AT THE BACK OF THE GREAT ROCK: CROFTING AND SETTLEMENT IN COIGACH, LOCHBROOM

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INTRODUCTION

General Background

Assynt and Coigach were once in the possession of the Clan Nicol, a family traditionally said to have held lands in Lewis since the 10th century. The remains of their modest mainland stronghold are commemorated in the name 'Castle Street', in Ullapool. In the mid 14th century, however, Torquil MacLeod of Lewis was granted a charter for the lands of Assynt by David II, and although Coigach was not specifically mentioned he continued to hold both districts — which had been seized by his father from the MacNicols. The 'transfer' had been regularised by his father Murdo's marriage to Margaret, the MacNicol heiress. MacKay of Strathnaver subsequently held what was effectively a liferent for some years and the Earls of Ross appear to have claimed a superiority, but essentially Coigach remained in the hands of the MacLeods of Lewis until the early 17th century.

By the early 1600s, however, the MacKenzies had come by Coigach — albeit not straightforwardly. Kenneth MacKenzie of Kintail was active in subduing Lewis and 'acquired' the lands of the MacLeods of Lewis. In 1608 he granted Coigach to Rorie MacKenzie of 'Cultaloid' (Castle Leod), who had married Margaret MacLeod in 1605. Like the earlier Margaret, she was also an heiress — in this instance to Torquil 'Cononach' MacLeod of Lewis. In a manner of speaking, therefore, the lands of Coigach were once again brought as a dowry, even if technically they were no longer Margaret's to bring. The Royal Charter for Coigach of 1609 was effectively royal confirmation of Kintail's grant of 1608 to Rorie. In his own right, Rorie MacKenzie ('Rory Mor', the Tutor of Kintail) had earlier inherited the lands of Castle Leod in Strath Peffer, Easter Ross, which gave the expanding Estate its eastern base. It was an Estate that his descendants were to own for over 400 years (Cromartie 1979. 29, 71, 93, 293; R&C 1989. 7; M. Bangor-Jones 1992. pers. comm.) [Fig. 11.1].

The lands of Coigach were wild, inaccessible and remote; more like an island than a part of the mainland until the coming of roads. The first, but inadequate 'road' to Ullapool from the east was built between 1792 and 1797; it proved impassable within twelve years and there was to be no satisfactory road west of Garve until after 1847. Efforts to build roads in

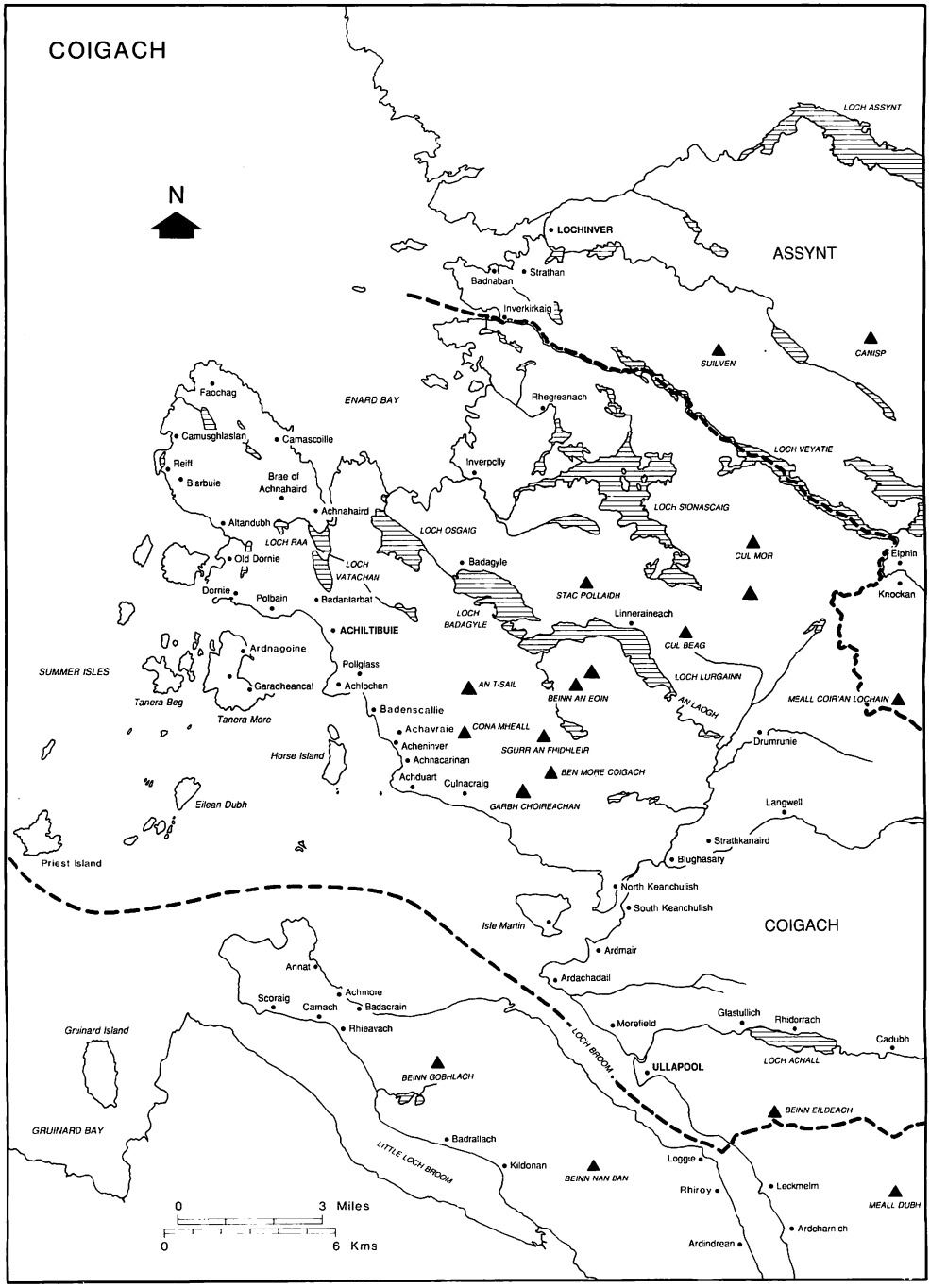

Fig. 14.1 Settlement in Coigach at the peak of mid 19th century population growth. Field survey reveals a small number of additional, tiny coastal settlements broken out by fishermen, cottars or squatters.

Coigach and Wester Ross in subsequent years, eg the 1850s and 1870s, were linked primarily to famine relief. Indeed, cattle and sheep were still being taken out of Coigach 'on the hoof' into the early 1930s (Cromartie 1979. 267-8; Baldwin 1986. 207 et seq; R&C 1989. 209-12, 286-7). Until relatively recent times, therefore, travel was either on foot or — much more easily and rapidly — by boat.

Coigach divides into two distinct areas, split by the mountains of Ben More Coigach, Cùl Beag and Cùl Mór [Figs. 14.1, 14.2]. Southern/eastern Coigach encompasses Ullapool, Glen Achall and Rhidorroch, Strath Kanaird and Langwell; northern/western Coigach includes Inverpolly and Sionascaig in addition to Achnahaird, Achiltibuie and the coastal lands out beyond Ben More Coigach on outer Loch Broom. Northern Coigach also includes most of the Summer Isles, and either in part or in whole was once referred to as 'the Aird of Coigach'. The one-time 'davoch of the Aird' appears to have stretched from Badenscallie to Rubha Coigach, and from there to the Kirkaig river (Bangor-Jones 1986. 157; 1992. pers. comm.).

Present-Day Coigach

This paper focuses primarily on those parts of Coigach that lie north and west of *A'Bheinne Mhór*, the big mountain (Ben More Coigach). It seeks to reflect aspects of everyday life and work in the late 19th-late 20th century as recalled and experienced by local families — notably the last MacLeods in the tiny township of Culnacraig. The MacLeod pedigree can be traced to early 19th century clearances for sheep of lands around Inverpolly and Loch Sionascaig, marching with Assynt some five to ten miles (8-16 kms) due north. In the mid 18th century, Culnacraig was uninhabited — it appears merely as a grazing on the Badenscallie farm [see Figs. 14.64-14.66] so in seeking to set that culture within the framework of evolving settlement patterns more widely in Coigach, there is a certain focus on the earlier farm of Badenscallie. Nonetheless, given that the Culnacraig MacLeod traditions and recollections are generally representative of those of the wider indigenous population of Coigach, this paper reflects more fully the rise and fall of crofting in Coigach.

Today, Culnacraig and the neighbouring townships of Achduart and Achnacarinan have reverted to sheep grazings — generally in association with outward migration, sub-leases and croft amalgamations. By contrast, privately-planted coniferous plantation covers much of the Achavraie infield (much of the rest being private lawns and gardens); whilst recently-planted mixed woodland is transforming Acheninver — a private conservation project by the leaseholder. All these townships are early 19th century pendicles of the 18th century (and much earlier) Badenscallie farm. At Achduart, Achnacarinan and Acheninver, a little traditional crofting continued into the mid 1960s; it survived into the early 1970s in Culnacraig, with a few drills of potatoes laid down for a number of years thereafter. Badenscallie, too, is now used mainly for grazing (cattle still, as well as sheep); but Badenscallie

Fig. 14.2 Cùl Mór, Stac Pollaidh, Cùl Beag, Beinn an Eoin and Ben More Coigach rise starkly beyond the crofts of Brae of Achnahaird. 1972.

alone retains an indigenous and active, albeit small crofting population [Fig. 14.3; see also Fig. 14.56].

In other words, the outermost townships mark the furthest expansion of settlement and cultivation at the time of the clearances, land hunger and peak population. At the other end of the peninsula the abandoned settlements of Faochag, Camascoille, Camusghlaslan tell the same story. So does Achlochan, and so do the townships on Tanera Mór [Fig. 14.1]. As pressures reduced, the smallest, poorest and least accessible townships on the outer limits of cultivation have emptied soonest and most completely. Certainly there is some contemporary diversification with local cooperatives developing small fresh-water fish farms at Culnacraig and Acheninver (as well as on other small burns in Coigach), but most of the former croft houses on these erstwhile Badenscallie pendicles have become holiday homes or retirement cottages. The new timber-frame house at Achduart serves a similar function, whilst the two large newish houses at Achavraie and Acheninver are owned respectively by the family of a former (post-Cromartie, mid 20th century) proprietor of the Ben More Estate, and by a titled land-owning dynasty from central Scotland which also owns the fruitful waters of Loch Osgaig. Ironically, the Cromartie family itself, constrained managerially and financially after (and indeed before) the Crofters

Fig. 14.3 The outermost crofts at Badenscallie have long ago gone empty and fallen into ruins as the core area of croftland and settlement has contracted. 1992.

Act of 1886, retains just one small unimproved cottage, also at Achavraie. It, too, is now scheduled for renovation and extension.

These trends, taken along with the immigration into Coigach of proportionately large numbers of elderly retired (mainly from England or non-Highland Scotland), and of younger individuals and families in large part opting out of urban unemployment and soul-less housing schemes in the English Midlands, have had a major impact on a cultural tradition, now much decayed but essentially little changed until the mid 20th century for perhaps 1,000 years.

This culture is presently undergoing a period of rapid transformation, such as probably it has not experienced since the arrival of the Norsemen and the Gaelic-speaking Scots. Because outward migration and the break-down of the old economy have been so regular and substantial over the past 50 and more years, and because immigration has equally been so sustained and rapid over the past 30 or so years, not only does precious little now survive of the Gaelic language and culture but what does remain has largely 'gone underground', replaced by a remarkable interface of what would be termed elsewhere as mainly middle and working class lowland Scottish and English cultures. Recollection and understanding of the old ways, where this survives, is now largely fragmentary, and it has been submerged by new

cultural waves with quite different cultural roots and aspirations. Whilst many newcomers may have an interest in what went before, by and large they cannot have a detailed, inherited or first-hand experience of Coigach's distinctive past (see MacLeod & Payne, this volume).

Whilst to some degree perhaps a lament, this is not a criticism. For whatever reasons, cultural change has taken place and is irreversible. Perhaps Gaelic will hold on in the area, taught as it is in the local school? — but this would seem unlikely given that Gaelic *learning* is minimal. And perhaps there are lessons to be learnt with regard to the nature and sustainability of economic change and the long-term intrinsic value of human cultures and natural environments that will help avoid a repetition of past errors and injustices? Meantime all cultural and ethnic strands within the present population of the 'Aird of Coigach' look to securing a future where community size and geographical location make cooperation and collaboration a necessary virtue.

THE TRADITION OF DONALD MACLEOD, CULNACRAIG

Family History

Donald MacLeod (1898-1979) [Fig. 14.4] possessed a good memory and eye for detail. From his own recollections it is possible to sketch an outline history of the family. His grandfather Donald (1816-1898), who died the year his grandson was born, was one of three brothers (Roderick, 1815-1857; Murdo, 1816-1897) all of whom were born 'in the Lodge area of Inverpolly'; his great-grandfather, Murdo Bain (1776-1863) was born 'somewhere between Inverpolly and Lochinver' [Figs 14.5-14.7]. All four were victims of the Clearances and formed a nucleus of the first recorded (although not the first) settlers in what came to be known as *A'Chulachreige* (Culnacraig: at the back of the rocky buttress, *A'Chreige Mhór*, on the steep western end of the ridge of *A'Bheinne Mhór*, Ben More Coigach).

Donald was well able to outline his genealogy (confirmed in good part by the stones in Badenscallie burial ground); he was also able to put at least a little flesh on the bones. His grandfather Donald used the shielings below the precipitous east/south face of Ben More; his grandfather's brother Murdo put in the well below the track below his house, built a wall around it and covered it; his grandfather's other brother Roderick emigrated with his family to New Zealand, where he died of 'galloping consumption' (tuberculosis). As for his father's generation, one sister (Hannah, 1858-1927 or Etta, 1864-1939) moved to Tain; the other two (including Annabella, 1870-1935) stayed in Culnacraig. Of his father's brothers, his uncles, Alex, the youngest (1876-1878) died in infancy; Duncan, the eldest (1855-1939) emigrated to Queensland, Australia, as a plumber; John (1862-1927) spent a few years as a shepherd at Raddery Mains, Tongue, before returning home; Roderick (the second eldest, 1855-1951) stayed at home as a salmon/herring fisherman and was 18 years bedridden with rheumatism from the fishing. In other words, four of the eight stayed at home. It is unlikely that the croft and

Fig. 14.4 The late Donald MacLeod, Culnacraig, cutting bracken to use as a base layer to his corn stacks. 1972.

THE FARMS OF INVERPOLLY
AND DALPOLLY , COIGACH :
C. 1747–52

Fig. 14.5 The farms of Inverpolly and Dalpolly, Coigach, based on a survey by William Roy, ca. 1747-52.

Fig. 14.6 Inverpolly and 'Dealpolly' Farms, as surveyed by Peter May, 1756.

the fishing could have supported more — even assuming it adequately supported four.

Donald's father, Murdo, was born in 1866 (died 1922), the sixth of eight children and the youngest of the four surviving brothers. According to Donald, he left for Glasgow to look for work; he married and settled down at '58 Miller Street, Motherwell'. His wife, Elizabeth Marshall, died one month after giving birth to Donald; Murdo was unable to look after his infant son; so Donald was sent north to Culnacraig to live with his 71 year old grandmother and uncles and aunts, mainly in their 30s and 40s. He was brought up, therefore, in a small remote township by kinsfolk who (with the exception of his grandparents) remained unmarried, and whose direct personal experiences went back to the 1820s-1850s/60s. Perhaps more than many, therefore, Donald MacLeod fell privy to the experiences, attitudes

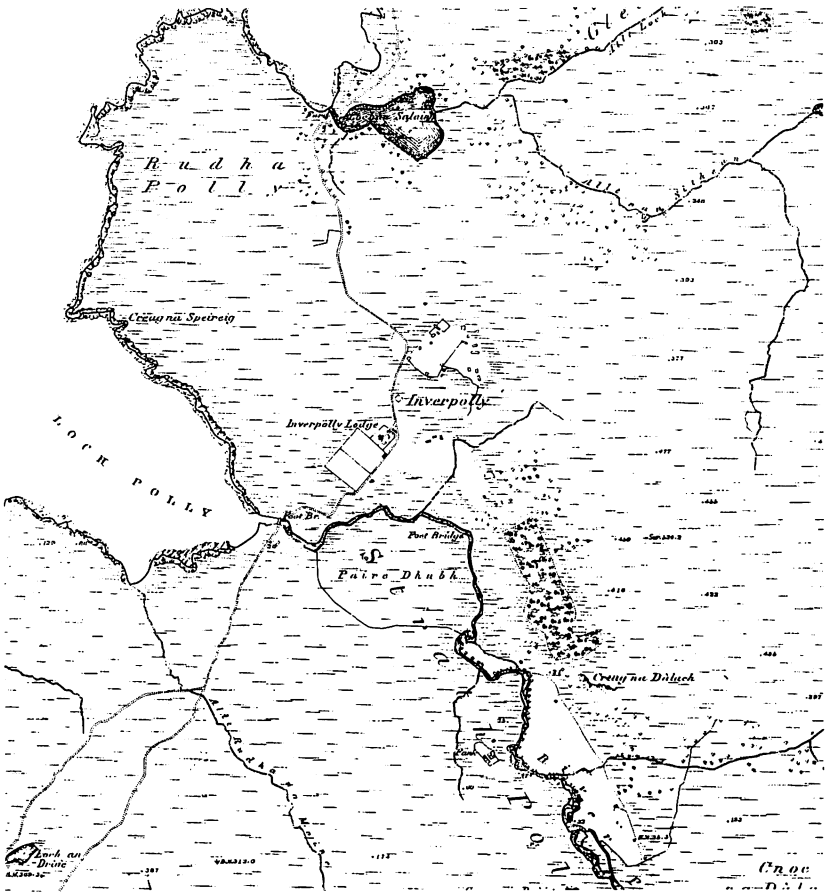

Fig. 14.7 Inverpolly, surveyed by the Ordnance Survey in 1875. Dalpolly has disappeared entirely by this time, though May's secondary cluster on the west bank of the river survives as a sheep fank. By contrast, the layout of the Inverpolly township remains not far from the subsequent Inverpolly Lodge.

and memories less of his parents' but of his grandparents' generation.

Development of the Township

From them, no doubt, he heard that prior to the clearances no-one lived in Culnacraig [Figs. 14.8-14.10; see also Figs. 14.65, 14.66]. He recounted that four families lived in the old Culnacraig; that when they first arrived their land was all down by the sea, and that it was they who created the patchwork of now long-abandoned turf dykes (*gàradh fàil*) and lazy-beds (*feannagan or màgan tumaidh*) that feature so clearly still in the landscape [Fig.

Fig. 14.8 Culnacraig, Coigach, 1972. The large flat field was known as Am Blàr; the smaller dyked fields below the nearest house were created in the late 19th century after security of tenure had been guaranteed by the Crofters' Act of 1886.

14.11]. They lived, he recounted, off herring and tatties; and their first houses were clustered around the site of his own house (171) and out-buildings [Fig. 14.13].

The question then is more 'why there?', rather than simply 'where?' According to Donald MacLeod, the original Culnacraig was below present-day Culnacraig, running down to the sea. He suggested that the people were

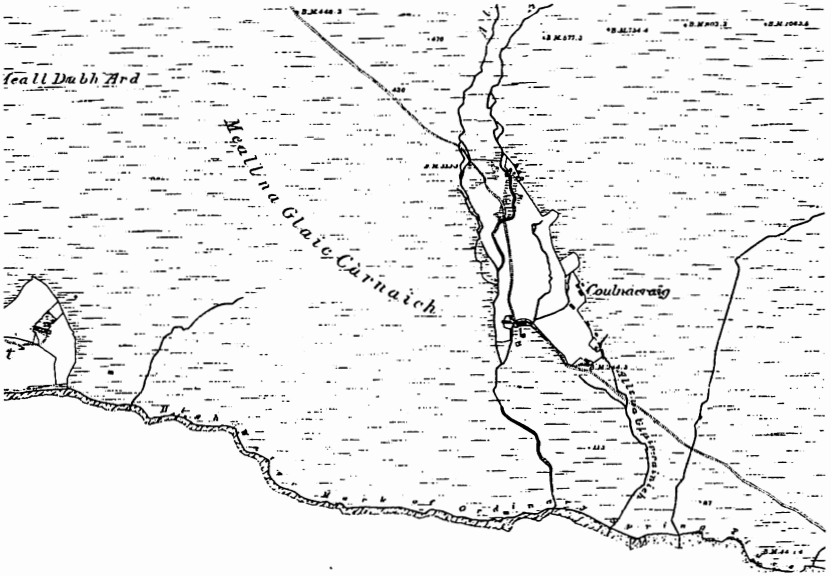

Fig. 14.9 Culnacraig, surveyed by the Ordnance Survey in 1875. Dwellings had become scattered, though the keeper's house at the upper end of the valley was not yet built. Nor was much of the infield yet enclosed other than by the hill-dyke. By contrast, none of the earlier lazy-beds are marked, lying below the present-day fields and running down to the sea between the two burns — evidence that they had long since been abandoned.

Fig. 14.10 Culnacraig by the time of the 2nd. edition of the Ordnance Survey 6 inch Map, 1906. This is close to the optimum period of settlement — the infield is at its greatest; the new houses have all been built; new tracks have been constructed, including the cart track down to the fishermen's bothy and the track leading to the school in Achduart. The main access track over the moorland has been realigned better to follow the contours.

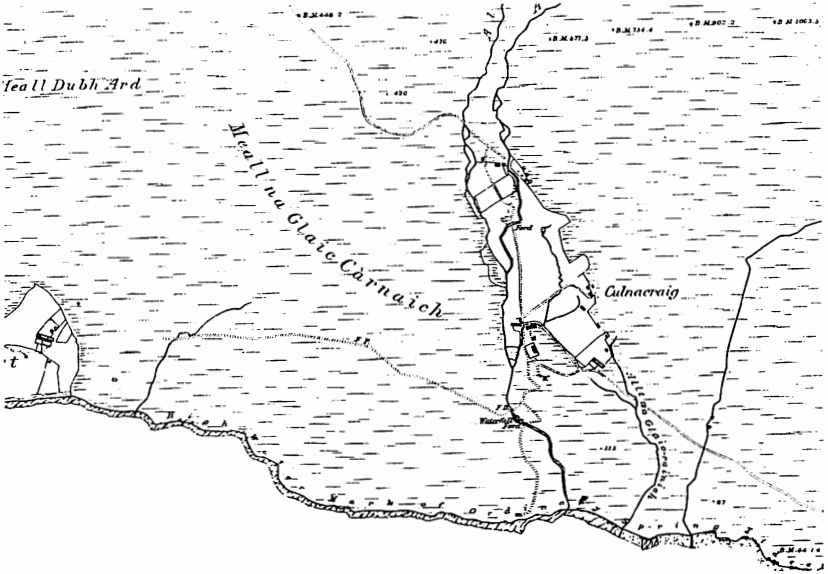

Fig. 14.11 Long-abandoned cultivation rigs below Culnacraig. 1992.

put there because, being more dependant on the sea, they preferred to be near it; but also because the flat and fertile Culnacraig croftland of today was then a marsh.

Some 14 ins or so (36 cm) under the big field (*Am Blàr*) is pure sand, and he heard it said that in former times it was a loch whose waters burst out and flooded down the hillside creating both the deep steep-sided gorge behind his own barn and the small gorge, *A'Chlais dubh*, below his neighbour's house (173). A marsh, it was said, remained; when the new settlers arrived, the steeper seaward rigs were broken out and cultivated whilst the marsh was being drained. Subsequently the people abandoned the early rigs, *A'Bhuaile Mhór* and moved to the better land.

Donald MacLeod's traditions apart, the first documentary record for Culnacraig appears to be in the proposals to improve the Coigach farms accompanying Morrison's plans of 1775 (E 746/189):

To 38 [Roods]	Stone to inclose Culchreg at 4/6	£8 11 0	}
To 74	do. feal on the same line at 2/-	£7 12 0	}

It is not until 1815, however, that we become aware of any settlers, when Alexander MacLeod and Roderick MacLeod are cited as defendants in a process for payment of debts. They are listed as living at *Culcraggie of Badscallie* (SC 25/22/54).

