliar in our own time. Thus, Dugald Stewart could write, "The effect of novels, in misleading the passions of youth, with respect to the most interesting and most important relations, is one of the many instances of the inconveniences resulting from an ill-regulated imagination."

Against such an intellectual background, as the author goes on to demonstrate, any attempt at writing fiction was foredoomed to failure. Writers were reduced to producing almost pathetic and laughable compromises. It was only after decades of domination by the artistically stultifying Scottish philosophy, that the field was ripe for the new idealism of the English Romantics and Transcendentalists. Under their aegis, the imagination was elevated once more, and, because of the terms in which the metaphysical polemic between them and the advocates of Scottish Common Sense philosophy was framed, American writers of fiction turned precisely to that disengaged imaginative experience which, though damned in the order of the Scots, was the very essence of romance as a literary genre. From the 1830's, and the works of Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, the mode of romance constituted a steady, even dominant, current in American literature even to the present day. In elucidating one of the most important factors in the background of this development, Professor Martin has made a valuable contribution both to the history of ideas and to the study of American literature.

RICHARD BAUMAN

Dr. Walton's "Population Changes in North-East Scotland"

Sir,

I have been puzzling over some of the figures given by Dr. Walton in your journal for January, 1962, and I think some corrections should be made to his conclusions. There are

considerable difficulties in the way of accepting Poll Tax records for population purposes, even when they are as full as those for Aberdeenshire in 1696, but if these are used care must be taken in adjusting them to include the untaxed section of the population. Dr. Walton has accepted Dr. Webster's age pattern for 1755 and his addition of two-ninths to the population over 6 to give the total population. He then makes his own allowance of one third to the 1696 return of taxable persons (those over 16 and not receiving poor relief), for the total for that year. If Dr. Webster's figures have any validity this is far too small an addition for the age group 6 to 16. It can be worked out that this decade would contain only three forty-fourths of the total population, which would mean either that this age group and this one alone had suffered a demographic disaster to reduce it far below older portions of the population, or that the expectation of life for those who attained the age of 6 was 125. There seems no historical reason for either situation.

Is there in fact any reason to disagree with Dr. Webster's own age pattern? For the years 6 to 16 it is based on an actual count. If his figures for the years 0 to 16 are added up they come to nearly three-eighths of the total population, and the ratio of this age group to that over 16 is approximately 62 to 100. This is nearly twice Dr. Walton's ratio of 1 to 3, and accepting this higher ratio would have a drastic effect on estimates for the population as a whole. It would add approximately 21·5 per cent to his total. If any allowance is to be made for paupers, the increase would have to be still greater, but as I know of no statistical basis from which such an allowance can be derived, I cannot assess this further increase.

The importance of altering Dr. Walton's adjustments to bring them into line with a population such as Dr. Webster's is to be seen in his population map. All his percentage increases would have to be dropped by more than 20 per cent. Parishes for which he claims an increase of up to 25 per cent would then have very little increase at all, or may have decreased considerably, and the whole pattern of population change as he sees it must be drastically changed.

Yours, etc.

ROSALIND MITCHISON

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Items in bold type denote titles of contributions; the names of contributors appear in small capitals.