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Cartography and the Kirk: Aspects of the Making of the First Atlas of Scotland

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In 1654 volume five of Joan Blaeu's great *Atlas Novus* was published in Amsterdam, containing a map of Britain, six maps of Ireland and no fewer than forty-eight maps of Scotland (forty-six of them maps of regions or counties). This was the first attempt to provide a comprehensive set of detailed maps of Scotland, and it remained a standard work of reference for fully a century.

Most of the maps in the Atlas were based on the manuscript maps compiled by Timothy Pont (died *c.* 1611-14) at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. Pont was minister of Dunnet in Caithness, and evidently undertook his cartographic and topographical work as a purely private venture, but James VI at one point promised him financial help towards completing his maps. This came to nothing, probably through Pont's death, but in 1629 Charles I agreed to give £100 sterling to help finish and publish the maps. Sir John Scot of Scotstarvit, the Director of Chancery, soon emerged as the main organiser of the project, probably because he already had contacts with the Blaeus—well known as map publishers—as he was negotiating with them over the publication of a collection of Latin verse by Scottish poets. It was agreed that Pont's maps should form the basis of a series of published maps of Scotland, but it became clear that much work was needed to be done on his maps (which were often confused and fragmentary) before they could be entrusted to Blaeu's engravers. Scot therefore recruited Robert Gordon of Straloch to undertake this task of revision. There is no evidence that Gordon had any previous experience in cartography, but he had long taken an interest in topography and was a skilled mathematician. Building on these relevant skills, he soon became deeply absorbed in revising Pont's maps. But progress was slow, and much still remained to be done when the Covenanters' revolt against Charles I broke out in 1637, leading to a period of political upheaval and intermittent civil war.

Both sides in the conflict, however, recognised the importance of Gordon's work, both for the honour and international reputation of Scotland and for more practical purposes. The civil war must have emphasised how useful detailed maps would be for military purposes. In 1641 Charles I wrote urging Gordon on with his work, with vague promises of future reward (Moir 1973:45), and in 1645-9 the Parliaments and Committees of the Covenanting régime issued a series of orders exempting him from taxes, loans, levies and quarterings so that he could concentrate on his map-making

activities (Stone 1981:27).[1] In addition, in 1647 the Scottish Parliament agreed (on a supplication from Blaeu) to try to persuade the English Parliament to give the maps (when published) copyright protection in England, Charles I having already granted such protection in Scotland (*APS*: 736-7). Moreover, it has long been known (and it was acknowledged by Blaeu himself) that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland also sought to help Gordon (Blaeu 1654: '*Lectori salutem*'; Cash 1901:403, 405; Moir 1973:46). No systematic account of the Church's involvement in the making of the *Atlas* has been attempted previously, but reference to the surviving records of the Church courts indicates that the Church deserves more credit for positively aiding the project than the State, with its negative exemptions, or the King with his vague encouragement. The story of the Church's involvement in the *Atlas* project is, moreover, of interest for the light it throws on some aspects of how material for the *Atlas* was collected (or, more often, how unsuccessful attempts were made to collect such material).

The initiative in gaining ecclesiastical support for Blaeu's *Atlas* came from Sir John Scot, whose enthusiasm remained undiminished by long delays. In August 1641 Robert Baillie wrote to his cousin William Spang, minister to the Scottish congregation at Campvere in the Netherlands, describing the recent meeting of the General Assembly. In the entry under 2 August he noted 'Sir John Scot's petition, to have a description of our Shyredomes, by some in everie Presbytrie, to be sett before the mappes yow have in hand, is granted' (Baillie 1841:I. 368; Snoddy 1968:52). The Assembly's resolution was that each presbytery was 'to sett doun the descriptiouns of there severall paroches according to the alphabet then given to the severall commissioners to deliver to there presbyteries and to report the same to the chancellorie' by 1 January 1642 (S.R.O. CH. 2/154/2: folios 39ᵛ—40ʳ; *Fife Synod*: 131); Scot was the Director of the Chancery.

The usual assumption (which Robert Baillie's report supports) has been that what Scot was seeking from the ministers of the Kirk was solely written descriptions (Moir 1973:46), based on answers to the 'alphabet' or list of questions which he had circulated, from which were to be compiled the written accounts of each region or shire accompanying the maps in the *Atlas*. This was certainly a major part of Scot's intention, but there was probably more to it than this. Firstly, as will be argued below, these 'descriptions' may well also have been intended to provide information for insertion on maps. Secondly, it is quite possible that the 'descriptions' were themselves intended to include rough maps. The word 'description' was ambiguous in the seventeenth century, bearing a wider range of meanings than today; as well as denoting written or spoken accounts, 'to describe' could mean 'to set forth in delineation or pictorial representation, to represent, picture, portray, or to delineate, as in geometry' (*OED*). Several references indicate clearly that both Robert Gordon and his son and helper James Gordon (minister of Rothiemay) used the word to denote maps and plans as well as written accounts. James Gordon's map or plan of

Aberdeen is headed *Aberdoniae Novae et Veteris Descriptio. A Description of New and of Old Aberdeen*, the same word being used in the title of the accompanying text (Gordon 1842). In 1647 when the burgh council of Edinburgh requested that James be permitted to leave his parish to come and make a plan of the burgh, the Commission of the General Assembly of the Kirk agreed that he should be employed 'for description of the mappe of this toun' (*Coms. of G.A*: 191-2). In the *Atlas* itself the captions of two maps provide further evidence that maps 'described' the areas they dealt with. James Gordon states that his *Fifae Vicecomitatus* is '*a se peragratae descriptionem*'; and Robert Gordon says *Scotia Extima* was '*collegit et descripsit*' by him.[2]

To add to the difficulties of interpretation, just as a 'description' might be a map, so a 'carte' might be a written description or exposition and not a map (*OED*), and therefore (as will be seen below) the Church records use the words interchangeably.

Well-meaning resolutions of the General Assembly were frequently ignored by the lower courts (synods, presbyteries and kirk sessions) of the Church; this point was to be well illustrated in the years that followed the Assembly's first attempt to help the *Atlas* project in August 1641. Reference to those synod and presbytery records which have been published suggests that there was little enthusiasm for Scot's project outside Fife, and even there it was limited. Fife was Scot's home county, and he was evidently determined that it should be well represented in the *Atlas*: as an eminent local man he was in a good position to maintain pressure on dilatory Church courts.

The first indication of action following on the General Assembly's order occurs in the records of Kirkcaldy Presbytery: on 20 January 1642 it is noted 'Anent Sir John Scotts business the brethren promeises diligence' (*Kirkcaldie Pres*: 222). In fact the deadline for sending in descriptions was already past, but at least Kirkcaldy was doing better than the other presbyteries in Fife. When the Synod of Fife met in April, Scot complained to it that none of the ministers of the province had obeyed the General Assembly's orders except for nine in the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy. On 6 April therefore the Synod, 'considering the worthiness of the work tending to the honor of the nation' ordered the moderators of the presbyteries 'to urge the fulfilling of the foresaid act' of the General Assembly by 1 May 1642 (Snoddy 1968:52-3; S.R.O. CH. 2/154/2: folios 39ᵛ—40ʳ).'

One Presbytery at least responded to this urging: that of St Andrews. On 21 April its records note 'Anent the reference to the severall Presbyteries concerning Sir Johne Scotts Geographie Cart, all exhorted to vse diligence therein' (*St. A. & Cupar Pres*: 6). Two weeks later the Presbytery was more specific. 'To the end greater diligence may be vsed in drawing vp the bounds of this Presbyterie for Sir Johne Scotts Carte' the parishes of the Presbytery were divided into three groups, and a number of lairds were appointed for each group 'to vse diligence heirin' (*op. cit*: 6-7). Again on 8 June 1642 those appointed to 'view the bounds of this Presbyterie, for Sir John Scotts Carte, ar appointed to vse diligence therein' (*op. cit*: 7). These St Andrews records

raise the intriguing possibility that at this point Scot was considering drawing up a map of Fife himself, but this may be to read too much into the references to 'Scot's carte'.

All these signs of activity in St Andrews Presbytery produced no parish descriptions, and few other presbyteries did any better. As a result when the General Assembly met in August 1642 it was presented with a new supplication by Scot, recalling that the previous Assembly had ordered the preparation of descriptions by presbyteries 'according to an Alphabet drawne and given to every ane of them for that effect'. But, Scot continued, no presbyteries except those of Carrick, Galloway, East Lothian, and eight parishes in the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy, had sent in any reports. This 'is a great hinderance to the setting furth of the whole cairts of this Kingdome now almost perfected, and which can not be brought to an end without these descriptions'. He therefore desired that the Assembly's orders for descriptions be renewed, and also requested that James Gordon (Robert Gordon of Straloch's son) be given permission to leave his parish of Rothiemay and go to Fife 'for expeding of the Shyre of Fife, which is altogether deficient'. If Scot had ever thought of producing a Fife map himself he had now abandoned the idea and was calling in outside help. The Assembly proved sympathetic to Scot's pleas. Having failed to get obedience from presbyteries, it now ordered all synods to send in descriptions of their parishes to 'the Chancellarie Chamber'; and James Gordon was given permission to go to Fife for two months (S.R.O. CH. 1/1/9:1642, pp. 81-2).

The Synod of Fife was prompt to act on these orders. On 5 October 1642 it recorded that it had 'done diligence' in providing parish descriptions; some had been delivered (to the Synod), and others were ready for delivery (S.R.O. CH. 2/154/2: folios 44ᵛ—45ʳ).¹ But, as before, most synods evidently ignored the General Assembly's orders, forcing Scot to renew his former complaints to the August 1643 Assembly. It was probably he who, trying a new approach, presented a petition from William Jansone, printer in Amsterdam, desiring that 'Letters of Recommendation' be written to those presbyteries which had failed to provide descriptions 'of their severall schires'. The Assembly duly ordered the Presbyteries to send descriptions to the Synods when the latter met in April or May 1644, so they could be forwarded to the chancery chamber (S.R.O. CH. 1/1/9:1643, p. 74; *Records of G. A.*: 361). But by this time the General Assembly had less patience with repeated petitions on a matter marginal to its main responsibilities, and Robert Baillie reported to William Spang that 'Sir John Scot's bill, for pressing Presbyteries to describe their own bounds, was not so much regarded' (Baillie 1841-2:II. 88; Snoddy: 53; Moir: 46). Nonetheless, three years later (June 1646) the Assembly issued a further recommendation 'of the Printer in Amsterdam his Bill concerning the charts of this Kindom' (*Records of G. A*: 454), and the following year this was followed up (1 September 1647) by a 'Warrand for Master James Gordon to come to Sterling-shire, for drawing the mappe thereof' (*op. cit.*: 483). Finally, in June 1649 the Assembly passed an 'Act

recommending to the Brethren to make out the descriptions of these parts of the Kingdom not yet described' (*op. cit.*: 555).

Thus in its nine annual meetings in 1641-9 the General Assembly showed its interest in the *Atlas* project six times; and the three years in which it neglected the issue were those in which the political turmoil of the time reached peaks in open civil war (the Montrose campaigns in 1644 and 1645; the Engagement crisis in 1648).

What do these references in Church records tell us about the process of compiling the *Atlas*? Above all, perhaps, they bring into prominence the attempt to exploit the unrivalled national network provided by the ministry of the Kirk for the systematic gathering of information. Relatively little attention has been given to the collection of 'descriptions' (But see Cash 1901:405, 406: Moir 1973:46), and (as indicated above) the assumption has been that their purpose was exclusively that of providing information for the written texts accompanying the maps. But the ambiguities of the word 'description' raises the possibility that they may have been intended to include maps. Even if this was not the case (and certainty is impossible), it seems likely that it was intended that some of the information included in *written* descriptions should be put to cartographic use. It has been demonstrated that some of the published *Atlas* maps, and some of Robert Gordon's manuscript maps, are basically Timothy Pont's work with a scattering of additional place names added by Gordon (Stone 1981: 18-20). It is hard to believe that these additions arise from attempts by Robert Gordon literally to follow in Pont's footsteps, systematically checking Pont's maps and adding to them by touring the country: he was too old for such a task, and, had he undertaken it, it would surely have enabled him to improve (or at least alter) Pont's maps more than by just adding handfuls of new place-names. Where then did the new names come from? The most plausible answer is from written accounts, detailing places and their distances and bearings from each other. Evidence that his son, James Gordon, used such information for cartographic purposes survives. In 1646 he drew up 'Demandes tuoching the discriptions of the two tounes of new and Ould Aberdein'; the list of questions to which he required answers includes both historical information for his written description and (headed 'Concerning the Topography of the Toune') place names and distances which could be of use only in drafting his map of the burghs (*Abdn. Letts*: 62-4). Further light is thrown on how James Gordon collected topographical information evidently intended for use in map-making (probably in this case for passing on to his father rather than for use himself) by the survival of some of his notes on the Highlands. Most of the material is taken from Pont; but he records, of his 'Noats of Distances of Places about the Head of Lochtay, Loch Erin, L. Dochart, Glen Urquhay etc.', 'This I had from [Sir Robert Campbell of] Glenurquhay himself in June 1644 at Abirdeen'. Similarly his 'Noats of Lennox & Stirlingshyr' were 'gotten fra gentlemen of that countrey 15 May 1644' (MacFarlane 1906-8:II. xliv-xlv, lxxix, lxxx, 537, 578). Here we see James Gordon making the best of random chances to acquire information while frustratingly unable to stray far from

his Banffshire parish: Glenorchy and the Stirlingshire gentlemen were probably in the North East in connection with military operations against the royalist Marquis of Huntly, and Gordon eagerly pumped them for topographical information.

There is no direct evidence that the written information which parish ministers were asked to supply in answer to Scotstarvet's 'alphabet' was similarly intended for cartographic purposes, but this seems highly likely. If Scot's intention was merely to gather material for the brief regional descriptions which were to accompany the maps in the *Atlas*, would he have sought detailed descriptions of all the parishes (nearly a thousand of them) in Scotland? It is possible; but it would seem that such an approach would complicate his task by providing far more information than he would need—and by making the process far more ambitious than it need have been. But if one of the prime purposes of the 'descriptions' collected through the ministers was to provide place-names and details of their locations for inclusion on the draft maps (mainly based on Pont) that Robert Gordon was working on, then parish 'descriptions' would be the obvious approach.

In the event, however, the parish descriptions failed to appear (with a few exceptions). From most areas Scot received nothing at all in the way of descriptions, and it is therefore not surprising that when in a few instances he received descriptions of much wider areas than parishes he was content with them: they could at least be published in the *Atlas* even if they were of no help to Robert Gordon in eking out Pont's pioneering work. When Scot told the 1642 General Assembly that the Presbyteries of Galloway had provided the descriptions required, he probably referred merely to the general description of the province of Galloway by John M'Clellan (minister of Kirkcudbright) that eventually appeared in the *Atlas* (*Fasti* II:417; Blaeu 1654:49-50). Similarly the description of East Lothian he had received may well have been a general one by William Forbes (minister of Innerwick, East Lothian), who was to contribute a description of the Lothians to the *Atlas*, rather than individual parish accounts (*Fasti* I:410; Blaeu 1654:41-2). Again, it may be guessed that Carrick provided a general account, perhaps by James Bonar (minister of Maybole in Carrick) who is known to have helped Robert Gordon (MacFarlane 1906-8:II. xx).' If this is the case, then the only *parish* descriptions Scot ever got may have been those from eight or nine parishes in the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy. From other areas he was glad to receive even regional descriptions, accepting them as better than nothing.

The evidence from the Church records confirms the date of one of the maps in Blaeu's *Atlas, Fifae Vicecomitatus*, and in doing so reveals that one piece of evidence about dating some of the maps on which reliance has been placed hitherto needs to be used with caution. It has been argued that *Fifae Vicecomitatus*, like *Fifae Occidentalis* and *Fifae Orientalis*, must date from before 1642 (Stone 1981:18; 1970:17), as Blaeu wrote to Sir John Scot in March 1642 listing the parts of Scotland for which he lacked maps (Moir & Skelton 1968:155; Moir 1973:46); as he did not list Fife it has been assumed that he already had all three Fife maps. Yet the Church and other evidence

makes it clear that the *Fifae Vicecomitatus* was not drawn until 1642, and that it was some years after that before it reached Blaeu. In 1642 Scot was actively collecting material in Fife for his 'geography carte', and James Gordon was sent to the shire in the same year to work on the project. Moreover Gordon's manuscript map for Fife survives and is dated 1642 (Cash 1907:590, no. 53), and his manuscript map of Kinross is dated even more precisely; 'Keanrosseshyre descrybed Oct. 25 1642. Be James Gordon at Keanrosse' (*op. cit:* no. 52).⁶ However James Gordon did not send the map to Blaeu until 1645. On 2 September of that year Sir John Scot (then visiting the Netherlands) reported that a privateer from Dunkirk had captured the ship carrying the map, and undertook to try to retrieve the map from the privateer's captain, though he held out little hope of success. 'You did wysly' he wrote to Robert Gordon, 'that caused your son keip a doubill of it vtherways all had been gone', and he urged that James 'drau it over agane, that it may be ioned [joined] with the rest' (*Spald. Misc* 1:52). Blaeu asserts the Scot succeeded in recovering the map from the privateers, but this seems unlikely and therefore James Gordon probably did 'draw it over again' as Scot had urged.

Why did James Gordon produce his map of Fife in 1642 though Blaeu had not requested such a map? The explanation appears to be that Blaeu had by 1642 two maps of Fife, *Fifae Occidentalis* and *Fifae Orientalis,* based on the work of Pont.⁷ He was content with them, and therefore did not include Fife among the areas for which he lacked coverage. But Robert Gordon and Sir John Scot evidently believed that these two maps did not do justice to the latter's native shire, and Scot therefore arranged that James Gordon should provide a replacement.⁸ James did so, drafting a map greatly superior to the other two,⁹ and this was sent to Blaeu. The obvious thing for Blaeu to have done would have been to scrap the two Pont maps and publish James Gordon's; but instead he published all three. Perhaps the reason for this absurdity was that he had already had the Pont maps engraved and was reluctant to waste the plates!