Thereafter, the evidence is primarily that of the Rentals and various other Processes (Rentals from 1855 sampled on a five-yearly basis):

1820 (Rental):	Alexander MacLeod		£4
	Rory MacLeod Senior		£4
	Rory MacLeod Junior		£4
	Murdo MacLeod Senior		£4
	Murdo MacLeod Junior		£4
	(GD 305/2/2050/18)		
1826 (Processes):	Murdo MacLeod senior		
	Roderick MacLeod senior		
	Roderick MacLeod junior		
	Murdo MacLeod senior		
	Murdo MacLeod junior		
	(SC 25/22/102)		
1830 (Processes):	Murdo MacLeod alias Baillie		
	Roderick MacLeod senior		
	Roderick MacLeod junior		
	Murdo MacLeod senior		
	Murdo MacLeod junior		
	(SC 25/22/119, 120)		
1835 (Rental):	Rod. MacLeod Jn		£5 3
	Rod. MacLeod Sn		£4 16
	Murdo MacLeod Sn		£5 6
	Murdo MacLeod Jn		£5 3
	Murdo MacLeod		£4 12
	In this rental Achininver, Achavrae, Achnagarron, Achduart and Culmacraig [*sic*] are all described as 'Pen.' — Pendicles of Badenscallie. (GD 305/2/85)		
1853-1865 (Rentals):	Neil MacLeod		£5 1
	Murdo McLeod (Bain)		£5 8
	Robt. McLeod & Mother		£10 8
	Murdo McLeod (Black/Dhu)		£5 8
	(GD 305/2/119, 120, 121, 122, 132)		
1865 (Rental):	Niel McLeod [*sic*]	(168)	£5 1
	Murdo McLeod (Bain)	(169)	£5 8
	Robt. McLeod	(170)	£10 8
	Murdo McLeod (Dhu)	(171)	£5 8
	(GD 305/2/136)		
1870 (Rental):	Neil MacLeod	(170)	£5 1
	Murdo MacLeod	(171)	£5 8
	Robt. MacLeod	(172)	£10 8
	Murdo MacLeod	(173)	£5 8

By 1870, the Lot numbers allocated by 1865 had been amended and appear to equate with present-day house/croft numbers.
(GD 305/2/139)

1875 (Rental): As 1870, except that Robt. MacLeod's Lot is divided between himself, I. Grant, J. Grant and S. Grant.
(GD 305/2/142)

1880 (Rental):

Neil MacLeod	(170)	£6 8
Murdo MacLeod	(171)	£7 1 6
Robert MacLeod	(172)	£6 13
Murdo MacLeod	(173)	£6 11 6
Alexr. Grant	(174)	£6 6

(GD 305/2/147)

1885 (Rental):

Neil MacLeod	(170)	£7 16
Murdo MacLeod Bain	(171)	£9 1 6
Do. Kate Int 12/-		
Robert MacLeod	(172)	£6 13
Murdo MacLeod Dhu	(173)	£7 19 6

On the statement of Rent Arrears for 11/11/1886, Neil MacLeod has been replaced by Wm. MacLeod.

The 'double' croft that Robt. MacLeod held 1850s-1870s, and then shared with Grants, has now reverted to a single tenancy. The 'second' croft has apparently been divided amongst all the tenants except Robert.
(GD 305/2/150)

1890-1892 (Rentals):

William MacLeod	(170)	£6
Murdo MacLeod Bain	(171)	£7
Robert MacLeod	(172)	£5 2
Wid. Anne & Don^{d} MacLeod	(173)	£6 2

(GD 305/2/156,157)

On occasion the Rentals have been annotated. Thus on 4 January 1887 William MacLeod, Culnacraig, bought a Drumvaich tup off the Estate for 12/-; and on 16 April 1887, Murdo MacLeod Dhu paid £8 cash towards rent arrears.

Without further research into, say, the Census returns or oral family histories, it is not easy to identify more detailed inter-relationships between the various MacLeod families, or indeed the various Murdos or Rodericks. Donald MacLeod's recollections tell only that the original settlers included twin brothers, a grandfather and the grandfather's uncle; and that Murdos in his family were referred to as Bain — as opposed to Dhu. He was, however, able to point to Ruaridh Og MacLeod as being the great-grandfather of his former neighbour Christie MacLeod (173). 'Young' Roderick, also 'born at

Inverpolly' according to Donald, would presumably be one of the Rories of the 1820 Rental. In which case perhaps he could be the Roderick Og who, as told by Morag Shaw Mackenzie in 1982, 'took his father on his back out of the burning village of Sionnenscaig when the people were evicted'[1] (R&C 1989. 443)?

With five tenants and their no doubt increasingly extended families to feed it must be asked whether all the lazy beds down towards the sea would have been abandoned at once (as Donald suggested), or whether — and when — gradual contraction took place? For they would surely have needed as much land as possible? Perhaps it coincided with the allocation of individual crofts, apparently in 1829? By way of comparison, the high point of cultivation in the crofting areas of neighbouring Assynt appears to have been reached during the 1830s — given that efforts by the estate to encourage the improvement of crops led subsequently to better cultivation of a smaller, contracted area (M. Bangor-Jones 1992. pers. comm.).

Another enigma relates to the names *Tigh a'Bhaillie* and *Lios a'Bhallie* (the house and garden of the 'baillie', close by the Culnacraig sheep fank), and to 'Murdo MacLeod alias Baillie' in 1830. Oral tradition says that the fank was built out of the old house, and there are certainly enough ruins close by to have provided outbuildings and a dyked 'garden'. Perhaps the said Murdo MacLeod came to live in a house formerly occupied by 'the Baillie'? There is no known (Baron) Baillie ever resident in Coigach, however, and more realistically Murdo MacLeod simply acquired his alias as a result of a personal standing, status or reputation locally — triggered perhaps by his involvement in the legal 'processes', maybe standing up for his rights? A 19th century date for the name is undoubtedly the most likely — in which case it suggests that not all the older houses were necessarily clustered.

Donald MacLeod could identify only three stone houses for his four settler families — one in what was latterly his hen house, one in his garage, and a third a little below his garden wall, close to the well. Their very first houses may have been rapidly-built turf houses close to the shore; indeed tradition has it that one evicted family lived for over a year in a cave, *An Uamhag*, along the rocky shore towards the Geodh Mor [Figs. 14.12, 14.13]. The old stone houses, clustered between the 'old' and the 'new' infields, remained as outhouses once more substantial stone houses were built in the late 19th century — a beneficial effect, no doubt, of the 1886 Crofters' Act. Instead of being clustered, the new houses were scattered about the township. The family from below the track built their new house on the hillside (170); another built the outermost house in the present settlement (173) — thatched until 1905 when the house roof was raised and covered with corrugated iron (the steading was corrugated later with a Board of Agriculture Grant in 1922) [Fig. 14.14]. Donald's own uncles and grandfather built the present house (171) in 1879 — the roof timbers were sledged across from the Osgaig woods and it was roofed with Ballachulish slate. (Dormers and rear outshot were added in the mid 1980s by the new owner).

The fourth habitable house, by contrast, at the road-end, was seemingly

Fig. 14.12 According to local tradition, the cave behind the rowan tree was inhabited for over a year by an evicted family. 1992.

first put up by one of several Grants (who appear to have acquired a share of croftland in Culnacraig shortly before 1875). By 1885, if not before, they had moved off; the Estate put a new roof on it and allocated it to a keeper. The keeper found it too far to walk regularly into Achiltibuie and was relocated at Greenhill, just west of the present Community Hall (ex Drill Hall). It seems that Robert MacLeod came to rent it off the Estate and used it as his croft house; John Alec Campbell bought it in 1947 when he married Peggy MacLeod, Robert's granddaughter, and took on the croft she inherited at Culnacraig. This house has recently been improved by John Alec's son Ian, in 1990-91 (J. A. Campbell 1991).

Tales and Stories

Donald MacLeod was also heir to a modest store of stories and sayings which, in the 1960s/1970s, he recalled hearing from his grandmother in the 1900s/1910s — 'a long, long time ago', when he was very young. A slight, slender, sprightly figure in his 70s/early 80s, with expressive bony hands, he would sit back in a chair in his old baggy trousers, black boots, old brown tweed jacket and open-necked shirt, a smile on his thin, high cheek-boned, weather-reddened face and an innocent — perhaps mischievous — twinkle in his sharp blue eyes. Over many an evening he would recount how things had been; and he would tell, for instance, of how the fire-blackened stumps of trees in the peat had come to be burnt:

Fig. 14.13 Part of the cluster of buildings at the lower end of Culnacraig. Barn, byre, hen-house, cart-shed and garage in more recent times, they once formed a nucleus for the post-Clearance settlement. 1992.

Fig. 14.14 The outermost house in Culnacraig was formerly occupied by the descendants of Ruaridh Og MacLeod. 1992.

. . . Hundreds of years ago, long before the evictions a Norwegian lady called *Dubh a'Ghiuthais* [black fir] came and burnt all the fir trees so that only the black stalks were left . . . the stumps of burnt trees in the peat banks. She had been sent to destroy . . .

The trees had been set on fire by a witch who came from Norway . . . She had wings and flew . . .

The *Dubh a'Ghiuthais* could turn into a hare . . . They tried to shoot the hare with a shotgun, but couldn't get a spark. They were told to put a 6d into the barrel of the gun, and they fired . . .

The hare disappeared into a hole — that was a witch. Hares could 'disappear into all appearances'.

(Further Wester Ross versions of this story have been recorded and analysed by Donald Archie MacDonald: MacDonald 1984. 269 et seq.).

And in 1976, on seeing the smoke-blackened candlesticks, victims of a blocked chimney in his neighbour's holiday house, he remarked with a chuckle: 'The candlesticks are as black as the trees in Glaic na Phris that were burnt by the Norwegians'. 'The hollow of the thicket' is down towards the shore, a little west of the old fishing bothy; it was his own, live cultural tradition on which he continued to draw.

He would also tell of the fairies:

The fairies lived up the hill above Loggie, on the moor. They had lots of festivities at Christmas time . . . in their mounds, filled with electric light . . . At Christmas they danced the Highland Fling . . .

One man was mesmerised and went to dance . . . and danced and danced . . . there was a very bright light. When he came out his feet were worn away to the knees . . . He was in the mound for 100 years but thought it was only a day.

Loggie was his wife's place of birth; maybe the hill or mound referred to was the prehistoric fort of Dun an Ruigh Ruadh or Dun Lagaidh? (see MacKie, this volume).

On yet other occasions, Donald MacLeod would tell of:

The Druid stones . . . down towards the sea *Aite (?)Ùrnuigh* ['Urie': place of prayer?] where people used to worship in a circle . . .

There was another stone, further west, nearer the shore . . . past the bothy . . . near to where peats were once cut . . . one stone only, about four feet high . . .

This single stone appears to be a standing stone; the 'Druid stones' (which also include what may be considered a standing stone) appear to be the remains of a hut circle adjacent to the old cart track running down to the *port* where boats were hauled up on the shore. Both are evidence of prehistoric settlement — the former perhaps 3,500 or so years ago; the latter some 1,600-2,500 years ago.

At Achnacarinan, a couple of miles or so north round the coast, stands another standing stone, *Clach na Biodaig*, the Dirk Stone, linked to another circle of stones [Fig. 14.15]. Angus MacLeod, Achnacarinan (1992) tells how this was called a Druid's stone by one Major de Hamill, an ex-Army

Fig. 14.15 Clach na Biodaig, the Dirk Stone, Achnacarinan. 1992.

padre who had the old Achduart Schoolhouse from the mid 1940s to the mid 1950s. De Hamill seemingly found an antiquarian reference to the Dirk Stone. In this instance, therefore, it seems as if Donald MacLeod's reference to 'Druid stones' and 'a place of prayer' at Culnacraig *may* have a specific and recent provenance (or overlay) — and exemplify the power of oral tradition, however originated. For Donald's wife was once housekeeper to de Hamill.

Both Donald and his wife, Dolina, were native Gaelic speakers, but it was only after his marriage that Donald was taught to read in Gaelic, by his wife, from the Gaelic *Bìobull*. Both were staunch Free Presbyterians and good church people, worshipping at the simple corrugated iron church in

Achiltibuie — latterly a craft workshop, 'Picture Shack' and hay store. They were strong observers of the Sabbath and, as others, Donald would always shave on Saturday night, for instance; nor would they cook meals on a Sunday.

At the same time, earlier concepts and stories could co-exist easily enough for Donald alongside his religion, without the incongruity apparent perhaps to outsiders. For Dolina, there was rather more tension maybe, for she could become quite agitated when her husband talked about the 'Druid circle' (*An Deilbh*) at Badenscallie, and about the 'Giant's tombstone' below the cemetery. Dolly poked the fire in great agitation when this came up and said 'There were giants here in those days' (J. & D. Armstrong 1973. pers. comm.).

These tales and recollections give a flavour of the world in which Donald MacLeod (and Dolina MacLennan) grew up — a world whose roots lay in a blend of Celtic and fragmentary Norse attitudes and beliefs, overlain by an almost overwhelming acceptance of Free Presbyterianism which did not remove totally, nonetheless, the much earlier cultural substratum. Along with its economy, it is a world far removed from present-day Culnacraig and Coigach.

For some, Donald MacLeod, *An Slaiseadh (An Slasag)* was maybe eccentric, perhaps naive. He had a simple, childlike sense of wonder and humour, a trusting nature and an impishness that must have got him into many a scrape when young. His nickname, indeed, is said to refer to the many little slaps around the legs that his uncles felt obliged to give him. Iain Slaiseadh, his uncle John, is said to have told him frequently to 'come here and I'll give you a little slap' (A. MacLeod 1991).

Yet it would be this open and unsophisticated gently mischievous nature, linked to his curiosity, his clarity of mind and eye for detail, that made Donald a natural repository for such stories of times past — accepted, in so far as one could tell, at face value (which is not to say that they were necessarily or totally believed).

And his recollections on other, more mundane matters — crofting, fishing and everyday life — are equally clear and detailed. Even though he was often more interested in talking about cars, watches and how he would have liked perhaps to have been a doctor had things been different, he would happily talk of the past, and could still turn his mind to a gentle Gaelic tongue-twister:

> Naodh ba breac dàmhsa air an leac
> Nine speckled cows dancing on the floor [flagstone].

At the same time he was just as taken with such prosaic purple prose as 'Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour over others without first getting a few drops yourself' (1970) — first uncovered perhaps in an old Reader's Digest or People's Friend!

Donald died alone, of hypothermia, one cold November night about a month after our last discussions. He had gone out in his normal working

clothes, probably in the evening, and seemingly to tidy up some rubbish in the little burn below the simple stone bridge, not far from the house. For some time now he had become increasingly frail and shaky on his feet, and had difficulty getting up again if he fell. And he would often not tie up his bootlaces, for he could hardly bend far enough to reach them. He apparently slipped and fell on the rocky slabs; and with loose boots and freezing fingers he tried in vain to get back on his feet and back up to the old cart track. He became progressively weaker and exhausted as he struggled; he lapsed into a coma; and the following morning was found dead beside the burn. It took three men to lift him, a slight light figure, and to carry him indoors (Miss M. F. Watt 1992. pers. comm.).

A far better end for Donald, however, than the old folks' home. He had rejected all talk of a move; he wanted to remain in his own house, on his own croft, with his cats and his hens; on the land his ancestors had worked. An old folks' home would have seared his soul.

Dolina had died of a weak heart in 1974 after many months in hospital in Inverness; Donald MacLeod was the last of his line. His family had lived at Culnacraig for around 160-170 years, a period that encompassed the rise and fall of crofting in the township.

CULTIVATION AND HARVESTING

Before they went away to the fishing, by the first week in May, the men would have prepared the land and sowed the seed. Traditionally spring work began on 12 March, and on 24 March (old calendar) the cattle were put out to the hill; dykes, fences and gates that had been open all winter were repaired and closed, and sowing began (D. Fraser 1972).

In practice, times would vary — not least according to the weather, the nature and extent of the land and availability of labour. For a five acre croft in Coigach it might take two weeks to gather enough seaweed, and a further three weeks to dig over the land (A. MacLeod 1972). With a plough, manure and a bit less land on the other hand, it might take a week or ten days (D. MacLeod 1972). Either way, if sown in April oats could normally be harvested around the beginning of September; if in May, by late September/early October — weather permitting! Meantime an enclosed 'park' or yard like that below Donald MacLeod's garden would be dug in February, from the bottom up, and planted with oats and potatoes, part being left in grass. It would give a threefold return (D. MacLeod 1976).

Turning over the Earth

Latterly, Donald MacLeod's neighbours would tractor-plough the land he was to cultivate. In 1972, the year of his last harvest, this was done on 5 May, when the Campbells also prepared their own drills for potatoes and turnips. Ministry tractors were first used in Culnacraig in 1942 (1941 in Achiltibuie); previously the land was turned over by horses or with the *cas-chrom*.

The Cas-chrom

The *cas-chrom* was once well-known in Coigach. A man could dig more in one hour than in two or three hours with the spade — though the spade was better because it went deeper. It was widely used on Tanera Mór (as also on the steep lands of eg Letters on Inner Loch Broom and Diabaig, Loch Torridon); and it was no doubt equally widely used on the once-cultivated, long-abandoned rigs that cluster around eg Dornie, Alltandhu, Badentarbat, Achnahaird and Inverpolly, and on the rough wet hillsides below present-day Culnacraig. Even on the gently-sloping heartlands of what were once the old 18th century farms, the *cas-chrom* was used for odd corners, rig ends or bits of land too steep, too rough, or too small to be ploughed with horses.

The *cas-chrom* was made locally from birch or other hardwood, carefully chosen so as to give a wide angle between the shaft (commonly 6 ft; 1.8 m long) and the sole (about 2.5 ft; 0.8 m long) [Figs. 14.16, 14.17]. It had a foot-peg inserted in the reinforced 'ankle' and one made by Donnie Fraser's grandfather also had a horn fixed to the upper end of the handle. The length of the shaft was made to suit the man; the iron blade was inserted into the earth at approximately 25° to the ground; and every man liked his back straight, not bent, when using it.

On a small rig or lazy-bed, particularly on rough ground, you had first to notch a line with a spade; for a *cas-chrom* can only cut one way, slicing in and forward. Then you started at the top, working backwards a single width

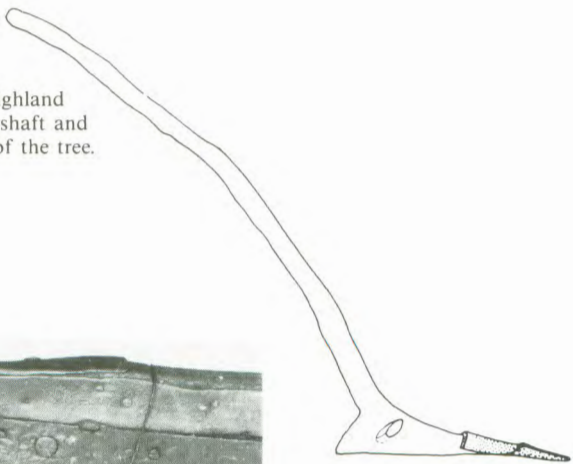

Fig. 14.16 A *cas-chrom* from Rhue, Ullapool, now in the Highland Folk Museum, Kingussie. The shaft and sole are in one-piece, cut out of the tree.

Fig. 14.17 The sole of a *cas-chrom* from Coigach, collected by Iain Crawford and now in the National Museums of Scotland (PA 34). As well as an iron blade, the base of the sole is shod with iron to protect it against wear.

down the rig, returning repeatedly to the top [Figs. 14.18-14.21]). A *feannag* was a narrow rig; *gead*, a somewhat wider lazy-bed or portion of arable land; *màg*, a very broad rig; *raon*, a field. If there were two or three men in the house they would work the rig together, in parallel, following each other down (D. & D. MacLeod 1972, A. MacLeod 1972, D. MacLean 1972, D. Fraser 1972).

The iron blade or *caibe* (*ceapa*) for the *cas-chrom*, as for other implements, was made by the Achiltibuie smith, William MacLeod in Polglass (A. MacLeod 1972) — but not everywhere did *caibe* refer simply to the blade. In the compound *cas-chaibe* it was a common enough mainland term for the Hebridean *cas-dhìreach* or straight delving spade (Dwelly). And around Gairloch, Kinlochewe, Torridon and Applecross the term *cas-chaibe* was also used instead of *cas-chrom* for a crooked spade (*cas-chrom* apparently re-appearing around Kyle of Lochalsh). When she first heard *cas-chrom*, Alex MacDonald's sister in Fearnamore, Applecross, did not realise that it applied to what she knew as the *cas-chaibe* (A. MacDonald 1972, R. & M. Beaton 1972).

Ploughing with Horses

In Culnacraig, however, as on other suitable land, horses were commonly used in the decades prior to the first tractors [Fig. 14.22]. For the bulk of modern Culnacraig is flat, stone-free land — some 14 ins (36 cm) of good black soil overlying an inch or two (2-5 cm) of coarse sand, and below that 'as good pure building sand as you could wish for' (D. MacLeod 1970, J. A. Campbell 1991).

In those times, each house had one horse, paired up to work each other's land in turn — three horses, that is, since the land attached to the keeper's house at the top of the settlement was insufficient to feed a horse. And on Tanera, where land was equally scarce, a pair of horses were temporarily shipped in each year to work the land (A. MacLeod 1972).

Donald MacLeod had had two horses (consecutively) since his marriage to Dolina in 1936. One, *Prince*, was 'a bit too big', presumably for easy yoking. *Jeannie*, brown with steel-grey hairs and a black stripe, was more than (?)30 years old when she died ca. 1940 — bought at Scoraig ca. (?)1913 and brought over the hills to Letters and thence to Coigach by the bridge at the head of Loch Broom. *Jeannie* was used in partnership with *Bessie*, a jet black mare 'bigger than a Shetland', bought from Strathan (Lochinver) around 1915 and kept by Christie MacLeod's family in the seaward-most house in Culnacraig (173). Bessie died in 1941 and was buried in *A'Chlais dubh,* the big rock-girt ravine below Christie's house.

When not working, horses were put out to graze on the moorland between Culnacraig and Achduart, though at one time in Coigach horses were grazed in several places in the hills. *Glaic nan Each* is a hollow high above Culnacraig, across the Allt nan Coisiche and under the buttress of A'Chreige Mhór, the great rock of Coigach; there were further horse grazings under the north-west slopes of Beinn an Eoin and at the Osgaig shiel-

Fig. 14.18

Fig. 14.19

Figs. 14.18 - 14.20 Stages in using the *cas-chrom* demonstrated for the writer by the late Alex. MacDonald, Fearnamore, Applecross, 1972, and now part of the Scottish Country Life collections in the National Museums of Scotland. Inserting the blade (14.18); cutting deeper and beginning to twist (14.19); turning the furrow (14.20).

ings; and *Eilean nan Eich* (Island of the Horses) was regularly used for the wintering of horses (Fraser 1957. A.I. 22, 55) — reminders perhaps of the days long past when droves of horses, not just cattle, were sold out of Coigach.

According to Donald MacLeod, in earlier times ('about 200 years ago', but more likely perhaps in the later part of the 19th century), there was a meeting of all those with horses on the hill to agree grazing restrictions — horses being included in the souming. Just one man from Culnacraig attended that particular meeting — William Macleod, who took over his tenancy in 1890 and whose house (170), occupied by MacLeans from Achduart after ca. 1907-10, still stands on the steep hill-slope above the fank. It is said that discussion focused at one point on the horse kept by those at the Achavraie shop. Some referred to it as a water-horse (*each uisge*) — no doubt as a joke or an insult! 'What about the *each uisge* then, that was up at Achavraie?' 'Oh well we never heard of a water-horse that ate grass', so its grazing was not restricted!

Donald MacLeod's long rectangular strips of land lay across the level field at Culnacraig, rising steeply up the eastern slope. The steeper land has not been much cultivated since 1942, with the advent of tractor-ploughing. On the flat ground his strips were about 120yds (110m), long from the

Fig. 14.21 Using the *cas-chrom* and planting potatoes in Lochcarron parish. The women frequently did the sowing, whilst the men dug. (?) Early 20th century.

township track to the bottom of the brae. It would take a pair of horses an hour to plough a 7 yard (6.5m) wide strip — seven yards being the most convenient unit allowing for the horse to be turned at either end.

Manuring the Ground

The detailed sequence of cultivation depended on the fertiliser to be used. If cow manure, accumulated during the winter in the byre, this was spread evenly across the ground with a graip before ploughing; if seaweed, the

Fig. 14.22 Ploughing at Achiltibuie, 1930s. From an album in the National Monuments Record of Scotland.

ground was sometimes ploughed first and the seaweed put into each furrow/drill afterwards so as not to get tangled around the plough (or *cas-chrom*) [Fig. 14.23].

Though it might take Coigach people about two weeks to gather enough seaweed for their land, and it might take perhaps a further three weeks for it to rot adequately, it would take only a few hours to spread — four or five tons being the equivalent to one bag of today's fertiliser!

