

THREE RIFTED OR FOUR TOPPED NINETEENTH CENTURY LUG MARKS FROM NORTH YELL

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Introduction

Identification marks are well known amongst many peoples in Europe, Asia and Africa as a means of attributing ownership under conditions of nomadism or of community existence where stock grazes in common. The phenomenon is most usual now in relation to sheep in this country, but other animals can also be lug-marked. An example is the reindeer herds held by the Lapps.

In a recent study from Norway, Johs. Falkenberg outlined the results of a survey he carried out in 1962 amongst the Rørøs Lapps, and made a number of points that have general relevance for lug-marking systems. At a technical level, the forms of the marks used were conditioned by being made with a small knife, or sometimes a pair of shears, so that slits, slices, nicks and angled cuts and openings prevailed (Fig. 1). At a community level, the animals were the personal property of individuals — husband, wife, daughter, son — and each had an individual mark, though the marks were often linked by common features that indicated family relationships. There was, therefore, a close connection between the marks used, the individuals within families, and the families within their communities.

A glimpse of the ear of a reindeer even in a fast moving group might immediately identify some major feature of a mark that pointed to a handful of owners for whom this was shared, whilst closer examination of the supporting features of the marks then tied the reindeer in with a family and with an individual within the family. It could be possible even to establish family relationships from the lug-mark code. In this way, lug-marks and other identification marks are capable of giving insight into the socio-economic relationships within communities. At a further level, broad regional variations in the form and composition of marks is also evident, so that territorial attribution can be added to the other criteria. And since marks could be inherited, sometimes over several generations, there is also a historical dimension. Where a mark was sold or given away, which was also possible, the historical sequence was, of course, broken. Finally, it appears that there has been in more recent times a reduction in the range and complexity of reindeer marks, which points in turn to less cohesion in the older well-knit forms of community existence.¹

This example from a distant land highlights a number of the aspects of the system of sheep's lug-marks in Shetland (and Orkney). The present paper

1. Falkenberg, Johs, 1979: 'Om øremerking av rein hos Rørøs-samene', *Kultur på karrig jord*, Oslo, 37-76. (Also in *By og Bygd*, 1977. Norsk Folkemuseums årbok XXVI).

concentrates on the lug-marks from North Yell, about which a good deal of evidence is available in the Irvine of Midbrake papers,² and makes a preliminary analysis of them.

In the Northern Isles, identification marks were used on cattle and horses, as well as on sheep.³ Records of marking the ears of cattle go back to the early seventeenth century in Shetland. The term 'cattle marks' is used every so often in the Irvine of Midbrake papers, though it appears that this is

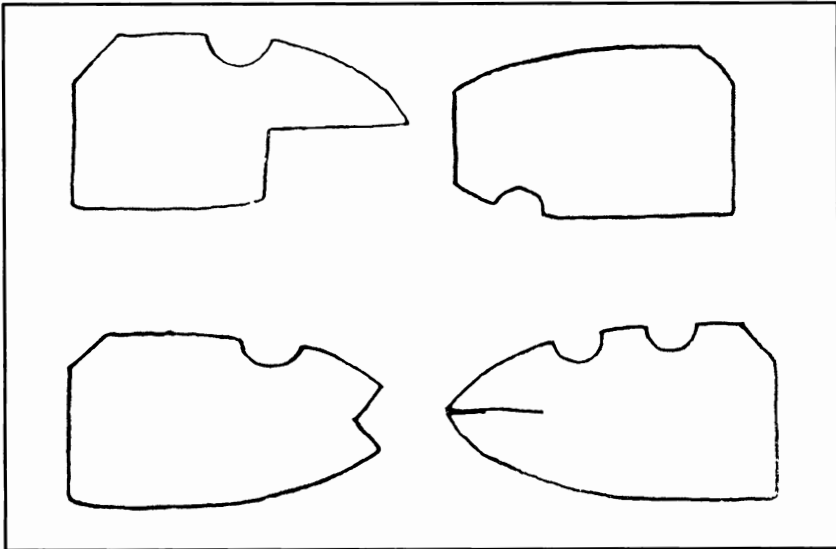


Fig. 1. Some Lappish Reindeer Ear-mark Parallels

1. Half out (*skaavhte*); bit (*dable* or *tjehkie* — the former is bigger)

2. Shear or shule (*skaarja*, cf Norwegian *skar*); bit

3. Stued, piece off (*namhpe*); bit

4. Rift (*sloeptje*); two bits

(After Falkenberg, pages 52, 54, 58, 65. Numbered from the top down).

