



SLAND



CULTURE



VERYDAY



LIFE

Although feuds & wars occupied but little of the overall lives of the people those were the stories that were invariably handed down. Ordinary times made poor news, but, then as now, most people, most of the time, were concerned mainly with providing their families with food, clothing & a safe home; the same mundane chores which have always occupied the bulk of mankind.

However, it would not have been easy to satisfy these basic needs in this region. The Western Isles were not noted for their fertility nor were the men noted for being industrious in anything other than the practice & pursuit of arms. As with tribal societies today most agrarian pursuits were probably considered to be women's work. As a result, the heavy farm labor, necessary for increased productivity, would naturally suffer. Such continued to be the case centuries later when farming methods were recorded by travellers. If & when men ever did such labor it would have been at their convenience rather than when necessary. And, those men who were involved would have been older & from the lower social orders, while the more learned members of society tended to despise such activity. This, too, would inhibit productivity.



During summer in the Hebrides, the cattle were transferred from the low pastures near the farm homes to more distant & higher ground. During this period the women lived in *shielings* (huts built of turf on the hillside), tending the cattle & returning home each day with the milk. This they carried in large containers placed in their *creels* & covered with moss. (82p.89)

Another source, however, believed the whole population moved to the shielings on the moors & that the villages were empty. (139p.41) But, other work had to be done in summer which likely centred around the homesteads; fish had to be caught & dried, grain had to be sown & harvested, hay had to be stored & wool gathered. The spinning & weaving for clothes & blankets likely occurred around a winter's fire.

Southern Mull was severely handicapped due to its small amount of arable land. Some barley, oats & a little wheat were sown along Loch-na-keal, along the north shore of the Ross of Mull & in some valleys, but the amounts harvested were insufficient to meet the consumption of the local populace & their livestock. Agriculture in Mull suffered from many problems: farming methods were rudimentary & time-consuming; crop varieties were limited; yields were a low threefold and, later, fourfold on potatoes. The lack of winter feed caused the cattle & the innumerable small horses to suffer greatly & the usual over-grazing resulted in soil destruction. As well, at least 1/8th of the island's total area was ruined by sand-blow.

The island seems to have deteriorated since 1542 when a writer described Mull as "*a grate roughe iyle, yet fertil & fruitfull. In its woods were maney deire & verey fair hunting*". (246) The fresh water lakes were full of salmon & the salt water lochs teemed with herring. By 1809 the woods had almost vanished (replanting began in 1824) & the herring had disappeared.

Today it is hard to visualize Mull as an island once celebrated for its woods. Trees became such a rarity that peat & driftwood had to be gathered for cooking & for winter heat. In 1773 Dr. Johnson suffered the loss of his large, oak walking stick on this sparsely wooded island. He had used it when his little horse could not carry his considerable weight during some of their wanderings over the wild, rugged slopes. He had brought it from London & entrusted it to a fellow to be delivered to the group's baggageman; but he never saw it again. Boswell could not dissuade him that it had been stolen. "*No, no, my friend*" said he, "*it is not to be expected that any man in Mull who has got it will part with it. Consider, sir, the value of such a piece of timber here!*" (12p.211) Just prior to this (1771) the post of Factor for Mull was vacant & wood cutting had been unrestricted.

It is difficult to conceive how the people, of this period, subsisted prior to the introduction of potatoes for they only produced half the meal they consumed. Although known earlier, potatoes were not a viable crop until the late 1700's but soon became a staple. When a little boy in Morvern was asked what his three meals consisted of he replied, "*Mashed potatoes,*" & when asked to elaborate. he continued, "*...on a spoon*". (191p.187)

Despite its areas of good land, Mull was importing 2000 bolls (1 boll = 5 bushels) of meal & spuds by 1791. (218p.19) The importation

of grain was fairly general with the cost being met from the sale of livestock, particularly cattle. Until kelp production began, cattle sales were the crofter's only real source of income & was their main means of paying their rents.

Breakfast consisted usually of oatmeal porridge (a thick, hasty pudding) & milk. For other meals the fare was fish, milk, eggs, oat bread & water. When food ran short the poor ate lots of herring & oats. Wild birds' eggs were gathered from the cliffs & shellfish were collected on the beach. In the 1700's, the little butter & cheese made were sold to provide money towards the rent. Meat, such as beef, mutton or poultry, was a luxury saved for celebrations of births, weddings & feast days such as New Year's.



*The mannerless man tells what he gets (fed) at his neighbors.
(an unpardonable offence in the Highlands) (131½)*

The general undernourishment, & in particular the lack of fruit & green vegetables, was to be seen in the short stature of the people. The average height of male prisoners taken at Culloden in 1746 was 5'5".

Although the people might live frugally in good years the problem with subsistence farming was that they suffered miserably when the season was bad. Between 1568 & 1745 there were 12 severe famines; most of them general throughout Scotland. To these must be added the many years when raiding had carried off the cattle & destroyed the crops. The only hope then was to find another enemy to raid in order to recoup the losses. Such tactics would invariably mean a net loss with no winners & everyone losers. One such raid was documented in 1545 when McDonald carried off from Glen Urquhart: (139p.63)

- 1188 cattle, 392 young cattle, 525 calves; 2 oxen; 383 horses
- 1978 sheep, 1099 lambs; 1410 goats, 794 kids
- 122 swine; 64 geese; 3000 bolls of oats; 1277 bolls of barley



Many people died of want, especially in the winter, when the poor folk often had to resort to such expedencies as bleeding their cattle. The blood was drawn, boiled, mixed with oatmeal (when it

could be got) & formed into cakes. The cattle were considered so valuable that only very rarely were they slaughtered for food. They, too, had to endure the privations of winter on a meagre diet, often being too weak to stagger outside to feed on the first green grass of spring. On such a diet it is surprising how the common folk existed at all. (79p.123) In 1723, a writer emphasized the poor standards that the Western Hebridean lived under & believed the West Indian slaves had better conditions. (21) We can only marvel at our ancestors' resilience of spirit & hope, & at their passiveness in accepting such inequities, especially after the role of chief had changed to that of landlord. The few large landowners lived quite well & visitors tell of dining on many courses of imported delicacies.