Last century, weed was taken from every bit of shore [Figs. 14.24, 14.25]. Anyone could take *feamainn chura*, the ripe weed washed up on the shore by the tides — it belonged to the first man who got to it and piled it up with a graip. Otherwise the shore rights were allocated to townships and sub-divided amongst the crofts. Shore divisions were determined by marks

Fig. 14.23 A team at work on a Skye croft. The men dig with the *cas-chrom*; one woman is carrying a creel filled with seaweed; the other woman teases out the seaweed onto the freshly-turned earth. George Washington Wilson, late 19th century.

Fig. 14.24 Cutting seaweed on Skye, from a Valentine's postcard. The women have sickles; one man rests on the boat; the other man stands beside a creel. 1880.

Fig. 14.25 Archie MacEachern, Kinsadel, Arisaig, carrying seaweed for fertiliser, ca. 1910. M. E. M. Donaldson Collection.

off the land; the Summer Isles too were allocated; and the resident factor kept the peace in the event of a quarrel.[2] Once cut (perhaps 4-5 tons per day), seaweed was gathered in creels and loaded either into a cart or a boat. On Tanera, for instance, boats homeward-bound from other islands would be moored below the crofts at high tide and unloaded at low tide. The seaweed was then taken right up to the croftland in creels as there were no carts on Tanera (A. MacLeod 1972, M. MacLeod 1972, D. MacLean 1972, D. Fraser 1972). At Badenscallie too, it was unloaded from the boats at *Creag a'Chléibh*, the rock of the creels (Fraser 1957. A.I.32), and a pair of creels could be hung on a *srathair*, pack saddle, either side of a pony's back.

Apart from *feamainn chura*, Coigach people would collect *feamainn dubh*, the bubbly black/dark green bladder wracks used extensively for corn and (sometimes) potatoes. Some, however, preferred not to use seaweed on potatoes, and certainly not tangles, for they were too rich and made the

potatoes watery or 'cheesy' — they preferred 'smiling' potatoes! Tangle leaves (*barr-stamh*) might be used on turnips, however, and some sought out the long, wide-bladed phosphorous-rich *liaragach* for their potato ground — weeds that grow far out, accessible only at the very low spring tides (M. MacLeod 1972, D. Fraser 1972).

More particularly at Culnacraig, black weed (*feamainn dubh*) and reddish/brown weed (*feamainn dearg*) were put on the corn land — byre manure being used mainly on potatoes. Cutting took place at low tide, particularly during the big March tides. Sometimes all the people in Culnacraig would cut weed together, bring it back and share it out; other days each would cut his own. It was cut on the boulder-strewn shore below the old rigs, taken in a creel (*cliabh*) to the mouth of the big burn (*Sruth mór/Allt a'Chulacreige/Allt a'Choire Reidh*), and then carted up the zigzagging *Ceum nan Cuirn*, the track of the carts, to the crofts. Donald MacLeod was in school at Achduart when cutting seaweed stopped — probably just a little before 1910 — though the system of shore rights had fallen into disuse long before.

The seaweed was cut with reaping hook or sickle (*corran*) [Fig. 14.26]. Although smooth-edged sickles seem to have been used around Applecross (Alex MacDonald of Fearnamore had never seen a *corran fiachach*), toothed sickles were certainly preferred in Coigach. They would be bought, toothed, from the local store (originally from Glasgow), but Donald MacLeod filed the teeth coarser so as easier to cut the seaweed. Moreover, a well-worn sickle, narrow in the blade, was also preferred — it slipped more easily between the rocks on the shore.

In addition to seaweeds and manures, the land needed lime. Shell sand from Tanera Beg was a local source, though apparently little used (Fraser Darling 1943. 146). When John Alec Campbell first went to Culnacraig in 1947 he found that yields were poor. After discussions with Ministry officials, and soil testing in Aberdeen, he put three tons of lime per acre on to the croft, bought at £2 per ton from the quarry at Ullapool. This brought him greatly improved crops of potatoes, oats, swedes and turnips, and magnificent hay; and it allowed him to winter half his sheep flock on the infield. But now the land is exhausted once more. 'If I were younger, I'd start it all over again — drain, lime and use the land' (J. A. Campbell 1992).

Planting and Harvesting Potatoes

Around the end of April/beginning of May potatoes were planted by hand by the whole family, about 18ins (45cm) from each other in ploughed drills about 2ft (60cm) apart, which were then closed up. Alternatively, they could be dropped into holes made with a *pleadhag* (dibble) — *putag* in Gairloch (Ian A. Fraser 1992. pers. comm.). If planted too early, when cold and wet, weeds would grow with the potatoes.

At Culnacraig, a *croman* or mattock (though latterly just a hoe) was used either side of the drill for weeding and earthing up; and elsewhere around

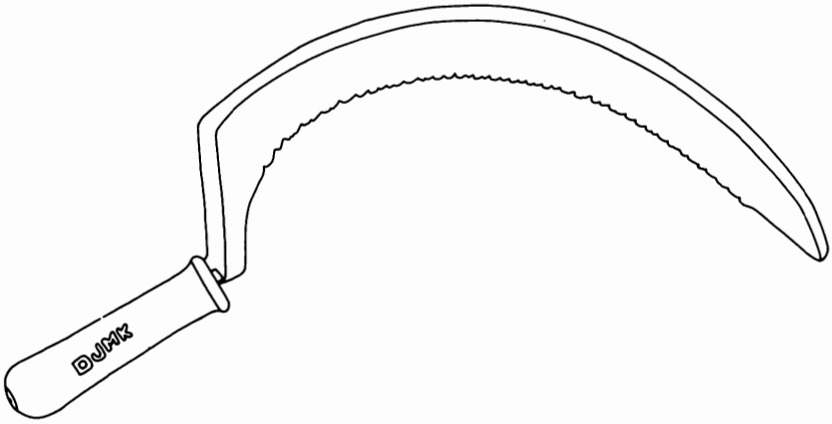

Fig. 14.26 Toothed sickle, from (?) South Uist, now in the Scottish Country Life collections, National Museums of Scotland. This has a considerably wider blade than was generally preferred in Coigach.

Loch Broom it was used occasionally to harvest potatoes at the ends of rigs or for digging out just a few for immediate use [Fig. 14.27]. More usually a *gràp* (graip, fork) was used — and in the early 1970s it would take the Campbells three days or so to lift their crop. Or as at Loggie, Inner Loch Broom, a horse plough opened up the drills and, after an initial gathering, a harrow was used to bring up the remainder. This was in the days before the spinner digger!

In the 1970s Kerr's Pink were preferred for human use [Fig. 14.28], and Pentland Dell for animal fodder. Earlier it was Champion and Golden Wonder — and 'Cows Horns', an old variety so-called because they were curly. Golden Wonder were often preferred, but as they were a late crop they had to be planted earlier. Seemingly they first came into Coigach in 1922 when Christie MacLeod's brother, a salmon fisherman in Prince Rupert Island (British Columbia, Canada), brought back a hundredweight (approx. 50 kgs). Shared around the district, they produced a sevenfold return.

Once lifted, potatoes were taken in creels and stored in a *toll buntàta* (potato pit) — a special place, well-drained and dry, and used year after year. At Culnacraig the MacLeods' *toll buntàta* was just below the *Ceum nan Each,* the track of the horses, just on the township side of the footbridge going towards Achduart. This pit, overhung by deep heather, still survives. In the old days, the heap of potatoes was simply covered with turf. Donald MacLeod's last potato pit was made in 1971, but close to his house. About 4ft (1.2m) square he first dug out a few inches of soil and then put in the potatoes — which were left to dry off during the day. The heap was covered with about 14ins (36cm) of earth, with a few extra inches added to the north

Fig. 14.27 *Croman* owned by the late Alex. MacLeod, Polbain, Coigach. 1972.

side to give added protection against the weather. Covered with divots cut from behind the house (dry bracken when the supply of turf was exhausted), the whole mound was chapped down with a spade.

At Loggie meantime, in the 1960s/70s, potatoes were alternated with layers of hay and 3/4ins (9cm) of earth to an overall height of about 8ft (2.5m). Bracken could be used instead — a good air space avoids sweating; whilst the earth was best taken from around the pit so as to make an 'island' and encourage good drainage (D. MacLeod 1972, D. MacLean 1972, A. MacLeod 1972, D. Fraser 1972).

Sowing and Harvesting Corn and Hay

Potatoes (introduced around 1750) are a relatively modern crop, though considerably earlier than turnips in the area.[3] In the 18th century, bere (an early form of barley) and oats were the two main crops, the former having the far longer history (Mrs A. Muir 1972; M. Bangor-Jones 1992. pers. comm.). However, Donald MacLeod remembered only two or three men ever growing barley — one at Achduart, John Alec Campbell's father at Polglass and one at 'Achiltibuie or Alltandhu.' Even then it was grown essentially as a fodder crop rather than as human food. *Clach an Eòrna,* nonetheless, the 'barley stone' down on the shore below Culnacraig and east of the Allt nan Coisiche, indicates a place where barley was once shelled and pounded into meal with a wooden mallet or *plocan.* There were seemingly several such places along the Coigach shore where barley was thus ground in natural holes in the rocks — even though it had to be carried there and back from the croft (Mrs A. Muir 1972).

However, at least within living memory, croft work revolved primarily around oats, hay, potatoes and livestock. On a five acre croft with three cows and three followers for instance, four stacks of corn and two of hay would be needed to see the beasts through the winter — and on Tanera this would be

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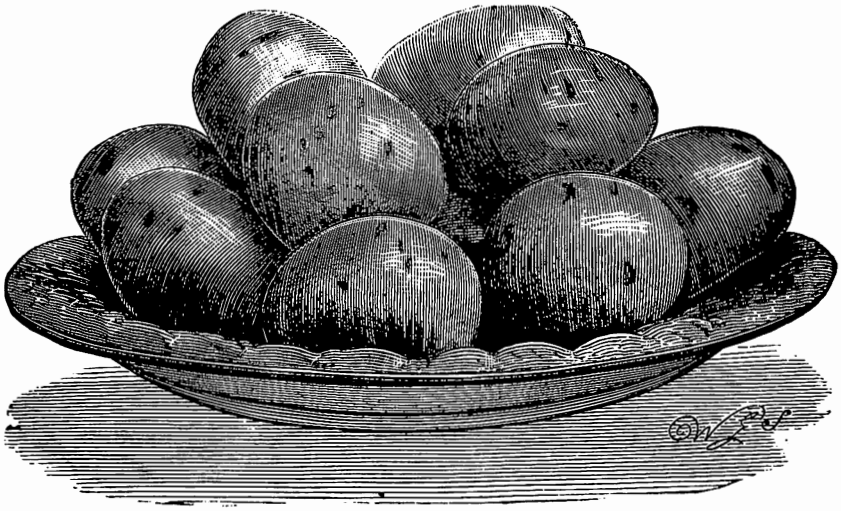

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Fig. 14.28 Advertisement for William Kerr's seed potatoes, from *Historical Sketch of the Agricultural Progress of Scotland*, Highland & Agricultural Society of Scotland, Centennial Show, 1884.

Fig. 14.29 The late Donald MacLeod's coles of oats on his croft at Culnacraig. 1972.

supplemented by a special kind of seaweed found along the top of the shore, boiled and with potatoes added (A. MacLeod 1972). According to Dwelly, this *feamainn chìreag* is but a few inches in length, short and crisp, and grows only on rocks that are seldom under water at neap tides. His Skye and Uist source, Rev. J. MacRury (Snizort) adds that it had a strong laxative property when fed to cattle suffering from 'dryness'.

Be that as it may, by the early 1970s Donald MacLeod had need of but two stacks of oats for his black cow and calf — enough to last them from November through till May. Traditionally, after ploughing and manuring, the earth was broken up with a *ràcan* (rake) prior to sowing. Oat seed might be carried in a pail held in one hand and sown broadcast with the other, generally around mid-April. After harrowing with a wooden, later iron harrow (*cliath*) with iron teeth (*fiaclan*), there was nothing more to do until harvest — other than make sure livestock did not stray on to the crop.

Toothed sickles seem to have been widespread in Coigach and much preferred to the smooth-edged reaping hook. The scythe arrived in the early 20th century, just before the 1914-18 war, but the hook continued in use to take off what the scythe could not manage (A. MacLeod 1972).

With his Y-snedded scythe (the 'Scots' type was much better, he felt, than the S-snedded or 'English' version he once tried), Donald MacLeod

would cut the oats, then tie them into sheaves with straw bands made from a handful of the crop, and put them up into *tùdan* (stooks). He put 12 sheaves to a stook, and after about a week raised some 20 stooks into a *sgrùthan* (cole), twisted slightly around a centre base and built around and up, heads inwards. *Sgrùthan* would be about 4-5ft (1.2-1.5m) diameter by 6ft (1.8m) high. Sacking over the top, secured by a bit of netting and binder twine, would protect the ears from the rain and the sheaves from the wind [Fig. 14.29]. By contrast, John Alec Campbell's *sgrùthan* were often thinner, more pointed and not covered by sacking; in Polbain 12 sheaves (*sguab choirce*) made a *sgrùthan* rather than a *tùdan* and would then be transported direct to the stackyard (A. MacLeod 1972); whilst a little further south, at Kinlochewe, a *dais* would be raised on the field, in addition to a *sgrùthan* (Mrs A. MacLean 1972). These basic techniques, common to all such communities, were highly susceptible to localised differences in practice, influences and terminology — so that by Loch Laxford, some way further north along the coast, a stook would be a *stùcan* and a cole a *tùdan* — a term which applied equally to the stack built and left all winter in the stackyard (A. MacAskill 1974).

Stacking the Corn/Hay

When sufficiently dry, and on a good dry day, the coles would be taken down and the sheaves taken to the stackyard.

Fig. 14.30 Having cut the bracken with a Y-snedded scythe [Fig. 14.4], Donald MacLeod carried it to his stackyard in a doubled rope. 1972.

Preparing the Foundations

First, however, Donald MacLeod had to prepare the foundations for the stack. Bracken cut from a strip about 15ft (4.6m) long by one scythe-swing wide was pitchforked onto a double rope and taken the 50-80yds (46-73m) to the rough circles of field stone foundations at the back of the barn [Figs. 14.4, 14.30]. Spread and patted down with the pitchfork, it was finally trodden down to a height of 1-1½ft (30-45cm) — which reduces considerably further under the weight of the corn. At Polbain the foundations were of stone and then heather; the purpose was the same — to keep rising damp away from the stack.

Building the Corn Stack

Taken out of the *sgrùthan*, the sheaves were placed across a double rope (*ròp uallach*) laid on the field, heads of the sheaves alternately to one side, then the other. Some 20 sheaves made a burden (*uallach*); the ends of the rope were taken over the sheaves and threaded through the loop at the end; the rope was tightened and the whole load hoisted on to the back over one shoulder. It was a heavy enough burden for a 74 year old man (or, for that matter, for one less than half his age!) [Figs. 14.31-14.33].

At the stackyard the sheaves were unloaded and spread around the perimeter of the foundations, to be close to hand [Figs. 14.34 -14.38]. The first sheaves were set up in the centre (as for building a *sgrùthan*), one twisted slightly round the next one to aid balance. Sheaves were then built up around the core, always working sunwise, clockwise, for as Donald said 'you should not go against the sun'. When the stack was one sheaf high across the full diameter, binder twine was used around this first tier to prevent it sliding outward when he climbed on top.

From then on it was building tiers all the way up. The second tier was also secured with twine, and trodden down at the centre to flatten it at a point just below the ears. Then the third and fourth tiers were added, now all but horizontally rather than vertically. The tiers were regularly trodden down, and some 12 sheaves added to the centre to maintain an outward slope — important for shedding any rain that might penetrate. A fifth tier was added, and then a half row to even up on the side where the foundations were not quite level — to prevent slippage and spillage.

At this point, Donald MacLeod took a spade and with the end of the blade (not the back) firmed the outer sheaves into position to make a neat, straight vertical line all around the circumference.

The process of adding tiers, treading down, tying and trimming continued until the stack was about 4ft (1.2m) high. From then on, narrowing of the stack began. And every two or three tiers, the stack was firmed and shaped — now with a pitchfork rather than the spade, and with the straw always sloping downwards to the outside.

Eventually the stack had narrowed almost to a point. Access had first required a short ladder; now a longer one. To position the last few sheaves, ears ever upwards, he had to turn continually around the point, and when

Fig. 14.31 Taking down the coles and laying the sheaves across the loop end of the doubled rope. 1972.

Fig. 14.32 Securing the burden by passing the loose ends of the rope through the loop and pulling it tight. 1972.

Fig. 14.33 Carrying a burden of some 20 sheaves back to the stackyard. 1972.

Fig. 14.34 The sheaves have been laid out around the stone stack foundation, already covered in a bed of freshly-cut bracken. The first sheaves are set up in the centre, in a slight twist. 1972.

Fig. 14.35 Once the stack is one sheaf high, it is secured with binder twine to prevent sideways slippage. 1972.

Fig. 14.36 Two tiers high, and the stack is trodden down to flatten it. Trampling continues as further tiers are added. 1972.

Fig. 14.37 After five or six tiers, the bottom edge of the spade is used to firm in the outer sheaves and to give the stack a neat, vertical face. 1972.

Fig. 14.38 The stack is narrowed, then firmed and shaped with a pitch-fork. The sheaves should always slope a little downwards so as to shed water. 1972.

the top was reached it was covered with sacking — four bags, opened out, and then covered with old salmon-fishing net. Later, when the stack had settled, the net and sacks would be removed and the conical top thatched with rushes and re-netted — or maybe he would put rushes over the sacking. Before the days of old fishing net or bought rope, rope (*sìoman*) was made at home, twisted by hand from rushes (*luachair*) — as were chair seats. The three/four ropes always passed up and over the stack (never around it), so that six/eight ends hung down, sometimes weighted with heavy stones (A. MacLeod 1972) [Figs. 14.39, 14.40].

The stacks were not built 'all in one go'. Rather was stack-building alternated with the more strenuous work of carrying in the sheaves from the field. For in one day Donald stacked 4½-5 coles — the equivalent of nearly 100 stooks or 1,200 sheaves. This is probably an average day's work for, although helped by the writer on this occasion, had she not been unwell Dolina would normally have worked alongside her husband. In all he had 9 coles (180 stooks, 2,160 sheaves) from a field 14yds (12.8m) wide by 100-120yds (92-110m) long — where the width reflected two plough strips, each 7yds (6.4m) wide. These 9 coles made one complete and one all-but-full-size stack, 10ft high by 7ft diameter (3.1 m x 2.1m) — sufficient to keep cow and calf from November through until May.

But October 1972 saw their last harvest. By then Donald was 74 years of age and his wife Dolina 78. She was taken into hospital within months and died in 1974. Right up until her illness, however, she had taken the view that 'We have the land and should therefore use it and have a cow'. With no wife to help, the beasts had to go; and without the beasts there was no call for the oats. True crofting had effectively died in Culnacraig.

Building the Hay-Stack

The Coigach term for such circular corn stacks is *cruach choirce. Cruach fhèoir* is a haystack, circular or rectangular, constructed from *tùdan fhèoir*, little stooks set up in the fields after the grass had been let lie loose to dry for two or three days. Normally, and particularly in wet weather, stands or tripods of three/four pieces of wood were set up, around which the *tùdan* were built — so as to let the air circulate better. In Coigach, hay was left in the *tùdan* as long as was required [Fig. 14.41]. Around Kinlochewe, by contrast, after the initial spreading of the wet cut grass, very small coles were built (*coileag bheag*), later amalgamated into larger coles 3-4ft high (3.5m) — *coileag mhór*, occasionally referred to as *tùdan* (Mrs A. MacLean 1972). And beside Loch Laxford, north of Scourie, a cole would be called a *gorag*. There, a stack (*cruach*) built on foundations of stone would be rectangular; otherwise circular (A. MacAskill 1974).

Preparing the Corn

Threshing and Riddling

The harvest was of critical importance in crofting life. When grown more

Fig. 14.39 Once the stack is complete, it is covered with a few opened-out sacks and secured with old fishing net. After a few days the stack will be lightly thatched with rushes. 1972.

Fig. 14.40 Alistair MacLeod's thatched stacks, Brae of Achnahaird, 1972. The tops are tightly secured and covered in net.

Fig. 14.41 Hay continued to be made in Polbain for a few years after Donald MacLeod's last corn harvest. 1972.

widely, oats were threshed straight from the sheaf with a flail (*sùist*) or with a stick. In later years Donald MacLeod no longer used a flail; he continued however to use a threshing stick, *siòlpan*, occasionally a somewhat thicker *buailtean* (by Loch Laxford a *plocan*). It was about 3ft (92cm) long, with a slight bend in the head (5-6ins, 13-14cm) and resembled a *camag* — his word for a shinty stick, *caman*. He would lay two sheaves at a time on a flat stone in the barn, just to one side of the door, and beat them for five minutes. Brushed up and bagged, this would feed his nine hens for two days.

In his younger days, two men would thresh with the flail — there were in fact two flagstones on the floor. Threshing normally took place at night in winter, the two men striking alternately. It took perhaps an hour fully to thresh four/five sheaves.

After threshing, seed corn was sieved in a calf-skin *criathar*, the skin perforated with a red-hot rod and laced to its circular pliable wooden frame with leather thongs. The MacLeods' sieves were made by one of Donald MacLeod's uncles. In use, the seed (*coirce*) fell through on to an old canvas sail laid out below — the hens pecking at it as it dropped, whilst the chaff (*mogul*) went away with the wind, helped by a split door with a small window in the opposite wall (Mrs A. Muir 1972, D. MacLeod 1972).

The corn was not dried artificially prior to threshing — leastways not in so far as was recalled. Nonetheless, placename evidence certainly indicates that drying kilns were once used on the larger (pre-crofting) farms — *Lios na h'Athainn* at Badenscallie, for instance; *Cnoc na h'Athainn* at Polglass (formerly part of Achiltibuie farm); and *Larach na h'Athainn* at Achnahaird (Fraser 1957. A.I.7, 31; A.II.27).

The Cromartie Estates built the meal mill, *Am muillean (allt an Ruisteal)* at Achiltibuie ca. 1880. [Fig. 14.42]. The late Mrs Abie Muir's father, a Fraser (whose people had come from 'behind Ullapool'), was miller — renting the mill from the estate. But during his tenure bagged meal began to come in from the North of Scotland Milling Company of Inverurie, brought by rail to Kyle, thence by steamer to Badentarbat. The mill fell into disuse at the beginning of the 20th century; Mr Fraser continued to keep an oatmeal store and sold the imported meal; and the old mill was rented as a store to the shop-owner (Mrs A. Muir 1972, A. MacLeod 1972, D. Fraser 1972). It was subsequently sold and renovated as a holiday house.

Before the Estate mill was established (seemingly between 1876 and 1884, during that period from 1849 to 1888 when the Cromartie Estates were amalgamated with and run by the Sutherland Estates), corn was either ground in a hand quern (*brà*) at the croft, or taken to one of a series of small horizontal water-mills (*tòn ri làr*: backside to the ground!). Hand querns were still used in Mrs Muir's early days — the turn of the century; the *tòn ri làr* survives in the placename record and ruinously on the ground. According to Donnie Fraser (1972), surviving placenames suggest about eight such mills locally — at Achnahaird, Reiff (by the sea below Loch na Totaig), Alltandhu (down by the shore), Achiltibuie, Acheninver (2), Achnacarinan, (?)Culnacraig. One on Tanera Mór is credited by the Ordnance Survey to the wrong loch; there are also mill ruins and a name at Badenscallie.

At Achiltibuie *Tigh Alaidh Ghairneilear* (the house of Alexander the gardener), now a ruin close to the shore below the Achiltibuie Stores (*Bùth an arcaich*: the shop of the Orkneyman), is said to have been built on the site of a former meal mill and grain-drying kiln, water being diverted from Allt an Ruisteal. At Achnahaird also, both functions are reflected in *Làrach a'Mhuillean* and *Làrach na h'Athainn* — the site of the mill/kiln on the burn flowing out of Ruadh Loch (called *Lochnamoullen* in Peter May's 1756 Survey [Fig. 14.70]). Fraser suggests that the mill was situated at the lower boundary of the later crofting settlement of Brae of Achnahaird, whilst May indicates structures close to the outlet of the loch. Meantime, at Badenscallie, *Muileann na Goile Duibhe* survives fragmentarily on the *Allt Bad a'Sgalaidh/Allt Mór*, the mill of the black throat — perhaps an abusive reference to a former inhabitant, or more likely a reflection of the dark, twisting ravine through which the burn passes at this point. And at nearby Acheninver, the names *Muileann Iomhair* and *Muileann Iain Ghrannd* refer respectively to Ivor and to Ian Grant — the last to work each mill (Fraser 1957. A.I.27-8, 32-3; A. II.53-4).