2. The Irvine of Midbrake Papers, now in the Shetland Islands Council Archives, were formerly in the Library of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (National Museums of Scotland), under the following references:

MS 395/1, bearing dates ranging between 1802 and 1805.

MS 395/2, diagrams (cut-outs) of lug-marks.

MS 395/3, '*Register of Marks*', listed mainly alphabetically, with dates ranging from 1833 to 1872.

MS 395/4/1, description of a lug-mark dated March 1781.

MS 395/4/2, extract from the '*Register of Marks*'

MS 395/6, 'A General List of All The Cattle Marks in the Parish of North Yell', compiled from a list drawn up in 1785. Dates given in the body of the text range from 1816 to 1824.

3. An initial survey of Shetland lug-marks was made in Fenton, A., 1978: *The Northern Isles: Orkney and Shetland*. Edinburgh, 475-476.

used generically for 'stock' and primarily for sheep, but the fact that entries sometimes specify the word 'cattle' may indicate use of the marks on bovids:

'Jerom Anderson in Basta 1 Cattle mark viz the Right Lug half away before, the Left Shulled and a bitt out before and no more' (MS 395/6, p 3).

Lug-marks for horses are specifically referred to. Examples are:

'Bain George Cullivoe Right Lug Rifted & a Bit on each side in the Left Lug the same Given to him by his aunt Molly (?) Bain who brought it from Fetlar where it had been used as a horse Mark. Registered 1860' (MS 395/3 p 3).

'Clark James — Horse Mark Rt. Lug *half behind* two Bits before Left Lug *half before* — Sheep Mark Rt. Lug *Half behind* — *Rift before* Left Do. *Half before*. Magnus Clark Mid Yell his Son has both these Marks in use — Febry. 1851' (MS 395/3 p 4).

'Danielson Alexr. Horse Mark — A Bit before each Lug & a hole on the Right. May 2nd. 1857' (MS 395/3 p 5).

'Irvine, Mr. Thos. of Midbrake Right Lug a hole & a bit before, Left Lug Rifted. This is called the Horse-mark 2 Bits behind the Left Lug & a Bit behind the Right Lug, is the mark on the Mare bought Augt. 1855 from Mr. Henry of Burraster' (MS 395/3 p 11).

'Robert Robertson or Johnson Otterswick — E. Yell A Horse Mark — A bit behind each Lug and a hole on the Left. June 4th 1858' (MS 395/3 p 25).

Descriptions of horse marks are few as compared with those for sheep. They appear to be of a relatively simple form, consisting in the examples quoted of slits and notches on the edges of the ears, and holes in the centres. The James Clark example quoted above shows that on occasion there were only minor differences between the marks of horses and sheep in the same ownership. The situation with sheep, however, was in general much more complicated. Nevertheless, the range of marks for North Yell was less than that of the total recorded for Shetland and Orkney as a whole, the implication being that this was a smaller area with a set of communities and families that did not require to utilise all the technical possibilities (Fig. 2). The total number of owners of sheep in the three lists comes to about 150.

Terminology and description of North Yell lug marks

Bit. A bit can be half round or V-shaped, and can be positioned anywhere round the edges of the ear, e.g. a 'bit behind' or a 'bit before'. There is one occurrence of 'a bitt behind at the Root of the Lug' (Thos. Robertson, Sellafirth, MS 395/6, p 2), and of 'a bit off the top', the latter in combination with a 'half behind' (Peter Gray, Basta, MS 395/3, p 11). There was also 'a bit off the top of the fore half' (Jerom Anderson, Basta, MS 395/3, p 1), described in the Register as an 'Old mark'.