The home of Macleod of Torloisk (c1785) was a smallish and simply appointed laird's house. His daughter played Italian music on a harpsichord. Meals were served by a barefoot servant lass in tartan petticoats. Breakfast consisted of porridge & cream, tea, coffee, Jamaican rum, cheese, smoked beef, salt herring, gooseberry & myrtle jam, & a confection of milk, yolk of egg, sugar & rum; drunk cold; & 3 kinds of bread, fine ship's biscuit, oatcake, & barley bannock. Dinner, served at 4pm, began with a great dish of Scotch broth (beef, mutton stock or sometimes poultry) thickened with fine oatmeal, onions, parsley, & a quantity of peas (but no barley apparently). Instead of slices of bread, as in France, slices of mutton or pieces of chicken floated in it. Puddings made of ox blood & barley flour, seasoned highly with pepper & ginger, were served with slices of excellent grilled beef; the finest roast mutton; potatoes cooked in gravy; sometimes grouse, pullets or waterfowl; cucumbers, ginger pickled in vinegar; milk prepared in various ways; cream flavored with madeira; & another pudding made with barley, cream, currants & fat. The mistress served it all at once; & made a toast with port in a great goblet which was passed around. There was beer, wine & water. Dessert (for lack of fruit) was 2 kinds of cheese, Cheshire & local. After dinner port, sherry, madeira & great pitchers of punch were consumed. The ladies stayed for a half hour in this gaiety of multi-toasts whereas in England, they were excluded - which shows the Scots' openheartedness & friendliness. The ladies then left for a half hour, after which the servants brought in coffee, tea, bread & butter. The evening concluded with music & talk; old newspapers &, weather permitting, a walk. (143p.305, St Fond's journey) There was no starvation here.

Whisky smuggling would become quite common & the drink was far from being considered a luxury; being reckoned indispensable for the cheerful execution of strenuous tasks or the proper enjoyment of social life. However, a glass of good whisky was a rare treat.

The other bad habit, tobacco, was also said to be excessive, especially among females. There was scarce a young woman in Perthshire who, by the time she had been taught to spin, had also learned to smoke. (143p.67)

Of course, disease went hand in hand with the malnutrition & the rudimentary sanitation of the average household. Epidemics often followed a famine when the folk were so weakened they had little or no resistance. Many fevers were brought back by returning soldiers &, later, by laborers returning from the lowland harvests.



The effect of such diseases was compounded by the dearth of doctors. As early as 1773 there were at least two doctors on Mull & by the early 1800's there were two in the Ross area, although it was necessary financially that they farm as well. (221)

Smallpox was the dreaded disease of youth until it was eliminated by inoculation in the early 1800's. Sometimes the primitive nature of the people & their prejudice against medicine hindered such progress. The inhabitants of Iona & Brolas inoculated their kids while the people of Ardmeanach (just across the Loch) refused inoculation & continued to catch smallpox. (221, Kilfinichen) "*Whisky is the universal antidote*" wrote one minister in 1836.

But, the stubbornness of the peasants should be viewed from the perspective of the times, an era when most 'learned' doctors & clerics fought inoculation; the former because of petty conservatism & the latter because they thought it God's will that people should suffer & that such intervention was sacrilegious. Mrs (Lady Mary) Edward Wortley Montagu was responsible for introducing inoculation into England in 1718. She had noticed old Turkish women performing the operation. (8p.175/6)

Despite the obvious hardships of their existence the people were referred to as being "*of a hardy constitution, well formed, contented with their situation, surprisingly intelligent & well informed, honest & industrious, yet possessed of their full share of that sly, low cunning which is so common among Highlanders*". They were said also to be sociable, good natured & even cheerful, with a love of music. They behaved as if supremely rich for they wanted no more than they had. Some regions were conducive to longevity for in the Ross area c1800 there were three brothers & a sister of the name M'Gilvra whose average age was 86. (221)

Although the people liked colorful clothing they could afford but little of it & usually wore homespun. In 1800 "*the clothes of both*

men & women [were] made chiefly of a thin, coarse, woollen cloth; fabricated & dyed indigo blue. Women [wore] petticoats & white caps, and the men waistcoats & trousers of the same cloth & beaver hats". (74)



Before the kilt was outlawed, in 1745, a Highlander man wore a large tartan; 4-6 yards long & 2 yards wide, folded over a belt & hanging to the knees. The end then went over the left shoulder & was fastened there by a large brooch. The right side was tucked into the belt. If both arms were to be left free, the end was fastened across the breast with a large, silver, circular brooch which was often enriched by precious stones or engraved with mottoes along the side. (19v1p.161) This plaid was the last on & first off; being used to protect man & firearms from wetness. It was sometimes worn in battle.