The history of *Fifae Vicecomitatus* (the best documented of all the Scottish maps in the *Atlas*) indicates that the assumption that Scot and the Gordons were (at least by the 1640s) solely concerned with filling gaps in the coverage of the maps which Blaeu had already accepted, is invalid. They were also endeavouring to produce replacements for maps which Blaeu was content with, but which they considered to be inadequate. The case of Nithsdale provides further evidence of this. The *Atlas* map *Nithia Vicecomitatus* is attributed to Pont, and is taken from Pont's work without any discernible intervention by the Gordons. Yet there exists a manuscript map of Nithsdale by Robert Gordon, dated May 1644 and based (as Gordon himself states) on Pont's work, though Blaeu had not asked for further work to be done on the area and Gordon's map is in fact inferior to Pont's (Cash 1907:591, no. 62: Stone 1968: 160-71). Stirling provides a rather similar case. The map *Sterlingensis* in the *Atlas* is attributed to Pont, and it has been demonstrated that it is in fact a map drafted by

Robert Gordon but based entirely on information derived from Pont. Blaeu evidently had this map by 1642 as he did not list the shire as an area for which he lacked coverage (Stone 1981:18). Yet, as the General Assembly records indicate, James Gordon undertook to map the shire in 1647, presumably hoping to improve on Blaeu's map, but either the new map was never completed or, if it was, Blaeu refused to accept an unnecessary additional map at so late a stage in his project.

Certainly it must have seemed to Blaeu that his Scottish collaborators lacked any clear understanding of priorities. They provided him with a map of Fife, and may have sought to provide him with maps of Nithsdale and Stirling, which he had not asked for; meanwhile they failed to provide maps to fill in some of the gaps in the coverage of the maps he already had. One of these gaps was the shire of Angus, and here at least there is evidence of good intentions on the part of the Gordons. Early in 1647 James Gordon completed his great plan of Edinburgh and was paid for it (*Edin. Recs*: 116). His intention, it seems, was to proceed to map Angus: the nobility of the shire had sent for him 'to descryve' it (*Spald. Misc* 1:55). That here 'describe' means 'map' is made clear by a letter of Scot to Robert Gordon on 2 February 1648. Scot related that the earl of Southesk intended to send for James Gordon in the spring to map Angus, adding tartly that James 'aught in reason so to doe seeing the lost M Timothies [Pont's] mapp and I hope ye will be a councellor of him to come that the work may be the soner perfected and brought to a wished end and not be left defective in the want of so good a shyre' (*op. cit*: 53).[10] Thus Gordon's attempt to map Angus had evidently begun with his borrowing Pont's map of the shire from his father and then losing it! He failed to make good the results of his carelessness, and the *Atlas* therefore appeared with a description of Angus (Blaeu 1654:84; Stone 1971:2 & map 3), but no map.

The collaboration of Sir John Scot and the Gordons in revising Timothy Pont's maps and providing new ones for Blaeu's *Atlas* has usually been told as a success story. But it has been demonstrated recently that their limited contribution has often been greatly exaggerated. Of the forty-six regional maps in the Scottish section of the *Atlas* thirty-one were engraved directly from Pont's manuscripts; eleven represent Robert Gordon's editing of Pont's manuscripts, either with no additons at all or relatively minor ones. Thus Dr Stone concluded, only four out of the forty-six regional maps can be attributed to the Gordons. *Fifae Vicecomitatus* is the work of James Gordon; *Aberdonia & Banfia* is by Robert Gordon; and *Fifae Occidentalis* and *Fifae Orientalis* are 'possibly' also Robert's work (Stone 1981:18-19). In fact the latter two maps are also based on Pont, so all the efforts of Scot and the Gordons produced only two totally new regional maps for the *Atlas* out of forty-six—though a number of the other maps were edited by Robert Gordon from Pont's manuscripts. The *Atlas* would be poorer without the Gordons' contribution, but the great majority of the maps would probably have been published from Pont's manuscripts even without their intervention. Robert Gordon's years of work produced surprisingly little so far as the

published maps are concerned. Some of the reasons for this have been noted by Dr Stone: his advanced age; the fact that cartographic work may well have been something new to Robert Gordon, his previous work having been mainly concerned with written descriptions or chorography; and the fact that latterly he was struggling to continue his work in a period of disorder and civil war (Stone 1981:14-15, 17, 21-2). To this may be added lack of clear priorities. Scot and James Gordon worked to provide Blaeu with maps the latter had not asked for, and it is clear that Robert Gordon similarly failed to give first priority to Blaeu's needs. Many of his manuscript maps (like that of Nithsdale) show him at work on areas for which Blaeu already had coverage. It may well be that he, like his son, wished to provide Blaeu with better maps, but it may also be that, having become fascinated by Pont's maps, he had wider ambitions. He had become involved in cartographic work to aid Blaeu and ensure that Scotland was well represented in the *Atlas*, but the range of his manuscripts may well indicate that he had moved on to a wider dedication to the better mapping of Scotland: helping Blaeu was an important part of this, but not the whole of it. It is true that by the time volume five of the *Atlas* was published in 1654 Robert Gordon was too old to complete many of the maps he had begun, but he clearly did not think the work on which he had been engaged was over now that the *Atlas* had appeared; had he done so his draft maps would have now become worthless. But his will, written in 1657, indicated that he regarded them as of considerable importance. He left to his son James 'all mappes, papers and descriptions, the most part writen and drawn with my hand, which condusce to the description of Scotland, and hee to bee countable therefore to the publique, but because they are all imperfect, that they be weil corrected or [before] any use [be] made of them' (Gordon 1841:I. xlix). He had been engaged in a project of national importance supported by both Church and State, and therefore the manuscript maps were in a sense public property entrusted to him. In the event James Gordon evidently did no further work on his father's maps, though he made them available to Sir Robert Sibbald when the latter was planning a Scottish atlas (Moir 1973:51).

Apart from sponsoring a single map, *Fifae Vicecomitatus*, by giving James Gordon permission to leave his parish to map the shire in 1642, the Kirk's support for the *Atlas* project had little or no practical effect on the maps which were ultimately published. Only a few of the written descriptions accompanying the maps resulted from the General Assembly's efforts to get all ministers to provide parish descriptions. Yet, disappointing as this seems, it can at least be said that the Kirk's efforts had some visible effect on the *Atlas*, which is more than can be said for the efforts of the King and the Covenanting State. Moreover though *Fifae Vicecomitatus* is only one map, it is the most accurate in the Scottish section of the *Atlas*. James Gordon was a better cartographer than his father, and it is unfortunate that his responsibilities as a parish minister prevented him from making a greater contribution to the *Atlas* than he did. But the Kirk can hardly be blamed for this, and indeed without its sanction

(and presumably the co-operation of his colleagues in the Presbytery of Strathbogie who conducted services during his absence) he would not have had a chance to demonstrate his cartographic skills at all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NOTES

1 Two items not previously noted relating to State support for Gordon are: (i) An order of 18 May 1649 by Colonel Robert Montgomery, ordering his officers and men to respect Parliament's order of 9 February exempting Gordon from taxes *etc.* (N.L.S. MS. 109: folio 2). (ii). A letter of 22 July 1651 from Gordon to the Marquis of Argyll thanking him for past favours—'many and great kyndnesses'—and asking him 'to favour a business I have to petition the estates for'. Gordon refers to himself as Argyll's 'humble and bownd servitor' (*op. cit.* folio 4). It is not certain that the favours referred to relate to Gordon's mapping activities, but this seems likely, raising the possibility that the great Argyll lay behind the Covenanting State's support for Gordon's work.

2 See also captions on three of the manuscript maps. Cash 1907:586 no. 25; 590, no. 52; 591, no. 62.

3 The text printed in *Fife Synod*: 131 is wrongly dated 5 April.

4 The text printed in *Fife Synod*: 133 is wrongly dated 4 October.

5 Blaeu in 'Lectori salutem' says only four ministers did their duty by providing descriptions—M'Clellan, Bonar, William Spang, and 'Lauder'. Lauder has not been identified, and his and Spang's contributions to the Atlas are unknown. Blaeu has overlooked Forbes' contribution, and ignores the fact that some ministers in Kirkcaldy Presbytery had 'done their duty' by providing parish descriptions, being evidently under the impression that ministers had been ordered to provide shire or provincial accounts.

6 Dr Stone informs me that this manuscript map of Kinross was not used in preparing the printed *Fifae Vicecomitatus*. James Gordon visited Sir John Scot at Pitteadie in Fife in October 1642, (Gordon 1841:1. preface pp. 32 and n, 34n).

7 Stone (1970:17) correctly lists *Fifae Occidentalis* and *Fifae Orientalis* as being among the five regional maps not attributed in the *Atlas* either to Pont or the Gordons; but on p. 20 the two maps are erroneously attributed to the Gordons, and Stone (1981:18) suggests that the two maps include place-names added by Robert Gordon to Pont's work. However, new work by Dr Stone proves that both maps were engraved from Pont's work without the intervention of the Gordons.

8 Robert Gordon has marked his own attempt to draft a map of Fife based on Pont 'Fyffe imperfect' (Cash 1907:590 no. 54A).

9 Analysis of distortion in the forty-six regional maps of Scotland in the *Atlas* reveals that *Fifae Vicecomitatus* is the most accurate of them all; *Fifae Orientalis* ranks twenty-second, *Fifae Occidentalis* thirty-third. The maps are all wrongly attributed to Robert Gordon, instead of James Gordon for the first, Pont for the other two (Stone & Gemmell 1977:7-11).

10 The grammar of Scot's letter is ambiguous (as pointed out in Cash 1901:410): it is not entirely clear whether Southesk or James Gordon lost the map. But from the context, and the fact that Gordon was the more likely to have had custody of Pont's map, it seems highly probable that he was the culprit.

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The Scottish Hairst and Seasonal Labour 1600-1870

WILLIAM HOWATSON

No period in the farming year has caught the imagination as much as the harvest. Scottish literature abounds with references to it in prose, poetry and ballad, and the entries in the *Scottish National Dictionary* under 'hairst' provide clear testimony to its place in printed Scottish sources (*SND* vol. V). In historical terms, however, this single economic and social activity has been examined less in Scotland than in other European countries. Recently the balance has been redressed by scholars such as Alexander Fenton, who discusses the harvest as an indicator of indigeneous material change (Fenton 1976).

Harvest was the time of year when the farm unit experienced a peak labour-demand with which the regular farm staffs could not cope, in both medieval and modern times. In the seventeenth, and into the eighteenth century, the agricultural manpower needs of the estate were met to a large extent by the tenants in the form of ariage services, by which labour was provided on the mains farm as a condition of holding land of a landlord. At harvest-time ariage services were specified when the tenant had to provide harvesters (referred to as 'hooks', in many tacks) for a certain number of days to work at the landlord's harvest (Whyte 1979: 35). But outside that system, to ensure the successful gathering of the harvest the farmer had often to recruit additional workers on a casual and seasonal basis, many of whom were people who migrated from their homes in search of harvest work.

Seasonal work migration is characterized by short term movements of workers between one area and another. It can be broadly defined as a movement from a pastoral upland area, where there is a seasonal under-employment, to an arable lowland area, which is experiencing a temporary shortage of farm labour at that time. Such seasonal movement of workers is an old established pattern in European economic development (Bloch 1966: 114; Collins 1976: 54; Devine 1979: 355).

It is the purpose of this paper to present and chronicle evidence relating to the movement of Scottish harvesters from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The bulk of evidence (which is frustratingly patchy) concerns the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Seventeenth-century evidence is less, but it shows a distinct pattern of seasonal harvest movement within south-east Scotland; also the first signs of a seasonal movement from the Highlands to the south are to be found in the closing decades of that century. The migrant harvesters were mainly from the region which lies north and west of the Caledonian Canal and they mostly made for the

Plate 1. 'Reapers Resting', Glenfeshie (1827). Steel engraving after line and wash drawing by Sir Edwin Landseer, in *Landseer's Studies* by W. Cosmo Monkhouse [*c.* 1880?] page 105, figure 93. (Note the pair of sickles, probably toothed 'huicks', and the coggie with a (?) spoon-handle protruding.)

traditional grain-growing regions of the Lothians, south-east and east-central Scotland. These, however, were not exclusive parameters: Aberdeenshire and Caithness proved to be both source and reception areas at different times during the nineteenth century.

Even before the 1600s, indeed, there is some indication of a seasonal movement of harvest labour in the Scottish lowlands. As early as 1528, seasonal harvesters were hired to work on the mains of Mauchline in the barony of Kylesmure in Ayrshire. (Probably only some of them were seasonal workers from Ayrshire and Lanarkshire, others being members of tenants' families who could be spared from their own harvest.) Initially, 57 were employed on 5 September of that year but the number dwindled to 12 by 1 October (Sanderson 1975: 90, 92).

The Movement of Harvest Labour in the Seventeenth Century

There is evidence of movement of harvesters in the Border town of Peebles in 1612: the magistrates there were obviously facing a seasonal shortage of labour for the harvest, for in that year they issued a warning that all those who had left the town during the 1611 harvest to shear corn would be prosecuted, and if they repeated the offence during the current harvest they would be banished from the town. They also stipulated the fees to be paid in their area: two shillings and sixpence to each male shearer and two shillings to each female (*Peebles* 1872: 360). The magistrates faced a two-fold problem: their town was being deprived of labour at harvest time and employers were being forced to pay higher wages to attract labour.

The Peebles legislation represented a microcosm of a wider national problem which centred on labour seeking to increase its earning power by hiring at daily or weekly wages as against longer-term engagements. The employing classes in the seventeenth century responded to this problem in two ways: they sought both to restrict the movement of labour and to regulate wages. In an Act of 1621, farm servants, who were traditionally hired on a six monthly basis either at Whitsunday or Martinmas, were not permitted to leave their current employer at the end of their engagement unless they had an alternative six monthly engagement to take up (*APS* IV (1621): 627). The Act sought to prevent servants hiring themselves out for daily or weekly wages at 'casting or winning peats, fewell divots and building of fold dykes and shearing in harvest' (*ibid.*). It clearly pinpointed those times in the farming year when labour demand was at its highest. Harvest, which required a massive input of labour, brought the problem most sharply into focus; and the authorities struggled throughout the seventeenth century to implement the Act's provisions. The payment of unregulated day wages to labourers in the free market was regarded as an expensive extravagance: it was at the root of the state's contention forcibly expressed in the preamble to the Act which described those farm servants who cut themselves loose from a long term engagement and became day labourers as responsible for '. . . the

graat straits and necessities whereunto the poor labourers of the ground (*i.e.* tenant farmers) are driven and constrainit . . .' (*ibid.*).

The frequent repetition of the Act in the form of legislation emphasises both the recurring nature of the problem and the ineffectiveness of the Act: the harvest was singled out as the time of year when the strain of labour supply became most acute. Local legislation was repeated in Peebles, for example, in 1653, 1654, 1673, 1676, and again in 1683. In 1653, the council ordained that the magistrates were to give up 'rolles conteaning the names of severall personnes who has contravened the acts of council anent the scheareris' and those guilty were to be fined forty shillings Scots (*Peebles* 1910: 18, 92, 95, 98). By 1676 imprisonment was added to the list of punishments; also, when two shearers left the same house, the earnings of one were to be confiscated. In 1680, labourers were debarred from hiring themselves outwith the burgh until the town's own crop was harvested. In other words, the town was experiencing a temporary seasonal shortage of labour for the harvest and its own crop was jeopardised by this shortfall in labour supply.

The burgh legislation reflected that of the country. An Act of 1664 specifically directed at 'all tradesmen, cottars and other men and women . . .' prohibited any movement during harvest unless they possessed a warrant issued by the Justices of the Peace. Constables were required to 'tak notice and inquire in their severall parishes after all such personnes transgressors herein and return their names to the bench next session' (S.R.O. JP 3/2/3: 1664). The problem existed on a national scale. Legislation designed to control the movement of harvest labour was implemented, for example, in Elgin in the North-East (one of the most fertile grain producing areas of the country), in Hawick in the Borders, and in Kirkcudbright in the south-west (Cramond 1903: 270; Wilson 1850: 63; *Kirkcudbright*: 237).

While we can establish that there was a local movement of harvesters in parts of Scotland, their destination is not always clear. Evidence from Roxburgh in 1656 gives some indication of this movement. Manuscript Justice of the Peace Records show that there was a pronounced movement of harvest shearers, both men and women, out of their immediate localities, in search of higher wages. The areas which they made for were other parts of the shire, or the Lothians or the north of England (N.L.S. MS 5439: 1656). Long lists of fines make it clear that some parts of the county were facing a major exodus of harvest labour. Harvesters went in search of work, in direct contravention of the local 'Act Anent Shearing' of 1656, which forbade them to move from home; the Act also directed the constables to bring back to their place of origin those who had moved.

Early Harvest Hiring Markets

In support of this localised evidence it is clear that a hiring-market structure for the recruitment of harvest labour was emerging in the seventeenth century. Even earlier,

however, it was not uncommon for labourers to assemble at the onset of harvest, looking for work. In 1593, Perth Kirk Session records that harvesters resorted to the town on the Sabbath to be hired; and in 1594, a certain Thomas Oliphant confessed before the Kirk Session that he had hired shearers on the Sabbath. In East Lothian the 'abuse of feying shearirs on the Lordis day' was recorded in 1619 (Lawson 1847: 219; Hately Waddell 1893: 90). By 1611 Edinburgh was recognised as a focal point for the recruitment of harvesters; and such was the stir caused by throngs of harvesters that it was decreed by the council in that year that it was 'to be cawset to had thair conventioun outwith the West Port in tyme cuming' (Wood 1931: 77).

The authorities in the seventeenth century, working in the midst of religious and social upheaval, and prompted by an Act of Assembly of 1640, were becoming increasingly concerned at any interruption of normal life on the Sabbath. The gathering of harvesters in large numbers on a Sunday to be hired for work in the following week inevitably came to the attention of the government. Acts designed to put a stop to this and other abuses of the Sabbath punctuate the Statute Book of the Scots Parliament in 1639, 1640, 1641 and 1661. The Act of 1640 noted that the profanation of the Sabbath was greatly occasioned in harvest time 'by the great confluence of people to publike places as portes or streets of Tounes and Paroch churches of landwart everie sonday from morneing to preaching tyme for hyreing of sheireris the weeke falloueing' (APS V (1640): 297). An Act in the following year stipulated fines which were to be exacted for contravention of the 1640 Act. Harvesters and salmon fishers were lumped together as notorious Sabbath breakers. The Act declared that a fine of £10 was to be levied on each shearer 'the one halfe to be payed by the hyreres and conducers the other halfe by the persones hyred' (APS V (1641): 390). Local presbyteries also did their bit. The Minutes of Cupar Presbytery record in 1649: 'This day we received a letter from the Presbytery at Perth desyring our concurrence for taking away the scandalous and sinfull fying of shearers upon the Lords day at Abernethy' (Presbytery Minutes: 145).