A bit could readily be added to existing marks, as when a lug-mark changed hands, as a distinction.

'Robertson Gilbert, West the firth, Right Lug Stued Left Lug rifted. Decr. 6 1852 — Granted to his granddaughter Margt. Robertson with the addition of a bit behind the Left Lug' (MS 395/3, p 11).

Such an additional distinguishing mark, not always a bit, was known as an 'obright' (MS 395/3, preliminary note), otherwise known in Shetland as an 'afbreg(d)' or 'obregd'.

Crook. In the *Register of Marks*, entry No. 18 is:

'Davidson Janet, Kongnaseter. Right Lug sheered, Left Lug Knaed behind & a Crook or bit' (MS 395/3, p 5).

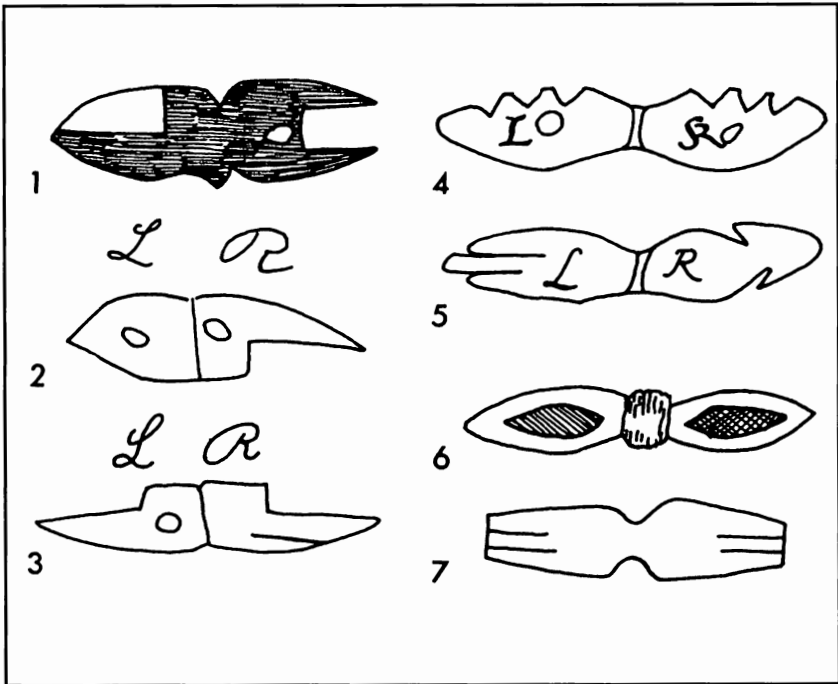


Fig. 2. North Yell Lug-marks from the Midbrake Papers.

1. James Moar, Jr., Gloup: Right — middled, a hole; Left — half out before, a bit behind.
2. George Moar, Gloup: Right — half out behind, a hole; Left — knead, a hole.
3. Andrew Manson, Kirkabister: Right - half out before, rift behind; Left — half out before, a hole.
4. Alexander Fordyce, Unst: Both lugs — three bits before, a hole.
5. Andrew Fordyce, Montulie: Right — crook before and behind; Left — two rifts or three topped.
6. Samuel Johnson: Both lugs — heart out.
7. William Nesbit, Kongnaseter: Both lugs — top off, two rifts or three topped.

This clearly equates a crook with a bit, and in MS 395/6, p 1, there is a diagram showing one of two marks of Andrew Fordyce, Mont(h)ulie, with 'a crook before and a crook behind'. It is a slightly elongated notch, like an extended bit (Fig. 2,5).

That this also brings it into line in some degree with a rift is indicated by a mark on a lamb given by Mr. Thomas Irvine of Midbrake to Laurence Smith 'in halvers', in Sept 1843:

'Right Lug full House mark — Left Lug One crooks or rifts upward & One Do. downwards on each side of the Ear' (MS 395/3, p 11).