What should be concealed was hidden by a large shot pouch (sporrán) which hung in front on the belt. On each side of this rested a pistol & a dagger as if they found it necessary to keep these parts well guarded. The powder horn (mouth to front) went under the right arm pit & a stocking knife was placed outside the right ankle. A round target (shield) rode on the back & a blue bonnet sat on the head, just touching the right ear (a change from 1583 when the men went bareheaded). In one hand was a broad sword & in the other a musket. Perhaps no other nation was better armed: & I assure you they could handle their weapons with bravery & dexterity. (19v2p.94) They usually went barefoot but sometimes wore simple leather shoes. (19v1p.161)

The women also wore slightly different garb in the earlier days. Their plaids, which went from neck to foot, were often white, with a leather belt which was sometimes studded with silver. A lady might wear sleeves of scarlet cloth with gold lace round them, having plate buttons set with fine stones. (139p.25)

The kilt, although becoming less common in the late 1700's, was ideal for fording burns & rivers & for striding through wet heather. However, it was unpopular for town dress. "*For the most part they wear the petticoat so very short (always above the knee) that in a windy day, going up a hill, or stooping, the indecency of it is plainly discovered.*" (74) Another writer commented on the men's brawny leg muscles.

The people of the Islands wore their hair long & unruly, in the 1600's, as did the Irish Celts. In Elizabethan times, in Ireland, it was lawful to kill any man wearing long hair; it being one of the characteristics of the rebels. (29p.92)

As mentioned, the Highlanders were dependent on sales of their black cattle & Mull offered fine pastures for both cattle & sheep. There were few sheep in Mull before 1790 but when Nathaniel Phillips (a Jamaican planter) toured Mull in July 1791. (161, Mar 1984 p.14) he found very few deer around Moy (Lochbuy) due to too many sheep. He commented also on the few fences & lack of trees in both Mull & Morvern. Sheep numbers would increase even more by 1801.

Prior to this, cattle had been the mainstay in the islands. In 1772 the three Mull parishes of Torosay, Ross (Kilfinichen) & Kilninian-Kilmore sold 1800 cattle & received about 40s each for them. (196) Another source estimated average yearly sales at 1600 based on one-fifth of the 8000 cattle on Mull. Coll & Tiree cows were ferried to Kintra (just north of Fionphort), hence through the Ross & Pennyghael to Grass Point. But, this would involve a much longer ferry trip then via northern Mull, which was said to be the long used drove route to the ancient fair, long held near Aros. Whatever the route, these cattle, plus the ones from Ulva, amounted to an additional 700 cattle. These, & the Mull cattle, were shipped to Kerrara Island via the Auchnacraig ferry & from there to the mainland they swam. (130p.673)



After Oban they went inland & either turned south to Glasgow or continued east to Crieff (North of Stirling), or southeast to Falkirk (between Edinburgh & Glasgow). In 1723, 30,000 head were sold at Crieff but, after the peace of 1746, Falkirk became more important as it was closer to the English market. Cattle drives to these distant markets took the men away for weeks at a time, usually in Aug and Sept. Arch MacLean of Lochbuie was at Falkirk in Oct 1773 & he was likely accompanied by the new Laird of Pennyghael, 23 year old Hugh McGilvray. (12) There remains an old drovers' inn (built 1705) at Inverarnan, just above Loch Lomond.

Droving reached its peak between 1795 and 1815 but this way of life died when steamships took the cattle directly from Oban to London. These in turn were soon replaced by trains. (179)

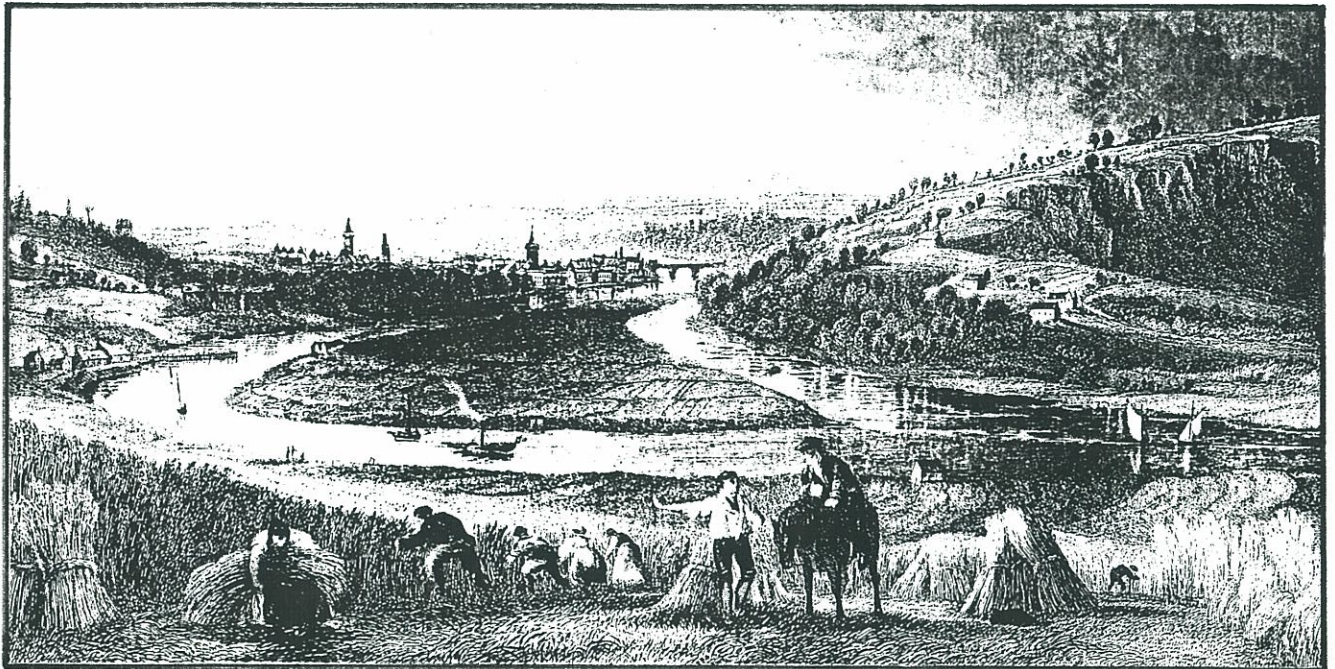
Of course, the drovers had to be experts in knowing the optimum driving time for the welfare of their cattle. This meant knowing where to find the best feed & water. It was also necessary for drovers to know the dangers of the route for their own welfare. Such risks were indicated by the fact they were exempted from the Disarming Acts. Droving was a life on its own & each man had his own experiences to recount at season's end.