Clearly some authorities, recognising the need to channel harvest labour and regulate its flow under some degree of supervision, expanded the scope of the existing hiring markets by granting permission for the creation of new markets. In 1643, the town council of Elgin, in the grain-producing area of Moray, allowed landowners outwith the burgh to establish a market specifically to recruit harvesters. The landowners were to enjoy 'the lyik libertie of feing huikis in harvest as the inhabitants of the burghe hes' (Cramond 1903: 277). Two of the most significant steps taken to establish and define a clearly recognisable harvest-hiring structure came within twelve years of each other, both in Lanarkshire. In 1695, Parliament formally established a shearers' market at Airdrie to be held every Monday during harvest (APS IX (1695): 499) and in 1707 the Lanarkshire Justices of the Peace also responded to the need to designate specific areas where hiring could take place. The wording of the local legislation is significant: the Justices wanted to streamline the entire system of hiring and

they may well have been attempting to clear up a haphazard routine of recruitment
that had grown up through habit and usage. They wanted the speedy and effective
harvesting of the crops to become the norm and to do so they would decide where and
when the labour force could be recruited. Coming shortly after the state's own legis-
lation, it may suggest that the whole system of recruiting harvesters had become
muddled and patchy throughout the country. The Lanark Justices decreed:

> . . . and that the . . . method of cutting doun and saving of corne in the harvest seasone
> may be made the more effectuall, the saids Justices of the Peace appoints the burghs and
> mercat touns to be places for hyreing of shearers, . . . viz. Glasgow, Hamilton and
> Strathaven, in the nether waird; and Lanark, Douglas and Biggar in the over waird of the
> same shire.   (Malcolm 1931: 18)

But the response of the authorities may also have been prompted by their awareness
of an increasing number of labourers seeking work, further from home. It has been
suggested that there was some mobility of labour in the seventeenth century, albeit
fairly local; towards the end of the century, however, for the first time Highlanders
were coming south in search of harvest work. This was very much a portent of things
to come. The presence of Highland harvesters in the southern labour market may
have brought confusion upon a system of recruitment which had lacked clarity before
the 1695 legislation and that of 1707.

Certainly, the Highlander was not a popular figure in some of the southern towns:
he was frequently banished (see *Lanark Records* 1893: 144). But farmers in Renfrew-
shire were in the habit of hiring Highland labour (Semple 1864: 93) and when Sir
Robert Sibbald first mentioned the movement of Highlanders south to find work in
the lowland hairst in 1698 (N.L.S. MS 33.5.16: 3), he may have been acknowledging a
movement that had already been going on for several years. Although the Highland
workers Sibbald referred to were from the periphery of the Highland zone—people
who were being forced south as a result of near-starvation conditions at home—their
significance cannot be over-rated. Highlanders had come to the south as part of
military operations earlier in the century (Donaldson 1971: 370); consequently many
of them would be aware of the routes to and from their homes and would un-
doubtedly have seen the possibilities of work in the southern harvest fields. What was
a trickle at the end of the century had changed into an identifiable flow in the
eighteenth century. (This will be discussed in the second part of the paper, page 20 *et
seq.*).

Social Origins of the Seventeenth-Century Harvest Work-Force

The task of identifying the seasonal migrants is not easy, because of the vague and
impressionistic nature of the sources. Much of the seventeenth-century evidence for
the social make up of the harvesters comes from law-suits over the non-payment of the

harvest fee (the agreed contractual amount paid for the employment of harvest labour).

Appearing before the regality court of Melrose in 1688, was David Kyle, a blacksmith at Lessuddun, sued by Lancelot Brown, a glover, on behalf of Brown's servant, Andrew Turner, who had served Kyle (Romanes 1915: 200). In 1659, Euphame Cairncross sued Patrick Blaikie, both of Calfhill, on behalf of her servant for fifty five shillings as her balance 'of a greater sum and £4 for her servant's fee for shearing to him in harvest last, and a firlot of meal in bounty.' In 1656, William Merser, a weaver, sued William Cairncross of Allenshaws for a harvest fee of £5.10s. Scots (Romanes 1914: 202). A Newstead widow, Janet Merser, sued Robert Forsan, the miller there, for £5 Scots of fee, as an engaged servant, in addition to a firlot of meal and a pair of shoes (worth 12 shillings) of bounty for her harvest fee (Romanes 1914: 163).

It is clear that servants of rural artisans, widows, and artisans themselves, provided a supply of harvest labour to small tenants and fellow artisans. Equally, a family unit was often engaged. Local legislation in Peebles attempted to control this practice in 1676 when it was declared that if two harvesters dwelling in the same house sought harvest work outside the burgh, the earnings of one were to be confiscated by the authorities, thus thwarting any economic advantage arising from a dual hiring (*Peebles* 1910: 92). A husband and wife might both participate in the harvest: in 1674, the Stitchill baron court ordered Robert Lillie, a smith, to pay 39s.10d. to Thomas Weir and his wife, Margaret Richardson, 'for eight days shearing and one halfe wrought by them to Agnes Lillie sister germane to the said Robert . . .' (Gunn 1905: 71-2). (Lillie was evidently a bad payer: he owed an additional £7 Scots to William Service for work in the 1673 harvest [*op. cit.*: 74]). Examples of other family units of two being jointly employed are common (*op. cit.*: 108, 133.) A clear example of family involvement in the harvest comes from a case in Melrose in 1658 where a fee of £28 Scots was at stake. A unit of three, James Tullie, his brother George and their sister Margaret, all from Earlston, were jointly owed that sum by a widow, Margaret Darling, as 'thair fies for scheiring to hir in harvest last' (Romanes 1914: 250). (Some servants clearly hoped to increase their harvest earnings by contributing a horse to harvest operations: Lady Stitchill's servant, James Thomson, was to receive 38 shillings Scots from William Hoggard 'for shearing and draught of his Naig in harvest last 1673' [Gunn 1905: 76].) One member of a family might employ another at harvest time: in the Renfrewshire parish of Eastwood in 1695 Andrew Shiells received £8 Scots in harvest fee from a tenant, John Shiells—which might suggest payment to a son, or brother, or cousin. (Semple 1864: 44). In another instance, a family relationship is explicit: in the Parish of Renfrew in the same year, John Whyte, younger, a cotenant in the holding of Meikle Inch paid £6 Scots to each of his two sisters who supplied all the harvest labour required on his holding (*op. cit.*: 89).

Cottars hired themselves out to nearby tenants: Margaret Neilson, a cottar in the

lands of Craigton in Erskine in Renfrewshire, was paid £6 harvest fee by William Paterson, a heritor in Craigton (*op. cit.*: 104); and William Jackson, cottar in the lands of Cathcart and Newlands, received £8 Scots harvest fee from a tenant, James Maxwell in the same parish (*op. cit.*: 39).

On the whole in the seventeenth century labour appears to have been drawn from the local cot town or settlement, so the distance travelled would not be considerable. Many harvesters travelled only two or three miles (although Robert Davidson of Blainslie in Roxburghshire was hired by John Gray in Selkirk, entailing a journey of some 15 miles [Romanes 1914: 296]).

Highland Labour and the Lowland Hairst

During the next century the migratory movement extended, and came more and more to have a Highland character. Contemporary sources make it clear that from tentative beginnings in the seventeenth century the travelling of Highland harvesters to the grain fields of the south in search of temporary work became more pronounced as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries progressed. This increase runs parallel with the changing economic circumstances of the Highlands: a look at that first will perhaps show why seasonal migration was becoming such a necessity.

After the collapse of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, any notion of the clan as a military organisation, relying on a potential force of fighting men, disappeared. Economically, despite the rising level of rents, peasant incomes were kept up for some time by buoyant cattle prices, the main source of income. Prices almost trebled in the second half of the eighteenth century; and the cost of meal, which was the main commodity the Highland peasant needed to buy, remained more or less steady. In the later decades the steep rise in kelp prices encouraged the exploitation of seaweed and provided seasonal employment along parts of the western seaboard. Equally, fishing was relatively sound economically: those who were involved in it could gain some financial return (Gray 1957: 36-7).

Such was the situation until the first decade of the nineteenth century: thereafter circumstances changed. Kelp and cattle prices dropped and the new agrarian order with its emphasis on sheep and clearance pushed people from the land. In addition, Highland population showed a dramatic increase after 1750 (Youngson 1973: 162), thus putting more and more pressure on a finite area of land. Landlords held rents at their high pre-1815 level and as a result the Highland peasant was faced with debt. Land shortage and a scarcity of capital forced Highlanders to look for an external source of income. Seasonal migration was their response to economic crisis at home. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the Highland croft was, generally, a base for diverse economic activities: it was not a self-sufficient operational unit. Even in times of economic expansion crofters pursued dual occupations, some of which might involve periods of absence from home. In times of crisis, when the small parcel of land

could not offer sufficient income, the need for movement from home to earn a cash wage became greater. The extent of seasonal migration from the Scottish Highlands in the century after 1750 can be judged, at least partly, in terms of the conditions prevailing in the home economy.

Naturally those at the bottom of the economic pyramid suffered worst. From the 1750s at least, destitute Highlanders were coming south for harvest work. They flocked to the West Port in Edinburgh, which had by this time become the traditional hiring point; from there they fanned out into the rich corn belts of the Lothians and the Borders. But by the 1770s pressure was growing on the city hiring point and harvest hiring markets were springing up elsewhere to supplement the existing structure. Large numbers of migrants were looking for work in the south-east: in 1794, farmers in Berwickshire were faced with such a flood of work-seeking Highlanders (*SA* XIII: 224) that the authorities thought it important to signpost clearly where harvest labour could be hired (Kames 1776: 181).

The Highland migrants seeking harvest work faced a constant difficulty in that they had always to take second place if a regular supply of labour could be secured from the farmer's immediate locality. The Highlanders' prime advantage to the host economy was that they could be removed when they were not needed (Collins 1976: 54; Devine 1979: 357). Bad weather could bring days of non-employment, but in years when the crops ripened simultaneously and there was a pressing need for as many hands as possible, migrant and locally recruited labour were both much in demand. Whatever the proportion of locally recruited harvesters to those who originated in the Highlands and who travelled some distance, contemporary sources make it clear that Highlanders furnished an impressive proportion of the labour force. Home's grudging remark in 1797 that the Berwickshire crops were harvested with 'some trifling assistance from wandering Highlanders' neither accords with other evidence nor takes into account the rapidly spreading harvest hiring structure which had grown up to channel labour (Home 1797: 99). In 1794 it was reported that the farmers in Cockburnspath in Berwickshire employed 'great numbers of Highlanders . . . who come in to the country for the purpose of harvest and no wages are spared when the season requires a stress of hands' (*SA* XIII: 224); and by the turn of the century the fairs at Doune, Gartmore and Drymen had become harvest hiring markets for multitudes of young men and women from the north (Whyte and Macfarlane 1811: 248-9).

The Character and Make-Up of the Highland Labour-Force in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Female participation in the annual harvest migration was a distinguishing feature of Highland seasonal migration at least from the 1790s: it has been argued that the majority of migrant harvesters were young women and girls, and that men worked at

fishing and kelping and went to the harvest when these other occupations failed
(Collins 1976: 47; Macdonald 1937: 128). Evidence at the turn of the century shows
that time was usually for the sole purpose of harvest work. In the 1780s it was the
custom for young women in Mull to go south to the Lowlands to shear corn.
Describing this regular migration, Knox said they relied solely on work in the south
custom for young women in Mull to go south to the lowlands to shear corn.
Describing this regular migration, Knox said they relied solely on work in the south
for their income, and for the rest of the year when they were not participating in
harvest work they were 'perfectly idle' (Knox 1787: 60). By the 1790s this migration
was the established pattern in the west (SA IV: 565). From Creich in Sutherland
unmarried girls went south 'especially before harvest', while many young men had
gone south several months previously in the spring (SA VIII: 374). In Kilninian in
Argyllshire young men engaged to go herring fishing as part of a buss crew, while the
women were employed in cutting the kelp-ware in summer before going to the low
country at harvest time to shear (SA XIV: 153). From the Hebridean parish of Small
Isles a regular movement south of women harvesters was established before the end of
the century (SA XVII: 293-4).

Children were also part of the work force—a fact that is not surprising, for if both
parents were seeking work the children would naturally go with them. (Irish groups
included them; and they were employed as part of the migrant work force in France.)
They would not possess the physical capacity for the heavier and more skilful tasks
such as reaping the corn or binding it when cut, but they may have been employed in
gleaning after the crops were gathered in.[1]

Relief in Hard Times

Judging by newspaper reports, many migrant Highlanders were destitute at times.
Their condition, and number, reflected the state of their home economy: in lean years
more and more were forced to leave their homes in search of work (Cregeen 1964:
xxi). In 1756 the presence of destitute Highland shearers in the Scottish capital
prompted the Reverend George Whitefield to preach a sermon in the Orphan
Hospital Park for the benefit of harvesters. He gained £60 for them (*Caledonian
Mercury* 30 Sept. 1756). By the 1780s newspapers carried stories of 'many hundreds of
poor Highland shearers with their children, in a starving condition on account of the
inconstancy of weather, which prevents them from getting work' (*op. cit.* 30 Sept.
1782): the harvesters had come early to the harvest but bad weather held up opera-
tions that year. Again, as in 1756, efforts were made to relieve the conditions of the
starving harvesters, and a voluntary contribution was recommended for their relief
(*ibid.*).

Bad weather and the late harvest of 1799 caused similar distress, and, as the result
of a collection, £10 was raised for their benefit, giving (in the words of the *Caledonian*

Mercury for 2 September 1799) 'one shilling to each man and woman and 6d to each child'. This was not considered enough, and the pitiful sight of hundreds of starving Highlanders caused some soul-searching on the part of Edinburgh's citizens, one of whom penned a letter to the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*.

> It may be an easy matter to perceive what I mean to aim at when these scenes of distress are exhibited in our streets daily by the Highland shearers who, by the inclemency of the weather, are obliged to straggle about the town, with scarce a farthing to support their lives, while they see others wallowing in luxury. (*Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 25 Sep. 1782)

Allowing for the exaggerated effect of bad harvests which not only forced greater numbers south but made their presence all the more noticeable, a regular movement of Highland harvesters must have been common at this time.

Recruitment

The general impression gained is that Highlanders travelled south to recognised hiring places where they were recruited, but there is also evidence that the estate organisation was used to marshal a harvest labour force and despatch it south, in a manner which, at least in one instance, was nothing short of a deliberate direction of labour. In 1808 a letter was sent to the Marchioness of Sutherland, which had originally come from a Mr Anderson who farmed near Thornhill in Dumfriesshire. In it he offered employment to 100 Highland harvesters for six weeks at the forthcoming harvest. The Marchioness responded to this request, as she described in a letter to the Marquis dated 4 August 1808:

> Accordingly we read a proclamation at the Church Doors, about 300 volunteered, all eager to go. This morning we dispatched 108 of those least wanted at home, with letters to Mr Anderson, to be there by the 22nd of the month, selected in proportion from the different Parishes. (Adam 1972: II. 85)

There is also evidence that Highlanders could be hired directly in their native glens. The harvest of 1826, which was a month earlier than usual, prompted word to be sent to harvesters in the upland parts of Perthshire telling them that they were required at this earlier time to work at the harvest in the Carse of Gowrie (Stewart 1911: 361). This arrangement suggests that a regular pool of labour was available for work, and that a period of under-employment in the upland areas was balanced by the harvest labour-needs of the farmers in the Carse.

However recruitment took place, the number of migrants at this time seems to have been large. The following was recorded in August 1824:

> During the fourteen days immediately preceding Monday last upwards of 2,500 Highland shearers passed through the Crinan Canal for the South, in the steamboats Ben Nevis, Comet and Highlander, from the islands of Mull, Skye, etc. So crowded was the Highlander on one occasion that she was compelled to land a number of passengers at Crinan, and cause them to walk down the bank at Lochgilphead. (Barron 1903: 245)

In the 1830s one contemporary observer reckoned that the young unmarried female harvesters who went annually from Tiree and Coll could be counted in hundreds (*NSA* VII: 214).

The Changing Pattern of Highland Harvest Migration

Clearly the number of people involved in migratory work in the first half of the nineteenth century was considerable (see Appendix B). In the crofting communities of the Highlands it was the function of the younger members of the community to go south for temporary and seasonal employment and contribute to the family income by earning cash wages. A crofter whose family was in a position to go and earn cash wages in another region had greater earning power than many of the other crofters. From the '40s to '50s the pattern of seasonal migration was one of increasing volume, paralleled by the increasing economic importance of the seasonal migrant (harvester or fisherman). In Skye, for instance, in the 1840s, 300 able-bodied men from the parish of Strath went south for work annually; the same numbers went from the parish of Sleat, and about 60 from Strowan (*PP* 1851: App. A. 59-60, 58). In the years immediately before 1841, we hear that more harvesters than ever went to the Lowlands from Skye (*PP* 1841: QQ. 1937-38).

The failure of the Highland potato crop (in 1845) proved to be the biggest single cause of increased migration—linked with low cattle prices and the failure of the west coast fisheries. The potato blight caused many more of the cottar class in particular to look for seasonal rural work in other parts of the country: in an agricultural system which offered little employment, cottars, many of whom were landless, represented that portion of society which had the greatest need for extra seasonal earnings. In Kishorn, for example, we hear that 'nearly all the young men of this class and such heads of families as are young and active go to the east coast or elsewhere in quest of work' (*PP* 1851: App. A. 75, 110).

As well as the younger members of their families, many of the smaller tenants and crofters themselves whose income was insufficient and who suffered periods of unemployment on their crofts, were accustomed to going south for harvest work. But by the late 1840s economic circumstances were for the first time forcing some of the larger tenants south too, to earn a seasonal income: these were men who had never been obliged to migrate before, having had sufficient income to keep them afloat (*PP* 1851: App.A. 60; Devine 1979: 351).

The women who engaged in seasonal work were usually young, physical fitness being a key requisite for the long journey. Older women tended to seek employment in harvest fields of their immediate locality and performed less strenuous work (*NSA* XIII: 370), but at this time of economic stringency they were also found travelling some considerable distances to the hairst: for example, we hear of women, described as 'old widows', journeying from the parish of Carnoch in Ross-shire, as far as

Aberdeenshire and Morayshire to 'earn a few shillings at harvest time' (*PP* 1844: 26). Whatever their age-group, they lessened the burden of travel on foot by travelling very lightly, with only the minimum of necessities. One Angus minister noted: 'I was wont to see many of them on the road, walking barefoot and carrying their shoes and stockings in their hands, and a small burden of things on their backs' (Cruikshank 1899: 153).