A crook, therefore, like a rift, could be cut upwards or downwards, though the majority were cut downwards.

Feathered. A feather is a thin slice off the side of the ear. In the Midbrake Papers, the word never occurs as a noun, but always in the verbal form. It is a reasonably common mark, usually in combination with a bit, hole or rift, and it can be on one or both sides of the ear:

'William Sutherland Tail 1 Merk viz: The Right lugg Feathered before & behind with a holl on it, the left lugg half away before & a rift behind' (MS 395/1, p 4).

There is one example where both ears are treated in this way:

'Laur. Gray there (Basta) 1 Merk viz: The Right lugg Feather'd on both sides (sic), the left lugg Feather'd on both Sides' (MS 395/1, p 10).

The term is equivalent to *Strawdrawn*, which appears to have begun to replace 'feathered' after about 1850.

Half (out) before or behind. This represents the removal of the front or back half of the ear, using a cut made downwards from the top and then at right angles at the appropriate side. It is an easily recognisable and frequent mark, sometimes alternating fore and aft on the right and left ears (Fig. 2, 1-3):

'Thos. Robertson in Sellafirth 1 Mark viz the Right Lug half before & a rift behind, the Left Lug half behind and a bitt behind at the Root of the Lug' (MS 395/6, p 2).

Heart out. This mark is not common. It involves taking a section in the form of an elongated oval from the heart of the ear, leaving a complete surround:

'Johnson Samuel — The heart of both Lugs cut out leaving the Sides and top standing as below June 16th 1856' (MS 395/3, p 14) (Fig. 2, 6).

The fact that it was illustrated in the Register further suggests that it was unusual. There are, however, two other occurrences. In one, the term used is 'hearted downward':

'Arthur Williamson Burreness 1 mark viz Both Lugs hearted downward & no more' (MS 395/6, p 7).

The other term is 'heart hole':

'Anderson Marble Kellister Right Lug Rifted Left Lug a Heart hole. Augt. 12 1835' (MS 395/3, p 2).

This mark had been listed as the second mark of John Sutherland, West the firth, but had been claimed by Marble Anderson and was given to her by the authority of the Registrar of Marks in 1835 (MS 395/3, p 26).

The remaining example is:

'Moar David, (Son of George) Basta, Right Feathered, Left Lug a Hart hole. May 21st. 1833' (MS 395/3, p 19).

If this mark is rare in Shetland, it appears from the available evidence that it is quite unknown in Iceland and in the Faroes. It looks as if it would be rather easy for the ear to be caught on a stalk of heather, so that it might become torn.

Hole. A hole in the ear, in various positions, and in general use (Fig 2, 1-4).

Knead. A 'knee' (only the verbal forms appear in these lists) is a slanting cut off the side of the ear, starting at the top. It is illustrated in the lists along with the description of one specific mark:

'George Moar Gloup 1 Mark viz. the Right Lug half behind & a hol on it the Left Lug knead & a hol on it & no more...' (MS 395/6, p 3) (Fig. 2,2).

An ear could also be 'knaed round', which presumably means that the cut was made on both sides of it:

'Danielson Jas. Cullivoe. Right Lug a bit behind & a bit before. Left Lug Knaed round & a hole. This mark was assigned to Daniel Williamson, Cullivoe, in 1837' (MS 395/3, p 5).

'Flaws Magnus Sellafirth — Right Lug a Crook behind & a Rift in top — Left Lug Knead round & a hole' (MS 395/3, p 7).

Another related term is 'half knead':

'Chirsten Johnsdaughter in midseat viz the Right Lug half Knead behind and a holl, the Left Lug Stoued and no more' (MS 396/6, p 6)

'Manson Barbara Neep — Right Lug half away before & a hole — Left Lug Knaed behind — Given to her by George Moar in Goodseter; her grandfather' (MS 395/3, p 29).

Middled. A rectangular cut from the top towards the middle of the ear. An example is illustrated:

'Jas. Moar Junr. Gloup 1 Mark [viz the] Right Lug Midled with a holl on it the Left Lug half [out before] a bit out behind' (MS 395/6, p 3) (Fig. 2,1).