One Donald McGilvray of Burg (or of Shiaba, depending on the version) was returning from a successful drive when he was waylaid by a robber. Donald took his money from his purse & flung it at the bandit's feet. When the latter bent to scoop it up Donald struck him a hefty blow on the head with his trusty walking stick. Retrieving his coins he proceeded on his way, proud of his quick thinking, & leaving the robber stretched out by the wayside; alive or dead, he never knew. He also turned a profit, for on the robber he found two extra money pouches. However, that night when he stopped at the Korphail Hotel (where??) he heard two sorry looking guests telling their story of being also robbed. Of course, Donald returned them their money but got his room paid for by his grateful fellow travellers.

By the late 1700's many young men were leaving home in the spring to find work on Lowland farms. In 1786 a visitor commented that half the women of Mull were idle except at harvest time when they went to the Lowlands & earned 22s. (116) One minister complained the men did nothing through the winter but sit around in giddiness, contemplating immorality. The shortage of mainland labor caused by the Napoleonic Wars resulted in increased wages in 1792. Men were getting £2.2/year & women 18s (a decrease?). (221)

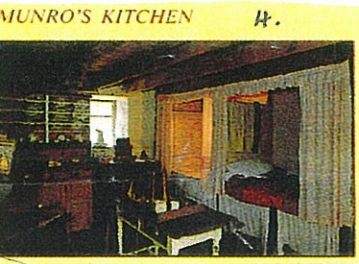
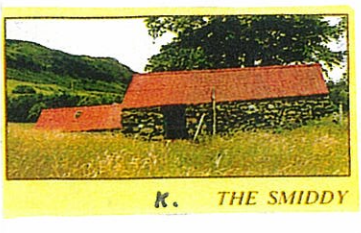
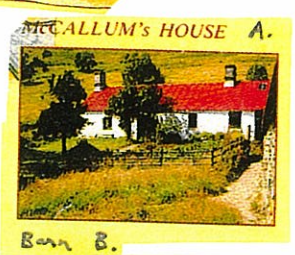
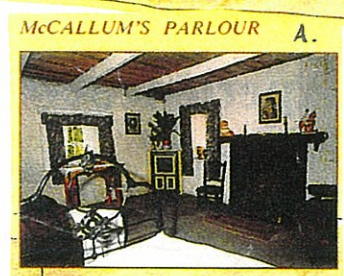
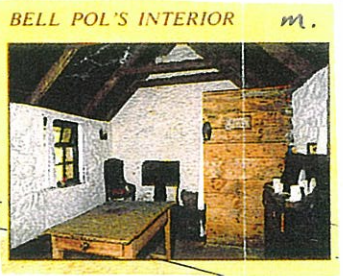
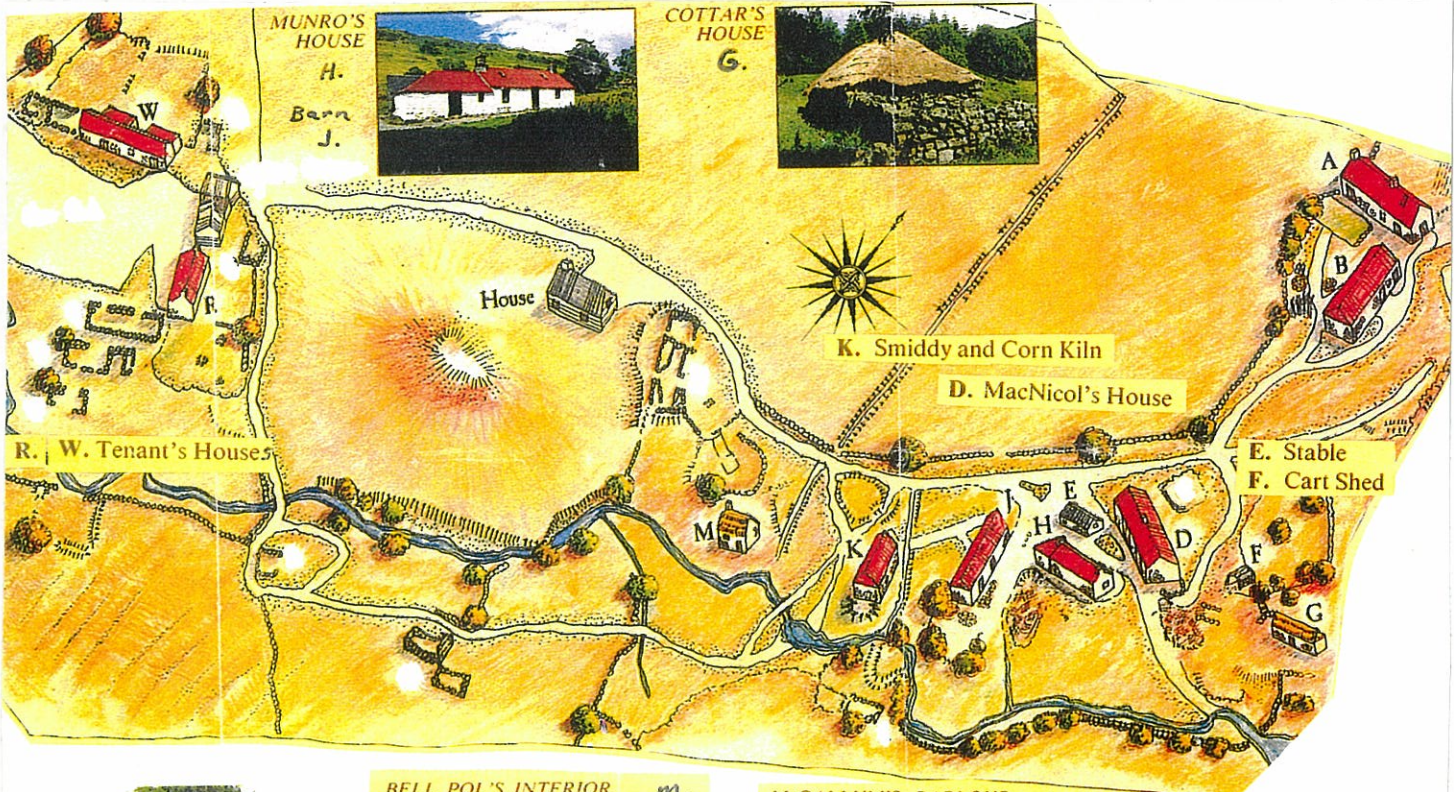
A traveller in June would continually meet groups of Highlanders trudging south; *"the women with cloth cloaks, bare feet & legs, their petticoats pinned up, their sickles on their arms & snow-white mob caps on their heads; walking 100 miles to the earliest harvest districts. They worked their way back northwest as the season advanced & arrived home ... in time to gather their own crops"*. (187) The harvest lassies never returned with silver but rather with shoes, sugar, tea & thread.