Throughout the 1840s, it is evident that more Highlanders than ever were relying on income from seasonal work (Devine 1979: 351), harvest earnings still providing a sizeable proportion of it. But by mid-century a change was beginning to be seen. Opportunities for work nearer home had grown and the need to travel south to the harvest fields, for many Highlanders, lessened. In addition, Highlanders were facing a certain amount of competition from a male-dominated Irish seasonal work force which with a larger hand-cutting-tool was able to make inroads into Highland preserves on the harvest fields: the Irish presence in particular affected the role of the Highland female as a shearer of corn in the fields of the south. Also the population pattern itself was changing: after the great increase during the previous hundred years, the number in the Highlands was now declining.

New Kinds of Seasonal Employment and Other Factors of Change

Alternative employment opportunities for both men and women were growing at a time when seasonal earnings were assuming a new and central importance in the Highland economy. The expanding east coast fisheries created a demand for labour which proved to be the greatest counter-attraction to harvest work. By the 1850s the state of the east coast fisheries contrasted sharply with the depressed state of the west: Wick and Helmsdale, as fishing centres, were undergoing rapid expansion and the former drew vast numbers of seasonal workers to it (estimated at 10,000 a year in the 1830s) during the six or seven week fishing season from July to the end of August (*NSA* XV: 153-4). Equally, the success of the herring fishing caused the population in Latheron in Caithness to double between 1794 and 1840. By the latter date fishing had become a major employer of Highland labour. Young men came from Assynt, from Lochbroom, and from the Isle of Lewis, to engage as hired hands for the fishing period (*NSA* XV: 101); and large numbers of women came from the Islands to the Caithness fishing stations as packers and gutters: in Wick alone, out of a total of 7882 persons employed in the herring fishing industry in 1840, 2175 were women, employed as gutters or in related tasks (*NSA* XV: 92, 103, 153). By the 1850s the income obtained at the east coast fisheries was clearly a major prop to the economy of the west coast Highlander, and for many small tenants and cottars it represented their sole monetary income.

There were further counter attractions for the seasonal worker. In the 1820s road-making was under way in Skye (Lumsden 1828: 84), and in the 1830s considerable

employment was obtained on government roads there (*PP* 1841: Q. 2390). The able-bodied unemployed men of Urquhart parish in Inverness-shire who did not take the more traditional route south in the early 1840s found work on Highland roads (*PP* 1844: 413); and during the winter of 1849/50, except in bad weather, about 100 men were employed in road-making in Harris (*PP* 1851: App.A. 107). Land improvement both at home and in the south also created work opportunities. In Kilmuir, Skye, Lord MacDonald had given some old crofters a piece of waste ground to cultivate, free of rent; and agricultural improvement in the vicinity of Inverness offered work (*PP* 1841: QQ. 86, 427). In addition, the Scottish railway boom of the 1840s and 1850s provided work for Highlanders as well as for Irish navvies. More than half the 2124 men employed in the railway construction in the Lothians in the 1840s were from the Highlands: on the Hawick branch of the North British Railway respective numbers of employees were 1310 Scots (mainly Highlanders) and 731 Irish (Devine 1979: 353).

Another major factor to be borne in mind during this period of lessening Highland migration to the harvests undoubtedly was the changing demographic pattern in the Highland counties. In 53 of the 128 parishes in the Highland region, the population had already begun to decline by 1831, even though the population of the region as a whole continued to grow until 1841. With few exceptions, decline set in for the western islands no later than 1851 (Flinn 1977: 307). This decline in population at least in some areas contrasted sharply with the massive growth in the period after 1750 and must have led to an easing of pressure on the land.

Irish competition in the southern harvest labour market to a certain extent reduced work opportunities for Highland harvesters, but the argument that the growing annual influx of Irish harvesters brought about the end of Highland seasonal migration needs qualification. The rate of Irish migration was impressive: at the height of the season in the 1820s between 6000 and 8000 Irishmen landed on the Clyde coast each week during harvest, and by the 1840s numbers had risen considerably: on one occasion, 14,000 reapers arrived at the Broomielaw in one August week (Handley 1943: 164). Nevertheless, their geographical distribution in the harvest fields was limited. They were concentrated in the west of Scotland and the south-west, and from there they fanned into Berwick and the Lothians, and then north into Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan, but there is little evidence of Irish harvesters spreading north of the Tay. The areas to the north were still the preserve of Highland migrants. The presence of Irish harvesters in the competitive labour market of the south served to reduce wage rates: in Wigtownshire, where there was a complete dependence on Irish harvesters, harvest earnings fell by 25 per cent between 1810 and 1835 (*PP* 1836: 151, 127).

Irish competition was most acutely felt in the technology of the harvest field—with the coming of the scythe hook. It was first introduced into Galloway in the 1760s and its use spread into Dumfriesshire, then eastwards to East Lothian and north into the county of Stirling. By the first decade of the nineteenth century it was widely used in

these areas (Singer 1812: 139; Somerville 1805: 71-2; Graham 1812: 15). Its use is associated with the male Irish harvester and its spread parallels the distribution of the Irish in Scottish harvest fields. The scythe hook was larger than the traditional serrated-edge sickle. Contemporaries estimated that with it a quarter to a third more work could be done in the time it took with the smaller sickle (*Farmers Magazine* 1824: 55), therefore it represented a financial saving to the farmer (Stephens 1855: II. 342). It was almost exclusively a man's tool and was widely used by the Irish harvesters. The serrated-edge sickle was largely (though not exclusively) used by the Highland female migrants. The wider use of the scythe hook in southern Scotland from the later part of the eighteenth century suggests that Irish male harvesters were taking over the cutting of the corn crops in those areas. Ancillary operations, however, such as the gathering and stooking of the cut corn required a massive input of labour which was still supplied by Highland men and women. Some ninety years after the introduction of the scythe hook in the harvest field the female workers on the great farming units of the Lothians were almost exclusively immigrant Highlanders; at that time too, female harvesters were still being employed for harvest piece work by Forfar-shire farmers (*PP.* 1870: App. Pt. II. 23).

Change in the Migration-Pattern of Highland Women

In the 1860s a feature of Highland female migration emerges which differs from the pattern of sixty years before: that is, the length of absence from home. The short-term, purely harvest, migration was changing into a longer-term migration which encompassed several different work tasks. Highland girls were coming to the southern farms for a six-month period. They still remained a key part of the harvest work force although they were no longer exclusively harvesters who returned home after the completion of harvest. Women so recruited took part in the whole round of agricultural work, including hoeing, turnip singling, work at hay harvest and of course at the corn harvest. Highland girls had always been preferred in the farmhouse (as domestic servants) to Irish girls, and they were better acquainted with dairy management than their Irish counterparts (*PP* 1841: Q. 1211). Despite the large permanent staffs resident on the Lothian farm, extra labour (see Appendix C) was still required to supplement their efforts at busy times (Gray 1973: 160). Highland female migrants were often employed to fill a vacuum caused by the absence of Lowland girls who were being increasingly attracted to domestic service. In instances where the traditional bondager system was breaking down, Highland girls were taken on to fill the gap in the farm labour force (*PP* 1870: App. Pt. II. 112, 116). An advantage of employing Highland girls on the Lothian farms was that their presence attracted still more labour, in the 1860s, in the form of male acquaintances who came south to work specifically at the harvest (*op. cit:* 110).

In the Lothians, the preference was clearly for married farm servants housed in

cottages near the farm (*PP* 1844: 799); but a bothy was kept for unmarried farm servants and it became extensively used to house female migrant workers. In evidence put before the 1868 Royal Commission relating to the farm of Luffness Mains, Aberlady, in East Lothian, such a bothy is described:

> There is a small bothy, inhabited by eight Highland girls, consisting of one small living room and two small bedrooms, with two beds in each. These girls or women range from 17–35 years of age and are, I believe all more or less related, coming from Broadford and Portree, in the island of Skye.[2]

The female bothy quickly established itself in rural folklore, as the ballad 'Lothian Hairst' shows (see also Appendix A). It was the function of the harvest gang foreman to supervise the sleeping arrangements in the bothies and to ensure that, where there was a mixed workforce, the sexes were kept strictly apart. In the opinion of the female authoress, Logan the foreman, did his job only too well:

> My mate and I could get nae chance,
> For Logan's watchful eye,
> And wi' the lads we got nae sport,
> For Logan was so sly.
>
> He cleared oor bothy every nicht,
> Befeor he went to sleep,
> And he never left behind him one,
> But strict his rules did keep.
>   (Ord 1930:17)

Housing the women workers in bothies was a practice not restricted to the Lothians and the south-east of the country: it also prevailed in Forfar, Aberdeen, and further north in Caithness where it became infamous.

Highland Harvesters in the North

Although in the more southern parts of Scotland the traditional form of harvest migration—*i.e.* a short term commitment governed exclusively by the length of the harvest—was being replaced in the 1860s by the longer term migration, in the north the traditional pattern still held good.

There are records which show that female harvesters from the west and north-west Highlands were moving seasonally to the eastern areas of Caithness, Ross and Cromarty and into Inverness-shire. These northern counties became, in the 1860s, the chief reception areas for migrant harvest workers, most of whom were women. In the 1860s, men and women migrants travelled to the east coast from Assynt in Sutherland, and girls and young women from Lochbroom and Gairloch in Wester Ross (some of them returning, in the words of the time-honoured complaint, 'demoralised') (*PP* 1870: App. Pt. II. 326, 329, 335). So great were their numbers in the 1860s that there is evidence of new bothies being erected to house the harvesters

(*op. cit*: 287, 294, 297). The system of packing harvesters into bothies was more general in the interior of Caithness than in the region near Wick at the coast, where part of the seasonal labour needs was filled by locally recruited labour. Sometimes between 20 and 30 women were crowded together in one bothy, and at Olrig the 26 women harvesters from the west coast who came to William Purves' 1350-acre farm were put up in an out-house which in winter was used as byre for cattle (*op. cit*: 311).

Conclusion

Except on the smallest agricultural holding, where the family and regular hired servants could cope with the workload, the grain harvest has traditionally required the recruitment of extra hands. Outwith the ariage system the seasonal increase in the demand for harvest labour in the seventeenth century resulted in the movement of harvest workers, both men and women, not bound by labour dues, but seeking to sell their labour on the market to the highest bidder. Records suggest that in the seventeenth century the harvester did not move far from his place of origin, nevertheless there was a great deal of local movement which is underlined by the attempts made by the authorities to control it. A successful harvest was of central importance to seventeenth-century rural society and the authorities were determined that the 'cutting doun and saving of corne . . . be made the more effectuall . . .'. A controlled labour supply, regulated wages and the establishment of recognised hiring markets were the tools they used to fulfil their aims. Traditionally the harvest labour force has comprised a wide spectrum of rural and urban society and it has drawn more workers to it than any other farm operation. It required not only the full scale deployment of regular farm servants, such as the tasker and the ploughman, but the recruitment of non-agricultural workers.

From the mid-eighteenth century Highland labour formed a major part of the work-force in the southern harvest fields. Throughout the period many of the harvesters were young men and women, underemployed at home, who were attracted to a limited sojourn away. But faced with a growing population and finite resources of land, food and income, Highland society was forced to make increasing use of seasonal temporary migration to relieve the pressure of people on the land: the temporary absence of the migrant worker not only saved the consumption of local resources, but resulted in a cash income at the end of the period. The seasonal migration to the lowland hairst was one aspect of migratory work and it had several distinct features. Initially, from the 1740s and 1750s, destitute and starving landless labourers flocked to the south for harvest work. Their numbers ebbed or rose as the home economy changed. As the economic crisis in the Highlands grew in the first fifty years of the nineteenth century and debt and poverty began to reach up the social scale, cottars, small crofters and latterly larger crofters were forced to look for work away from home, not only in the harvest fields but in canal, road and railway con-

struction (*PP* 1844: 367). By the 1840s more Highlanders than ever before were relying on seasonal work for a source of income.

The impressionistic nature of the sources makes it difficult to assess accurately the contribution made by harvest earnings to the Highland economy in the century after 1750. It is clear that a large part of that contribution was made by the female migrant harvester. In the 1790s she went south purely for the harvest and her stay was shorter than that of the male migrant. In the nineteenth century she continued to play a major part in lowland agriculture, the number of women harvesters then being considerable. Irish competition in the harvest field, which has usually been seen as the death knell for the migrant Highland harvester, was in fact limited in its effect (Devine 1979: 348). Large numbers of Highland harvesters were still coming south in the 1840s: the failure of the potato crop sent more harvesters south in search of work than ever. In the 1860s migrant Highland girls were so numerous that they were being housed in bothies; and in the northern counties, particularly Caithness, Ross and Cromarty, and Inverness, they formed the bulk of the migrant work force.

The 1860s, however, represented the last phase of long-distance harvest migration. It had contained a predominantly female element, and especially in the south of Scotland that seasonal movement was changing to a longer term migration: domestic service, dairy work, and the east coast fisheries were competing for labour and offering the migrant a clear choice. By the 1870s, the migrant harvest force was only a shadow of what it had been a decade before. By the early 1890s girls from Skye and the Outer Hebrides still travelled to parts of Inverness for the harvest, but only in small numbers (*PP* 1893-4: Pt. II. 167). In effect, harvest migration had come to an end.

APPENDIX A

Migrant North-Eastern Harvesters in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Although the evidence about the movement of north-eastern harvesters to the south is sparse, a pattern does seem to have been established by 1751. The people of Glenbuchat in Aberdeenshire, for instance, travelled south to harvest southern crops before their own harvest was ready (Henderson 1942: 123): they were making use of the time-lag between the Scottish harvesting regions which produced early and later harvests, depending on the crop grown, the locality and the climate (see, for example, *SA* V: 224, 329, 358, 381, 415). By the middle of the next century, a considerable number of harvesters were sailing down the east coast from Aberdeen to Leith. An outstanding example of mobility was Banffshire farm servant and later farm manager, John Gordon. The notice of his death tells the story:

> The death has taken place at Tiniver, Dufftown, Banffshire of Mr John Gordon, who on February 2nd, celebrated his 99th birthday. A Native of the parish of Grange, Banffshire, he entered farm service at an early age, and when a young man he would walk to Aberdeen and proceed by Boat to Leith to engage in the Lothian harvests. (*Glasgow Evening Times* 1923: March 29)

A lively source of information on the movement and character of the harvesters can be found in some of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Bothy Ballads. (It has been noted that of

all the Ballads dealing with life on the land, the harvest songs form the largest category [Buchan 1972: 265]). 'The Lothian Hairst' (mentioned above, p. 28) describes Aberdeen harvesters travelling to the Lothian fields. According to tradition, it was written about 1860 by a female harvester from Deeside who travelled to the Lothians as part of the band of harvesters. They were contracted by a Lothian farmer to cut, gather and stook the crops at an agreed price per acre. The contractor then engaged a foreman who was responsible for carrying out the various tasks (Ord 1930: 16, 264). Some of the ballads testify to the strenuous nature of harvest work on the one hand; and on the other they convey the vitality of the harvest workers and, what the author has taken to be, their convivial spirit of camaraderie. The ballad 'Johnnie Sangster' for example, gives some idea of this contrast:

> Oh some complain on hacks and thraws
> And some on brods and bruises,
> And some complain on grippet hips
> And stiffness in their troosers;
> But as soon as they lay doon the scythe
> And the pipers yoke their blawvin,
> They ane an' a forget their dools
> Wi' daffin an wi' tyawvin.
> (Greig 1963: article 3)

In 'The Harvest Song' we learn of the individuals who cut the corn with hand tools, gathering at the farm and being arranged by the farmer into a working unit:

> Frae baith toon and country to him they convene
> And a' to the fields they gaither O;
> The maister he orders them a' as he thinks fit,
> And pits whom he pleases thegither O.
> (Greig 1963: article 98)

The cutting of the crops brings much physical fatigue: one by one the harvesters air their feelings. First is the bandster, next the tailor:

> Then oot speaks the tailor, 'To my needle I'll go,
> And shape and sew claith to keep oot frost and snow;
> I'll mend up the old for to hain up the new,
> And forget a' the toil at the shearin' o't.'

The barnman follows, then the ploughman. All look forward to returning to their normal tasks.

It can be seen here that men of other trades, as well as regular farm servants, left their usual work to join the harvest force.[3] This recruitment of harvest labour from a wide spectrum of society can be corroborated from other sources (Carter 1979: 65).

APPENDIX B

Migration and the 1841 Census Survey

One of the most sensitive indicators of nineteenth century population movements comes from the various census surveys, and although only one occupational census, that of 1841, was taken in the summer when seasonal migration was at its peak, it underlines the extent of that migration. At Kilchoman in Argyllshire, for example, a decrease of 317 head had occurred since the 1831 census. This was attributed 'partly to a number of young persons, particularly

females, having left to seek work in the summer months in the low country, and in Torosay in the same county, about 50 persons left during the summer 'for seasonal work in the south'. Latheron parish in Caithness showed 500 persons temporarily absent in 1841; and, from six parishes in Ross and Cromarty, a total of 544 were absent on a temporary basis (*PP* 1843). It may reasonably be deduced that a proportion of those migrants were part of the harvest work force.

APPENDIX C

Comparison of Numbers of Workers at Different Seasons

The following list shows the number of workers employed in the 1860s on selected farms in the Lothians, an area of large grain-growing farms and one of the main reception areas for migrant harvesters. The numbers are calculated from the labour returns of 27 occupiers of farms in 21 different parishes, as given by the assistant commissioners who in 1867 compiled the *Fourth Report on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture* (*PP* 1870, vol. XIII).

	Male	Female
Spring	431	369
Summer	468	447
Autumn	612	589
Winter	421	308

The high figures for Autumn shows the extent to which the farmers depended on temporary work at harvest-time. Case studies of individual farms endorse this: for example, on a 750-acre arable farm in Corstorphine parish (Midlothian), 70 men were needed in Autumn compared with 25 in each of the other seasons; 64 women were employed at harvest-time, 34 in Spring and Summer and 10 in Winter (*PP* 1870: App. Pt. II. 180). At Fentonbarns in Dirleton parish, East Lothian, 15 harvesters were recruited by George Hope to supplement his 58 regular hands. Further north, in Errol parish in Perthshire, extra harvest labour was supplied entirely by recruited female labour—100 women were employed in the harvest quarter, compared with only 20 in Spring. On another Perthshire farm, in Methven parish, we hear that between 40 and 45 extra hands were taken on at harvest-time (*op. cit*: 189).

NOTES

1 For a graphic description of children as part of the migrant force in the nineteenth century see *The Scotsman* 23 Aug. 1845 (and in a wider context, Handley 1970: 19 and Hufton 1974: 83). The children of poor Irish cottars were often hired out as seasonal workers in Northern Ireland with their parents from the age of nine, as a prelude to migratory work in Scotland (Cullen 1968: 161).

2 *PP* 1870: App. Pt II. 110. See also evidence from Coldstream, Athelstaneford and Dirleton.