Fig. 14.42 The Estate mill, built ca. 1880. It was obsolete by the beginning of the 20th century, largely on account of the expansion of the railways. Part of the lade survives in the foreground. It led to an overshot wheel. 1992.

The age of these mills, like the kilns, is uncertain. In Assynt, although there are some very old mill sites, most date from the 1770s-1830s and a few kept going until the 1860s (M. Bangor-Jones 1992. pers. comm.). In Coigach, such as at Acheninver and Loch Totaig, Achnacarinan and (?)Culnacraig, seem most likely to date from the 1810s-1830s, following the post-clearance settlement of outlying parts of earlier tenant farms. The mills close to the earlier farms however — at Achnahaird, Achiltibuie, Badenscallie, Alltandhu — were presumably older, presumably horizontal and presumably the model for the later township mills. For only the Estate mill is known to have had a vertical wheel.

Otherwise, the only reference to an older mill in the district concerns a possible tide-mill at the entrance to *Loch na Ribhe*. According to William Muir (1991), William Matheson, late of the Department of Celtic, Edinburgh University, had identified an early 16th century documentary reference. Given that the loch of Reiff, in spite of the reef, is said once to have been one of the three key harbours in this part of Coigach (the others being Old Dornie and Tanera), and that its entrance was subsequently altered, the location of a tide-mill here remains a possibility [Fig. 14.43].

Fig. 14.43 The loch of Reiff enters the sea through a channel straightened by man. The former postman's house (George Frame's), now modernised, was the last inhabited thatched house in Coigach. 1972.

LIVESTOCK HUSBANDRY

However critical the annual harvest, livestock formed the core of the Highland economy and numbers were strictly regulated. Prior to the '45 it appears that the Earls of Cromartie would grant to certain of the aged and poor free grazing for a cow and follower and a few goats. Tacksmen continued this privilege, and because of labour shortages were obliged to extend it. Inevitably abuses arose, and in 1768 the Cromartie factor, Ninian Jeffrey, initiated a survey of 'the Persons who has catle [*sic*] and pays no rent' (E 746/72/4; Mitford n.d. 19-21). It is little wonder perhaps that other tenants and subtenants had complained — free grazing was enjoyed by some 23 horses, 84 cattle and 272 sheep and goats! In consequence, a new Souming was also compiled (E 746/72/5). Whether or not this Souming was ever implemented is unclear. Jeffrey certainly considered it 'very hard upon the present manners of management of cattle in Coygach for these Tenants to pay the higher rent' [Fig. 14.44].

Today, the scattered townships from Achnahaird by Reiff to Achiltibuie and Culnacraig have substantial common grazings — areas that have ebbed and flowed over the past 250 or so years in line with clearances for sheep farming and deer forests, and subsequent declines in these monocultural activities. There are still a small number of cattle grazed on the lower moorland beyond the old township dykes, notably around Achiltibuie, Badenscallie and Polbain, as well as at Inverpolly Farm. Until very recent times, however, the hill ground has been intensively stocked with the crofters' sheep and roamed by red deer. Deer there still are, culled annually by a freelance stalker contracted by the Benmore Estate. Sheep there still are, but in

REVISED SOUMING: COIGACH, 1768

E 746/72/4-5	Cows	Horses	Sheep	Goats	Soum Total	Value of each Soum
Achnahaird (with Eisbrecky added instead of Ouscraig) [*sic*]	80	20	10	10	120	3/4
Reeve	40	6	5	5	56	3/-
Altandow	20	4	3	3	30	2/6
Runabreck	30	4	2	2	38	3/-
Leorebircaig	35	4	3	2	44	3/-
Sheanascaig	25	3	2	2	32	3/-
Inverpollie	65	6	6	5	82	3/-
Dalpollie	50	8	5	4	67	3/-
Dornie (£2 grass added)	70	13	5	5	93	3/4
Badentarbat (£1 grass added)	35	6	3	3	47	3/-
Island Taurara	—	—	24	—	24	3/-
Achiltybowie	40	10	5	5	60	3/4
(do. when Ouscaig added)	80	20	10	10	120	—
Badenscallie	60	10	5	5	80	3/-
Forest					300	1/-

Fig. 14.44 Proposed new Souming for Coigach, 1768, prepared by Ninian Jeffrey (Factor), Alexander MaCra (Achyouran) and Alexr. MaCra (Invershin). E 746/72/4-5.

The switch in grazings may be linked to the removal to Dalpolly of Mrs MacKenzie, widow of Roderick MacKenzie, tacksman in Achiltibuie, so as to accommodate Lieut. Daniel MacKenzie in Achiltibuie [see also Fig. 16.67]. In 1777, Achnahaird also acquired Runabreck as grazing.

considerably lesser numbers than in the 1960s-1980s. Sheep are territorial and keep to given areas once hefted. Gradually those hefted to the high hills — the one time Forest of Coigach — have been sold off as the last generation of traditional crofters grew older, so that most now stick to the lower ground and are regularly grazed on the former infields.

In Donnie Fraser's father's day, 'crofters had a house, cow, wife and children, potatoes and hens'. On a two and a half acre croft you were allowed half-a-horse, six cows and six followers and 30 sheep; and with only half a croft his father had to go to the herring and salmon fisheries (D. Fraser 1972). Individual crofts were not economically viable, in other words, without such supplementary activities as fishing, shepherding, gillieing, working on the roads, delivering the mail, and seasonal migration.

Sheep

At Culnacraig, with a wife, four children and elderly relatives, John Alec Campbell had taken on and worked his wife's croft there, along with his own at Polglass. He was a gillie; he was also a shepherd and maintained over 300 sheep on the Benmore grazings. By contrast, Donald MacLeod and his wife, childless and with no close relatives remaining in the area, continued as simple, traditional crofters, keeping 30-40 sheep, a few cows and followers, hens, cats, a dog . . . the norm for most crofter-fishermen. Within memory, the sheep have always been Cheviots, with an admixture of black fleeces — perhaps a throwback to pre-clearance stock, or influenced by the *caora Sealtanach* introduced experimentally to Tanera in the early 1940s by Fraser Darling. The dominance of Cheviots appears strange, however, given that this extremely bleak land looks far better suited to Blackfaces (better still to the pre-improvement breeds). According to Fraser Darling, the reason is to be found in earlier mismanagement and the lack of planned husbandry. Cheviots are kept and do well in the limestone country a little further north, beyond Elphin, and on through the hills into mid-Sutherland. Years ago, however, the poorest lambs, L Sc *shotts*, were consistently sold to the coastal crofters for a few shillings apiece. In this way, the poorest Cheviot stock came to be kept on some of the poorest hill ground that would not have well-suited even the best Cheviot stock. Thus it was that the Coigach crofters could not keep up an adequate ewe stock without regularly buying in more of the same class of poor sheep (Fraser Darling 1938.32). It was a vicious circle that well-suited the commercial sheep-farmers to perpetuate.

The crofters would go to the hill four times a year — for lambing, lugmarking and dipping at the end of April, for clipping in June and July, for dipping and taking off lambs in September. Tupping was carefully controlled so that the lambs would be born when there was enough new grass to put milk on the mother; it took place around New Year, and both these Culnacraig crofters would hire Board of Agriculture rams for a month at the end of November rather than feeding their own year-round.

Tupping, Smearing and Dipping

In the old days it was usual to fix a patch of cloth to the tail of the gimmers (two year old females) to prevent them from breeding. This was made illegal however, for when the gimmers were on heat the tup was in danger of destroying his penis. Instead, the gimmers were kept in and only the sheep and the tups sent to the hill. Two to four men would go to the hill daily during tupping, to round up the animals and check both sheep and tups. More recently, however, with very few gimmers and with reduced manpower, the tups and sheep were kept inbye, with the gimmers sent to hill (D. Fraser 1972).

Until regulations required regular immersions, the main dipping took place in the autumn. In earlier days still, however, sheep were smeared. Each sheep in turn was laid on a *stòl-smeuradh*, smearing stool; one man stood at the end of the stool and 'split' the wool every two inches (5cm), smearing the split with a mixture of tar and linseed — as waterproofing and to control vermin. The tar and oil came in barrels; you mixed it yourself, using more tar than oil. The speed of smearing a sheep (like shearing) was the index of a good or poor smearer. The tar made the fleece heavier, and therefore more profitable — in theory at least. But it remained in the fleece after shearing; it was difficult to remove; and it was seen increasingly by buyers as a disadvantage. (When the men were away at the fishing, the women and older men/children looked after the shearing, the women shearing with scissors rather than the strongly-sprung shears) [Figs. 14.45, 14.46].

Fig. 14.45 A stool once used for smearing and/or shearing sheep — trapped beneath the collapsing roof of an abandoned croft house. Polglass. 1972.

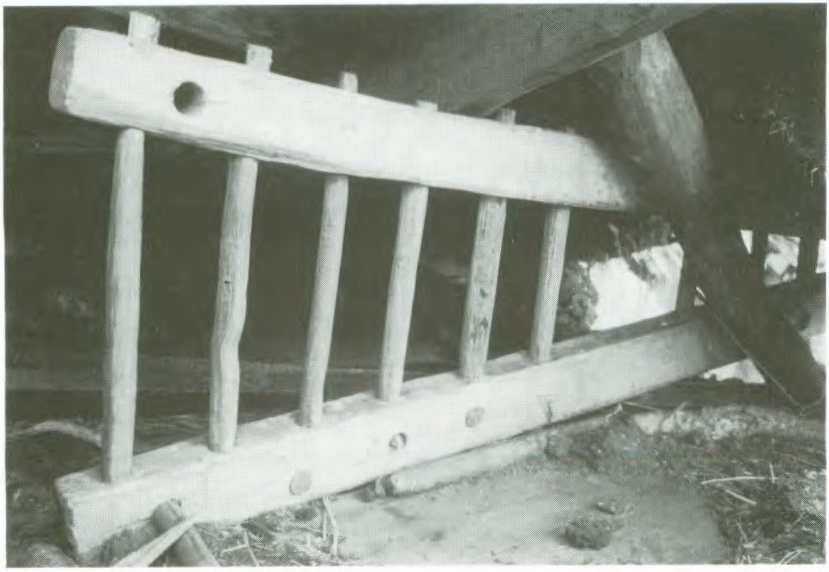

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Fig. 14.46 The wool crop would be sold away to help raise cash to pay the rents. From *Historical Sketch of the Agricultural Progress of Scotland*, Highland & Agricultural Society of Scotland, Centennial Show, 1884.

Smearing went out of fashion before the 1914-18 war, when the men learnt new ways, working on sheep farms further south. Donnie Fraser's father built the first dipper, in wood, down by the Achiltibuie mill (the fank is still used, although gradually being eroded away by the sea). It was used by crofters from both ends of the road; the ingredients came from Glasgow. Solid cakes of McDougall's Dip were melted down and boiled together with whale oil, also bought from McDougall's. And on occasion soft soap might be added to the large black pot [Fig. 14.47]. Gradually, however, dippers were built at fanks in townships across Coigach — sometimes an old bath was used; and a new concrete dipper was added at Culnacraig in 1950 (D. Fraser 1972, M. MacLeod 1972). At Badenscallie a brand-new fank and dip have recently been completed (1993) — evidence of a determination to continue aspects of crofting on the part of a handful of younger crofters.

Marking

The other key task was to mark the sheep. Keel was never used as a mark of ownership, only to recognise sheep on the hill. Keel marks could be applied, for instance, to the side of the sheep, top of the tail, head, shoulders, hindquarters — and in the olden days maybe right over the back, from one side to the other. There were also back-end keel marks used during tupping — red for breeding sheep, blue for gimmers. (Today it is the spray-can of paint!).

Ownership marks, by contrast, were either lug-marks or nose brands (horn brands on the occasional stray Blackface) [Figs. 14.48, 14.49]. Some believed nose-brands to be best — eg a bar, spot or band straight up and down. And nose-brands would certainly be preferable for those sheep whose ears went black, shrivelled and eventually dropped off (Yellows disease) — for otherwise they could only be keeled.

Nose-branding, like keeling, was generally introduced into the Highlands during and following the 18th/19th century development of commercial sheep-farming; lug-marking, on the other hand, has a much older pedigree. Certainly the southern flock-masters brought north southern shepherds' lug-marks and terminology, not to mention custom-made pliers for eg the nip, fork, hole and cut; and undoubtedly Coigach shepherds would return home with new ideas, whether from the south or Montana! But small subtenants and crofters continued to keep their handful of sheep alongside the large commercial flocks. And whilst gradually they, too, acquired the new marks and breeds (Cheviots in Coigach), nonetheless they retained some of the older Highland marks and names (D. Fraser 1972, A. MacLeod 1972) [Fig. 14.50].

Over-Wintering

North-west coast winters are harsh, particularly away from the coastal fringe; in more recent times the generally scarce arable land allowed only a modest crop of turnips; and traditionally other fodder crops were always in short supply.

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Fig. 14.47 Advertisement for Robertson's sheep dips, from *List of Sheep Marks for the Counties of Aberdeen . . . and Inverness.* 1897.

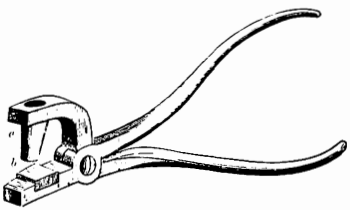


Fig. 412.—*Punching-nippers for sheep.*
a Hollow cone. *b* Horn pad.
c Orifice of hollow cone.

Fig. 413.—*Buisting-iron for sheep.*

Fig. 414.—*Branding-iron for sheep and cattle.*

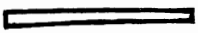
Fig. 14.48 Commercially-produced tools for marking sheep. The punching-nippers cut lug marks; the buisting-iron tar marked the fleece of a sheep; the branding-iron was used on the horn or the face. From H. Stephens *Book of the Farm*, 4th edition, 1891.

Fig. 14.49 Brand marks for selected sheep farms in Skye and Western Inverness-shire, from *List of Sheep Marks for the Counties of Aberdeen . . . and Inverness*, 1897.

Tracing of Brand Iron.

William and Hugh Cameron, Benmore, Portree.

Iron, runner on left side of nose. Tar—Ewes and Lambs, ⊕ left side on ribs. Ear mark—Ewes and Lambs, fork and fore bit right ear; fork left ear. Paint—Ewes and Lambs, two Red marks, one across shoulders and one across hips.



Bernisdale Club Farm, Bernisdale, Snizort, Portree.

Iron, [ ] on cheek. Tar—One, Two, and Three-year-olds, B right ribs; Ewes and Lambs, B left ribs. Ear mark—One, Two, and Three-year-olds, fork and back bit out of right ear; Ewes and Lambs, fork out of right ear and back bit out of left ear. Paint, Red right side

Allan Cameron, Dundreggan, Urquhart, Glenmoriston.

Iron, ⊢, stroke down bridge of nose and from centre to left. Tar, O on rump. Ear mark, fork out and hole in right ear; back bit out of left ear.

The Macleod of Macleod, Uiginish, Duirinish, Dunvegan.

Iron, runner above nose. Tar, U left ribs. Ear mark—One-year-olds, back bit right ear; Two year-olds, fore bit right ear; Three-year-olds, fork right ear; Ewes and Lambs, two fore bits right ear. Paint, Red keil back of neck.

(i) Lamb Houses:

Whilst most crofters' relatively small numbers of sheep could be left safely enough on the hill and allowed to graze the croftland during the winter, special arrangements were needed for some. The ruins of small lamb houses are found in the hills above Polglass (J. A. Campbell 1990); whilst at Culnacraig, each of the houses had a *bothan uan* a short distance outside the hill-dyke on the lower slopes of the hill. One bears the name *Tigh na Creig* (Fraser 1957. A.I.51); the ruins of all are still to be seen. Small, rectangular, drystone buildings with a narrow entrance and formerly thatched, they were used in winter to house the hoggs day and night, to protect them from the snow and the frost. A dozen or so such lambs were kept loose inside, fed on

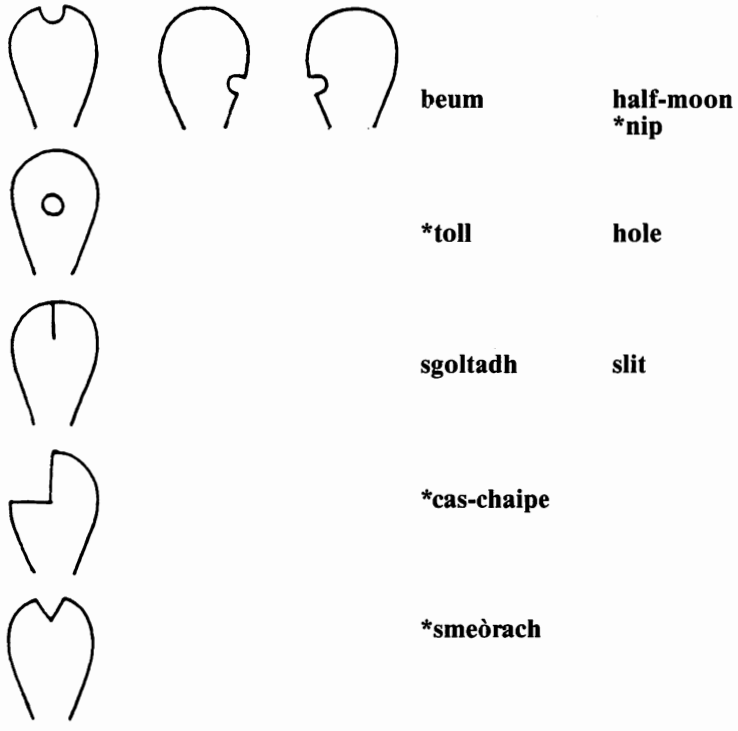


Fig. 14.50 Some Coigach lug-marks, collected in 1972.

oats and turnips (cut into halves or quarters with a spade and left on the floor), with hay left lying in little slatted wooden racks.

Quite separately, down by the shore, tucked into former beds of the Allt nan Coisiche, a number of small dry-stone structures survive to a height of one to three courses. Like similar structures a little above the settlement, above the road bridge beside the Allt a'Chualacreige (Allt a'Choire Reidh), these provided shelter for lambs (J. A. Campbell 1990) [Fig. 14.51]. At the same time, they suggest a re-use of earlier buildings, perhaps associated with one-time shielings (see below).

(ii) Winter Transhumance:

Lambs were frequently weaned in the first week of August so that they would put on plenty of fat before winter. In many parts of Coigach, female lambs in their first winter (L Sc *hoggs*) were herded by the children in autumn, given good food and conditions and then, October to February/ March, over-wintered on the Summer Isles [Fig. 14.52] — an alternative to lamb houses and of much greater antiquity. Traditionally they could not generally be left on the islands much after the end of February without heavy loss from pining and braxy; so after their return they would be kept around the crofts during the hard months of March and April and given extra feed before being moved to higher ground and new grass in May.

The grazing on the islands, it was said, strengthened the uterus, making them better for breeding in their third year (as two year old gimmers they were not to be tupped). Put another way, low islands almost always provide better pasture than the adjacent mainland, and the soil on the north-west seaboard is unusually deficient in the mineral salts that are necessary for growing sheep. On the islands, however, not only is the climate milder and the pasture lower, the rainfall is much lighter, the drainage is better and the land generally less waterlogged. But in addition, high sea-bird populations on the islands help manure the ground — the knolls occupied by the lesser black-backed gulls, for instance, grow short sweet grass that is eagerly eaten by sheep. And there can be seaweeds to graze (Fraser Darling 1938. 31-2).

Wedders also (the castrated males), if kept for several years could be overwintered on the islands; whilst Willie Muir's father would overwinter Highland cattle on An Cleirich (Eilean a'Chleirich, Priest Island).

Virtually all the islands with grazing might be used, even including such as Glas-leac and Sgeir nam Mult, where the spray and the surf would shoot right over in winter storms. It was accepted that some animals might be lost in these conditions (Fraser Darling 1944. 129-131; D. Fraser 1972, W. Muir 1991; see also Baldwin 1986. 187-190).

This practice of winter transhumance still continues — in 1991 the sheep were brought back to the mainland on 26 March; 8 March when Fraser Darling observed the operation in 1938. A boatload of men go out, round up the sheep and manhandle them into the boat from often slippery rocks in a frequently heaving swell (W. Muir 1991, A. 'West' MacLeod 1990,1991).

By contrast, winter transhumance of a different kind took place amongst the larger flocks. In earlier centuries the farmers and tacksmen with stock in

Fig. 14.51 Sub-square dry-stone enclosures in the old stream beds of the Allt nan Coisiche, just above the shore south of Culnacraig. Used as shelters for lambs, they may mark the site of earlier shielings. 1992.

Coigach would sell off or transfer a proportion of their droves of horses and cattle to dealers or to low-country farmers in Easter Ross who had the arable to overwinter substantial numbers. The later flock-masters and crofters with sizeable sheep flocks acted likewise — taking the sheep out on the hoof along the old drove routes, or later in motorised floats (D. Fraser 1972; see also Baldwin 1986. 194 et seq.). In this way, there would be enough fodder and winter grazing available to maintain locally a smaller flock through until the following spring. But it was costly if they were simply out-wintered and later returned — 10 shillings a head ca. 1938. For the ordinary crofter, therefore, out-wintering on the islands was much more economic (Fraser Darling 1938.31).

Goats

At one time goats were quite widely 'kept' in Coigach — though not normally at the croft, for their grazing habits are destructive. Recent attempts at goat-keeping by incomers have stripped the bark and killed 40/50 year old alders regenerating in the MacLeods' former potato 'park' or yard at Culnacraig; on the other hand Donald MacLeod would relate with relish the particular agility with which goats would climb onto thatched roofs early in the century, and eat the grass growing out of the thatch!

Culnacraig goats were kept out past the Garbh Allt, along the low route to Ullapool; and on occasion they were kept in a 'park' at Geodha na

Cailliche, opposite Eilean Martain — the infield of a tiny, long-ruinous cottar settlement where, it is said, the old woman (*cailleach*) regularly climbed the very steep short valley with a creel of either shellfish or seaweed, all the whiles spinning on her distaff (Fraser 1957. A.I.61-2).

Fairly wild, most were quite white; a few 'with sprechans on them', were black 'sprecheld'. Christie MacLeod's family (173) and Donald MacLeod (171) each kept five or six goats; others, including Angus MacLeod, Achnacarinan, also had some — a total of about 25. The herd had been there at least since their parents' time (? mid 19th century), and part of their value was in grazing the very steep rocky slopes either side of the Garbh Allt. Nimble on their feet, in so doing they rendered the area less attractive to sheep which would slip and fall more easily or get stuck on narrow rocky ledges. The writer rescued one such animal from a ledge a little south of the Garbh Allt in the early 1960s; it is widely believed however, that once a sheep has found a way onto such a ledge, if rescued it will return again subsequently (see Baldwin 1986. 188-9). In hard weather the goats would shelter in *An Uamhag nan Gabhar* — a cave below the steep shore track to Ullapool, *Cadha nan Tòn*, just a little before the Garbh Allt, where you would frequently fall on your backside! (Fraser 1957. A.I.43).

This apart, some families (but not Donald MacLeod's) milked the *boirionn* (female) — it was stronger than cows' milk. And latterly they would take the kid (*cid*) from the mother in the autumn to prevent the latter becoming too thin. Each summer, moreover, they would drive the herd back to Culnacraig with dogs, just like sheep. They would select one to kill and salt down for the winter, then release the rest and let them work their way back along the hillside to their customary grazing. Subsequently, these goats were shot at periodically by Ullapool people in boats, and eventually died out (D. MacLeod 1972).

At one time, however, goats were not restricted to these far-off cliffs. *Meall nan Gabhar*, Goat Hill, a little island lying just north of Eilean nan Eich, was no doubt once used to graze goats (and Horse Island, horses); *Clach nan Gabhar*, the stone of the goats, stands just west of the Allt nan Coisiche, below the Eas Dubh; whilst *Lón nan Gabhar* lies just past the top of Culnacraig in a flat shallow valley, a little to the east of Meall Dubh Ard. Here in the wet meadow of the goats (used later for peat cutting) is *Làrach an Tigh Dhuibh*, the site of a one-time bothy where Ruaridh Og, Christie MacLeod's great-grandfather would distil whisky and cast out the dregs on to what became a greener spot! A copper pot is said to be buried there still, hidden from two maurading excisemen.

Cattle

Donald MacLeod (1972) tells of two families locally once keeping a pig — one in Achduart and one in Badenscallie. And he recounted how he used to push pins into the Achduart pig on his way to school there! But in times past, it was not pigs or goats or sheep, but cattle that were the most valuable

Fig. 14.52 The Summer Isles from above Altandhu, across Old Dornie harbour. Isle Ristol (right), with Tanera Beg beyond. 1992.

animals on the farm or croft.