The men never brought back Lowland wives. Marriages were rarely contracted outside one's district & small tenants usually married within their immediate vicinity. They all married young & had many children. (221) This appears to be a change from earlier days when later marriages were the norm.

Travellers found the Highland manners to be very pleasant & generally there was no fear of thieves by day or night. Although hospitable, the locals were also extremely curious & had to know everything about a stranger. Although the signs of poverty & hard living were everywhere, they were more noticeable to outsiders. As tourism & outside employment increased 'foreign' customs & ideas were introduced as never before. The effects of these influences were especially far-reaching on the isolated islands.

Both geographically & spiritually this was a different world. There were neither towns nor villages. Even the area's main centre, Oban, was merely a collection of a few houses in 1773, although it did have at least two inns to serve the needs of Island travellers (including the McGilvrays). The whole population of Mull lived in groupings of farm buildings or 'tenant-steads' consisting of impermanent buildings, often made of earth & wattle, clustered on the infield of the farms.



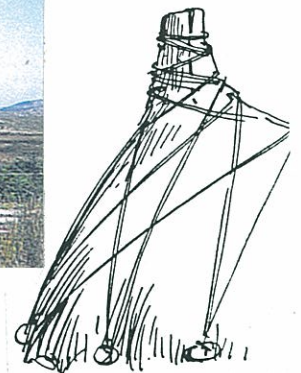
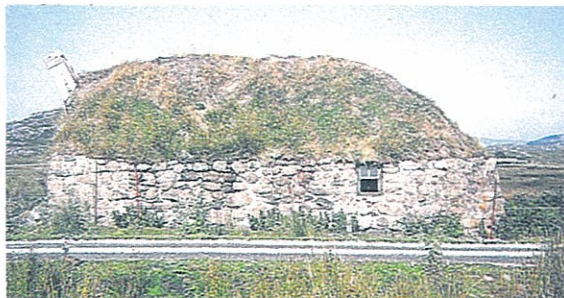
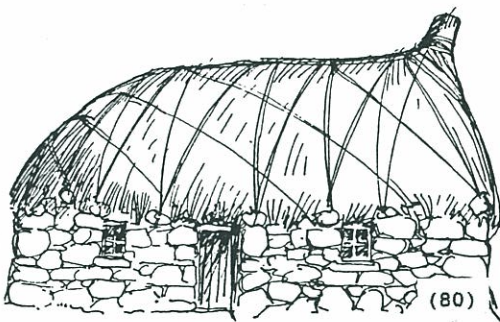
Auchindrain Township (Historical village sw of Inveraray)

In 1779 the average population of such a place in Mull was 45 people, many of whom shared the same name for the bonds of kinship & clan were tightly drawn. Besides the tenants, there would be cottars & crofters plus a large number of servants (usually unmarried) & many farm workmen (with their families). (see Appendix iv) They had an average total of seven animals. The average size of such a holding was 40 acres. Of this, about 13 acres was infield, 11 outfield & 16 pasture. Of this total, six acres would have been useless due to sand-blow. It is little wonder that 95% of the tenants paid rents of under £5.

Each group held the land either as joint tenants directly under the chief or as subtenants under his tacksmen. This custom of joint cultivation was common to most northern countries & the custom fitted very well with the social organization of the clans.