3 Although this version was collected in the North-East, another version, 'The Faughhill Shearing' may refer to the Roxburgh farm of Faughhill (Crawfurd 1975: xlii, 132).

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Education and Anglicisation:
the Policy of the SSPCK toward the Education of
the Highlander, 1709-1825

CHARLES W. J. WITHERS

The eighteenth century witnessed major changes in Scottish life and manners, in her agriculture, her culture and in her society. Nowhere were these changes more keenly felt than in the Highlands and Islands. These remote and barren uplands to the north and west, together with the western isles had been recognised as a distinct part of Scotland since the late fourteenth century, separated as they were from the remainder of the country by social and linguistic differences. The widespread use of the Gaelic language in the Highlands was, in the eyes of those in authority in the Lowlands, a major hindrance to the political unification of Scotland, and since the early 1600s, if not before, attempts had been made to crush the independence of the Highlander and wipe out his language. In the eighteenth century, the people and the language of the Highlands came under renewed attack. While the broad outlines of the changes affecting the Highland way of life are well enough known, the actual means by which the Gaelic Highlands were drawn into the outside world are less well documented. In particular, the part that education and the expansion of schooling played in the 'improvement' and anglicisation of the Highlands has received comparatively scant attention. This paper examines the role played by one institution in the transformation of Gaelic culture and in the shift from Gaelic to English within the Highlands in the eighteenth century.

It is perhaps true to say that few important subjects in Scottish history have been so little understood as eighteenth-century education. As one historian has observed, 'Wide generalisations have been made on narrow grounds and judgements have swung violently from extremes of praise to equally uncritical condemnation' (Ferguson 1978:198). In the case of the Gaelic-speaking Highlands, the history of education in the eighteenth century is largely the history of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (hereafter simply SSPCK), for it was that institution, founded in Edinburgh in 1709, that was most concerned with the education and civilisation of the inhabitants of those parts of Scotland. Parochial·

schools had been set up from 1696, but had relatively little effect outside the Lowland parishes. It should be recognised from the beginning that, whatever the school, 'education' then was not as we now know it. The SSPCK was strictly Presbyterian in its outlook and taught only the Presbyterian religion, reading, writing, church music and arithmetic: more important, English was the only language permitted, both as the medium of instruction and in the conversation of the scholars. Educational provision in the Highlands was used as a key weapon in the anglicisation and civilisation of Gaeldom.

Ferguson has considered the SSPCK an important auxiliary in the fight against illiteracy—which, in some senses, it was (Ferguson 1978:199). Others have gone so far in their praise of the Society as to state that, 'Without its devoted work throughout the centuries, the plight of the inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands would indeed have been a desperate one. Thanks to these efforts, the moral fibre of the people in these areas was stiffened and their field of opportunity immeasurably widened' (Andrew and Cairns 1957:11-12). In contrast, other scholars have seen the actions of the SSPCK as constituting a serious hindrance to the welfare of the Highlander and have argued that the SSPCK did 'incalculable harm to the intelligent education of the Highlanders' (Campbell 1950:60). Still others have referred only to the SSPCK's 'great contribution to the transformation of the Highlands' (Smout 1969:426).

In the light of these differing opinions, it is perhaps surprising that relatively little attention has been focused on an examination of SSPCK educational policy towards the Highlands: the actual means by which that institution sought to educate Gaelic-speaking Highlanders. Previous assessments of the SSPCK in this period have only briefly mentioned the policy of that Society towards the Highlands (Mason 1954; Withrington 1962). There is not space here for an exhaustive listing of all meetings and debates upon the Highlands within SSPCK records, just as there is not space for a detailed educational history of the eighteenth-century Highlands. But in examining SSPCK policy towards the education of the Gaelic-speaking Highlander, some light is thrown upon exactly how one institution operated in its plans to spread the English language throughout the Gaelic areas. The relationship of the SSPCK to other educational bodies and the history of education in the Highlands at other periods is dealt with elsewhere (Withers forthcoming).

Education in the Highlands before 1709 was largely directed by several synods of the Church of Scotland. Regional variations had long existed throughout the Highlands in the extent to which any education was available (Watt 1981), and even though the 1696 Act of the General Assembly had directed that schools be established in every Scottish parish, both schools and schoolmasters were in short supply in the Highlands by the earlier eighteenth century (MacKinnon 1938). Indeed, if the early claims of the SSPCK are to be taken literally, the majority of Highlanders must have gone without any sort of education at all. The Society in

Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge was formed with the express aim of 'propagating Christian Knowledge especially in the Highlands and Islands . . . where Error, Idolatry, Superstition, and Ignorance do mostly abound' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/1:7).

The SSPCK was derived in part from the Society for Reformation of Manners, itself founded in Edinburgh in 1696 (N.L.S. MS 1954:1). This particular society took some interest in educational matters, but not until 1705 was any formal proposal put forward to establish a society for propagating Christian knowledge in Scotland. The proposals were discussed by members of the Society for Reformation of Manners and several others much involved at that time with the problems of education in the Highlands (Durkacz 1978). As Durkacz has noted, however, little attention appears to have been paid to the language policy of the proposed new society: 'This lack of discussion doubtless reflects the almost unanimously held view that highland schools should teach only English' (Durkacz 1978:36). Given the attitudes of the time, the widely-held belief that Gaelic was a barbaric language, and the fact that education in the Highlands had, since the Statutes of Icolmkill in 1609, been geared toward the diffusion of English (Campbell 1950:49), it is hardly surprising that the language question was never discussed. We should not expect it to have been. The strategy of the SSPCK is clear—civilisation through anglicisation: the tactics employed towards that end merit close examination.

The first indication of an operating policy in terms of language appears in a directive to Alexander Buchan, the schoolmaster on St Kilda, in 1710. He was directed to 'Be diligent not only to teach them to read English but also to write and lay it on such as profite by you to do all they can for the edification of others and teach them their duty to their superiors' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/1:64). Later directives indicate an increasing concern on the part of the Society to teach only in English. In a note of 1713 to William Mackay, schoolmaster in Durness, the SSPCK directed that those poor people and children of Durness parish who did not understand English be allowed catechism in Irish, but that Mackay 'must only teach his scholars to read English books' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/1:183). Mackay's response was that as 'many of his scholars have nothing but Irish, he must examine, sing, and pray with them in that language, unless the Society give other orders' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/1:198). The SSPCK in return ordered that Mackay be allowed to continue this practice, but only until such time as his scholars could understand English. Mackay was further directed to 'teach them to read only English Books, and do his endeavours as soon as he can make them understand that language' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/1:199). No encouragement whatever was to be given 'to the teaching of Irish books in the Societies Schools, or to the Printing of them for their use' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/1:199). In the beginning, then, the policy of the SSPCK was that Gaelic books were proscribed, but that the Gaelic language itself could be used *only as a spiritual medium* until such time as English was learnt and understood. This policy hardened very quickly, however.

The attitude of the SSPCK toward the education of the Highlands is apparent in a statement of 7 June 1716.

> Nothing can be more effectual for reducing these countries to order, and making them usefull to the Commonwealth than teaching them their duty to God, their King and Countrey and rooting out their Irish language, and this has been the case of the Society so far as they could, ffor all the Schollars are taught in English. (S.R.O. GD 95/1/1:294)

This leaves little room for doubt concerning the tenor of SSPCK policy at that period, although it should be noted that the phrase 'ffor all the Schollars are taught in English', was probably not always the case, for, as the above evidence on Durness suggests, Gaelic was through necessity sometimes employed by schoolmasters in their dual role as catechists, despite the concern of the parent Society to root it out. From 1716 onwards, the minutes of the SSPCK continually refer to the need for more schools in the Highlands, 'for teaching the principles of our Holy Religion in the English language and by time wearing out the Irish' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/1:294). From that date, the Gaelic language was denied an effective place in the education of a population whose only language it was. Of course, one must allow for some difference between the intent of the SSPCK and the actual effect of their policy. The main text used was the Bible, but there were not always enough Bibles for all, and SSPCK schools were always hampered through a shortage of schoolmasters—'men of piety, prudence and gravity, who can understand and can speak, read and write both in the English and Irish languages' (S.R.O. GD 95/2/1:196-7). School buildings were often in poor repair, and potential scholars had long distances to walk to attend school even when they could be spared from labour at the harvest. In Gairloch in 1716, only ten boys attended the SSPCK school in the entire summer although more appeared after harvest (S.R.O. GD 95/1/1:130). Nearly all SSPCK schools were attended more by males than females, education for girls being considered wasteful. As one observer noted in 1764, 'Wherever there is access to a School, the Boys are carefully put to it; but the Parents consider Learning of any kind as of little Moment to the Girls, on which Account, great Numbers of them never go to any School' (B.M. King's MS 105).

As early as 1719, however, it was becoming apparent to a number of members of the SSPCK that the chosen method of teaching only English in English had produced a rote-learning amongst the Gaelic-speaking population who read English without understanding what they read (S.R.O. GD 95/2/3:208). Perhaps surprisingly, in view of the evident desire of the SSPCK to extirpate Gaelic from the Highlands, this rote-learning without comprehension was merely termed 'an inconvenience to be provided against', and SSPCK schoolmasters were urged to ensure that their pupils actually understood what English they learnt. Further resolutions were passed in February and March 1720 in which the SSPCK again directed all their schoolmasters to 'cause their charges to understand English', and that they 'do not teach Latine or Irishe' (S.R.O.

GD 95/2/2:346). The problems involved in actually ensuring that Highland pupils whose native language was Gaelic in fact understood what was largely a foreign language seem not to have concerned the officers of the SSPCK. Neither does the denial of Gaelic's place in the education of the Highland population appear to have worried that Society. But then, we should not expect it to have. Quite the reverse was true. In 1720, the SSPCK reaffirmed that 'the Societies design was not to discourage any proper means of Instruction in the principles of Christianity but to forward the same, and yet not to continue the Irish Language but to wear it out, and Learn the people the English tongue' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/2:104). There is evidence, however, to suggest that their adopted methods were not at once attended by success. By 1721, increasing dissatisfaction with the educational policy of the SSPCK was manifest in a *Representation anent teaching Irish* sent to the Society from a number of school-masters and parish ministers in the Highlands. This exposed several contradictions in SSPCK policy and, in particular, noted that

> . . . through a defect of the present method of teaching in some of the Societies Schools in their Highland bounds, these good ends are much frustrate, for in places where nothing of the English language is understood, the children are taught to read only in English which they understand not . . . and thus they return home able indeed to read the Bible but understand not even the plainest historical part of what they read, and after residing in the Countrey where they hear nothing but Irish, in a Little time they entirely forget what with much Labour and Long time they acquired, which as it proves a great discouragement to the parents to send them to school, So the principal design of the Society in propagating Christian Knowledge is thereby obstructed. (S.R.O. GD 95/1/2:170)

The *Representation* proposed that scholars be taught to translate the Bible and other scriptural works into Gaelic after being able to read English: 'When they once come to read English, to put into their hands the translations of the Shorter Catechism and psalm book which they have in vulgar Irish . . . that they may Collate and compare these translations, which method . . . is the only way to make them capable to understand what they read' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/2:170).

It should be noted at once that this proposal to adopt what may be called the 'comparative method' as SSPCK policy in the Highlands was not made in the interests of the Gaelic-speaking population. Whilst those persons who put forward these proposals considered that the use of the comparative method would ensure greater comprehension of what English was taught, they were also convinced that this method would guarantee the more rapid disappearance of Gaelic. They stated clearly the means by which these proposals, if adopted, would further the removal of Gaelic and thus conform with SSPCK aims.

> The Exerciseing of the boys at school to a ready Converting of English into Irish and reaching the Principles of Religion into both Languages, as it will instruct themselves, so it will make them capable to instruct their Ignorant parents at home, who are themselves fond of knowledge and are sensible that their Ignorance of the English language is their great

Loss, by being thereby excluded from all Commerce, Conversation and Correspondence with the rest of the nation, and by the having of it, quo mise to themselves access to employments Stations or offices that might afford them advantage, and the parents having once understood English, the Babes from the knees would receive the same as their mother tongue, which would be the only finishing stroak to the Irish language. (S.R.O. GD 95/1/2:170-1)

At the meeting in June 1721 at which this *Representation* was received, the General Committee of the Society was not fully complete and discussion of the proposals was set aside for a later date. In fact, there was no formal discussion on the matter until 1 November 1722, and then only to record that 'The Committee finding that the teaching of Highland Children to read English is but Lost Labour unless at the same time they may be made to understand what they read, they shewed that they had sub-Committed it to some of their numbers to consider this case' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/2:221).

Faced with such important proposals, the deliberations of this sub-committee dragged on into 1723. In April of that year, the sub-committee sent out letters on the subject of teaching English to SSPCK schoolmasters (S.R.O. GD 95/2/3:188-9). Four points were contained in these letters: the schoolmaster was to use Gaelic in translation as a means of instruction *only after the pupils could read the Catechism in English*; all the scholars were exhorted to speak English and any who could speak that language were barred from speaking their native Gaelic except when translating it into English; censors were elected to record those who flouted this rule; those able to speak English and converse in it with some ease were to be sent to schools in the Lowlands. Whatever reservations there may have been over the implementation of the comparative method were soon dispelled, and later that year, *Overtures for teaching the Societies Schollars to understand and Speak the English Language* (S.R.O. GD 95/10/79), were put forward by the General Committee of the SSPCK in response to the proposals contained in the *Representation* of 1721. These *Overtures* constitute an important shift in SSPCK educational policy toward the education of the Highlander.

The SSPCK conceded that teaching Gaelic-speaking pupils to learn English was 'to no purpose, when they do not understand that tongue' (S.R.O. GD 95/10/79). To increase actual understanding of the English language, the Society resolved that as soon as the scholars began to read the Catechism

The Schoolmasters Shall teach them to understand their Lessions by turning or translating and causing the Scholars themselves to turn to translate from the English into Irish. (S.R.O. GD 95/10/79)

At least as important in terms of the evolution of SSPCK policy is the accompanying directive that

. . . the Schoolmasters shall speak to and converse with their Schollars alwayes in English, and that after the Schollars are once through the Catechism, they be not allowed to discourse or converse with another in the Irish but only in the English Language, and that the masters appoint private or Clandestine Censors to debate such as transgress. (S.R.O. GD 95/10/79)

Of interest is the fact that this directive of 1723 can have done very little itself to ensure comprehension of what English was read, but of crucial importance is the fact that the translation of English into Gaelic—thus guaranteeing an understanding of at least some English words—was not based upon *actual* knowledge of English, but only upon an ability to read and not necessarily understand that language. Rote-learning without comprehension—commonplace in SSPCK schools in the Highlands—had become the basis for the employment of an educational method whereby Gaelic was used to translate English words and phrases. The fact that such translation was permitted, based not upon the actual understanding of English, but only upon ability to read that language, almost certainly meant that numbers of Gaelic-speakers began to compare or translate what English they were taught with Gaelic, and thus, through the native language, arrive at some understanding of English. The effects of this change in policy, which was to last until 1766, did not occur in isolation. Contact with the Lowlands, especially for those in schools near the borders of the Highlanders, in temporary migration, and in regular trade with the English-speaking South, familiarised many with English. But SSPCK schools did hasten the move towards English, both before and after 1723. John Flow, schoolmaster in the Aberdeenshire parish of Glenmuick Tullich and Glengairn, reported to the SSPCK in August 1713, how, after only a year's schooling, all his pupils were 'able tolerably to speak English read and write' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/1:191). All 182 scholars attending the three SSPCK schools in Comrie parish in January 1723 could speak English, and in Kilmorack parish, Inverness-shire, some eighty-eight persons 'have Learn'd to read and speak English at the Society's School therein', according to Thomas Chisholm, minister there in the late 1720s (S.R.O. GD 95/1/2:197-8; GD 95/1/3:132).

At the same time as this new method was being adopted, the SSPCK was rethinking its attitude on Gaelic texts. Although, in a list of instructions to their schoolmasters dated 4 June 1724, the General Committee of the Society had reiterated that using Gaelic texts, and speaking and reading Gaelic alone were banned, the resolution not to print Gaelic texts began to waver by 1725. In June 1725 the Society proposed 'to get a good English and Irish vocables composed, for a help to the more Speedy teaching the Schollars the most usual and familiar English words' (S.R.O. GD 1/2:344). The Presbytery of Lorn was the first to comply with a request for assistance with this vocabulary, and gave notice to that effect in 1726 (S.R.O. GD 95/1/2:359). Not until 1739, however, was the vocabulary ready. Its author was Alexander MacDonald, an SSPCK schoolmaster whose later life was to run counter to .

the established order of which the SSPCK was part (Chapman 1978:56). MacDonald's *Leabhar a Theagasc Ainminnin. No A Nuadh fhocloir Gaoidheilg & Beurla, etc. A Galick and English Vocabulary with an Appendix of the Terms of Divinity in the said Language, etc.* was printed in Edinburgh in 1741.[1] The SSPCK was in no doubt as to the purpose of the vocabulary. It was 'intended as a means to Introduce the use of the English Language more Universally into the Highlands and Islands' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/4:105). As MacDonald wrote in his preface,

> The Instruction of the Youth in the English Language, is thought necessary to promote the charitable Purpose of this Society, and to make these, who can speak only Gaelic, more useful Members in the Commonwealth; and it is certain, that if this were to be carried on, by teaching from Books entirely English, without any Mixture of the Mother-Tongue, it would not be so speedily got done.' (MacDonald 1741:V)

In 1738, the SSPCK erected 'Spinning Schools' in the Highlands, in which 'Husbandry, Housewifery, Trades and Manufacture' were taught almost entirely to women and girls. No statement appears to have been made concerning the use of Gaelic in these schools, but it is very unlikely that Gaelic was looked upon with any more favour than in the other schools. In 1751 (after the collapse of the fourth Highland rising in half a century) the SSPCK again urged the appointment of censors to record those using the Highland language in their schools:

> . . . hereafter the Scholars attending the Charity Schools after they have in some measure learned to speak English, be discharged either in the Schoolhouse, or when playing about the Doors thereof to speak Earse, on pain of being Chastised. And that the School Masters, Appoint Censures to note down and report to the Schoolmaster such as transgress this rule. (S.R.O. GD 95/1/4:466)

This further proscription of Gaelic must have seriously undermined the status of the language, and, given the atmosphere of repression, perhaps pushed many Gaelic-speakers towards the more frequent employment of English, if only a few halting words and phrases. As was the case with the earlier directive of 1723, the wording of such declarations leaves little doubt as to the ideal situation sought by the SSPCK in the Highlands, but it was almost certainly a scheme difficult to enforce in practice. Several statements of 1753 refer to the 'disadvantages arising from allowing the Schollars taught at the Societys Schools to Speak the Irish Language, Especially after they have been for some time at School' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/4:504), which may suggest that SSPCK directives against Gaelic were not always wholly effective in practice. In the face of the continued use of Gaelic and as a result of their continued determination to extend English throughout the Highlands, the SSPCK became further involved, particularly in the 1750s, with the production of printed books in

Gaelic. As had been the case with the 1741 vocubulary, this involvement was based upon the comparative method of teaching. The SSPCK considered that the printing of a New Testament with one page in Gaelic and the facing page in English 'would tend much towards the advancement of Knowledge, and of the English Language in the Highlands' (S.R.O. GD 95/1/4:553). The involvement of the SSPCK with this text should not, however, be seen as a charitable one, but rather as the continuation and refinement of a policy which aimed at removing Gaelic altogether from the Highlands.