Over-Wintering

Just as certain sheep were put to the Summer Isles during the winter, so also were non-milking cattle and horses. Horses were put to *Eilean nan Eich*; and back in the mid 18th century *Eilean Martain*, then uninhabited, was considered 'a good place' for winter grazing. As for *Achlochan*, between Badenscallie and Achiltibuie (almost as good as an island!): 'This Isthmus has cover and good Pasture for Wintering to black cattle' (May 1756).

In more recent times, in the early 20th century, Donnie Fraser's father would buy stock in Dingwall for £5-£7 per head — he 'couldn't pay more than £7 10/- if he was to make any profit at all'. The beasts were sold the following season after over-wintering on the islands — the converse of the more usual practice of selling stock east out of Coigach for over-wintering! Willie Muir's father (married to Donnie Fraser's sister) once kept Highland cattle on An Cleirich; it is probable that his father-in-law grazed his in-bought stock there also, for the tenancy of the island had been transferred to the Frasers after others had been discovered distilling whisky there — 'the sheep had scab, they said, which required many visits to treat them!' (D. Fraser 1972, W. Muir 1991).

Otherwise, cattle were over-wintered in the byre [Fig. 14.53]. In those days there were no turnips and no bought-in hay. The cattle lived on oat straw, and earlier this century every scrap of grass was cut from the roadside and elsewhere to provide winter fodder.

The cows became leaner as winter progressed; and had become so weak by the spring that, when they were let out, the old men had to follow them all day in case they fell into a bog and could not haul themselves out. The men followed until the cattle were strong enough; and they occupied themselves by twisting rope from heather freshly-pulled from the moor — for it had to be new, green heather (D. Fraser 1972). A not dissimilar sight was noted at Easter 1960. The surviving croft at Achduart, hard by the road-end, was still occupied by an elderly couple — MacLeans, originally from Skye. Their three or four cows were grazing on the topside of the Achduart hill-dyke, one in particular staggering and stumbling as she went (Baldwin 1986. 189-90). Shortage of winter fodder was always a problem on the marginal lands.

Summer Transhumance: The Shielings

The secret of successful cattle husbandry was to ensure that they got as much good grass as was possible, for as long a period as possible. Once cultivation began, however, all stock was banished from the infield until the following autumn.

Commonly, of course, hens were kept around the house and steading, and individual larger animals might be tethered on odd bits of uncultivated infield ground. Otherwise a well-developed system of transhumance existed in Coigach, as elsewhere in the Highlands — making use of a carefully structured sequence of seasonal grazings and shielings.

Given the extent of the Cromartie Estates, it comes as only a partial surprise to learn that, in the 18th century, the Forest of Fannich — a part of the first earl of Cromartie's Regality of Cromartie in 1686 [see Fig. 11.1] — was used in conjunction with the Coigach grazings. Because of its distant and disjoined location, not only was a forester employed there in 1755 to prevent illicit fuel gathering, but a 'Yeald Bowman' was responsible for the cattle, particularly the barren cattle and heifers before their first calving. For the stock was driven from Coigach to Fannich for the summer grazing — a practice that was evidently profitable given the presence of two Bowmen there by 1783 (R & C 1989.32; M. Bangor-Jones 1992. pers. comm.).

(i) The Culnacraig Shielings:

The use of many, if not most, shielings and pastures was discontinued in the later 18th/early 19th centuries, when the lands were taken away from the small (sub-) tenant farmers and leased out to sheep farmers. But not all became obsolete, and such was the need of the dispossessed on their new coastal marginal holdings that, where they could, they looked out new areas

Fig. 14.53 The MacLeods still kept a cow and follower until the winter of 1972/73. Their oat crop provided winter fodder — though the hens would get a share! 1972.

for summer grazing. Thus *Na Bothan Airigh*, immediately below *Na Baic* on the face of *A'Bheinne Mhór* (Ben More Coigach), were discontinued only in the time of Donald MacLeod's grandfather, perhaps around the mid 19th century.

The ruins of up to six small, rectangular, once-thatched stone bothies can still be seen stretched out on relatively flat but broken land a little above and west of *Na Luban Ruadha* (a maze of knobbly little humps and winding little valleys) in the vicinity of *Na h-Ach'ean Beaga*, the small meadows. They lie to the west of *Cnoc an t'Suidhe*, the hill of the sitting — a suitable place for the herds to rest perhaps when following the cattle onto the steeper ground.

At the beginning of the season the cows were taken up to the shieling across the steep screes and rocky slopes below *A'Chreige Mhór*, the big rock. ('Cross the scree that looks like an elephant', said Donald MacLeod). Then they followed *An Ceum Meadhon*, the middle path, before branching off along *An Ceum Ard*, the high path. Subsequently, the herds would climb up from Culnacraig in the morning and stay overnight in the bothies, eating food they had taken with them. The following day they would return to the

settlement with the milk, to be made into butter, cheese and crowdie at home; and they would climb back up to the *bothan* the same day, with a further night's provisions. They would milk night and morning at the shieling, therefore, and spend every night there.

How long *Na Bothan Airigh* were in active use is unclear. For they do not feature on the 1756 Survey Map, and given that Culnacraig was uninhabited at that time, they may well have been built by the incoming MacLeods in the 1810s/20s. In which case they may have had a life of perhaps 30-60 years — a lingering remnant of the pre-clearance, pre-crofting economy, in a post-clearance setting. That John Alec Campbell (1991) considers it 'a very queer place for cattle . . . very difficult to get the cattle up to', would tend to confirm its late development — under pressure of land shortage for grazing. The grazing is quite attractive, but it is also high at between 750 and 1,000ft (230-300m), with an inevitably restricted growing season. Significantly perhaps, the land there had not previously formed a part of any recognised Coigach farm; rather was it a part of the Forest of Coigach, unallocated in 1756.[4]

In other words, we do not know if there were shielings high up at the back of Ben Mor in earlier times, though this seems unlikely. What we do have, however, is circumstantial evidence of likely shielings much lower down and closer to Culnacraig that would correlate with Culnacraig's 18th century role as a grazing for the Badenscallie Farm, as suggested by the 1756 Survey Map.

Structures used at a later date as winter shelters for lambs have already been mentioned, but with an earlier function suggested. Down by the shore, in the boulder-strewn, bracken-infested former stream beds close to the mouth of Allt nan Coisiche, there are the ruinous remains of at least three sub-square stone-built huts, each about 7ft (2.1m) internal diameter [Fig. 14.51]. Each appears to have a secondary, adjoining structure closely paralleling 'double' shieling huts elsewhere; and each is partly built into the east side of the low bank separating one former rocky stream-bed from the next, thereby protecting the huts from the prevailing weather coming up and across Loch Broom from the south-west. Likewise the doorways face east, away from the weather, as they do in two nearby prehistoric hut circles.

This would indeed be a classic shieling site. Westward is the land later taken in as cultivation rigs; eastward *Allt an Achan Fheàrna*, the burn of the little meadow of the alders, runs into the sea at nearby *Am Port Driseach,* the 'port' of the thorns/brambles. This meadow is a tussocky, gently albeit unevenly sloping piece of wet moorland, showing possible signs of drainage, that runs back and up to the Allt nan Coisiche; and it is surely no coincidence that at its western, slightly higher end lies one of Culnacraig's hut circles. By its location close to the shore and to good fresh water, and by its general disposition for grazing, cultivation and fishing, it lends itself to human use. The surprise is, rather, that it seems not to have been taken into cultivation following the early 19th century settlement of Culnacraig. Perhaps it was just too wet to be drained satisfactorily? Perhaps it was just beyond the 'pressure zone' of the new, post-Clearance township? Or per-

haps it was considered even more valuable as grazing? Indeed, perhaps the Estate forbade its cultivation?

That said, the documentary sources do not confirm unambiguously that there was ever a shieling at Culnacraig. The Mitford ms. (n.d. ? mid 20th century[5]); indicates 'a ¾ shealing' at Achduart; May, 1756, gives the name *Grackenarie*, across the point of Achduart, glossed by Fraser (1957. A.I.47) as *Creag an àraidh*, 'rock of the ladder', rather than *Cnoc an airidh*, 'hill of the shieling'; and Morrison (1775) refers to a shieling called *Achduard* located at what later became Culnacraig (not close down by the shore, but at what maybe emerged as early post-clearance cultivation rigs)! Mitford's designation, whatever '¾' may mean, is quite unconfirmed; the May Map is a copy, redrawn not without errors by Jon Scott — he dates it 'Surveyed . . . 1758', and gives 'A Tabee [*sic*] of the Contents' full of mathematical inconsistencies; whilst more generally in Coigach Morrison did not record all the shielings (or arable for that matter) mapped by May, nor did May map everything recorded by Morrison!

(ii) Shielings across Northern/Western Coigach:

Whatever the specific arrangements at Culnacraig and Achduart, there is evidence of substantial exploitation of northern and western Coigach for shielings and summer grazings. Donnie Fraser's collection of placenames, made in 1957, taken along with other surviving oral tradition and the Ordnance Survey 6 Inch map (1906), identifies some 14 shieling sites — as reflected in the elements *airigh/airidh, ruigh, bothan*. Peter May's Survey (1756) suggests at least 27 sites mostly identifiable as shielings either by their name (incorporating *arie*) or by the designation *Shealing*, but including sites (eg. Culnacraig) referred to as *Grass* or *Grassing* [Fig. 14.54].

There seems little logic behind this differentiation unless 'grassings' were to be distinguished from 'real' shielings. Might it be then that *Grass* or *Grassing* indicates an unattended grazing for eg young or dry animals, as opposed to milking stock? In which case it might be confirmation that Culnacraig's role as a one-time milking shieling, suggested by the ruinous huts by the shore and by Morrison, had indeed ended by the mid 18th century. In which case it might indicate an effect of the '45 and/or reflect the growing importance to the Cromartie Estates of cash-crop production of cattle for the droving trade — in evidence at least from the mid 17th century (Baldwin 1986.196). By the 1750s, therefore, Badenscallie farm could have had a milking shieling at Achduart, and an unattended grazing for non-milking cattle at Culnacraig — unless, that is, the shieling called 'Achduard' really was at Culnacraig!

Discrepancies apart, it is clear that shielings were variously located close to the sea, beside freshwater lochs, beside burns on the higher moorland — but not at this period, right in amongst the high mountains. And the Survey Maps make it very clear that by the mid/late 18th century, population pressure had caused a number of shielings and grazings to be cultivated — and perhaps (or about to be) occupied on more than a seasonal basis. Faochag,

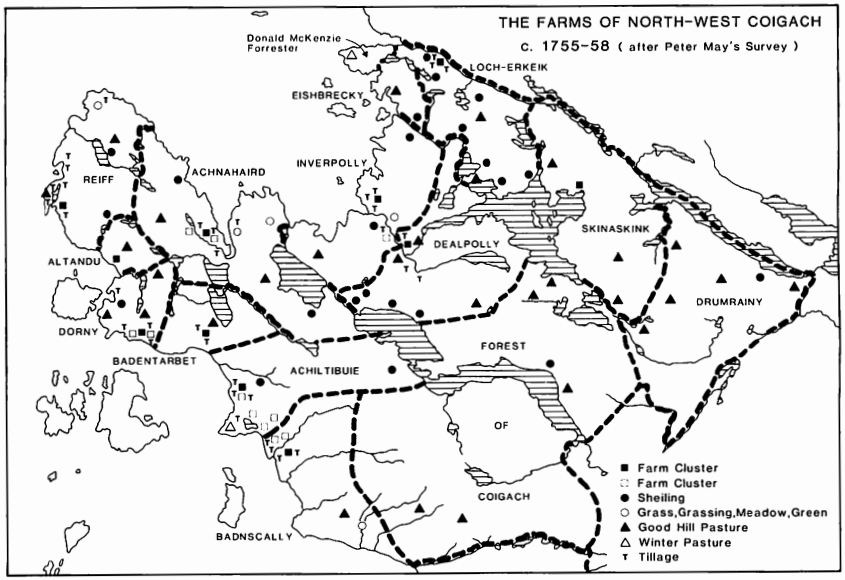


Fig. 14.54 The farms of north-west Coigach based on the survey by Peter May, 1756. Names are as written on the survey map; shielings marked do not include names incorporating Gael. *airidh* given by May, only those formally designated as 'shealing'. Building clusters shown by a solid black square appear to be the principal tacksmen's buildings, as opposed to sub-tenants'/cottars' buildings (open squares) — though not all farms show such differentiation. No settlement is indicated for Drumrunie; no cultivation is indicated on Eishbreaky or Sionascaig (though elsewhere Sionascaig is noted as under corn).

on the point of Coigach out past Reiff, is a good example.

Of particular significance in the longer evolution of settlement might be sites at Sionascaig, Osgaig and Calascaig — the latter at the foot of Loch Achall, inland from Ullapool and going with Corrie Farm in the mid 18th century. Sionascaig was apparently inhabited at the time of May's Survey; the other two were shielings — all of them in prime inland locations, with good land, beside substantial and fish-rich rivers/freshwater lochs. It is no coincidence, perhaps, that of all the shieling sites, these three alone are represented by Gaelicised forms of Norse names — ON *sjónar-skiki* (observation/lookout strip), *óss-skiki* (strip beside the mouth/outlet of a river/loch), *Kali-skiki* (Kali's strip). They appear to reflect a continuing ebb and flow of permanent settlement of considerable antiquity on narrow attractive strips of land between loch and hill (Watson 1904. lxxxii).

Indeed, the attractions of Osgaig live on in oral tradition. For it was evidently a well-loved shieling, in use in Donnie Fraser's grand-mother's time, well after the 1800s. Willie Muir remembers his mother (a sister to Donnie Fraser) talking of the 'happy thoughts' people related regarding life at the shieling, whilst Angus MacLeod, Achnacarinan, tells of the women staying at *Airigh Osgaig* from June until late August, sleeping on heather beds on the floor of the shieling huts. The men would walk over on Saturdays with

food and clean clothes, and carry back the butter and cheese. *Pigean* (earthenware 'pigs' or jars) were put two or three at a time into the corn stacks, so that the salted butter and cheese would not all have been eaten before, say, March. It was a way of ensuring you had food left late in the season (D. Fraser 1972, W. Muir 1991, A. MacLeod 1991).

Tradition has it that the last dairy maids there were disturbed by a huge monster, an *each uisge* or water horse. They drove the shape or form into Loch Oscaig with sticks and stones (another version has them at a shieling at *Bun a'bhig*, driving the beast into nearby Loch Bad a'Ghaill) — but what frightened them most was that their missiles seemed to go right through the creature, and the dairy maids never returned (Fraser 1957. A.II.85 et seq.; J. A. Campbell 1991). A similar creature was said to live in *Loch na Beiste*, where the boundaries of Achnahaird, Alltandhu, Dornie and (almost) Badentarbat farms met (Cromartie 1979. 330).

Bun a'bhig was a shieling on the southern side of Loch Bad a'Ghaill, marked on Peter May's Survey (1756) and recorded by Fraser as *Airigh na Banachaig*, the shieling of the dairy maid. The name *Airigh Osgaig* refers to both sides of the burn running into the southern corner of Loch Osgaig, as does *Na h'Achaidhean*, the meadows — where the ruins of the shieling huts and calf pens can yet be seen. *Achadh Innis Bhràighe* is a pasture in the upper part of the shieling area, whilst *Grunnd Oscaig* is the bottom land of Osgaig. The whole area sits between the loch and *Meall Doire an t-Sithein*, the hill of the wood of the fairy mound — though the exact location of both fairy mound and wood is uncertain. There are many fragments of mixed, mainly birch woodland surviving in what would once have been a much more densely wooded area, and it is from these woods, for instance, that the birch roof timbers for Donald MacLeod's house were cut in the 1880s/90s, and sledged across the moorland, back to Culnacraig (A. MacLeod 1991). Indeed the peat either side of the Allt Druim Fuarmailt (Druim Mhór Osgaig on the OS 6 inch Map), was renowned for its long straight sticks of bog fir, much sought after for rafters (Fraser 1957. A.II.81).

At the head of the burn in *Coire Osgaig*, above the main shieling area, lies *Glaic nan Each*, horse hollow — presumably a horse grazing or place where horses were kept; whilst the whole area is bounded by ancient dykes. An unnamed dyke links Lochan Sgeireach to Loch Osgaig, whilst between Lochan Sgeireach and Loch Bad a'Ghaill lies *Garadh Glaic na Cullaidh*, the dyke of the hollow of the boar.

The *Abhainn Osgaig* completes the link between Loch Osgaig and Loch Bad a'Ghaill, fordable in at least two recognised places, *An Àth* and *An Damhàth*, the ox or stag ford. This last name refers to the fine pool below, rather than to the ford itself — a pool poached at night for salmon, with a torch (Fraser 1957. A.II.80-81, 84-87).

Two old tracks once made for the fords from Achiltibuie, passing by the western end of Lochan Sgeireach. Several small cairns, said to be funeral resting cairns, lie just south of the burn (en route for Badenscallie or for the ancient burial ground on Tanera Mór? — see Brown, this volume), whilst the bog to the south of the lochan bore the name *Blàr na Fala*, moss of the

blood/bleeding — perhaps the site of a clan battle or a place where cattle were bled for food? Just south of the west end of this lochan stands *Clach na Comhalaich*, the stone of the meeting — probably a natural spot when travelling to rest or wait for others.[6] For past this tiny lochan and across the Abhainn Osgaig ran a key route to the Easter Ross fishings, harvests and religious festivals — by way of Gleann Laoigh, Elphin and the Oykell. (Other routes to the east/north-east led via Culnacraig through Strath Kanaird and Glen Achall).

The Osgaig shielings, therefore, were close to a major trackway; they were also close to the meeting of several major farms (Inverpolly, Dalpolly, Achnahaird, Badentarbat and Achiltibuie). It was less a remote shieling; rather a focal point near a key river-crossing on a lengthy system of large freshwater lochs and wide fast-flowing rivers stretching from Enard Bay to the River Runie and to Strath Kanaird: a system that effectively made the southern part of northern Coigach an island.

It would be little wonder perhaps, were this kindly shieling, located in a well-watered and wooded valley, once to have held a certain strategic importance. It is probably no accident that Osgaig has a Norse name, nor that it outlasted all other Coigach shielings; for it is a sheltered and fertile area, critically central to northern Coigach, and close to a good look-out point north, west and south to Enard Bay, Loch Broom and the Minch.[7]

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

These accounts of generally early-mid 20th century land-use and crofting practice are based mainly on the evidence of oral history. Further accounts of eg fisheries, domestic and social activities, placenames and field-names must await another occasion.

This final section seeks to give an overview of the evolution of settlement in northern Coigach — from traditional tacksmen's farms and clusters of sub-tenants, to the modern crofting townships that have now outlived their original role as subsistence smallholdings for the remaining descendants of that local population once moved at will by landowners [Fig. 14.55].

Given the wealth of oral evidence relating to crofting specifically at Culnacraig, much of the material has been selected to focus on change and continuity within the area covered by the one-time Badenscallie farm [Fig. 14.56; see also Figs. 14.62-14.66].

Coigach in the mid 18th Century

Coigach as a whole (extending from the River Kirkaig to the Summer Isles and south to Strathkanaird and Glen Achall) once comprised four davochs of land (Gael. *dabhach*, a vat, measure of land: see Bangor-Jones 1986. 153 et seq.). The exact extent and sub-division of the four davochs of Coigach is not entirely clear, but they appear to break down as follows (M. Bangor-Jones 1991. pers. comm.):

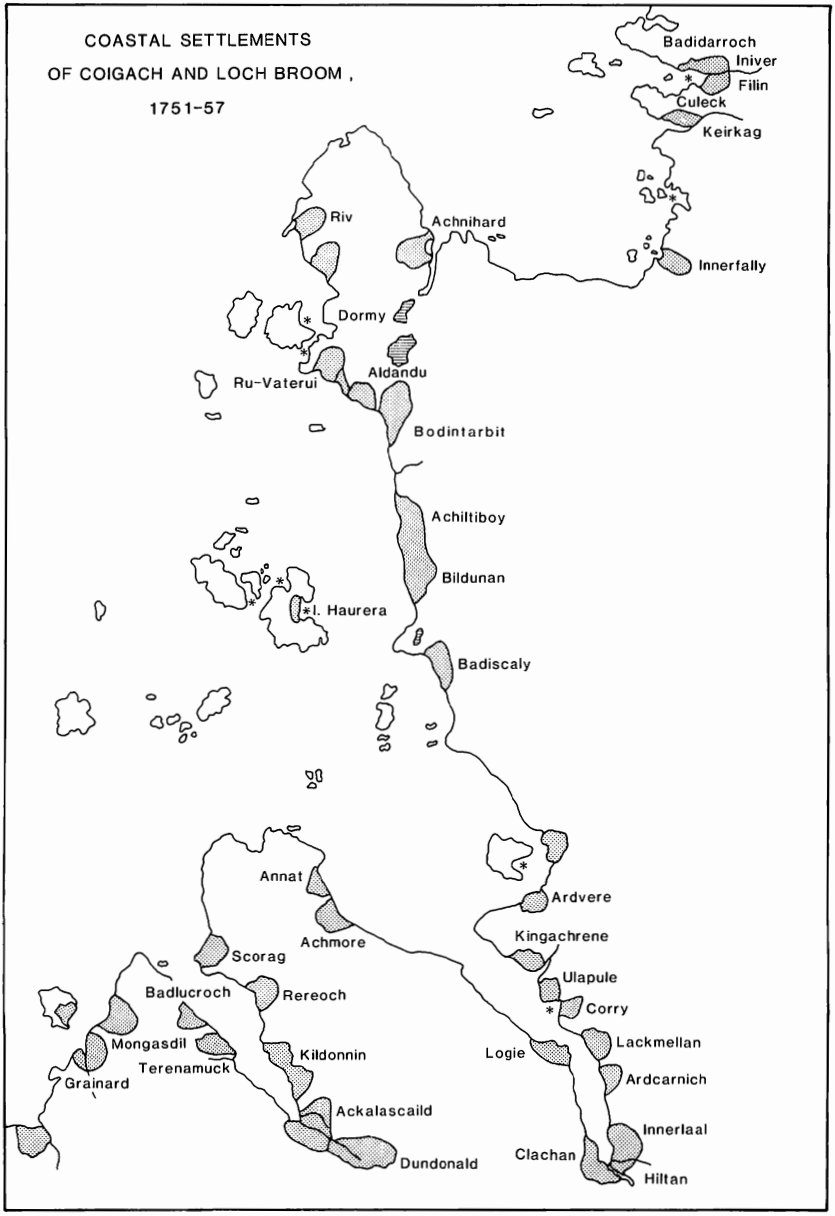


Fig. 14.55 Townships around Coigach and Loch Broom redrawn from Chart XXVII of Murdoch Mackenzie's *North West Coast of Scotland*, 1776. Because this is primarily a sea-chart it does not record such inland settlements as Dalpolly, Sionascaig and the numerous farms in Strathkanaird and Glen Achall. It does give a good general impression, however, of the extent of 18th century coastal settlements. An * indicates 'anchorage'. (NB: The names for Aldandu and Dormy are incorrectly placed on the original chart.)

2 davochs:	Strathkanaird (including Langwell)	
1 davoch:	Ullapool and Glen Achall	
1 davoch:	1/8 Badenscallie 1/8 Achiltibuie 1/8 Badentarbat 1/8 Dornie	2/4
	Achnahaird Reiff Altandubh	1/4
	1/8 Inverpolly 1/8 Dalpolly	1/4

Whilst this helps correlate land divisions with the layout and listing of farms given by Peter May in 1756, it does not account for the northernmost part of Coigach: neither *Skinnaskink* (noted by May as under corn, with buildings), nor those areas he describes as grazings in the *Kierrograve*, the rough quarter — *Eisbrecky, Kennabreg* and *Knockbreck* [*sic*]. One must assume, however, that the 'davoch of the Aird' encompassed all the lands as far north as the Kirkaig river (M. Bangor-Jones 1992. pers. comm.). For in earlier Rentals, 1725 and 1740, the rough Kerrowgarve is certainly tenanted (GD 305/1/64, 126, 129), and a complementary list of farms for 1775 (E 746/189) indicates corn land at *Runabreck & Eishbrechy*, as well as at *Sheanascaig* [*sic*]. It may be, indeed, that Kerrowgarve signifies the fourth part of a davoch or possibly of a half-davoch — Gael. *ceathramh* (cf. Watson 1904. lxxxi; 1926. 236) [Figs. 14.54, 14.57-14.61].

What should not be assumed, however, is that all the farms were fully let or in good heart in the mid 18th century. For following the Jacobite Rising and the Battle of Culloden, the Earl of Cromartie's estates were forfeited and annexed to the Crown.