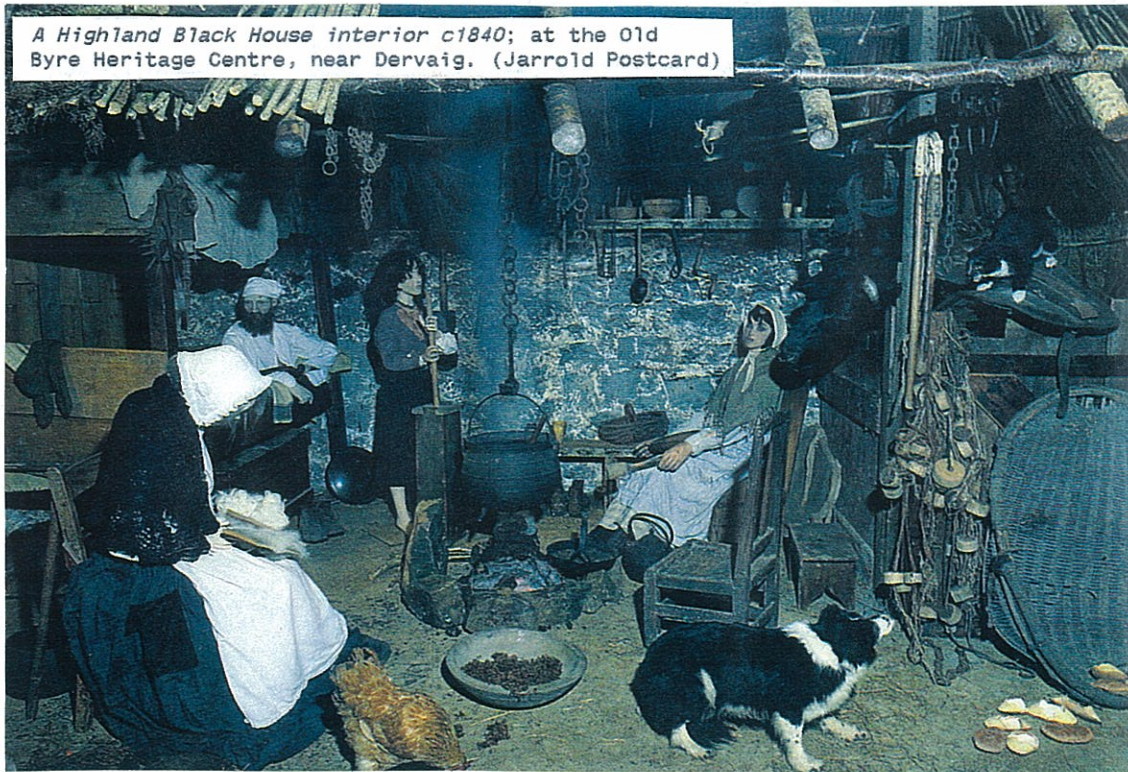
Island settlements were generally by the seashore in those roadless days. Captain Dymes wrote of Lewis, in 1630, that the groups of joint tenants occupied "*towns of some half a score of cottages built together neare some piece of arable land where they make their abode in winter; for the most part of the common people in the somer they remaine in the hills to graze their cattle*". When the land became overworked it was abandoned & the 'town' moved to new ground. Hillside land was poorer.

A typical Mull house was built of stones with a peat roof.



The wattle house, on the other hand, was formed of oak beams placed at regular distances with the intervening spaces being closely woven with wickerwork. The outside was wholly covered with heath. Such homes were not confined only to small tenants for, as history had proven, unless you had a castle it made little sense to build a fine home which someone would surely destroy. Why accumulate possessions if you lived under the constant threat of having your family chased into the hills where you could watch these meagre goods being stolen or burned. Possessions did accumulate when peace became common. Home interiors were divided into several rooms & finished according to the means & taste of the occupants. However, most Highlanders (especially in the old days) paid scant heed to their homes which were often filthy, due in large part to their also serving as barns.

During the day the house was usually smoke-filled & at night the coals were raked out so the family could sleep on the warmed earth. Furniture consisted of an iron pot, a few bowls, some spools of wool & milk pails. There was always a trusty dog & often a few shelties (small, surefooted ponies). (187) Yet the people's clothes were spotless & they were always smiling & often singing & dancing.



These Islands were completely shut off during winter gales but even in summer the lack of harbor & shelter discouraged shipping. Roads were either non-existent or extremely bad, so that wheeled transport was virtually unknown throughout the whole area. Isolation intensified self-sufficiency in every way & the shortages of one district were relieved by the resources of its neighbors. Few travelled except under necessity & little English was spoken although usually understood. Even as late as the early 1800's it was stated that the Gaelic spoken in Mull was the richest & fullest in Scotland. The shift to a cash economy after 1750 necessitated more contact with 'civilization' which encouraged travel & transport. By 1773 there was a tolerable road through the Ross of Mull via Pennyghael.

A strongly traditional organization is still maintained (in 1800) on the extensive Broilass tack-lands of Sir Allan MacLean (of Coll), the former wadsetter & now chief of the clan. Here in this remote district (next to Pennyghael) in the west of Mull, wild & formidable to this day, while then surely one of the most independent of fastnesses, there remained these two major holdings still in the hands of the native clans. (42)

Life on Mull was similar to that of any subsistence agricultural society today. Hard or easy, work or play, life went on, & the people, although poor by today's standards had few luxuries to desire or to work for & thus had time to relax & to enjoy life.