Yet by 1766, it was clear to the members of the SSPCK that the policy of forbidding Gaelic reading, and teaching only through the comparative method, had not been wholly successful. In March of that year, the General Committee recommended that

> the Societys regulations enjoining their Schoolmasters not to teach their Scholars to read Earse should be altered . . . because according to the present practice the teaching of Children to read English only has been found not to have the desired effects; for when they leave the School, they can neither speak nor read English with understanding. (S.R.O. GD 95/1/5:105)

The adoption of the comparative method from 1723 had, in fact, been much hindered as a means by which to extend English for the simple reason that it was not accompanied by Gaelic reading. Even although English was taught through a method which, in part, entailed the use of Gaelic as an aid in comprehension, there is a certain amount of evidence to suggest that little understanding of English was arrived at within the confines of the school. Undoubtedly some English was learnt and spoken as a result of the work of SSPCK schools in the period up to 1766 as the evidence of John Flow and Thomas Chisholm testifies, but English had not been as widely spread nor was it as widely understood by the majority of the pupils as the SSPCK had hoped.

Despite this continued lack of comprehension and in view of the importance of the questions raised, members of the SSPCK were careful, almost suspicious, in their review of the recommendations of their General Committee. These proposals sat on the table until mid-1766. At the meeting of 5 June 1766, the proposal made in March of that year was unanimously agreed upon:

> in time coming School masters in those places of the Highlands where the Earse language is generally spoken, be enjoyned to teach their Scholars to read both Earse and English . . . as being . . . the most effectual method to make them read, speak and understand the English language. (S.R.O. GD 95/1/5:106)

Almost certainly, the decision to allow Gaelic reading was based upon the continuation of the comparative method, albeit somewhat modified, and on the fact that Gaelic was, after 1766, used to translate what English was learnt and read. Gaelic as a medium of instruction was still proscribed as was conversation in Gaelic in and around

the school, but its use in translation after 1766 must have ensured greater comprehension of the English language than had earlier been the case. This was certainly the view of the directors of the SSPCK who, in 1781, wrote that the adoption of the new rule in combination with the part-Gaelic part-English New Testament had been influential 'not only in opening the minds of the people to knowledge, but in giving a greater desire to learn the English language than they had ever before discovered' (Mackay 1906:238). Fourteen years later, they again complimented themselves on the role of SSPCK schools as agents of anglicisation in recording how 'thousands of the natives of the remote Highlands have by means of their schools attained to such knowledge of the English language as qualified them for intercourse with the inhabitants of other parts of the British Empire' (S.R.O. GD 95/11/3:29). Lachlan Shaw, in his History of Moray, wrote how, as a result of SSPCK schools, 'Christian Knowledge is increased, heathenish customs are abandoned, the number of Papists is diminished, disaffection to the Government is lessened', as well as the English language being more widely diffused (Shaw 1775:381). The expansion of education was not the only cause of the anglicisation of Highland Scotland in this period, but it was the major contributory factor. As one anonymous observer wrote of Dunoon parish in 1792, 'The language of the parish is changed much, from the coming in of low-country tenants, from the constant intercourse our people have with their neighbours, but above all, from our schools, particularly those established by the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge' (SA II:389).

Some idea of where in the Highlands the English language spread is given by the distribution maps in the Appendix (Figs. 1-5. Fig. 6, and the list of parish names, may be used to identify the parishes). Figure 2, showing which parishes in the Highlands and Islands had SSPCK schools in 1755, also shows the relatively low proportion of the population attending SSPCK schools. But repeat this picture over a number of years (and consider the fact that English was also being introduced throughout the Highlands in a variety of other ways), and the important place of the SSPCK schools in developing and accelerating the anglicisation of the Gaelic parishes cannot be doubted.

By 1825, emphasis in Highland education lay with the Gaelic Schools Societies, established in 1812, and not with the SSPCK. Few SSPCK schools were surviving by 1825 (Fig. 5). It is interesting to note, however, that in 1812 the SSPCK considered that 'the teaching of Gaelic has been much neglected' (S.R.O. GD 95 /1/8:63). Not until 1825 did the SSPCK decide to change its long-held beliefs, and agree to use Gaelic as an educational language. Even then, the decision to instruct in Gaelic reading first, prior to instruction in English, was a calculated ploy. The SSPCK argued that it would hold out an English education as 'a premium' to those who had become proficient in their native Gaelic (S.R.O. GD 95/1/8:122). Gaelic had gone full circle from being barred, to being used first, in the education process. But the end in view was still the same; only the means had changed.

In conclusion, it is possible to argue that changes in SSPCK policy toward the education of the Highlander from 1709 to 1723, in 1766, and again in 1825, were admissions of failure on the part of that Society. Certainly, there is evidence to suggest that the intended aim of extending English throughout the Highlands was not always realised in practice without some adjustment being made to the original plans of that institution. But the fact that tactical refinements in policy were made on a number of occasions indicates also what a deeply-felt concern there was to anglicise the Highlands, within an institution whose underlying rationale and long-term strategy was to deny an educational heritage for Gaelic, and to extirpate the language from Scotland. Of course, as has been elsewhere noted, 'the task of teaching English, a language foreign to many parts of the North, must have been extremely difficult. . . . It was a slow and tedious method of imparting knowledge of a foreign tongue, and it is to be wondered how the masters ever succeeded' (Mason 1954:2). Yet succeed they did, and over a large part of the Highlands (Fig. 1-5). Such English as was learnt through SSPCK schools in the Highlands in this period was itself part and parcel of the increasing currency of that language, as Highland Scotland in varying degrees became assimilated to Lowland, anglicised Scotland; but the evidence examined above does suggest that SSPCK educational policy in the Highlands was a potent agent of anglicisation. The date 1766 should not be seen as marking the only important shift in that policy, for, as has been shown, the SSPCK continually altered the means by which it sought to remove Gaelic from the Highlands. The hoped-for spread of English may not have been easily achieved, and would have varied from place to place and year to year, but overall, the continual refinement of policy, evident from the very beginning of the SSPCK, does show the close and important relationships between education and anglicisation in the eighteenth century.

APPENDIX

The following distribution maps, Figures 1-5, give information about the schools of the SSPCK in the parishes of the Highlands and Islands at specific dates mentioned in the text. Figure 6, with its accompanying list, identifies the parishes shown in Figures 1-5.
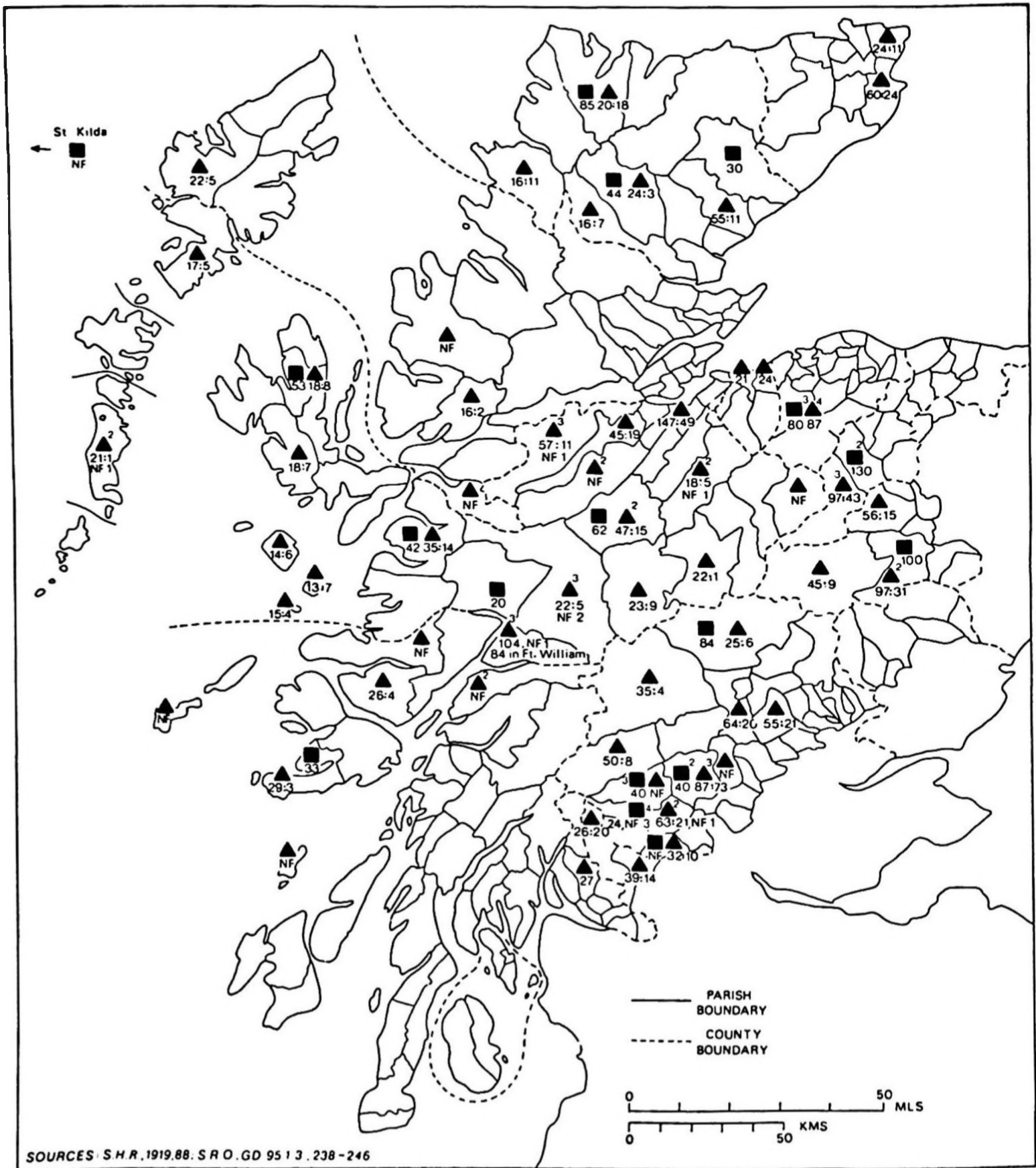
Fig. 1 Parishes with SSPCK schools in 1719 and 1731

■ Schools in 1719

▲ Schools in 1731

▲² Number of schools in parish
    when more than one

▲
29:7 Number of male and of female
      scholars [m:f] (by parish)

▲
40 Number of scholars (not differentiated)

NF No figures given on scholars' attendance
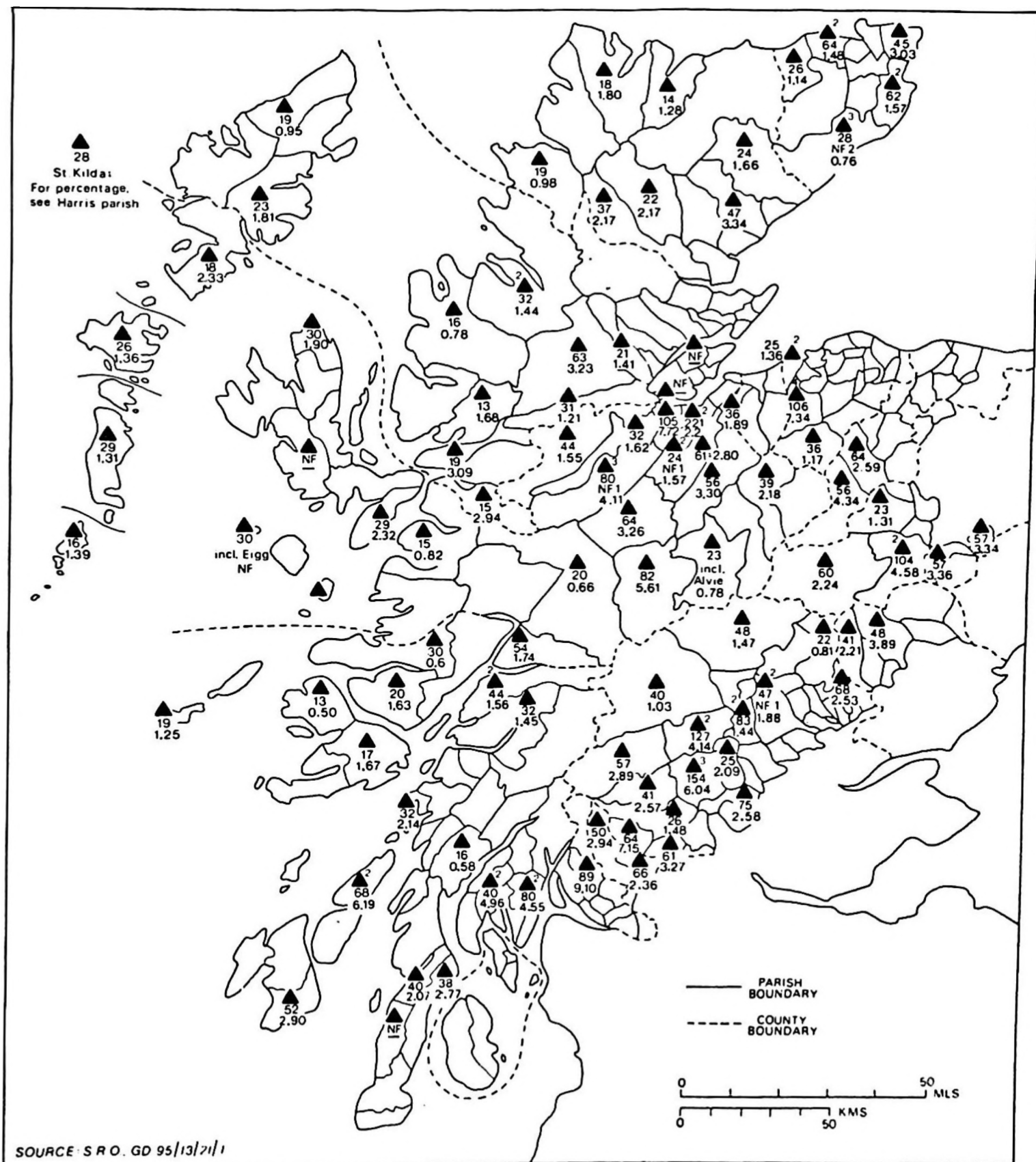
Fig. 2 Parishes with SSPCK schools in 1755

▲	Schools in 1755	▲ 40	Number of scholars (not differentiated)
▲²	Number of schools in parish when more than one	1.44	Number of scholars, as percentage of parish population

NF   No figures available
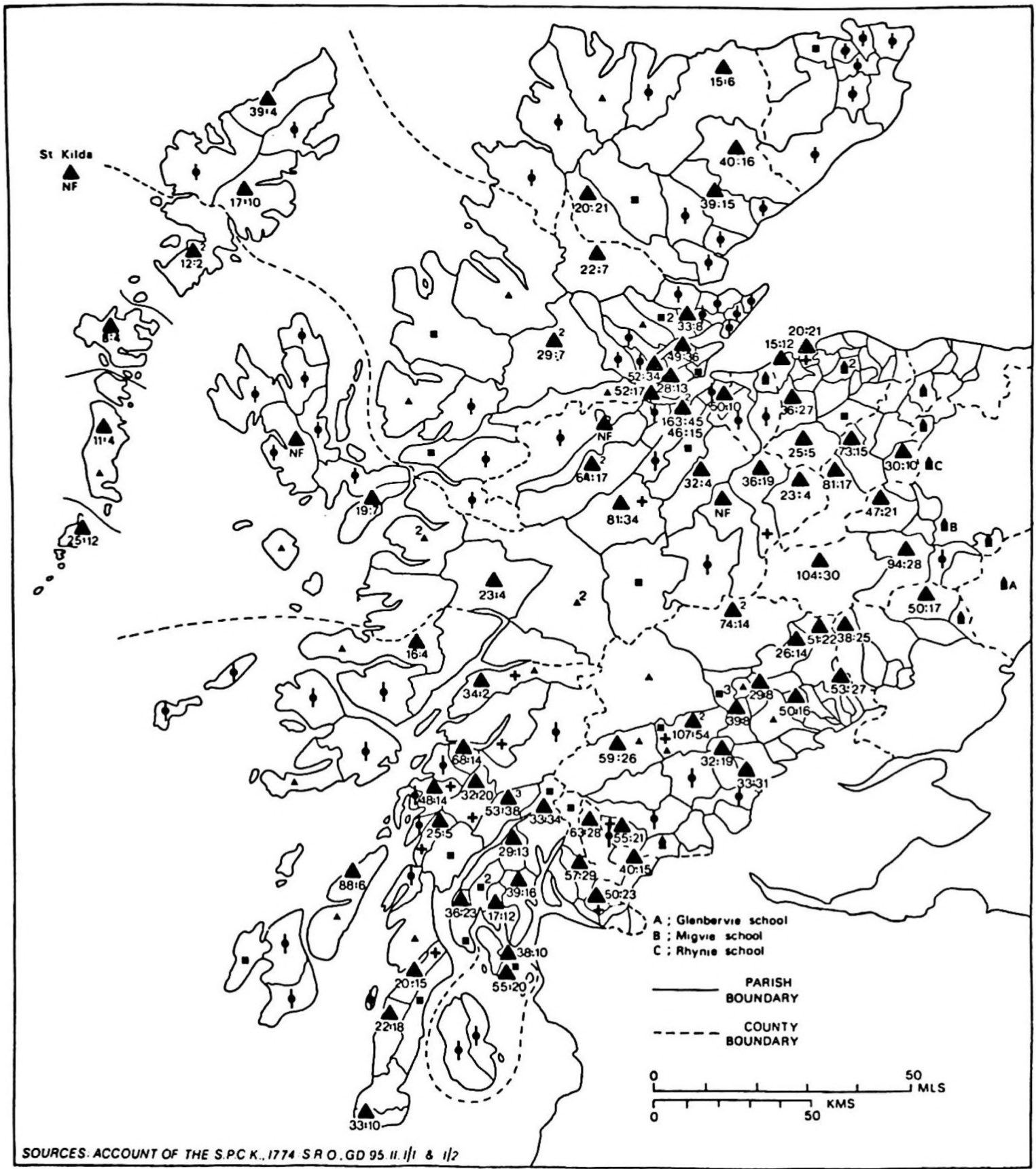
Fig. 3 Parishes with SSPCK schools in 1774