On the one hand, contemporary references by Munro of Teanninch and the annexed estate's new factor, Captain John Forbes of New, confirm the physical 'wasting' of Coigach referred to nearly a century later in the *New Statistical Account*. In 1746, Hanoverian ships under Ferguson appeared in Loch Broom. They stayed for eight days, during which time parties of Marines ransacked the Mackenzie house at Langwell, burnt a trunkful of estate papers (including, it is said, MacKenzie's title deeds to a wadset right and possibly any surviving charters of the MacLeods of Lewis), and drove off some 50 head of black cattle. Elsewhere, they fired the Forest of Coigach, seized cattle, sheep and goods wherever they could, and generally laid waste to the area (Ross 1834. 82-3; Cromartie 1979. 199, 245-6; R&C 1989. 72-79; M. Bangor-Jones 1992. pers. comm.).

On the other hand, given that virtually all the Coigach tenants were said to have been in rebellion supporting the Jacobite cause, large numbers of the young men would have been taken prisoner and transported to America — a factor which must also have led to a great part of the Barony lying waste (unoccupied) for several years. Indeed, according to the 1755 *Judicial Rental,*

Fig. 14.56 South-east towards Ben More Coigach (left), Beinn Dearg and the Fannichs. Achiltibuie, Polglass and Badenscallie (left to centre); Achlochan, Acheninver and Achnacarinan (right), with Isle Martin beyond. 1988.

Achnahaird, Reefvater of Garve (=Reiff, Water of Garve) and *Kerrowgarve* 'was [formerly] unrentalled and lying waste', as well as the *Forest of Coigach* (E 746/70/77 et seq.).

Although the Cromartie estates, including Coigach, were forfeited after the '45, Cromartie's own factor John MacKenzie of Meddat continued to collect rents for the family as late as February 1747. In 1748 the Barons of Exchequer Court in Scotland appointed an Edinburgh lawyer, John Baillie, as Estate factor, and he proceeded to lease the whole of Coigach for three years to Alexander MacKenzie of Fairburn at a yearly rental established in 1748. In October 1749 Fairburn sub-let Coigach to Murdoch MacKenzie of Achilty, and following Fairburn's resignation in 1751 Achilty continued to act as sub-factor for the new factor, Forbes of New (Bangor-Jones ms. 1988. 1-2).

To combat the evident depopulation occasioned by the Rebellion, Achilty brought in new sub-tenants 'from the island of Lewes and the neighbouring countys', including his own son-in-law Donald McAulay who settled in Inverpolly and is listed as having possession of the town, lands and fishing from 1753. Elsewhere, Angus McAulay was $^{2}/_{3}$ tenant of Badentarbat and the Summer Isles, with Hector MacKenzie $^{1}/_{3}$ tenant; whilst one Aulay McAulay appears to have held Auchindrein since at least ca. 1725 — holding a wadset to those lands (*Judicial Rental* 1755) [Fig. 14.61].

Factors, Tacksmen and Tenants in the later 18th Century

By 1755 the barony was let out to 64 tenants — out of a total population of 896. Given an average family size of say 5 people, perhaps some 115 or so families (nearly $^2/_3$ of the population) were sub-tenants, labourers/cottars or otherwise dependent upon the principal tenants.

This was a period of considerable unrest and instability, with increasingly poor relations between tacksmen and their sub-tenants, who were generally allocated the worst parts of the farms at exhorbitant rents.

In a letter of 1755 John Forbes comments on 'Various grievances of the Coigach subtenants against principale Tacksmen'. He continues:

> It is the custom in the Highlands and in the greatest part of the North that when a tenant takes a large farm he subsells the skirly and worst parts of it to poor people at as high a rate as he can, and makes them obliged to perform many services, and the rent and services paid by them is generally much higher in proportion than what is paid by the aforesaid Tacksman. Some times he subsells so much of it in this way that he enjoys the best part of it to himself for nothing at all, and that this is at present the case in Coygach and several other parts of the Annexed Estates, I believe to be very true, and cant at all doubt but these poor creatures the subtenants are frequently oppressed by these tacksmen their Masters (E/746/74/1).

COIGACH FARMS: 1756

Names of Farms or Divisions of the Plan	Arable			Meadow			Improvable Land		
	A	R	F	A	R	F	A	R	F
Achnahaird	54	2	30	—	—	—	4	2	—
Reiff	37	3	20	—	—	—	5	1	—
Altandu	26	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
A Grassing on Kierrograve called Eisbrecky	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
A Grassing on ditto called Kennabreg & Knockbreck	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Locherkeick	7	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shinaskink	5	3	20	10	—	—	4	3	30
Inverpolly	10	—	10	8	2	20	—	—	—
Delpolly	11	—	10	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dorny	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Badentarbet	11	2	30	4	3	20	—	—	—
Achiltibuie	78	—	20	3	—	—	—	—	—
Badenscallie	30	—	20	5	2	10	6	3	30
The Forrest of Coygach	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Drumrainy	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	2	10

Fig. 14.57 Extent of farms in north-west Coigach, from Jon Scott's 1758 copy of Peter May's Survey Map of Coigach, 1756. (RHP 85395).
'Meadow', 'Improveable Land' and 'Marshy Ground', if taken together correspond to 'Grass & Good Pasture' on Morrison's 1775 Survey. Similarly, 'Moss' and 'Barren Ground' correspond to 'Hill & Moss' [see Fig. 14.58].

MacKenzie of Achility, MacKenzie of Corrie and Aulay McAulay seem to have been a particularly rapacious lot, even if George MacKenzie of Achnahaird seems to have been the only tacksman still demanding services from his sub-tenants. Around 1755 the same George MacKenzie paid rent of £233.6.8 (Scots) for his farm and received £220 (Scots) per annum back, taken from his 17 sub-tenants — who 'being poor . . . make not punctual payments' however! [Fig. 14.61]. There was widespread land hunger and widespread conflict. Dykes were broken down, sub-tenants' cattle were illegally pastured and tacksmen's sheep harried. At the same time, tacksmen evicted sub-tenants and others at will (R&C 1989. 82-84).

The finer details of the affairs of Coigach and the inter-relationships of factors, tenants, sub-tenants and cottars can be gleaned from *Cromartie:*

COIGACH FARMS: 1756

Continued

Marshy Ground			Moss			Wood			Barren Ground			Whole Contents		
A	R	F	A	R	F	A	R	F	A	R	F	A	R	F
9	3	30	140	—	—	7	3	20	3157	—	—	3374	—	—
7	—	—	50	—	—	—	—	—	1828	3	20	1929	—	—
—	—	—	7	3	—	—	—	—	405	2	—	440	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	20	3	30	442	—	10	463	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	—	226	—	—	236	—	—
5	3	20	9	3	30	7	2	10	1627	—	20	1628	—	—
14	—	—	8	—	—	10	—	—	3817	—	30	3860	—	—
7	3	30	50	1	10	5	—	—	1743	—	10	1825	—	—
3	—	—	18	2	20	12	3	—	3004	2	10	3050	—	—
—	—	—	15	3	30	—	—	—	703	—	10	820	—	—
—	—	—	30	2	—	—	—	—	1044	3	30	1092	—	—
20	2	—	80	3	30	16	3	—	2305	2	10	2505	—	—
60	2	20	40	2	10	—	—	—	1902	—	30	2046	—	—
90	3	—	250	—	—	20	2	30	10924	2	10	11286	—	—
18	2	20	30	—	30	15	1	20	5086	—	30	5154	—	—

Fig. 14.57

Highland Life 1650-1914. Richards & Clough have ably quarried the Cromartie Papers to give a tantalising picture of a Highland Estate seeking to integrate the development of Highland (Wester Ross) and Lowland (Easter Ross) properties within a philosophical and cultural framework far removed from that of the people who actually lived and worked in Coigach, Strathpeffer and New Tarbat. It is hardly surprising perhaps, that the tension and discontent so clearly visible at the time of the Estate's annexation, should have continued in one form or another right through until the Crofting Acts of the 1880s gave a real security to the indigenous population.

As elsewhere in the Highlands, sheep farming was seen as the Estate's economic saviour. A Borderer, Ninian Jeffrey, was appointed local factor in Coigach 1764-81, and it was he who sought to introduce sheep-farming. In

COIGACH FARMS: 1775

	Corn Land			Grass & Good Pasture			Hill & Moss			Wood			Total		
	A	R	F	A	R	F	A	R	F	A	R	F	A	R	F
Achnahaird	54	2	30	14	1	30	3297	0	00	7	3	20	3374	0	00
Reeve	37	3	20	12	1	00	1878	3	20	0	0	00	1929	0	00
Altandow	26	3	00	00	0	00	113	1	00	0	0	00	140	0	00
Runabreck & Eisbrechy	2	0	00	0	0	00	224	0	00	10	0	00	236	0	00
Leorchircaig	7	2	00	5	3	20	1637	0	10	7	2	10	1650	0	00
Sheanascaig	5	3	20	28	3	30	3825	0	30	10	0	00	3870	0	00
Inverpollie	10	0	10	16	2	10	1793	1	20	5	0	00	1825	0	00
Dalpollie	11	0	10	3	0	00	3023	0	30	12	3	00	3050	0	00
Dornie	21	0	00	00	0	00	799	0	00	0	0	00	820	0	00
Badatarbat	11	2	30	4	3	20	1075	1	30	0	0	00	1092	0	00
Achiltibuie	78	0	20	23	2	00	2386	2	00	16	3	00	2505	0	00
Badenscallie	30	0	20	73	0	20	1912	3	00	0	0	00	2046	0	00

Fig. 14.58 Extent of farms in north-west Coigach accompanying Morrison's *Plans of Coygach*, 1775 (E 746/189).

1765 he suggested that Coigach men go south to learn about grazing methods; he proposed that the Forest of Coigach be let experimentally, rent free, to a southern sheep farmer to show the potential of the area; and he offered personally to transform Tanera into a sheep farm. However, the first sheep-farming tenant failed, despite a long lease and low rent; and in general the Board of the Annexed Estates did not appear to favour sheep-farming (or any other enterprise) that could have triggered large-scale evictions (Smith 1982. 86-87).

It was important to differentiate between the main tenant (whether old-style tacksman or new-style farmer), smaller tenants (also holding directly of the landlord), and the sub-tenants. In the regular famines of the 1760s/70s (eg in 1763, 1768, 1771-72, 1773) it was primarily, though not exclusively, the smaller tenants, sub-tenants and cottars who suffered. Crop failure, increased rents, social division, land hunger and American attempts to entice new settlers that continued until (and indeed after) the American Revolution in 1776, led to substantial emigration. In 1772, for instance, 26 persons left Coigach; in 1773, 11 more families had renounced their leases and sailed off in the 'Hector' to Pictou, Nova Scotia. Also in 1773 Lieut. Alexander MacLeod, tacksman in Inverpolly, gave up his lease; and in 1776 tenants in Runabreck, Badentarbat and Tanera wished to be relieved of their leases and to leave (R&C 1989. 90-92; Mitford ms. p29).

By contrast, the Estate was successful in setting farms to new and progressive tenants — which unsettled yet further many of the lower orders. In 1767, for instance, eight sub-tenants in Achiltibuie [Figs. 14.62-14.64] were removed to furthest *Rubha na breige* to make room for Lieut. Daniel Mackenzie, then living in Lewis. In 1777 the five who remained at Runabreck (the others had seemingly left in 1776) were again removed so that the Achnahaird tacksman could have Runabreck as a grazing. Four of these five settled on Tanera, and were evicted yet again in 1784 when the fishing station was established. Small wonder that on occasion the people refused to remove and that the factor found them 'so stubborn and unruly' (Bangor-Jones ms. 1988. 8).

In another instance, it would appear that Easter Ross-based Donald MacLeod of Geanies, a descendant of the MacLeods of Assynt, was keen to lease Cromartie land. Perhaps by the mid/late 1780s, 'At Coigach, on the west coast, Mr MacLeod possessed a large farm, which maintains about 300 horned cattle and 60 horses during the summer months . . .'; around 1790 he was thinking of replacing the cattle with sheep; in 1791 he was paying rent on Badenscallie [Figs. 14.62-14.66]; and in 1795 he is recorded as holding the leases of Badenscallie, Rhidorroch and half of the Forest [of Coigach] (GD 305/1/135, 163, 200, 203; Mackenzie 1810. 130; Baldwin 1986. 194-97; M. Bangor-Jones 1991. pers. comm.). The contrast is clear: MacLeod of Inverpolly was struggling and failing under the old system; MacLeod of Geanies had the political vision, muscle and capital to see where economic success would lie.

Nonetheless, he did not find it easy and was evidently in conflict with the sub-tenants. For three years later, in 1798, a *Petition of Donald MacLeod of*

COIGACH RENTAL: 1725

GD 305/1/126(129)	'Land Duty, bicardys, ffishing and ffow Duties' marks	sh	p
1. Auchnahaird and Roiff	180	00	00
(Auchnahaird) 'of bicaradys' [*sic*]	015	00	00
2. Kerowgarw (Keriwgariew)	200(290)	00	00
do.	015(025)	00	00
3. Inborpolly (Inborpollie)	090	00	00
do.	007	06	08
4. Dabinhionphollunds (Dallphollig)	090	00	00
Dalsichionphollunds			
do.	007	06	08
The ffishing (The watter of Pollie)	020	00	00
5. The Ivion of Dornie (Dornie)	110	00	00
do.	007(007)	00(06)	00(08)
6. Baidinterrbutt (Baidintarbatt)	110(110)	00(06)	00(08)
do.	007	06	08
[mainland]			
['Somar jllds']			
7. Aicbilibuy (Auchilibiy)	120	00	00
do.	007	06	08
8. Baidsbullie (Baidsballie)	110	00	00
do.	007	06	08

Fig. 14.59 Part of the Coigach Rental, 1725. (GD 305/1/126, 129). Entries in brackets are taken from the second copy (129).

COIGACH RENTAL: 1725

Continued

'Customs as usually peyd' Stones Butter	Wedders	Plaids	'Entries' ('Grassum') marks	Principal Tenant
8	6	1	1,000 (2,000)	(Ardloch)
8	6	1		
4	3	½	400	
			(650)	(James mbonye)
4	3	½	250	
—	—	—		
4	3	½	300	(Sallachy)
4	3	½	(500)	(?—)
			300	
			200	
4	3	½	400	(Allon. mLeod)
4	3	½	400	(Donald mLeod)

COIGACH RENTAL: 1740

GD 305/1/64	Merks	Sh.	D.	Principal Tenant(s)
1. Achnahard 2. Kerowgarve Water of Garve	1,065	00	00	Corrie
3. Inverpollie 4. Delpollie	459	00	00	Alexander Mackenzie younger of Keppoch
5. Dornie	304	10	00	Alexander McKenzie of Achilty
6. Baditarbat [mainland]	237	2	4	Hector Mackenzie John Mackenzie John MacRa
Summer Island	99	8	00	Donald McLeod
7. Achlbuy	324	10	00	Alex[r] McLeod
8. Badishally	324	10	00	Donald McLeod

Fig. 14.60 Part of the Coigach Rental, 1740 (GD 305/1/64). In an accompanying *Account of the Arrears of Coygach Rent 1737*, the following tenants are listed:

Dorny	Kenneth Mackenzie
Ackilbuie	Allasidr MacLeod
Badiskallie	Donald MacLeod
Badintarbat	Tennants

JUDICIAL RENTAL OF BARONY OF COIGACH: 1755

E 746/70/77 et seq.	Annual Rent (Scots) £ sh. d.	Entry Money /Grassum	Tenant(s)
Auchnahaird Reiff Water of Garve	233 6 8 (= money rent + customs)	14-15 guineas in whole to Auchilty	*George Mackenzie, entered Whit 1750 without Tack *+ 17 subtenants who pay him 'yearly £220 Scots or thereby but being poor they make not punctual payments'
Eisebrecky in Kerrowgarve	44 3 4 (= money rent + customs)		*Roderick McKenzie of Achillibuy, entered 1751
Kergarve Ruenabreage Knockbreck (part of)	44 3 4	None	*Donald McKenzie of Achale, entered 1750
Shianscaig Lochangavich	26 13 4 26 13 4		*Angus McLeod, entered 1745 * Let to him by deceased Alex. McKenzie of Corry at 40 merks Scots each. Heard that old rent of Lochangavich was 20 merks Scots. Has paid that yearly since 1750 to Murdoch McKenzie of Achilty
Inverpolly + Fishing	78 5 8 4 stone butter 2 wedders 1 plaid	None	*Donald McAulay, entered 1753 without Tack *+ 3 sub-tenants
Dallpollie	32 10 0 (+ wedders etc)	Since 1750 to Murdoch McKenzie of Achilty. £17.16.8 Scots for 1st. three years £12.12 for 4th year	*½ lands — Roderick McLeod, entered Whit 1744 *½ lands — Murdoch McLeod, entered 1754 *Alike in everything: i.e. both pay the same

Fig. 14.61

● Continued on next page

JUDICIAL RENTAL OF BARONY OF COIGACH: 1755

CONTINUED

E 746/70/77 et seq.	Annual Rent (Scots) £ sh. d.	Entry Money /Grassum	Tenant(s)
Dornie	78 6 8 + customs 4 stone butter 3 wedders ½ white plaid	None	*Wm. McKenzie, entered 1754 * + 4 subtenants
Badentarbat Summer Isles	78 6 8 4 stone butter 3 wedders ½ white plaid	240 merks (⅔) 100 merks (⅓) since 1750 to Auchilty	*⅔ Angus McAulay *⅓ Hector McKenzie * + 5 subtenants
Achillibuy	78 6 8 4 stone butter 3 wedders ½ white plaid	£82.10 Scots yearly for 3 years past to Murdoch McKenzie of Auchilty	*Roderick McKenzie, entered 1745 *+ 10 subtenants who 'pay him 200 merks Scots yearly but being poor do not make exact payments'
Badiscallig		£16.18.4 Scots yearly, each, for 2 years past to Achilty [*sic*]	John McLeod (son) Roderick McLeod (son) Mrs McLeod (mother) *Entered 1751 without Tack
Forest of Coigeach	Formerly £30/£31 sterl.		*Alexander McKenzie of Corrie, deceased Laid waste in 1745

Fig. 14.61 Farms in north-west Coigach as detailed in the *Judicial Rental of the Barony of Coigach, 1755* (E 746/70/77 et seq.).

Geannies and others (GD 128/36/8) to the Estate sought protection for their sheep-farms from 'depredations' on their flocks. One of the signatories is given as 'Alexander MacCulloch of Badscallie', probably the tacksman and/or Geanies' local manager of the grazing lands in Coigach, the rent of which had risen sharply over the previous few years (GD 305/1/146, 147, 200, 203; R&C 1989; M. Bangor-Jones 1991. pers. comm.) [Figs. 14.67, 14.68].

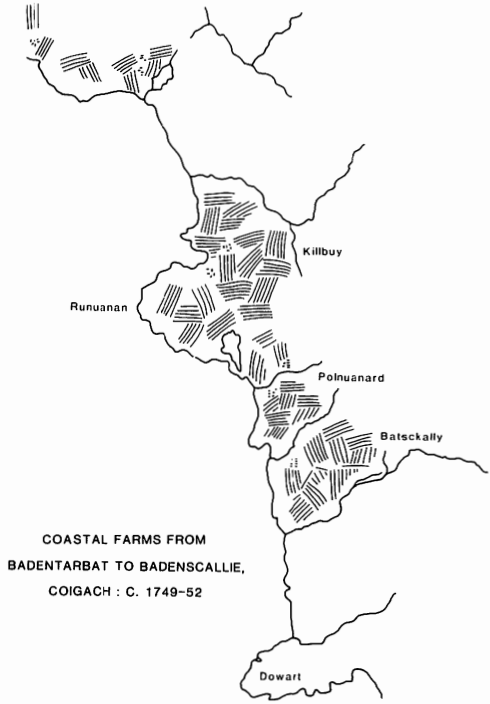


Fig. 14.62 The farms of Badenscallie, Achiltibuie and Badentarbat, based on the survey by William Roy, ca. 1749-52. The later plans [Figs. 14.63, 14.64] suggest this to have been a much stylised and inaccurate survey.

Into the 19th Century: Sheep Farms and Lot Farms

The turn of the century was a critical time both for Badenscallie and for other farms in northern/western Coigach. In spite of all the talk about sheep farms, an enquiry into Highland emigration reported in 1803 that there were only two in Coigach — one large and one small (*NLS* ms. 9646 p.43); though it did point out that the estate would be out of lease within ten years and that movements were beginning to be detectable.

In 1807 a 'good tenant' offered John Macrae, Edward Hay-MacKenzie's western factor, a bid of £150 for 'Badscally Farm', as opposed to its current rental of £30 (*CP* Bundle xxix, Macrae to Edward Hay-MacKenzie 18 April 1807). Then in 1808-09, 15,000 acres at Badenscallie (in addition to 2,400 acres at 'Altandow' and nearly 80,000 acres in eastern Coigach) were put up for letting (*Inverness Journal* 1808, 1809). The proposal was to have 14 sheep farms when the existing leases ran out in 1810. The market was all; as additional bait, sporting and commercial fisheries were highlighted along

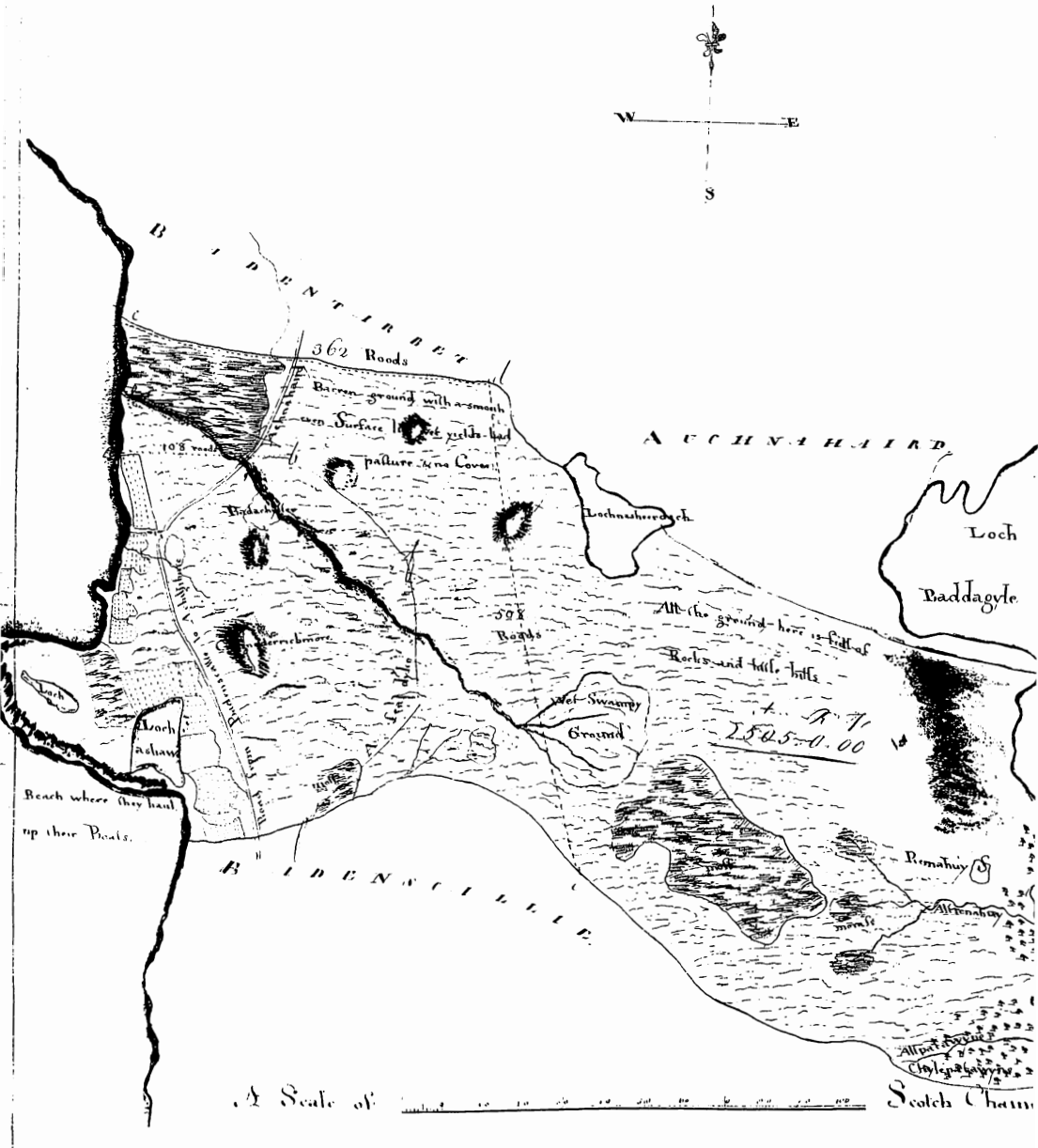


Fig. 14.63 Morrison's plan of the farm of Achiltibuie, 1775. There are minor variations in the layout of parcels of infield land, and he does not appear to pay as much attention to buildings as does May [Fig. 14.64]. On the other hand he names a shieling near to Loch Badagyle as 'Remahuy' and that behind Achiltibuie as 'Badachylleo', nowadays *Bad a'c(h)oitear* — the place of the cottar (though *Bad a'coitcheann*, place held in common, has also been suggested: Fraser 1957. A.II.83) (E 746/189).