Throwing the Stone

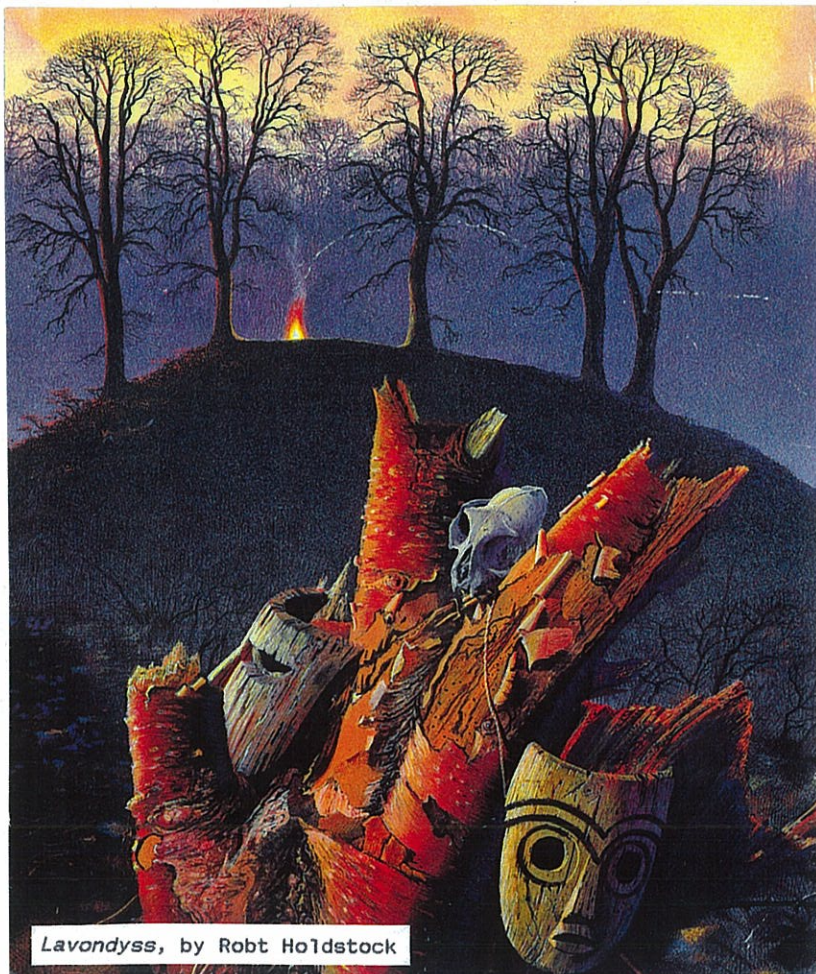


The Sword Dance



In Mull, especially in the remote areas such as the Ross (just west of Pennyghael), the Druidic memories lingered long. Many Druid rites continued via Christianity for, as elsewhere, the church renamed those festivals of the old religion that it could not suppress, & Christianized them.

The Beltane Fire was one such ceremony which continued in Mull as late as 1767. During the great festival of the solar new year, & possibly at the start of each season, all the home fires were extinguished. They were communally rekindled in a procedure which was as old as time & common to many nations including the ancient Romans. Hilltop locations were chosen because of their proximity to the gods & Ben More, between the McGilvray lands, would have witnessed many such rituals.



Lavandyss, by Robt Holdstock

A common method, in the Western Isles, was to turn a large dowel of oak set inside a hole bored in an oak plank. Three sets of three virtuous people turned the axletree until friction caused combustion. This 'pure fire' had the appearance of being immediately derived from heaven & manifold were its ascribed virtues. It was used to combat witchcraft, poisons & malignant diseases in both humans & cattle. Priests presided & men & cattle passed between them. During cattle plagues, special fires were lit & appropriate Druidic incantations were recited. Many of these ceremonies were conducted under oak trees. (Druid means men of the oaks)

After kindling the bonfire the company prepared their festive meal. Later they sang & danced around the fire and the evening ended with each family carrying home a torch with which to rekindle their individual fires. At home, kindling was never allowed to be removed by a neighbor on a quarter-day (the first of each season) for it would take with it all the luck that might belong to that house for that quarter. (4v2p.20)



Hand-fasting, or trial marriage, was another ceremony from yesteryear. Under this procedure, a young couple (holding hands over water) contracted to live together for a year & a day & if the girl was not pregnant within that time the contract could be dissolved. Although respected by clansmen, such an arrangement was against all Lowland feudal law, & hence the government (& of course the church) considered such offspring to be bastards which resulted in many succession problems. Irregular, but permanent, marriages in the form of a declaration by the parties before witnesses, but not a churchman, were entirely legal but were frowned upon. (222p.27) In the old days marriages were not contracted at an early age & were usually between people of the same district. Illegitimacy was quite common & incurred little moral censure.



A Scottish Christening, by John Phillip

An 1800 writer (187) tells of Mr Campbell, the Bunessan Minister, awaiting a couple to be married in his home. However, the couple were spared the 10 mile hike when they met a missionary minister, at the head of Loch Scridain, who married them on the spot. In the West Highlands even the church marriage ceremony of the common folk was a simple affair which consisted only of a joining of hands & a short exhortation from the minister for their future behaviour.

However, the wedding feasts were not dispatched so quickly.

In Mull they give breakfast, dinner & supper. The guests invited are sometimes so numerous, that no less than 6 sheep are slaughtered for one entertainment. A very long table is placed in a barn, or out-building, on which is set meat at different distances; with potatoes, eggs, & oat bread in abundance; also near the seat of every third person a whole cheese, & a lump of butter. The liquor, whisky or rum, is provided by the bridegroom. The rest of the entertainment is furnished by the parent of the bride. (187)

However, it seems that in older times the guests brought at least some of their own food & drink to the marriage feast. Sometimes these feasts lasted for days at a time & excessive drinking often caused the revelry to take on the fierceness associated with the Vikings. But, as always, some villages were gayer than others & some villagers were more intelligent than others. (139p.41&p.46)



There were also many Gaelic superstitions connected with funerals. It was customary to place a plate of salt, the smoothing-rod, or a clod of green grass on the breast of a corpse while it was laid out prior to being confined. It was believed this kept it from swelling. A candle was left burning beside the confined corpse on the night before the funeral & the boards on which it had previously laid were left for the night as they were, with a drink of water on them, in case the dead should return & be thirsty. However, in Mull & Tyree, the water or milk was placed outside the door & a sprig of heartswort was placed above the lintel to prevent the dead from re-entering the house. When confining the corpse every string in the shroud was cut with scissors, for the story was told of a woman's ghost coming to her friends to say that all the strings in her shroud had not been cut. Her grave was opened, & this was found to be true.