SOURCES: ACCOUNT OF THE S.P.C.K., 1774 S.R.O. GD 95 II.1/1 & 1/2

St Kilda
NF

A : Glenbervie school
B : Migvie school
C : Rhynie school

PARISH BOUNDARY
COUNTY BOUNDARY

0 ———— 50 MLS
0 ———— 50 KMS

▲   Schools in 1774

▲²   Number of schools in parish when more than one

▲   Number of male and of female
29:7   scholars (by parish)

NF   No figures given on scholars' attendance

▲   New schools 'appointed to be erected' by SSPCK from 1st May

◖   Parishes where SSPCK want schools but cannot afford them

■   Parishes where SSPCK have lately suppressed their schools

⬤   Parishes where SSPCK have lately suppressed their schools 'because they were in the low country' [i.e. non-Gaelic-speaking]

+   Spinning schools
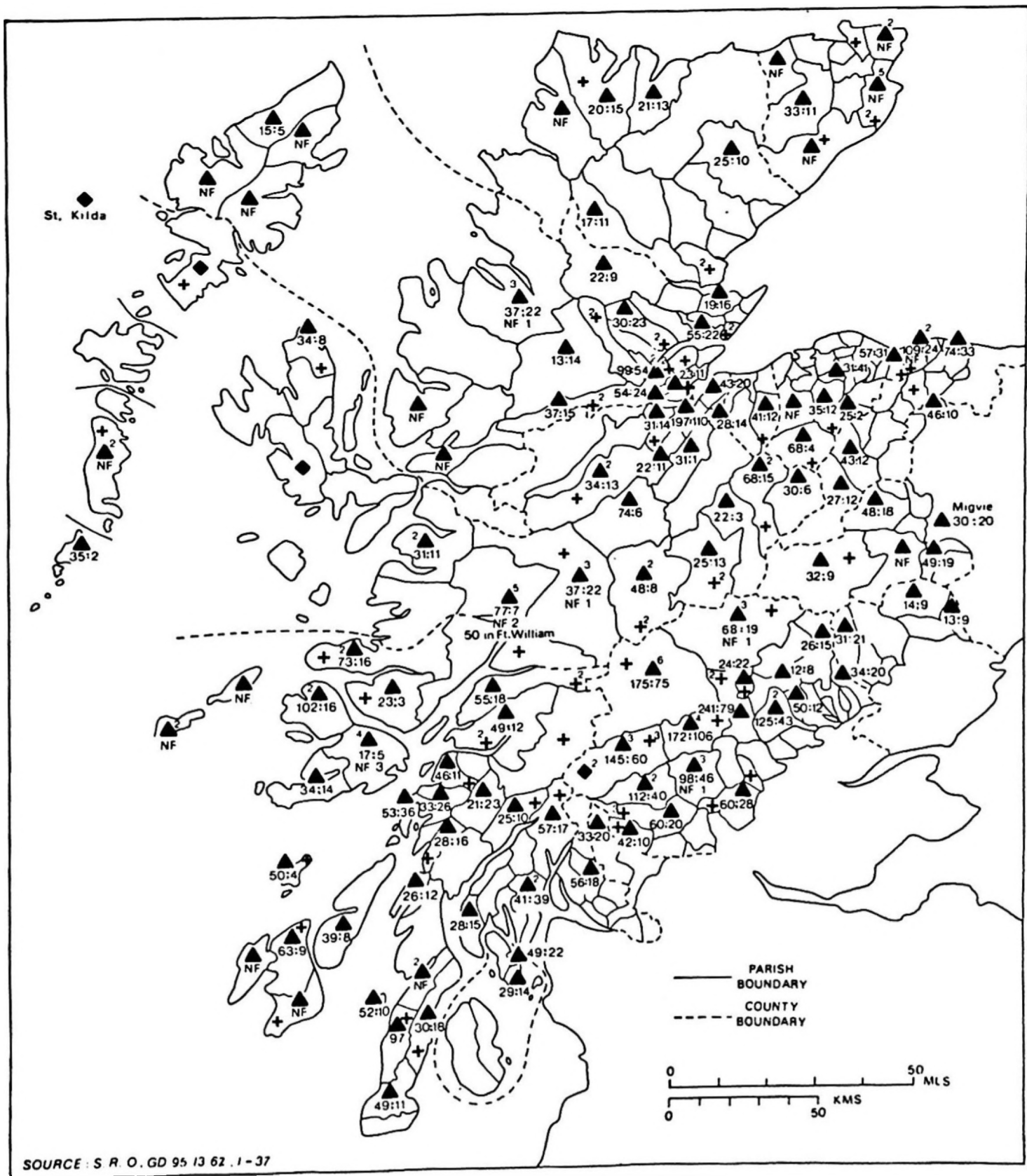
Fig. 4 Parishes with SSPCK schools in 1792

▲   Schools in 1792

▲²   Number of schools in parish when more
     than one

▲   Number of male and of female scholars
29:7

NF   No figures given on scholars' attendance

◆   Parishes where SSPCK-funded
     missionaries and catechists were at work

+   Spinning schools
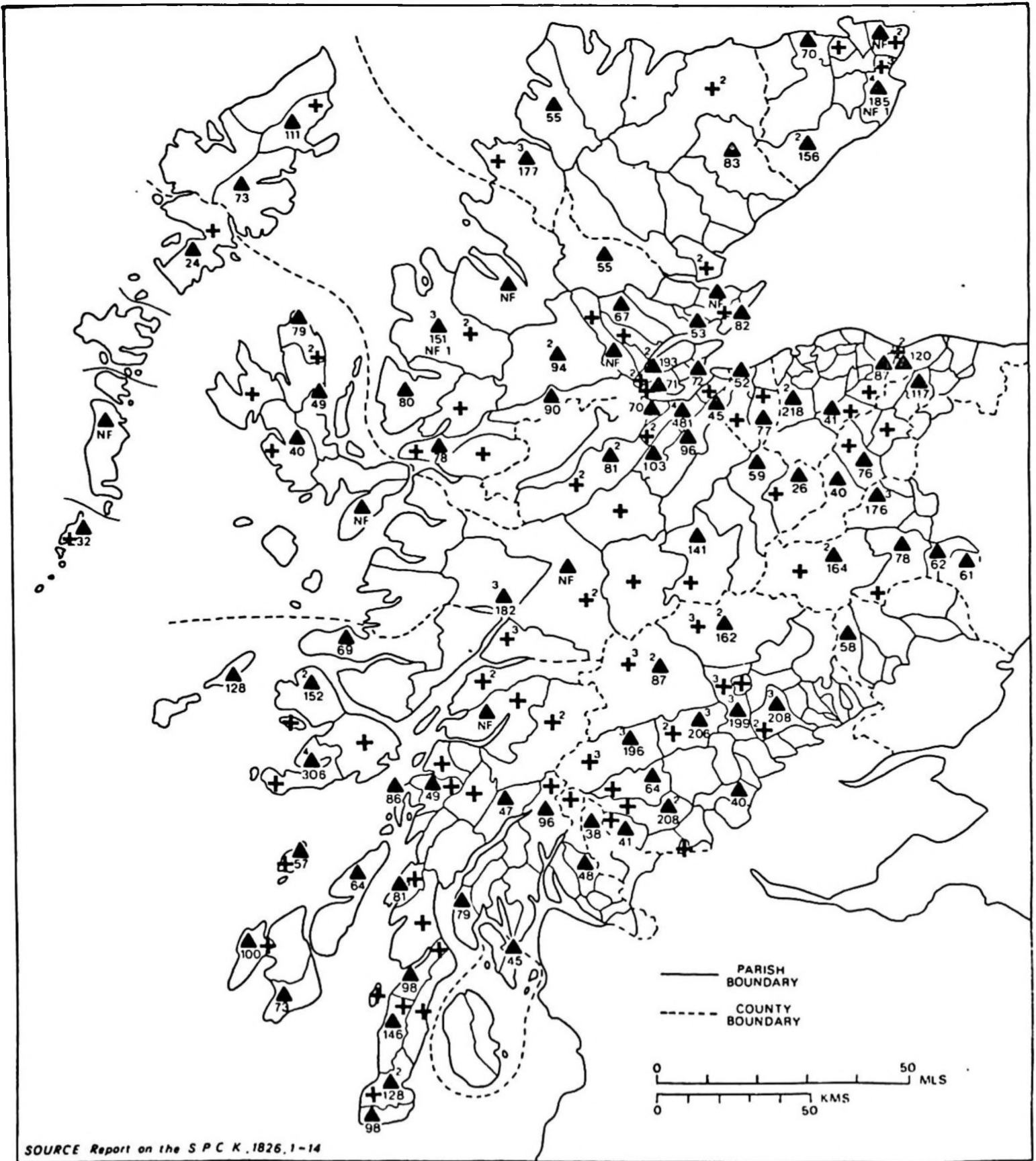
Fig. 5 Parishes with SSPCK schools in 1825

▲   Schools in 1825

▲² Number of schools in parish
    when more than one

▲ Number of scholars (not differentiated)
40

NF No figures given on scholars' attendance

+   Spinning schools

Fig. 6 Map to identify the Highland parishes shown in Figs. 1-5. The names of those referred to by number are given in the list following

List of Highland parishes referred by number in Figure 6

Parish name	Number	Parish name	Number	Parish name	Number
Aberfoyle	123	Edinkillie	46	Logiealmond	132
Aberlour	69	Edzell	86	Logie-Coldstone	83
Abernethy and Kincardine	76	Elgin	48	Logie Easter	13
Aboyne and Glentanar	84	Fearn	11	Logierait	136
Alness	16	Foddesty	18	Monzievaird and Strowan	129
Alves	47	Forres	43	Mortlach	68
Alyth	145	Fowlis Wester	131	Moulin	92
Ardchattan	94	Glass	65	Moy and Dalarossie	78
Ardclach	42	Glenbucket	73	Muckairn	95
Ardersier	38	Glenisla	90	Muthill	128
Ardgour	80	Glenmuick Tullich and		Nairn	39
Ardoch	127	Glengairn	82	New Kilpatrick	119
Arisaig and Moidart	79	Glenorchy and Inishail	93	New Spynie	54
Arrochar	116	Glentrathen	147	Nigg	12
Auchtergaven	133	Grange	62	North Bute	109
Auldearn	40	Inveraven	72	North Knapdale	102
Avoch	24	Inverchaolain	107	Old Kilpatrick	118
Balquhidder	126	Inverness and Bona	33	Olrig	2
Bellie	57	Keith	63	Ordiquhill	61
Bendochy	144	Kilcalmonell	112	Petty	37
Birnie	53	Kilchrenan and Dalavich	98	Port of Menteith	124
Birse	85	Killearnan	26	Rafford	45
Blairgowrie	142	Kilfinan	103	Rathven	58
Boharm	67	Kilmadock	125	Rattray	143
Bonhill	121	Kilmaronock	122	Resolis	21
Botriphinie	66	Kilmartin	100	Rosemarkie	23
Bower	5	Kilmichael Glassary	101	Rosneath	114
Cabrach	71	Kilmodan	106	Rosskeen	15
Cairnie	64	Kilmore and Kilbride	96	Rothes	55
Canisbay	4	Kilmuir Easter	14	Rothesay	110
Caputh	139	Kilninver and Kilmelfort	97	Saddell and Skipness	113
Cardross	117	Kiltarlity and Convinth	30	Speymouth	56
Cortachy and Clova	89	Kiltearn	17	Spynie	50
Clunie	140	Kingarth	111	St. Andrews Lhanbryd	51
Craignish	99	Kingoldrum	146	Strachur	105
Crieff	130	Kingussie and Insh	81	Stralachlan	104
Cromarty	22	Kinloch	141	Strathdon	75
Croy and Dalcross	36	Kinloss	44	Tain	9
Cullen	59	Kirkhill	31	Tarbat	10
Dallas	49	Kirkmichael (Perthshire)	91	Thurso	1
Daviot and Dunlichity	35	Kirriemuir	148	Towie	74
Deskford	60	Knockando	70	Urray	27
Dingwall	19	Knockbain	25	Urquhart	52
Dores	34	Lethendy	138	Urquhart and	
Dumbarton	120	Lethnot and Navar	88	Glenmoriston	32
Dunkeld and Dowally	137	Little Dunkeld	134	Urquhart and Logie	
Dunnet	3	Lochalsh	29	Wester	20
Dunoon and Kilmun	108	Lochcarron	28	Watten	6
Duthil and Rothiemurchus	77	Lochgoilhead and		Weem	135
Dyke and Moy	41	Kilmorich	115	Wick	7
Edderton	8	Lochlee	87		

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES

1 David McColm, an Edinburgh minister, had written to the SSPCK and the Church authorities in 1735 intimating a desire to produce such a vocabulary, but despite a reference of 1737 to the SSPCK's intending to distribute the work 'where Irish is spoke', McColm's work seems never to have been published (S.R.O. GD 95/1/4:59).

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Notes and Comments

The SSPCK and the Question of Gaelic in Blair Atholl

LEAH LENEMAN

During the eighteenth century the chronic shortage of Gaelic-speaking ministers in the Highlands of Scotland led the General Assembly to hand out bursaries to likely students who spoke 'Irish' (then the usual term for Scottish Gaelic). However, from its inception in 1709 until its reversal of policy in 1766, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) forbade the teaching of Gaelic in any of its charity schools.

The initial aim of the SSPCK was, in Establishment terms, to 'civilise' the Highland area, which was seen as a hotbed of Jacobitism, Episcopalianism and Roman Catholicism. In order to turn the inhabitants of that part of the country into loyal Presbyterian citizens it was considered necessary to extirpate their language.[1]

One of the earliest areas to receive the benefit of the Society's charity schools was Atholl in Highland Perthshire, largely owing to the interest shown by the 1st Duke of Atholl, who was a founder member. On 20 March 1719 the SSPCK's committee reported to the main body that James Murray, schoolmaster at Blair Atholl, taught children the 'Irish Catechism and Irish psalms' (the only part of the Scriptures at that time translated into Gaelic) after they could read the Scriptures in English. He did this 'for the good of their ignorant parents who understand not English, That the Children, when they come home at night, may be in case to read to the Families for the Edification thereof'. He asked for some 'Irish psalm books' for this purpose. In the wake of the Highland Risings, however, Murray's request was refused: the Society 'resolved to give no encouragement to the Teaching to read in the Irish Language, and therefore will furnish no Books for that purpose'.

A year later, on 12 March 1720, the committee reported 'that the schoolmaster makes it his bussiness to teach his schollars to read the Irish psalm book and Catechism'. The Society wrote to Murray to affirm that they were determined that none of their schoolmasters would teach 'Irish' and forbade him to do so. On 2 June 1720, it was reported that the minister of Blair Atholl had written as follows:

> as to the teaching of Irish, he attests that Mr Murray teaches none Irish, but such as can read and speak English and can write and cypher, and that his design therein was that some persons who are never like to come to the knowledge of the English might have a portion of Scripture read to them in their own Language with the Catechisms and other means of knowledge in their own families by the Societies schollars, and that by this means several

parents who could not read had got the questions by heart in their houses which was a great help to the Minister in so great a charge, when it is not possible for him to get such a vast multitude overtaken in his ordinary diets of Catechiseing which must be in the winter season only, and the Minister pleads, that the Society might allow their schoolmaster to teach those who are ripe in English to read Irish for the ends forsaid, which would make Religion to flourish more than it does in that Countrey.

The committee also reported a similar letter from James Murray, and went on to report:

> The Committee having considered those Letters ordered a return to be written thereto, shewing that the Societies design was not to discourage any proper means of Instruction in the Principles of Christianity but to forward the same, and yet not to continue the Irish Language but to wear it out, and learn the people the English tongue, and therefore dischargeing the learning and to read Irish unless they can first read and understand English.

However, this was not enough for the General Meeting.

> They did not agree to their Committees opinion as to the teaching of Irish, and therefore ordered Letters to be written to the Minister & Schoolmaster, shewing them, that the case proposed by them about teaching the schollars to read Irish after they can read and speak English was laid before the Society, and that they have thought fitt to order not only Mr Murray, but all others their schoolmasters to forbear to teach reading Irish upon any pretext whatsomever, unless they get new and particular directions in that matter from a General Meeting of the Societie.

Murray had no choice but to comply, though in his letters reported 10 March 1721 and 22 March 1722 he continued to regret not being able to teach his pupils the Catechism and psalm book.[2]

The avowed purpose of the SSPCK was to instil proper religious principles into the supposedly misguided Gaels who lived beyond the Highland line. However, as shown above, when given the opportunity to spread the Gospel more effectively in the large and sprawling Highland area of Atholl, the Society's prejudice against the Gaelic language proved to be much greater than its missionary zeal.

In 1766 it became generally known that many Highland children were simply parroting the Scriptures in English without actually understanding what they were saying, and from then on the teaching of Gaelic was allowed (although English still remained the primary language of instruction). It may seem surprising that it should take fifty-seven years for the SSPCK to become cognisant of this lack of understanding on the part of the children; however, in 1760 the so-called 'epic' of Ossian first appeared, and its effect on the Scottish literati was seminal.[3] The Highlanders became idealised as 'noble savages', along with their accoutrements, their dress, and—to a certain extent at least—their language. English was still the language of 'civilisation', but Gaelic was that of 'antiquity', and amongst Highland ministers and others a new and keen interest in the Gaelic language was born.

NOTES

1   For a history of the SSPCK see the chapter on it in *The Charity School Movement* by Mr. G. Jones, Cambridge 1938.
2   SSPCK Minutes. Scottish Record Office. GD 95/1/2.
3   For an examination of the effects of Ossian on the Scottish literati see my M.A dissertation, 'The Creation of the Highland Image in Lowland Scotland 1745-1831' (Edinburgh 1979).

Book Reviews

The Ballad as Narrative. Studies in the Ballad Tradition of England, Scotland, Germany and Denmark by Flemming G. Andersen, Otto Holzapfel and Thomas Pettitt. Odense University Press, Odense 1982. viii + 162 pp. Dan. kr. 140.