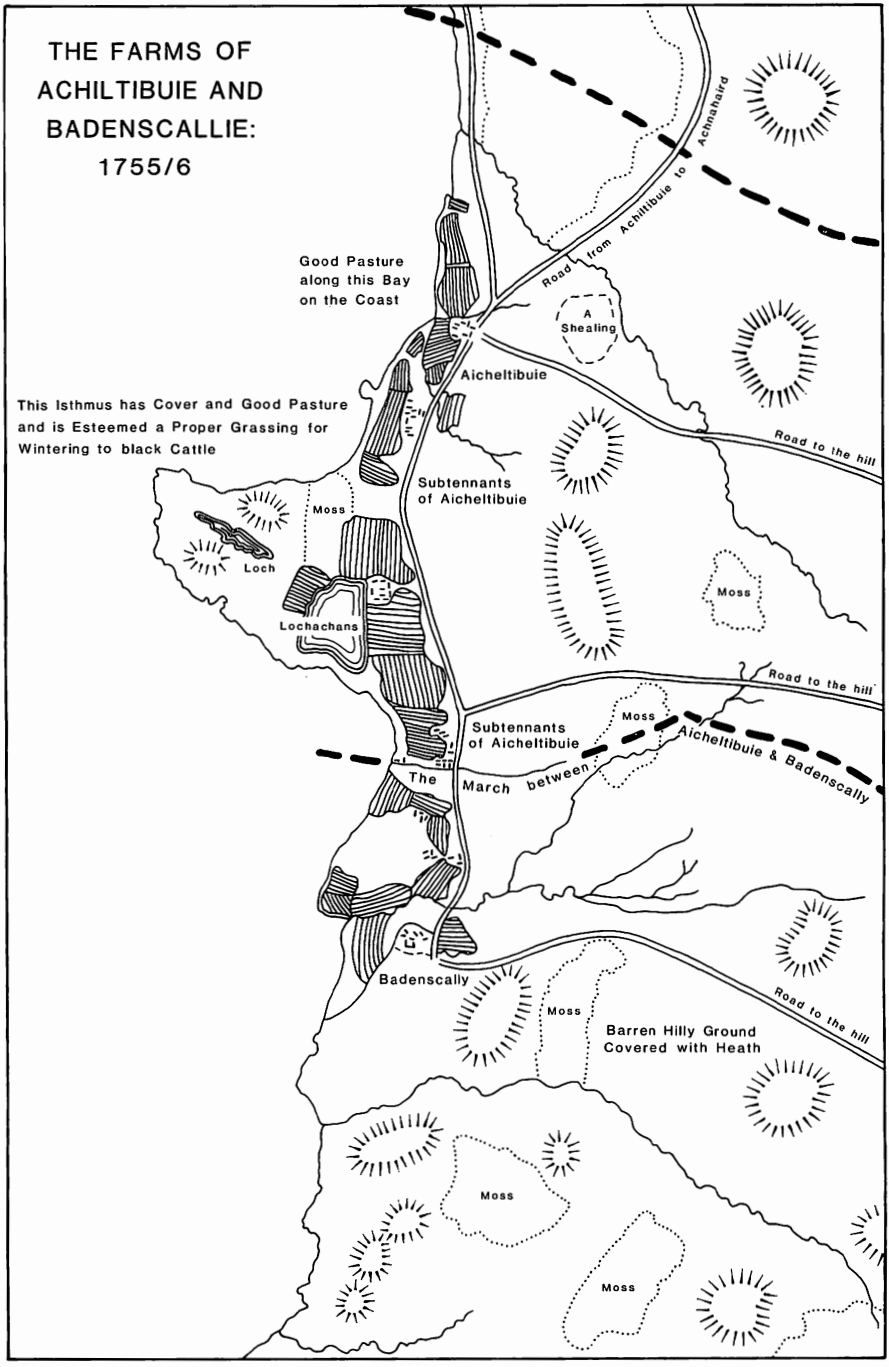


Fig. 14.64 The farms of Achiltibuie and Badenscallie based on the survey by Peter May, 1756. At Achiltibuie the tacksman's farm was in the vicinity of what is now known as Raon Mór, the big field; at Badenscallie the tacksman's farm was on the south side of the burn. For Achiltibuie there is a clear distinction between a buildings cluster for tenants (on the best land) and those for sub-tenants. (RHP 85395).

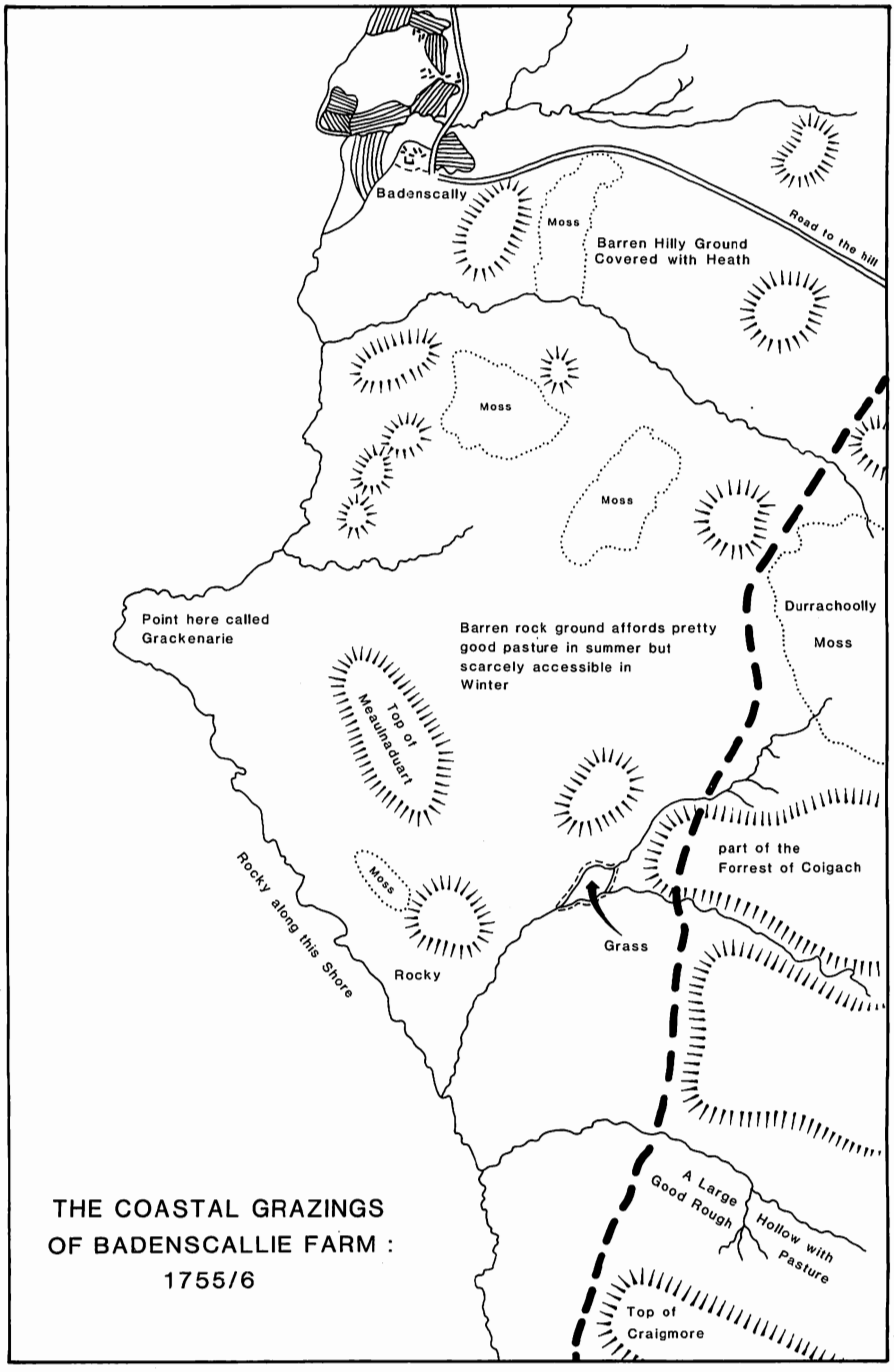


Fig. 14.65 Re-drawn from May's survey of the grazing lands of Badenscallie farm, 1756. What was later to become Culnacraig is designated simply as 'Grass'; 'Grackenarie' perhaps indicates the site of a former shieling, though Morrison [Fig. 14.66] places a shieling called 'Achduard' at Culnacraig.

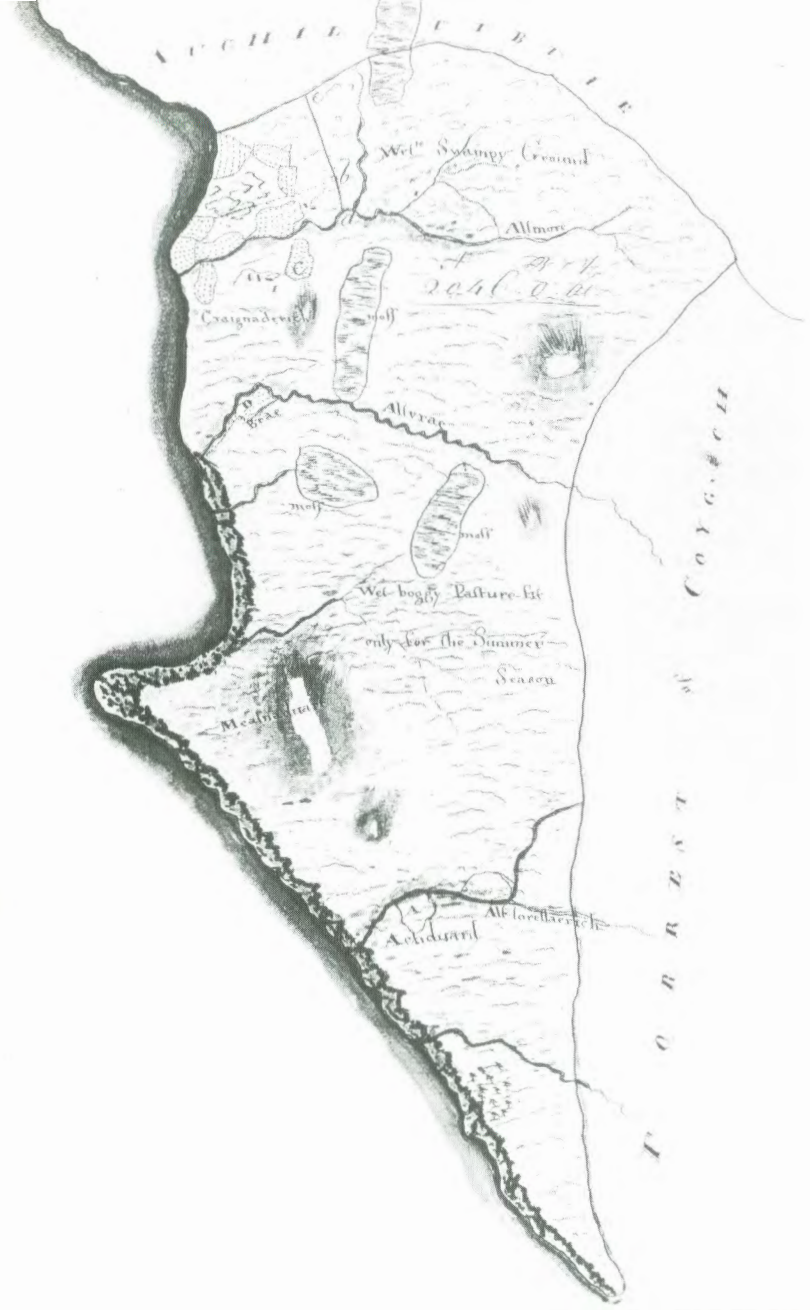


Fig. 14.66 Badenscallie farm, surveyed by Morrison, 1775. By this date there appears to be a cultivated area at 'Brae' (= Achavraie/Acheninver); and according to the facing page, 'Brae' was to be enclosed with a stone dyke. The shieling 'A', given as 'Achduard', was to be enclosed with a turf dyke; whilst 'Culchreg', a little upstream, was to be enclosed partly with a stone, partly with a turf dyke. If the latter area corresponds to the big field at present-day Culnacraig (though it is curiously placed with regard to the burns) then the shieling, in spite of its name, corresponds perhaps to part of the old cultivation rigs still visible below Culnacraig. In which case surviving turf foundations across the main burn, by the waterfall, may be the ruins of a shieling hut, not simply a 19th century old man's bothy (see also note 1).

COIGACH RENTAL: 1785

GD 305/1/146-147	Rental £	sh.	d.	Principal Tenant(s)
Achnahaird	13	6	8	George Mackenzie
Rive	8	8	0	10 tenants
Altandow	3	15	0	5 tenants
Rhunabreck	5	14	0	Malcolm MacLeod (Tack) + 4
Leorchirkaig	6	12	0	Hector MacLeod Donald MacLeod
Shiniskaig	4	16	0	John MacLeod Roderick MacLeod
Inverpolly	13	11	0	Lt. Donald Mackenzie + 6
Dalpolly Fishing	10	1	0	Widow Mackenzie + son
Dornie	13	6	8	7 tenants
Baddintarbat	7	1	0	Angus MacAulay Donald MacLeod Murdoch MacLeod
Island Tanera	2	13	4	Rod. Morison (Feu + Tack)
Priest Island + Fishing	17	4	5	Capt. Mackenzie, Avoch
Auchillibuie	20	0	0	Heirs of Lt. Daniel Mackenzie (Tack)
Badinscally	12	0	0	Roderick McLeod John McLeod Hugh McLeod (Tack) Murdoch Stewart
Forest	7	1	14/12	John MacKenzie Hector McLean
Island Martin	4	4	0	John Woodhouse

Fig. 14.67 Part of the *Coigach Rental of the Cromartie Estates, 1785.* Lieut. Daniel MacKenzie had by this time succeeded in acquiring the tack of Achiltibuie — indeed it is now credited to his heirs. The widow of Roderick MacKenzie and her son, after an acrimonious and long-drawn out struggle, had finally been removed to Dalpolly (GD 305/1/146-7) [See caption to Fig. 14.44].

COIGACH RENTALS: 1795 & 1799

GD 305/1/200, 203	Rental £	sh.	d.	Principal Tenant(s)
Achnahaird	18	15	8	Roderick Mackenzie
Rive	22	0	0	John MacLeod + others
Aultandow	5	18	1	Kenneth MacLean + others
[Runabreck]		—		—
Leorchirkaig	10	0	0	John MacAulay Don. MacLeod
Shiniskaig	6	10	0	Roderick MacLeod John MacLean
N. Half of Inverpolly	15	0	0	Murdo MacLeod + others
Delpolly	12	9	4	Mrs Mackenzie
Dornies	28	12	0	Heirs of Mr. Roderick Morison
Badintarbat	20	0	0	John MacAulay Angus MacAulay
Isle Tanera	3	12	0	Don^{d} MacDonald (Feu)
Isle Ristol [+ Ullapool]	50	9	1	British Fishery Society (Feu)
Achiltybuie	20	16	8	Mrs Mackenzie of Hilltown
Badinscally	30	0	0	Geanies
½ of the Forest (+ Rhidorach)	20	13	7 4/12	Geanies
Isle Martin	2	4	0	John Woodhouse (Feu)
Salmon Fishing	14	0	0	Ken Mackenzie Rod^{k} Morison
Kelp Shores of Coigach	25	0	0	Donald Shaw

Fig. 14.68 Part of the *Coigach Rental of the Cromartie Estates, 1795 & 1799.* By this time Isle Tanera, Isle Ristol and Isle Martin had been feued to herring fishery interests, and Donald MacLeod of Geanies had a lease on Badenscallie (GD 305 1/200, 203).

with ease of communication to Liverpool and elsewhere; no mention was made of the occupying tenants. In 1813, 'the whole district of Coigach is about to be let'; and by 1814 considerable areas of inland Coigach had been cleared, including Inverpolly, Langwell and what may well have been Badentarbat. Inverpolly had been taken over by Roderick MacKenzie of Achnahaird as early as 1810, when Sionascaig was cleared; further parts of Badenscallie and Achiltibuie farms were advertised for sheep in 1815; and more sheep farms were created over the period up until 1840 (M. Bangor-Jones per W. Muir 1991).

In 1814, Hay-MacKenzie's agent in Coigach, James Laing, was also 'supervising the rearrangement of Coigach lands' — the resettlement of people, the creation of lots for crofters, 'removals' and a rapid increase in rents (MacKenzie 1813. 256; R&C 1989. 144-150):

> I shall settle the small Tenants as far as in my power at present and should the Badenscallie Tenants not give £250 Badenscallie will bring more Rent and be better improved by letting it out the same as Achiltibuie — indeed were the present Tenants or any native to have the whole, they would just subsist and enslave the poor creatures as formerly, which I know is against your wish.

Richards & Clough highlight several key points in Laing's document:

* individual lots were being created for 'crofters' in Coigach (and had already been fixed in Achiltibuie)
* efforts were being made to eliminate the old system whereby tacksmen rented the whole land and sublet it in a quasi-communal fashion
* this was justified not simply because it would bring higher rents, but because it would reduce oppression by the tacksmen
* tacksmen were to be given the chance to bid at the new rentals, but outsiders were preferred for the main part of the land
* the majority of the people were to be placed on small lots, with most of the land to be let to a single tenant at a large rent
* a rapidly increasing local population would be granted reduced access to grazings, thereby turning them into 'crofters' whose continuing, albeit limited grazing concealed a substantial loss of land rights.

Clearly the existing (sub-)tenants were under heavy pressures, and by 1814 many had already agreed to the higher rents and to lotting — Rive (=Reiff) £60, Altandhu £70, Achiltibuie £300, Badenscallie £250. The Achiltibuie tenants agreed to add four more tenants to their number; those at Badenscallie a further six (R&C 1989. 146-149). Laing intended that in future the landlord should have a much greater degree of control, with a consequent reduction in the power of the tacksman. He had already ensured that rent payments were up-to-date in 'the Boreraig of Coigach' (= ?), and he looked to a more direct and regular system than hitherto. The elimination

of the tacksman as middle man, however, was not to be completed until the 1860s.

Although the tenants of some at least of the farms had accepted the new rents and conditions in 1814, in most cases the allocation of individual crofts (as opposed to run-rig holdings) seems not to have taken place for another 11, 15 or even 34 years. Records are but sketchy for the 1820s and 1830s; and the surviving lists, which are evidently incomplete and show a number of minor discrepancies, were compiled some 40-60 years later:

1884 Crofters Statistics (*CP*: to Kemball & Green; R&C 1989. 346)		**1886 Crofters Statistics** (*CP*: November 1886; R&C 1989. 170)	
1825	Keanachrine	1825	Keanchrine
1828	Achindrean	(ca.) 1828	Achindrean
1829	Culnacraig	1829	Altnacraig [=Culnacraig]
	Polglass		Polglass
			Achlachan
			Achanduart
			Achnahaird
			Strathan
			Rhive
1831	Reiff	1831	Isle Martin
	Isle Martin		Altandhu (15 lotters)
	Altandhu		Canniscoil
	Camuscoil		
1846	Isle Tanera	1846	Isle Tanera
1848	Polbain	1848	Polbain (19 lotters)

It is difficult, moreover, to square these lists with Laing's letter to Edward Hay-MacKenzie of 26 September 1814: '. . . the new settlers on Keanchrine have got most of their houses up. I have got it all divided into lots . . . there are fine crops all along the coast they were never so good . . .' (R&C 1989. 149-50). Perhaps it is the difference between lots marked out on a plan and lots fully marked out on the ground — the latter taking a considerably longer time? In which case, plans for the lotting of other townships may have been prepared long before their implementation in the 1820s-1840s, new tenants being accommodated first of all within a run-rig system that required a considerable extension of rigs on to the surrounding moorland.

In other words, most of the new lots/small-holdings were only formalised between 1828 and 1831; the rest by 1848. Altandhu had 15 lotters initially; Polbain 19 lotters. The overall amount of infield land available to the community was not necessarily any less than previously. Moreover, the new holdings were each much of the same size — which, in adversity, must have given the 'crofters' a sense of (more or less obligatory) social cohesion, reducing rivalry and encouraging cooperation. At the same time, virtually all the new lots (as opposed to re-lotted farms) were created coastally on

rough marginal land — often small patches of grazing between and beyond the old farm infields.

In 1831, one Andrew Scott from Roxburghshire became John Hay-Mackenzie's factor. He was to remain factor until 1869 and had a local sub-agent on the west coast, Kenneth MacKenzie. Scott's factorship saw further remarkable events and changes in Coigach.

In 1841, when anything from 40,000-80,000 people were destitute in the Highlands, the Government set up a Select Committee on Emigration (Scotland). Most of the Cromartie evidence was given by Scott, who testified that the tenants were located on 'eight lot farms' or 'townships' (R&C 1989. 482) [Figs. 14.69, 14.70]:

Achiltybuie:	52 tenants	Tanera:	7 tenants
Badenscallie:	34 tenants	Ardmair:	26 tenants
Altandow:	20 tenants	Keanchrine:	46 tenants
Reiff:	21 tenants	Auchindrean:	25 tenants

— which helps confirm, if the surviving records are sufficiently complete, that Dornie and Badentarbat were not lot farms at that date,[8] and neither was Achnahaird (even though it had apparently been lotted in 1829 — Brae of Achnahaird?). Until 1848, moreover, Polbain was let to a single tenant with the power to sub-let (*CP* Crofters Statistics. November 1886).

At that time the Coigach estate (including eg Langwell, Rhidorroch, Glen Achall) covered 145,000 acres — roughly a third of Lochbroom parish. Of this the lotters of the entire estate (not just the western part) had access to but 450 acres of arable for oats and potatoes, with no significant scope for expansion or reclamation. Additionally each township was allocated 1,000-5,000 acres of hill grazing, depending on the amount of arable. Tenants grazed 1-3 cows and 2-20 sheep which raised cash to pay their rents — augmented by fishing and seasonal employment in Wick and the Lothians.

In 1838, meantime, Coigach's total population was 1,512 and rising — a third of them under the age of 12. This represented 231 tenants, averaging 6½ to a family and paying an average annual rent of 65-70 shillings per tenant. But in addition there were 500 others — squatters who were not officially there and who officially did not even exist. To discourage early marriage and thereby to slow down population growth, sub-letting and sub-division of lots was prohibited. So also was the building of additional houses on lots, other than as direct replacements, room for room, for old houses, which had to be converted into barns or byres. On the limited grazings, shielings too were forbidden lest they became permanent dwellings — though ostensibly to prevent some tenants gaining greater hill grazing advantages than others (*CP* Scott to Alex Ross n.d.; to James Mitchell 3 December 1842; R&C 1989. 201-205). Perhaps inevitably, however, squatting was uncontrollable.

The situation was exacerbated, according to Scott, by the tenants' continued reliance on and preference for a traditional, semi-communal peasant life-style based on what remained of the old ways and the old economy. For the 'lot farms' were an inadequate response for those removed from extensive

Fig. 14.69 'Altndu' with 'Camishanea' as surveyed by Peter May, 1756. A shieling lies on the north side of 'Locknarickielaphetre'. On the adjoining farm of 'Dorny', a further shieling lies just a little inland from the farmland of Old Dornie beside the harbour. Altandhu appears to have been broken up into 15 lots in 1831; and by 1841 there were 20 tenants. The 1835 Rental, however, gives 17 tenants, with a further 4 in the dependent pendicle of 'Camiscoil', nearly 3 mls (4.8 km) away on the northern coast of Rubha Coigach — a pattern reinforced in subsequent rentals.

Fig. 14.70 Achnahaird as surveyed by Peter May, 1756. Unlike Altandhu, which became a 'lot' farm, Achnahaird remained largely as a single unit. Tacksmen/tenants included Roderick MacKenzie (±1820), George and Roderick MacKenzie (1833-48), George MacKenzie (1848-55: died 1851), George MacLeod (1851-66), heirs of George MacLeod (1864-5 . . .). By 1868-70 Alex. Munro was tenant — when there were also 9 smaller tenants (? Brae of Achnahaird), who appear to have co-existed alongside the principal tenant (Rentals).