That this is an old mark is not in doubt. It goes back at least to the seventeenth century as a Midbrake mark:

'Irvine Mr. Thos. of Midbrake

1st Both Lugs Middled a hole & a bit before on the Right Lug

N.B. The original Record of this mark was Kept in the House of Midbrake among the Title Deeds in the little old Oak Charter Chest. It was

dated 16 hundred & odds, but I do not remember the exact year, and came to Midbrake along with Some of the Land (4 Ms [merks] of the Garths (I think)) from the original Udalers & held as an heirloom — Hence the mark is always called the *House Mark*. The said Record was lodged in the Sheriff Court at Lerwick in 1804 or 1805 on occasion of a Process ‘twixt my father & some men in West Yell about sheep’ (MS 395/4/2, copied by Thomas Irvine of Midbrake from MS 395/3, p 11).

The widespread nature of the mark is shown by the parallel forms and terms in Iceland, *mið-hlutað*, and in the Faroes, *midt úr hajlun* (1780s), *miðjulutað*. ‘Middled’ may well be a form of the Norse expression, though influenced from English.

Middle standing. This refers to the situation, noted once in the lists, in which the sides and top are cut away, leaving a rectangular piece standing. It is the reverse of middled:

‘Robertson Peter, Mid Yell, Right Lug, a third part away behind & before, the Middle standing & the top off, Left Lug Rifted’ (MS 395/3, p 25).

This mark is known in Iceland as *hamrað*, *hamarskorið*, and in the Faroes as *hamarsmerki*.

Piece off the top. This mark refers to the removal of the tip of the ear. It is found only once in the lists:

‘Hay Basil Junr. Burrabrake, Right Lug Stued & a Shule in it, Left Lug a piece off the top & a hole. Jany. 11th. 1833’ (MS 395/3, p 10).

It seems certain that a ‘piece off the top’ is similar to a ‘stoo’, since the same mark is referred to again, but as a ‘half stoo’, which presumably was not as substantial as a stoo proper:

‘Sutherland John West the firth, Right Lug Stued & a shule in it, Left Lug half Stued & a hole. N.B. Given to Basil Hay Jr. Burrabrake Jany 11th. 1833’ (MS 395/3, pp 10 and 26).

Rift. A narrow slit downwards from the tip of the ear, or from the outer edges of the tip if another mark (a shear, shuil or half away) had already been made in the tip, or from the middle down if a stoo had been made. If two rifts were made in the whole ear or in the stooed ear, the mark was then called two- or three rifted or three- or four topped (Fig. 2, 3 and 5):

‘Robertson David, Sellafirth. Right Lug rifted in the top, two bits before & two behind, Left Lug half away behind’ (MS 395/3, p 25).

‘Robertson Thos., Sellafirth, Right Lug half away before & a rift behind, Left Lug half away behind & a bit under’ (MS 395/3, p 25).

‘Sinclair John, Virdick, Both Lugs Sheered in the top a Rift on each side & a hole on the Left Lug. 1860 Used by Wm. John Hay as a halvers mark’ (MS 395/3, p 28).

‘Moar Wm. Backhouse, Right Lug Shuled the Left Lug shuled in the top & a rift on each side a hole & a bit behind’ (MS 395/3, p 17).

‘Manson Andw. Papil, Right Lug half Stued a rift in the Stue & a bit before, Left Lug Knaed, a hole & a bit behind’ (MS 395/3, p 20).

‘Moar Janet, Junr. Right Lug half Stued & two Rifts in the Stue, Left Lug Feathered & a hole’ (MS 395/3, p 18).

‘Nisbit William Kongnaster The top off Both Lugs and two rifts in the cut of each thus May 11th. 1869’ (MS 395/3, p 22) (Fig. 2, 7).

‘Alexander Spence there (Broken) 1 merk viz: The Right lugg Stowed the left lugg three Rifted or four Toped & a holl on it’ (MS 395/1, p 3).