This well presented sewn paperback has an appetising title but it turns out both gastronomically and nutritionally disappointing, perhaps because there were too many cooks. The broad aim is to examine oral qualities of poetic style for insights into the way a metrical story is—not transmitted, the usual preoccupation—but performed effectively. A 'balladic mode' is postulated, and if we can swallow the adjective we can undoubtedly find sense in this, for who can fix limits to a ballad corpus by genre definition? The hypothesis incurs a risk: scrutiny of non-narrative poetry may reveal that 'balladic' mode really has little that is exclusively generic about it at all and that we have been talking about features that recur across the whole range of metrical oral literature, not to speak of 'prose'. But the book does not examine any purely non-narrative lyric, so it does not confront the problem.

Ten chapters dealing with eleven songs traverse a range of topics difficult to characterise. From various British ballads the first five elicit the facts that (1) religious ballads are an important category, (2) oral ballads may occur on broadsides, (3) the English, as well as the Scots, learned songs orally in the eighteenth century, (4) broadside ballads may acquire oral features, (5) Jeannie Robertson is a traditional singer. Such thumbnail summarising does rough justice, but it reflects fairly enough that these authors take a long time about saying little and bring in much irrelevance. They show no special experience of oral literature in performance, mingle synchronic and diachronic perspectives in a confusing way, tend towards a magisterial style seeing 'problems'—undreamt of by the ordinary singer—everywhere. They lean heavily on David Buchan. Now and then they start an interesting line which their scope does not give room enough to develop, such as the distribution of the 'death-and-burial' motif discussed on pages 69-70.

The following five chapters, four on German and one on Danish, comprise Otto Holzapfel's contribution. They very usefully inform an English-speaking specialised public about unfamiliar poetic traditions, while pursuing their main aim of making these illustrate more generally the narrative theme of the title. The theme continues to elude the reader as the successive topics are unwound. Yet here he feels an authority and discipline that emanate reassuringly from a descriptive method not just looking for windmills to demolish.

Holzapfel's last chapter best illustrates his 'epic formula' concept. 'A formula is

"epic" when in addition to conveying its primary information it has the function of adumbrating [*the translation is good but doesn't he mean* loading *or* endowing?] that information with supplementary expectation'—page 108. I dislike uses of the term 'epic' which dissociate it from genre, but the concept is plausible enough. And such features of *epic* poetry as symbolic gestures, traits *etc.* have long been recognised as meaningful beyond the literal level. In 'Stolt Ellensborg' Holzapfel notices four curious references to hair though he prefers to emphasise modes of dress and of address which signify frank or deceitful behaviour. These are clearly valid, but he leaves the hair un-disentangled. It is hardly enough to say that so droll a picture of astonishment or discomfiture as 'There stood Sir Peder As if ladies had cut his hair' derives from 'a proverb or saying of some kind', or to label 'illogical' the fact that Ellensborg *lets her hair grow* to look like a man (pp. 149-51). Is her behaviour illogical because this is the way a *man* usually disguises himself? Some clarification is needed. Anyway, a census of occurrences of descriptions of hair in Danish ballads is perhaps not to be sniffed at.

The chapter—and the book—ends by declaring that the 'epic' formula makes the ballad 'easy to remember and repeat', so rejoining studies that emphasise transmission, as Pettitt also did on page 10. These statements seem to distract from the main purpose of giving the 'epic' formula more than a mnemonic function, and to accept, moreover, a lot on trust. I remember the Irish singer of 'Prince Robert' who got repeatedly confused by the recurrence of similar but varying formulaic verses in successive scenes, and how I did the same myself when trying later to reproduce his song. Commonplace assertions of the memorability of formulaic matter are too often based on nothing more than common sense, which, deserving as it is of high respect, can be misleading.

I am not quite sure whether this book could have been written. There are some quite interesting drafts of it here, but they are mostly by the same person. Singers don't get a look in, not even Jeannie, and music is dismissed on page one.

HUGH SHIELDS

Hebridean Folksongs, vols. I-III, edited and translated by John Lorne Campbell, tunes transcribed and annotated by Francis Collinson. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1969, 1977, 1981.
Vol. I *A Collection of Waulking Songs by Donald MacCormick in Cille Pheadair, South Uist, in 1893.* 375 pp. [£3.50].
Vol. II *Waulking Songs from Barra, South Uist, Eriskay and Benbecula.* 367 pp. £15.
Vol. III *Waulking Songs from Barra, South Uist, Eriskay and Benbecula.* 432 pp. £25.

There is probably no other category of song in Scottish Gaelic as interesting as that of the Waulking Song. The songs are interesting, first, because of their apparent age,

although they are very difficult to date with any degree of certainty (but see *Tocher* 27, p. 157, where Donald Archie MacDonald sets out an argument for dating part of Song VIII in Volume I as round about 1539). They are interesting because of their apparent female authorship, at a time and within a culture where the opportunity to compose anything of note was undoubtedly the prerogative of the male. And they are interesting because of the unique quality of their melodic and verbal structure and content. What is more, few, if any, are still extant outside Gaelic Scotland.

Waulking was the process of finishing hand-woven cloth by pounding it, wet, on to a wooden board with the hands or the feet. The process varied in some of the details from place to place, but in all places it was the practice to accompany the work with singing. The phrases of the songs alternated between solo and chorus, and it is very likely that other work songs, such as rowing songs especially, became part of the Waulking song repertoire, when the relevant work went out of fashion.

Although Waulking remained, until about the mid-1940's, a fairly strong tradition, and although choral songs are still an attractive concept, there is a danger that the best tunes and especially the best texts, will disappear very soon. As John Lorne Campbell points out (Vol. I, p. 25), '. . . Waulking songs, not being felt suitable for literary treatment or for solo singing at concerts, have been neglected by the compilers of Gaelic anthologies and Gaelic songbooks.' John Mackenzie, the compiler of *Sàr obair nam bard Gaelach*, The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry (Edinburgh 1882), writes of *Iorram* (a type of working song that became incorporated into the Waulking song tradition): 'Various pieces of this sort are in our possession, but they are generally of little poetic merit, though the airs are sometimes cheering and melodious if well sung.' Mackenzie is probably referring to only one type of choral song which has very short solo phrases and short vocable refrains.

The publication in 1981 of the third volume of *Hebridean Folksongs* completed the series which started with the MacCormick Collection as Volume I. Donald MacCormick of Cille Pheadair, South Uist was a school attendance officer there in the 1890s. Volume I quotes a description of him by F. G. Rea in *A School in South Uist* as 'an educated man who spoke, read and wrote Gaelic and English quite fluently'. He was a collector of oral tradition and a bard, and when Dr John Lorne Campbell learned of his success in collecting, from the notebooks of Father Allan MacDonald of Eriskay (b. 1859 d. 1905), he searched earnestly for a manuscript that was mentioned, of Waulking songs transcribed by MacCormick. After a long time he ran it to ground in Edinburgh almost accidentally, when the late Hector MacIver (of Edinburgh's Royal High School)—from Lewis, and an enthusiast for Gaelic traditions—who knew of Dr Campbell's interest in Father Allan MacDonald's collections, sent him a manuscript which turned out to be the MacCormick Collection.

Negotiations were already being made for the publication of Father Allan's collections (and therefore the MacCormick Collection) in 1903, but nothing was achieved until Dr John Lorne Campbell published this work with the help and

collaboration of Francis Collinson, formerly musicologist on the staff of The School of Scottish Studies. (Both Dr Campbell and Mr Collinson are Honorary Research Fellows of the School.) Of Father Allan MacDonald, Dr Campbell says, 'had he lived, he and Amy Murray might well have developed a collaboration that would have much surpassed in interest that of Mrs Kennedy-Fraser and Kenneth MacLeod'. Amy Murray, who wrote *Father Allan's Island*, arrived in Eriskay from America in the last year of the priest's life.

Judging from Amy Murray's writings, Dr Campbell's statement cannot be denied, but in the light of subsequent events, I do not think that the fact that they were not able to collaborate on the MacCormick Collection is entirely a matter for regret. If a volume by MacDonald and Murray had already existed, Dr Campbell or his wife Margaret Fay Shaw, or both, might have been inspired to produce two further volumes of Waulking songs with the help of someone like Francis Collinson; we might have got the informative chapters that have been added to the bare texts, translations and musical transcriptions in Volumes II and III; we might even have had the extra material now contained in Volume I, incorporated in the other two volumes. But, while accepting Amy Murray's skills as a general folk musician, we must be grateful that Francis Collinson came to this task with years of experience in listening and annotating Gaelic song: he had already done the work on *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1966); and, while Father Allan MacDonald's knowledge of the vocabulary of the songs was probably second to no-one's, Dr Campbell's approach must inevitably be better suited to the present day. The contributions made to Gaelic scholarship by the collaboration of Dr John Lorne Campbell and Francis Collinson in these three volumes is invaluable. As well as a total of 135 songs (with more than one version of some of them) with translations and tunes—several variants of some tunes—there are copious notes on both verbal and melodic texts, which combine the skills of the two editors: for example, in Volume I there is a chapter on 'The Waulking Pulse' and another on 'The Meaningless Refrain Syllables and their Significance'.

In Volume I there is a detailed description, with three photographs, of Waulking. There is a short chapter on 'The Subjects of the Songs' and a Bibliography running to nearly five pages with useful headings: 'Descriptions of Waulking', 'General', 'Musical Transcriptions (a) Objective (b) Art versions' 'Recordings', 'Articles in Periodicals', 'Printed Texts', 'Dictionary', 'MS Texts.'

With such a feast of information apart from the songs themselves in this volume—information that could be applied to Gaelic songs in general and not just to Waulking songs—the editors would have been excused for relaxing slightly over the production of Volume II. They could well have confined it to a publication of Gaelic words with English translations and musical transcriptions of more Waulking songs from Barra, South Uist, Eriskay and Benbecula. But no: they have added further to the reader's knowledge with more copious notes on the verbal and musical aspects of

the songs. There is a long note on the texts of each of four especially intriguing songs: *Am Bròn Binn* (the Sweet Sorrow); *Seathan, Mac Righ Eirinn* (Seathan, son of the King of Ireland); *Cailin òg as stiùramaiche* ('Calen o custure me'); and *An Spaidsearachd Bharrach* (The Barra Boasting). In Volume I the songs were transcribed by Donald MacCormick from his own collection, whereas the musical transcriptions were of versions collected by John Lorne Campbell and others at a much later date. In Volume II the words used with the melodies correspond with those in the first part of the book. The contents of the books are laid out so that the verbal texts, Gaelic and English translations, are completely separate from the melodic texts, which appear towards the end of each volume. It is easy to criticise this layout if we do not consider all the practical difficulties involved in any alternative. Dr Campbell explains these difficulties in Volume II and convinces us that the chosen layout is the only practical one.

Francis Collinson elaborates on his comments on the scales used, referring to examples from this volume. He also shows in great detail (fewer examples would probably have sufficed—but this is difficult to judge, from the viewpoint of the already informed) the melodic treatment of the *svarabhakti* vowel. He defines the *svarabhakti* thus: it 'arises between certain consonants following a short vowel under certain conditions, forms a group with the preceding vowel and consonant which falls under one stress.' (It is slightly similar to, but much more significant and complicated than, the intrusion of an extra vowel in *girl* and *warm* to be heard in some Scots dialects.)

There is not quite so much extra detail in Volume II as in Volume I—the editors have not gone that extra mile with us—but in Volume III there is still more information about 'The Waulking—for the sake of readers who have not read Volume I'. There are photographs of four singers who are well-loved by anyone interested in the study of traditional Gaelic songs. There is a fascinating and useful chapter on 'Some Motifs and Formulas of the Older Waulking Songs'. One of the interesting aspects of Waulking song texts is the insight they give us into the *mores* of another age and the ideals of excellence in person and personality. John Lorne Campbell summarises references to food and drink thus: 'Food and drink in better circumstances is variously described as "the breast milk of white-palmed women", cow's milk, beer, ale, wine and whisky; in bad circumstances as soup made from limpets or green shore crabs (partain), in one case as a "miserable pancake" (breacag shuarrach).' Musical instruments referred to are harp, fiddle and bagpipes; death and funerals are often mentioned, as are curses, and dowries; and there are formulaic numbers, used in a similar way to that in which they are used in Scots and other ballads and stories.

Also in Volume III there are further observations on the refrain vocables, a page-and-a-half addition to the extensive Bibliography of Volume I, and an important chapter on comparisons between some of the songs as published by Mrs Kennedy-Fraser and the more authentically traditional versions contained in *Hebridean Folksongs*—the authors compare sixty airs in all.

John Lorne Campbell's own more literal, non-rhyming translations are a great improvement on those in Volume I, described by another reviewer very aptly as being in the style of 'Hiawatha'! There are one or two important errors, however. I have the advantage, that Dr Campbell does not have, of Gaelic as a first language, and I have had many years of practice in transcribing Gaelic; nevertheless I can still have reason to blush over my own faulty and sometimes ridiculous transcriptions, and it is in a spirit of humility, and of sympathy, that I now point out some errors in *Hebridean Folksongs*, most of them from Volume II.

Vol. II, l. 412: *Dh'aithnghinn*, 'I would know'—for *dh'aindeoin*, in spite of'.

l. 506: . . . *an Gleann-dubh mo laithean*, 'for my days'—for *mu laighinn*, 'before I would go to bed'. This particular example was from a song 'taken down from Mrs Neil MacInnis, Cape Breton', that is, the misunderstanding is presumably caused by a written form, with some lapse of time since the hearing.

l. 549, 578 and 583: '*S gu dé mo ghnothach, a Cholla?*—*a Cholla* each time translated as if a person was being addressed. The comma should be removed and the reference then is obviously to the island of Coll, that is, 'what is my business to (in) Coll?' The place-name, I am told by colleagues, should strictly speaking be spelt *Cola*, and its pronunciation conforms better with the assonance in this song.

l. 1540: *Saor an tàthaidh*, 'joiner' (in the glossary, *tàthadh*, 'joining together') for *Saor an t-sàbhaidh*, a formulaic phrase used in many songs for 'joiner of the sawing'.

l. 476: *O'n luath i*, from the ashes she'—for, more probably, *O'n luathaidh*, 'from the ashes', using the dative form. The translation given is correct, however.

l. 435: *uaimh*, 'cave'—for *uaigh*, 'grave', must, I think, have been a slip of the pen or the type, as I also think is line 625 in Volume III where *dh'innseadh* appears instead of *innseadh*. Again, the translations are correct.

The refrain starting at line 1272 in Volume III as *Phàil ó*, 'O, Paul', is suspect. A vocable *Fàil* is much more likely.

Virginia Blankenhorn, writing in *Celtica* XV, presents a fairly convincing argument against John Lorne Campbell's theory that Waulking song texts were improvised by the women who took part in the work. The theory is presented at various points in Volume I and later in Volume III. A lot of improvisation took place in Lewis in the latter years of Waulking, and a woman there remarked to me recently that 'the words were just made up as they went along'. This is, regrettably, true to some extent and as a result many fine texts have been replaced by doggerel. Is it possible, therefore, that something similar happened in a nobler age when poetic skills were more finely tuned? We cannot counter Dr Campbell's argument by asking how the songs were

then remembered after one rendering at the waulking board, because we know that even eighty years ago some people's memories were phenomenal. It seems doubtful that the songs would be capable of repetition by those present if they were actually improvised under semi-trance conditions (see pp. 7 and 8, Vol. III). If vocable refrains were a means of identifying songs—admittedly they may only have become so at a later date—,how did they become separated from sections of text? For example Song XII in Volume I has a section which commonly has a refrain

Hill ù ill é ill e illó
Horó 's tu mo chuachag, etc.

—quite different from that given in the book. There are many different versions of the song known as *A' Bhean Eudach*, which often has the opening lines of Song III in Volume I. One cannot but feel at least uneasy with the certainty of John Lorne Campbell's statement on page 22, Volume I '. . . the bulk of it was extemporized by women at the waulking board . . .' and even more when he adds the following: 'with the likelihood that different sections of the same song were extemporized by different persons' (Vol. III, p. 7). I think that on this question we can only attain to speculation.

The musical transcriptions are meticulously done, as far as one can judge without checking on individual items with the requisite recording. The alignment of note to syllable is particularly careful, and we presume that this is the result of very close collaboration between the two editors.

These are books for the layman and the scholar. The writing is clear and unpretentious in both the melodic and the verbal section. The jump in price from £3.50 for Volume I to £25.00 for Volume III is indicative of the rate of inflation from 1969 to 1981. In spite of their high cost the books are well worth buying, and will be referred to again and again by anyone who is fortunate enough to own them. Finally, they are a great tribute to all singers and bearers of any kind of tradition who have given joy, and will continue to give joy, to those who are interested in what they have passed on. The editors have not been slow to acknowledge their debt to the singers, and the Dedication in Volume II to the 'memory of Annie and Calum Johnston, Roderick Mackinnon and Mrs Neil Campbell and the other singers of Barra and Uist who have passed away' represents the gratitude that we should all like to express to the wonderful tradition-bearers whom we have been privileged to meet, whether on tape or in person.

MORAG MACLEOD

Books Received

Hebridean Folksong, vol. III: *Waulking Song from Barra, South Uist, Eriskay and Benbecula.* Edited and translated by John Lorne Campbell, tunes transcribed and annotated by Francis Collinson. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1981. 432 pp. £25.

The Little General and the Rousay Crofters. Crisis and Conflict on an Orkney Estate by William P. L. Thomson. John Donald, Edinburgh 1981. 234 pp. £15.

Progress and Poetry. The Enlightenment and Scottish Literature by John MacQueen. Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh 1982. 158 pp. £7.50.

Joseph Black 1728–1799. A Commemorative Symposium. Papers presented at a Symposium held in the Royal Scottish Museum on 4th Nov. 1978 in association with the Scottish Society of the History of Medicine, together with a Survey of Manuscript Notes of Joseph Black's Lectures on Chemistry. Edited by A. D. C. Simpson. Royal Scottish Museum Studies, The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh 1982. 70 pp. £4.

The Historical Geography of Scotland since 1707 by David Turnock. Cambridge University Press 1982. 352 pp. £25.

Order in Space and Society. Architectural Form and its Context in the Scottish Enlightenment, edited by Thomas A. Markus. Mainstream, Edinburgh 1982. 322 pp. £20. (Most pages illustrated with black-and-white photographs, plans or drawings.)

Editorial Note

The booklet for the School's double album, *The Muckle Sangs* (TNGM 119/D in the *Scottish Tradition* series of discs and cassettes) was revised and reprinted in 1979 and accompanied all albums subsequently sold. Copies of the revised booklet should be obtained from Topic Records Ltd, 50 Stroud Green Road, London N4 3EF. The price per copy is 50p plus 32p postage.

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(Titles of contributions appear in bold type, and names of contributors in small capitals)