Morrison (1775) marks May's 'Good Grass' east of the river as a 'shealing', but omits the two buildings, presumably mill and kiln, at the outlet of 'Lochnamoullen'.

old-style farms: the expropriation of the vast proportion of these lands turned the tenants into all-but landless labourers, and the factorial conviction that fishing would support the people was as ill-researched as it was cruelly optimistic (though it held up times enough when the potato crops were blighted).

Resultant poverty and the injustice of the surviving system of tacksman and sub-tenant are well illustrated by the case of a Badenscallie sub-tenant Mrs A. MacKenzie, who travelled across to Tarbat (Easter Ross) in 1841, to petition Hay-MacKenzie to save her from eviction by the over-tenant. She had to look after her aged and bed-ridden mother on her 'lot' and sought help to pay £2 per annum rent for her arable; she also asked for old grazing land to be added to an adjacent croft (she had neither cattle and sheep). It appears that her petition was granted, provided that no new houses were built and no strangers allowed on to (work) the land. (*CP* Letter Book 1841-48. Scott to Mrs A. MacKenzie, 20 February 1841).

Yet if Laing's stated intention in 1814 had come to pass, this incident might have been avoided — namely that the landlord should exercise greater control by cutting out the tacksman and leasing directly to the tenants.

Eventually townships were held directly from the landlord:

1848:	Polbain	1853:	Achiltibuie
	Dorney		Badenscallie
	Altandhu		Achavraie
	Reiff		Acheninver
			Achnacarinan
			Achduart
			Culvercraig [=Culnacraig]
1866:	Achnahaird		

(*CP* General Statement relating to the Crofter Holdings on the Cromartie Estate in the parish of Lochbroom, 1890; R&C 1989. 379).

However, this had been a long-drawn-out affair, largely it would seem of the Estate's own choosing — for the Estate found it much less troublesome to leave it to the tacksmen to collect rents from an impoverished tenantry.

When a later factor, William Gunn, set about making a survey of tenants' rentals in 1869, he noted of the small tenants:

> It is right to mention that having traced the Rentals back for a period of 40 years I find that there has been practically no increase of Rent during that period. At that time the Crofters of Achiltybuie and other smaller townships as far as the Big Rock [ie as far as Culnacraig] were all sub-tenants of Messrs MacKenzie, Merchants, Ullapool, and so continued until 1853 when much to their satisfaction they became the tenants of the Propr direct at the old rents. (*CP* William Gunn's 'Remarks on the recent valuations of Crofter Holdings on the Cromartie Estate', October 1878; R&C 1989. 292-5).

In 1841, certainly, both William and Alexander MacKenzie, tacksmen respectively of Badenscallie and Achiltibuie, were still shown as collecting the rents. In 1850 they unsuccessfully petitioned the Estate to be allowed to relinquish their tacks on account of their difficulties in collecting the rent;

and only when their leases expired in 1853 were the small tenants made direct tenants of the Estate. There were over 82 such tenants, paying £320 to the MacKenzies; and after the landlord had tried unsuccessfully to re-settle them in Badentarbat, the tenants subsequently paid £370 per year (*CP* Gunn to Kemball, 22 February 1884; R&C 1989. 348).

New Attempts at Clearance: 1850s

This reference to resettlement highlights perhaps the most important event in mid 19th century Coigach. Back in 1841, Scott's personal conclusion was that emigration was the only answer to poverty and overpopulation:

> I think it would be a decided benefit to the people themselves, as well as to the landlord, to get rid of the burden of the support of these people . . . [after which Hay-MacKenzie] . . . would make the farms into sheep-grazings. (*PP* Select Committee on Emigration (Scotland) 1841-2 Report, Q.1636-1828; R&C 1989. 204).

In other words, the predicted famine of 1846-7 was simply one of a string of such disasters (1850 was another), which encouraged the Estate to think again about clearances and emigration — partly to reduce an impoverished and dependent population, and partly to increase income by extending sheep farms and the increasingly popular sporting tenancies. Scott's letter to Smythe, Secretary of the Board of Supervision in Edinburgh, 22 June 1848, says it all:

> a large proportion of the Parish is in farms let on lease and a considerable extent is in townships or allotments of land to which are attached extensive hill grazings occupied in common by the tenants of the townships respectively.

As Richards & Clough remark (1989. 213), this was the traditional, uncleared pattern of settlement — substantial grazing areas in Coigach still in the hands of tacksmen and small tenants had remained untouched and uncleared since the first round of changes in the first quarter of the century.

Albeit on a modest scale, piecemeal, and thinking of local relocation of communities rather than massed emigration, in 1848 Scott was planning evictions at Dornie and on Tanera. But the people were not for removing (*CP* Scott to J. Hay-MacKenzie, 2 June 1848; to G. MacKenzie, 1 August 1848; to K. MacKenzie, 3 March 1849; R&C 1989. 213-5).

Even so, there was an emigration in 1853, when 15 Coigach families from Dornie, Reiff, Tanera, Isle Martin (and also Morefield/Kenachrine, Ardmair and Auchindrain) left at a total cost of £1,425 for Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania). The local factor, Kenneth MacKenzie, accompanied them by sea as far as Glasgow; for various reasons however they were unhappy, awkward and abusive towards him. This echoed the passive resistance to removal shown by the Dornie and Tanera crofters five years earlier; it served also as a forerunner of what was about to unfold in Coigach (R&C 1989. 233-5, 484 note 42).

The Coigach Riots: 1852-53

The 'Rebellion at Coigach' is described in considerable detail in *Cromartie: Highland Life 1650-1914* (see also MacLeod & Payne, this volume). Following the abortive attempts to clear Dornie and Tanera, the Estate did not want to risk difficulties at Achnahaird. Thus, although in 1851 Scott received an offer from a Border sheepfarmer, Purves, at a rent well above that of the current 11 sub-tenants, this would have required the removal of the sub-tenants. It was rejected, therefore, in favour of one from George MacLeod in Assynt who would pay only a little more than his predecessor, but agreed to retain the small tenants provided they paid their rents and behaved peaceably (CP Scott to Purves, 4 March 1851; to MacKenzie, 12 April 1852; to MacLeod, 21 January 1852).

However, the following year, 1852, in addition to the MacKenzies seeking yet again to get out of their leases of Badenscallie and Achiltibuie, Mundell of Badentarbat (created a sheep farm by 1848, but possibly some 10, 20 or even 30 or so years earlier[8]) decided not to renew his lease 'on account of the trouble and loss he has had to suffer since he became the tenant at the hands of the Lot tenants on every side'.

The Estate's solution was to shift the Badenscallie tenants to Badentarbat and to make a sheep farm out of Badenscallie — which marched with no other farm but Achiltibuie. The Badenscallie tenants included, of course, those of Achavraie, Acheninver, Achnacarinan, Achduart and Culnacraig, not simply Badenscallie.

Scott's problem was transparent. The tenants would be unlikely to remove voluntarily, so he set about making his proposal as attractive as possible whilst recognising — albeit with serious misgivings — that he would almost certainly be obliged to take legal action.

He first sought to persuade the 93 tenants[9] to sign letters agreeing to move. Although there would be a reduction in the hillgrazing and a greater encouragement to fisheries, they would only have to move about two miles (3.5 kms), and they would be given time to harvest their crops and to build new houses. In the event, 75 tenants signed the letter; only 18 refused. The 18 were to lose their crofts and all their hill-grazing (ie total eviction), but their refusal blocked the entire scheme — at least initially.

In March 1852, the sheriff's officer sought to serve eviction notices on the 18. Men and women waited all night, and when the group arrived from Ullapool they were attacked and the summonses burnt. A second attempt produced a similar result — summonses were again burnt and the boat dragged some 300 yards (275 m) over the shingle. The resettlement plans were postponed for a year.

By mid 1852, however, a new and financially much more attractive tenant from the south wanted a long 15-19 year shooting lease. Lord Dupplin demanded the removal of both people and sheep so that he could stock the western Coigach hills with deer; Lady Stafford rejected a petition from the tenants and gave her full support to Scott. She had reacted badly to the treatment meted out to her factor the previous March and wrote to Scott: 'I think

the sooner and the more decidedly the Badenscallie people are taught their lesson the better, and it will also be a warning to the other small tenants' (*CP* Scott to Johnston, 24 February 1853; Lady Stafford to Petitioners of Achnahaird, 3 June 1852).

It was the next confrontation, in February 1853, that has left its mark in the oral as well as the documentary record. According to the latter, nightly watches were kept, with 'spies' or 'Scouts' in Ullapool. Eventually the sheriff's party left by boat for Culnacraig; they were violently assaulted by a large number of (mainly) women; yet again the summonses were seized and burnt; and the sheriff's officer 'was put on board the Boat in which he went to Coigach in a state of almost absolute nudity'. Women were said to be the leaders, but Scott was in no doubt that all the men were also present, as the previous year (*CP* Scott to G. MacKenzie, 10 February 1853; to Melville, 11 February 1853; to Loch, 18 February 1853; R&C 1989. 236-45).

Mary Shaw MacKenzie's recollections (J. N. Fraser 1982, in R&C 1989. 443) recall the early warning system in Ullapool and tell of the women, and men disguised as women, gathering in a barn at Culnacraig — 'this suggests that the evictors were coming by foot rather than boat', although it is an extremely rough route that leads out from Keanchulish to Culnacraig, underneath A'Chreige Mhór. Mrs MacKenzie suggests that 'The purpose of the disguise was the notion that if the worst came to the worst women would be treated more leniently than men'. Indeed, in her version one of the officers 'swore that no Coigach women would stop him. He received a blow from one of the women which did him permanent damage. He averred that the blow was so hard that it could only have come from a man'.

Donnie Fraser adds that the boat arrived at Ra Chamas; that it was met by young women and by some men dressed as women who stripped the whole party; that the warrants were found nailed below the step of the mast and subsequently burnt in 'a merry little bonfire made on the beach'. He also adds that a woman was put in the stern of the boat with her hand on the rudder, 'a lady skipper'; and that the boat was then carried shoulder high ¼ - ½ ml (400-800 m) inland and dumped on the top of a potato pit. According to Donnie Fraser, *An Gàradh Ùr*, the new dyke, was built to form the new eastern boundary of Achiltibuie but was never finished (Fraser 1957. A. I.2; 1972). That would have required removals from all lands east of the present-day school and community centre, and would have included, therefore, Polglass and Achlochan.[9]

Mrs MacKenzie refers in particular to three women — Mary MacLeod, Anna Bhàn (the 'hefty woman') and Katie MacLeod Campbell. 'Katie Campbell took the shoes of the leader to ensure that no papers were secreted there. The officer was subsequently thrown into the sea'. Mrs MacKenzie continues by saying that Katie Campbell was later identified and the officers demanded of the factor that she never live on the estate again. When she was married, therefore, 'she was forced to build a house below the high-water mark'.

Further corroboration comes from John Alec Campbell of Polglass and Culnacraig. His version is similar, whilst offering additional detail with regard

to the ringleader Katie Campbell — Cait Bheag, small Katie. She is said not to have had a croft, and to have lived in what is now a ruin immediately south of the burial ground at Badenscallie, just above the low coastal cliff. It was she was hit the sheriff's officer with a stick and knocked him out. Afterwards the Estate refused her a house and she eventually emigrated to New Zealand (J. A. Campbell 1990).

These, then, were the Coigach Riots of 1852-53 — an event of more than local significance as tenants more widely were taking the initiative regarding their traditional lands. In the event, the Estate had backed down; it dropped its attempts at removing the Badenscallie tenants; and in 1857, not getting any satisfaction regarding the adjoining Lot tenants, Walter Mundell refused (again) to renew his lease of Badentarbat. Scott had found it impossible to re-let Badentarbat, and wrote with great exasperation of the triumphant attitudes of the 'natives' or 'wretches' who so taunted the shepherd — 'We were here before you and will see you out and so on tormenting the poor fellow'. By 1857, the tenants were effectively beyond his control (*CP* Scott to J. Scott, Hawick, 18 February 1857; to MacKenzie, 13 April 1858; R&C 1989. 245).[8]

The 'victory', however, did not put an end to the problems of poverty, overpopulation and famine. In the spring of 1861, a letter from Badenscallie showed two tenants unable to pay their rent and offering to relinquish a third of their croft by way of compensation to the landlord. Indeed, over 1861-62 crops failed again, leading to a further petition from Badenscallie, signed with many crosses. It said that the small tenants could pay no more than one-third of their normal rent. Kenneth MacKenzie, the local ground officer acting for Scott, opted to take cattle in lieu of rent with which he could stock the large Rhidorroch farm; but prices could not be agreed and the rents remained unpaid (*CP* Angus and Hugh MacLeod to Scott, 14 March 1861; MacKenzie to Scott, I January 1862; R&C 1989. 259, 349).

And so it continued. By the 1880s Coigach was, if anything, even more unmanageable — even though a new factor, William Gunn, had replaced the ageing Scott. It was partly the continuing failures of crops and fisheries; partly the growing campaigns by crofters throughout Scotland for a 'new deal'. Thus it was, in 1882-83, that a situation emerged reminiscent of the Riots 30 years previously — except that this time the sheriff officer was collecting School Board Arrears. When he arrived in the traditional way, by boat to Badenscallie, he was opposed, assaulted and sent away. He was told that cattle and sheep were virtually unsaleable; that the potatoes (in October) were deteriorating rapidly; and that the fishermen had returned penniless (*CP* Gunn to Kemball, 13 April 1883; R&C 1989. 301).

Eventually the Napier Commission was established (1883); in 1886 the Crofters' Act gave crofters security of tenure at a fair rent; and gradually, through their own efforts, the crofters developed a more secure albeit still overpopulated and fragile economy. It was only in December 1992, with entry in February 1993, that the nearby crofters of the 'North Lochinver' estate, mobilised as the Assynt Crofters Trust, finally succeeded in buying out their lands — a date that may prove to be as significant for the indigenous population as the Coigach crofters' successful resistance to removal

140 years earlier.

POSTSCRIPT

In Culnacraig, Donald MacLeod's grandfather, born 1816, was in his prime at the time of the 'Coigach Riots'. He would have been fully aware of what was happening. His eight children were born in the 35 years following, beginning in 1855 — a period that would still have been filled with fear and insecurity, whether of eviction or starvation. For only when Donald's grandfather reached the age of 70, and his father 20, did the Crofters' Act become law; and whilst this offered security and fair rents, it could not guarantee a freedom from famine. Indeed his father, the youngest of the four surviving brothers, left for Motherwell at some point during the 12 years after 1886.

This is the background to the culture and oral history of Donald MacLeod and others of his generation still alive in the last quarter of the 20th century. Their tradition spans four generations, more or less — generations which saw a remarkable transformation from the role of oppressed sub-tenant on an old tacksman's farm, to dispossessed settler on the coastal fringe, to secure crofter with a title to his own land and house. In the event the land allocation proved insufficient and the standard-of-living too low — even on the most fertile parts of Achiltibuie or Achnahaird. And given opportunities to move away, large numbers of crofters in Coigach have seized them. By contrast, those few and younger crofting tenants who remain have become a new elite. They have gathered around them a multitude of assigned or sublet crofts, often across several townships, which provide them with ample infield grazings, considerable agricultural potential and substantial influence over what takes place both on the common grazings and on the enclosed land. For it has been the empty houses that have gone to outsiders and incomers, not the crofting leases by and large.

The future of the Highlands, however, cannot continue to depend upon monocultural exploitation — whether of sheep, deer, trees, fish, potatoes, tourism or nature conservation. It is to be hoped that both proprietors and politicians recognise this. It is also to be hoped that the descendants of the indigenous population, whether or not they have retained their Gaelic language, will feel encouraged to work along with others for a long-term, interdependent and sustainable use of the land — where natural resources and human cultures are recognised as of substantially greater importance and value than short-term economic gain, the maximisation of profits or political expediency. For now that the population is much reduced and subsistence activity and deep poverty are largely things of the past, the opportunities are there to work for a carefully-balanced, collaborative and attractive long-term future for the community. As Dolina MacLeod said in 1972, at the age of 78: 'We have the land and should therefore use it'. Twenty years later, aged 87, John Alec Campbell concurred: 'If I were younger, I'd start it all again — drain, lime and use the land'.

Notes

[1] The theme of carrying people, whether in flight or old age, is a recurring one. At Culnacraig, the grandfather of an occcupant of Christie MacLeod's house (173) lived in a bothy a little down from the old wooden footbridge on the Achduart side of the Allt a'Chulacreige (see Fig. 14.66, caption). The outline of the turf bothy, overrun with bracken, yet remains. When he fell ill he was carried up to the higher house on the man's back (Mr & Mrs D MacLeod 1972). Could this even have been the same Roderick Og who was carried out of Sionascaig?

There are versions also of an old Fingalian tale associated with Loch Lurgainn. In one story, Fionn escapes with his mother after coming to blows with an Irish giant in the direction of Garve. He carried her on his back all the way to Loch Lurgainn. When he found only her shanks or shins remained, he threw them into the loch — hence the loch of the shanks (Fraser 1957 A. II.91; see also MacDonald 1984. 265 et seq.; Watson 1904. 257). In another version the writer has heard it applied to the Norsemen. Escaping from Norsemen raiding on the east coast of Ross, a man ran all the way, without stopping, across to the west, with his father on his back. He ran through the woods and forests — 'for at that time the land was well-afforested' — but by the time he reached Loch Lurgainn he discovered that all of his father, except for his legs, had been torn off by the trees and branches as he ran.

[2] During the 18th century there were periodic attempts to develop a kelp industry in Coigach: before the Rebellion, by the Earl of Cromartie; afterwards by a succession of 'entrepreneurs'. In 1764 Ninian Jeffrey, the factor, argued that kelp manufacture would make the people 'shake off the lazy idle habits they have hitherto been accustomed to'; and by being prevented from using seaweed as manure they would be obliged to use the shell sand much favoured by agricultural improvers. It was left to James Robertson, the minister of Lochbroom, to stress to the Board of Commissioners for the Annexed Estates in 1766 the importance of seaweed as a manure, as well as reminding the Board of the inaccessibility of the banks of shell sand (eg Tanera Beg at low spring tides: Fraser Darling 1944. 146).

The conflict with tenants' rights appears frequently; in general, coastal farms continued to be allowed the right to use seaweed from their shores for manure. Kelp was certainly made from time to time (eg Tanera 1774/5, Auchtascailt 1781), and Donald Shaw rented the 'Kelp shores of Coigach' for £25 in 1795/99 (GD 305/1/200, 203). But there was never the same concentration or economic dependence on kelp as in the outer isles or parts of Orkney (Bangor-Jones ms 1988. 9-11). Whether the £211. 5. 9. rental for 'Sea Ware', charged of the 'Coigach tenants' in 1835, referred to manure or kelp manufacture is unclear (GD 305/2/85).

[3] In 1768 it was noted that 'Rory MacLeod & Son has built a drye stone House & Barn near the march wt Altendow and has taken in some moss or muir wt potatoes which will save about 8 or 9 pecks of bear, this where his grass is set apart from ye rest' (E 746/72/4). They would appear to have been subtenants/cottars in Reiff.

[4] The rough and rocky Forest had certainly been let for grazing prior to 1745, but had been laid waste in the Rebellion. The *Sworn Judicial Rental of the Barony of Coigach of 1755* (E 746/70/77 et seq.) gives two perspectives on its immediately preceding tenants and rental. In his own deposition Aula(y) McAula(y) — principal tenant in Auchindrein, between Keanchulish and Drumrunie — considered that its former rent of £31 sterling was far too high, 'being occasioned by two gentlemen in the Country, their bidding on one another out of humour'. He adds that 'those who took it at that rent were obliged to give it up'; also that he had been one of those appointed to value the Forest at the time of the first survey, when it was valued at 100 merks Scots. Even then he thought it was 'not worth even that, excepting to the tenants within the Country in order that they may be free of a Forester'.

By contrast, Alexander MacKenzie — in Ardmair since 1745 — related that about 20 years previously (ca. 1725) the late Earl of Cromartie was in Coigach setting tacks and offered to set the Forest at about £100 Scots yearly:

2 gentlemen of the Country, the dec. Alex McKenzie of Corrie and Aulay McAulay of Auchindrein in odium of each other did raise the same by roup to £31 sterling yearly which was continued to be paid until the year 1745 by Alex McKenzie who was the highest offerer.

Shades of pique, resentment and animosity on the part of Aulay McAulay?

Although exploitation of the Forest intensified during the latter part of the 18th century, at the time of May's Survey in 1756 there was no tenant. In the vicinity of the later shielings May simply notes:

This end of the hill is called Beian-more and is like the other, very Steep and Rocky. These two hills are among the largest in Coigach, they abound in a Number of Fine Springs and have Sundry patches of Grass in the hollows and towards the Bottom it is Generally pretty Good Pasture.

[5] The 'Mitford manuscript' is a typed document acquired by William Muir (Achilitibuie) from Kenny John MacLeod, Achduart Schoolhouse, ca. 1960.

According to Mr Muir and Angus MacLeod, Achnacarinan, it was based on papers held by the late Mrs Mitford (née Fowler, of Braemore Estate), giving the names of Coigach crofters in the (?) 1770s. The papers are said to have been found in the fishery warehouse in Ullapool when it was cleared out prior to conversion as 'The Captain's Cabin'. Enquiries of the Troughtons of Leckmelm in 1991 failed to identify these papers.

Examination shows the manuscript to include material extracted from Morrison's Survey of Coigach (1775), as well as from other Forfeited Estate Papers and from the Cromartie Papers. In spite of discrepancies, the manuscript seems to be based exclusively on material now available through the Scottish Record Office, and it appears to have been prepared for serialised publication in a newspaper or magazine.

[6] In local tradition, *Clach na Comhalaich,* the trysting stone, is said to have been the meeting place of three brothers who were the first to have settled in Coigach. *Sgàl* gave his name to Badenscallie; *an Gille Buidhe,* the yellow boy, settled at Achilitibuie — the field of the yellow boy; and Watson (1904. 258) failed to learn the name of the third!

[7] In 1596 for instance, Torquil Dow MacLeod of Lewis, with 700/800 followers, fought with Torquil Cononach MacLeod of Coigach close to the mouth of *An Garbhaidh,* that exceedingly short length of river between Loch Osgaig and the sea. This attempt to seize Coigach was almost the last in a series of family feuds, spread over some 30 years, which ended in the early 1600s when the MacKenzies took over the MacLeod territories in Lewis and the adjoining mainland (Cromartie 1979. 174-75; see also Halford-MacLeod, this volume).

It is a battle still remembered in oral tradition as the battle with the Lewismen; that the Lewismen fled; and that after the battle, swords were thrown into a small loch still known as the loch of the swords — *Loch nan Claidheichean.* Stones nearby are said to mark graves; and when draining the land it is said that a local man once came upon the body of a Highland soldier. The drain was diverted so as to avoid the body (W Muir 1987).

A slightly different version suggests that 'peace was made without bloodshed and swords or possibly one from each side cast into the loch as a token of good faith' (Fraser 1957. A. II. 31). It is also said that 'one of the Torquils' was taken and hanged on the gallows hill, *Cnoc na Croiche* — the second highest point on the peninsula behind Achlochan (W Muir 1993).

[8] William McKenzie was removed from Badentarbat at Whitsunday 1842 when his ten year lease expired. Walter Mundell, who had the lease of Horse Island, Rhidorroch, Dalcanloch and part of Corry in 1835, took a four year lease of Badentarbat and the Isles in 1848 (1850 Rental). Given the difficulties that both Mundell and the Estate had with the local population around this time, Mundell gave up his lease in 1852. Badentarbat and the Isles appear to have been virtually unlettable at this point, and Lady Stafford herself is credited with the tenancy from Whitsunday 1852 (1851 Rental).

In 1857 Lady Stafford is 'removed' from the tenancy and Duncan Urquhart set on a 19 year lease until 1876 (GD 305/2/85, 113-116, 119-122, 132).

[9] Acccording to the 1853 Rental (GD 305/2/119-120), Badenscallie and its pendicles had

33 tenants; Achiltibuie (including Polglass and Achlochan) 60 tenants — a total of 93! Was it the Estate's intention, therefore, to clear both Achiltibuie and Badenscallie entirely? References in Richards & Clough (1989. 240) are ambiguous, and Rentals for 1850 and 1851 appear not to have survived for these particular townships. Oral tradition (see later, main text) suggests Achiltibuie east of the new dyke was to be cleared (ie Polglass and Achlochan), but on the evidence of the 1853 Rental this would have affected some 36 only of the Achiltibuie tenants — with Badenscallie and its pendicles, some 69 in all.

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