All of these variations are also known in Iceland: *heil-rifað*, *tvírifað í heilt*, *þrírifað í heilt*, *stúf-rifað*, *tvírifað í stúf*, etc., and there are Faroese equivalents, *riving*, *rivað heilt*, *rivað stúv*, etc., but there seems to be no evidence for the use of the three rifted or four topped mark there.

Sheared. This mark involves cutting a V-shaped notch in the tip of the ear (cf Fig. 1,2). It does not occur very often in the lists, seemingly because it was the same as the much more frequently used term, *shuled*. One entry, in fact, glosses sheered as shuled:

‘Anderson Andrew Basta. Right Lug Sheered (Shuled) & a Hole, Left Lug a Bit before & a Bit behind’ (MS 395/3, p 1).

It happens also that the same entry occurs in two of the lists, one using sheered and one using shuled. Both are given here because they also show how the description of the same mark can be varied:

(a) ‘Jas Leisk in Basta 1 Cattle mark viz the Right lug sheered in the top with a holl & a bit before & Do. behind, the Left lug two rifted or three toped with a bitt before and Ditto behind & no more’ (MS 395/6, p 4).

(b) ‘Leisk Jas. Basta, Right Lug Shuled a bit on each side & a hole, Left Lug two rifts or three toped & a bit on each side’ (MS 395/3, p 15).

Shear, which is simply the English word, may represent a stage in the anglicisation of a good native word of Norse origins (see *Shuled*).

Shuled. This is the same as sheared. It is known from at least the late eighteenth century:

‘At Cullavoe 24 March 1781 Compeared Andrew Moar in Mursetter and presented the following Cattle merk viz: The Right Lugg Shulled with a Rift on each side of the lugg Cut downward, the left lugg Shulled with a Rift on each side of the lugg Cut downward & a holl on said lugg, which merk he Desired to have and the said merk was published in the presents of the Parish being met at said Place, no objections made, therefore the same is granted to him, as his lugg merk, to be used by him on his Cattle, and by Virtue of Powers Invested in me by the Sheriff Substitute of Shetland I hereby warrantize said merk to him which is Recorded and Extracted from the same by Desire of Alex Irvine’ (MS 395/4/1).

The term and shape are the same as for Icelandic and Faroese *sylt*.

Slit. There is only one example of this mark:

‘Fraser George Brae — One Slit upward & one Slit downwards on each side of each Ear, & a hole on the Left ear. — 1843’ (MS 395/3, p 7).

It seems to be like the Icelandic mark, *andfjaðrað*, two slits half way down the ear that start from two different points and run towards each other, or *oddfjaðrað*, where the two slits start from the same point and run away from each other

As used here, it may represent an anglicisation of rift, though no other examples of rifts taking this upward and downward form have been found. A possible parallel may be found under *Crook*.

Stoed. With this mark, the tip of the ear is cut off. The term ‘half stooed’ also occurs and seems to indicate that a smaller piece was removed; it could be found on both ears.

‘Jas. Anderson in Cirkabister 1 Mark The Right Lug feathered behind and a Rift before, the Left Lug stoued’ (MS 395/6, p 2).

‘Elizabeth Leisk Basta 1 Mark viz. the Right Lug Rifted the Left Lug half Stoued & one hole on it’ (MS 395/6, p 3).

‘Mr John Spence Mercht. Stonganess 1 Mark viz: The Right lugg half stowed & two Rifes in it, the left Lugg half stowed & two Rifes in it’ (MS 395/1, p 3).

The Icelandic equivalent is *styft*, and the Faroese *styyt*. *Styft* is also the name in Sweden (Öland).⁴ The term and shape are, therefore, in wide use.

Straw drawn. This is a thin slice cut off along the full length of the ear, equivalent to *Feathered*, as is specifically stated in the description of one mark. The mark might also alternate in position on each ear:

‘Smith Jas. Both Lugs straw drawn on each side (feathered) and a hole on each — Old Mark’ (MS 395/3, p 23).

‘Williamson Peter John — Right Ear Straw-drawn before and a bit out behind — Left Ear a Bit out of each side — The above mark was presented by Peter Jn. Wm.Son a year or two back for Sheep in halvers with Mr. Pole Cullivoe — Entered in this Register Feby. 23d. 1852’ (MS 395/3, p 30).

‘Moar Bruce — Lingarth Rt. Lug Strawdrawn before & a bit behind — Left Lug Strawdrawn behind and bit before — March 31st 1866’ (MS 395/3, p 29).

There is one example of the form ‘strawn’:

‘Also May 28th. 1856 — The same Thos. Moar Junr. (Konnaster) presented the following Mark — Right Lug Strawn on both sides — the Left Lug Knaed and bit behind’ (MS 395/3, p 16).

4. Comparative evidence for the forms and terminology of Scandinavian marks is taken from: Berg, Gösta, 1966/67: ‘Johannes Galejas märkebok och andra öländska märkeböcker’, *Kalmar läns fornminnesförenings årsbok*, 23-34; H Pålsson, 1958: ‘Fjärmörk’, *Freyr*, Nr. 7-9, 132-137; *Almanak hins íslenzka þjóðvinafélags um árið 1912*, Reykjavík 1911, 80-81; *Seyðamark*, serpent úr Álmanakkum, Tórshavn 1964, 3-7.

Topped. Occurring in the phrases ‘three tops’ or ‘four topped’, seemingly as a Yell speciality. See *Rift*.

Top off. The mark for William Nesbit, Kongnaster, quoted under *Rift*, shows in the illustration that this is equivalent to being stooed (Fig. 2, 7).

Lug marks and the community

Lug-marks were, in effect, like legal documents that established an owner’s claim. They had to be publicly accepted before they could be officially granted to an owner, to ensure that they did not duplicate those of another man, and that they did not have too close a resemblance to any other. They were listed in Registers of Marks by the local registrar, whose authority to do so came, as Alexander Irvine noted, from the Sheriff Substitute of Shetland (MS 395/4/1). In this way they had both a legal basis, and a basis of joint agreement amongst the stock owners of the various districts, in this case North Yell. There was also a registration fee of 6d in the mid nineteenth century, for example on change in ownership of a mark:

‘Gilbertson Charles — residing in Halsingarth — presented the following Sheep Mark viz. A hole & a Bit behind & a Bit before on each Lug — descinded from Molly Jameson from Buster wife of Gilbt. Anderson Out Harra — Registered accordingly & Extract given dated Agt. 9th 1851 — fee 6d paid’ (MS 395/3, p 8).

The keepers of the registers were men of responsibility, who had to be scrupulously careful in order to avoid disputes. A note written by Thomas Irvine in the *Register of Marks* shows that the succession of keepers, probably from the late eighteenth century, was Mr John Spence of Stonganess, then Mr Gilbert William Irvine of Midbrake, then Thomas Irvine, also of Midbrake. A note by Thomas’s nephew, also called Thomas, states:

‘The above Mr. Thos. Irvine was the last official Registrar of Sheep Marks for the Island of Yell. My Father Gilbt. Will. Irvine held it before him and His father My grandfather James Irvine of Midbrake before him again I had the Bladder bag Containing the bundle of cut shapes of Ear Marks but lost this. Thos. Irvine’ (MS 395/3).

The ‘bladder bag’ gives some insight into the way in which the actual outlines of the marks could be kept, cut out in paper, as a complement to the written descriptions in the registers.

Within the community, various activities could take place in relation to marks. A mark could fall into disuse, perhaps through the sale of an owner’s flock when he died or became too ill to look after them, and had no direct descendants in the area. A mark that had belonged to Edward Fraser in 1781 was ‘renewed’ to Thomas Anderson, Brough, in 1833 (MS 395/3, p 1), and in 1824, a mark given up by the heirs of Olla Gray Junior in Basta was given by the registrar to Helen(?) Skollay in Buraness (MS 395/6, p 4).

The giving of marks was common. Andrew Fordyce, Monthulie, gave a mark to his grandson, Geo. Jameson, and Christan Fraser to Basil Moar,

Colvister (MS 395/3, p 7). David Moar, Kolvister, gave one to his son Andrew (MS 395/3, p 18), Magnus Nesbit Senr., Bixter, to his daughter Janet in Kirkabister, and Peter Nesbit, Senr., Kirkabister to his youngest son Robert in 1849 (MS 395/3, p 21). The mark of John Sutherland, West the firth was given to Basil Hay Jr., Burrabrake, on 11 Jan 1833 (MS 395/3, p 26), and that of Gilbert Scollay, Kongnaseter, to his grandson, Gilbert Scollay Nesbit, though in this case a bit off the top of the left lug was added as a distinction (MS 395/3, p 26). George Moar in Goodster gave a mark to his granddaughter, Barbara Manson in Neep (MS 395/3, p 29).

From these examples, it appears that the giving of marks between members of the same family was frequent, and that grandchildren tended to be especially favoured. Youngest sons also came into the reckoning, as the following examples emphasise:

(a) 'Nesbit Peter, Senr., Kirkabister. Right Lug half before & a bit under. Left Lug half behind. Extract given May 16th 1849 to Robt. Nesbit youngest son of the above & fee of 6d paid'.

(b) 'Nesbit Peter Junr. (Son of the above) Right Lug two holes Left Lug a hole & bit behind. N.B. This was Mr Scott of Greenwell's mark in N. Yell Allowed to Thos. his 3rd son untill Robt. the youngest child requires it (meaning P.N.'s children)' (MS 395/3, p 21).

Marks could also be sold:

'Danielson Lodwick, Lingarth, Both Ears half Stued and a Bit behind each, a Hole on the Left Ear and a Rift in the Right. This Mark is sold to him by Miss B.B. Irvine of Midbrake to whom it belonged' (MS 395/3, p 6).

Miss Irvine, in fact, acquired the mark from Mr William Henderson of Petester (formerly in Gloup), who in turn got it when he bought the stock of Charles Simpson in Vigon (MS 395/3, p 11).

A second example is:

'Nesbit Thos. presents the following Mark sold to him by Janet Peggie Irvine daughter of Hannah Anderson Right Lug Rift behind Left Lug stued bought for Peter Jas. Nesbit his son -' (MS 395/3, p 22).

From these records, it is clear that women as well as men could have their own marks, and also children, and this is in line with the reindeer owning situation among the Rörös Lapps.

A further point that relates to aspects of community life is the existence of halvers marks. At Midbrake in 1863, a halvers sheep was held with A(n)drina Moar, servant there. Another sheep was in halvers with Jane Spence (possibly also a servant), and a lamb bearing the house mark was given to Laurence Smith in halvers in Sept. 1843 (MS 395/3, p 11). Mr Gilbert William Irvine had a sheep in halvers with Daniel Smith, and in March 1863 a mark was given as a halvers mark between Susan Irvine and Louisa Katharine Fraser (MS 395/3, p 15). John Sinclair of Virdick's mark was used as a halvers mark in 1860 by William John Hay (MS 395/3, p 28),

and Peter John Williamson's mark was presented in mid century for sheep in halvers with Mr Pole, Cullivoe (MS 395/3, p 30).

From this evidence, it looks as if the big house was in the habit of having sheep in halvers with servants, perhaps as part of their wages, but flocks might also run together under a shared mark.

Conclusion

This initial analysis of North Yell lug marks refers only to the situation in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. Logically, it should be followed by analysis of later evidence, right up to the present day. In itself, it could also be taken much further, for example by listing the various communities in North Yell, noting the names of the individuals (and their families) associated with them, and relating the forms of the marks to them. That there are possible associations seems to be beyond doubt; for instance, George Moar, Basta, and Basil Moar and Andrew Moar, both of Colvester, had the right ears of their sheep stooed and a half out before on the left ears, though there were also minor differentiating marks. Of course, such associations can become obscured by changes over time, but careful examination is very likely to give further pointers, so that these identification marks can be more clearly seen as the indicators of community life that they are.