The relatives of the last person buried had to keep watch over the graveyard until the next funeral. This was especially necessary during 'resurrectionist' times. So, if there were two funerals on the same day there was often a scuffle to see who got their friend buried first. The bodies of suicides were not taken out of the house via the door but through an opening between the wall & the thatch. They were buried, along with unbaptized children, outside the common churchyard. It was believed in the North (Skye & Ross-shire) that no herring would be caught in any part of the sea which could be seen from the grave of a suicide. (140v18p.180)

Funerals were often wakes, which, like weddings, were mainly social gatherings. Here, a large party, composed chiefly of young folk, would pass the whole night by singing songs & telling stories. Whisky was usually provided & in earlier times the ceremony was less orderly with music & dancing playing an important part. Indeed, the chief mourner or nearest of kin was expected to lead off in the first dance. Such conduct could lead to altered priorities &, in this area, the story is told of the wake for a respectable person of rank. Numerous relatives & friends had been invited & they regaled themselves; even to excess. The procession began at last & arrived at the burying ground with tolerable order & decorum but, behold, the corpse had been forgotten & they were obliged to return for it.



This tale illustrates the Highlanders' love of telling & re-telling the old stories, particularly the wry ones against themselves or their friends. Any gathering was an excuse for this pastime & raconteurs with a plentiful supply of yarns were always welcome. Ceilidhs (kailies) were informal social gatherings held on winter nights. Fairies, giants & witchcraft were then real & certain & formed an indispensable part of heroic tales. Poetry, humor, satire & music were presented as fishing nets were mended & wool spun. (139p.46)

By this means of passing their leisure time, & by habitual intercourse with their superiors, all classes acquired great eloquence. Their conversations were carried on with an ease, vivacity & freedom from restraint not usually to be found in the lower classes. The Gaelic is singularly adapted to this colloquial

ease, frankness & courtesy. It contains expressions better calculated to mark the various degrees of deference due to age, rank & character, than is found in other languages. Although Highlanders were accustomed to stand before their superiors, with bonnets in hand, few lairds chose to be outdone in politeness & stood also or else both were seated. Every man was accustomed, without showing the least timidity, to argue & pass his joke (for which the language is also well adapted) with the greatest freedom while maintaining a perfect command of his mind, his words & his manners. Feeling thus unembarrassed before his superior, he never lost the air of conscious independence & confidence in himself which is acquired by the habitual use of arms. (143p.84)



Hallowe'en (All Hallows Eve) presented an excellent opportunity to commune with the dead. One method of 'raising' supernatural spirits was to roast live cats on a spit. (161 Oct 1992 p.25) A more humane custom involved the eating of a salt bannock. The cake was made of common meal but with an inordinate quantity of salt. No water was to be drunk nor a word or prayer spoken after its consumption. In this manner, dreams were induced which foretold the future. (4v3p.151)



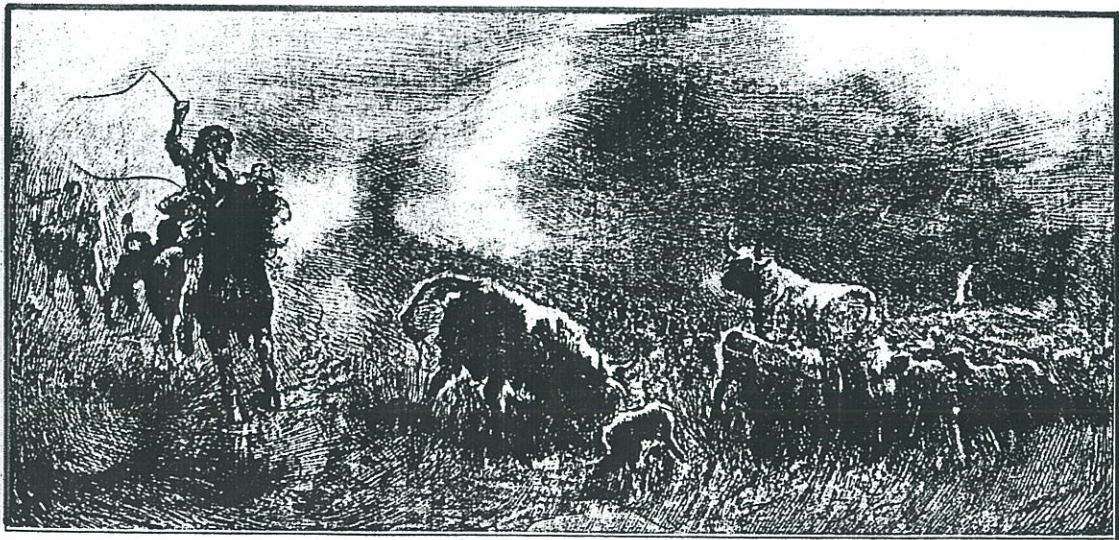
Superstition was a major part of their lives, and the Celts had a strong belief in witchcraft, ghosts, fairies & magic; all of which depend on & indicate a strong sense of imagination.

Moon Magician by Peter/E Pracownik.

Every old castle had its household Brunies or Urisk (invisible guardian spirits who did household tasks similar to the Hob in Yorkshire) & Green Maids (kind fairies who dressed up the house at night). Banshees were female guardian spirits. Such a spirit would attach herself to a person or family, watch over them during their life, & foretell an imminent death by shrieking, crying & wailing. Similarly, the spirit of a headless warrior, furiously riding his horse around Moy Castle, was heard when a chief of Lochbuie was about to die. (187) Banshees often haunted old & noble Irish families, sometimes to avenge the cruelties that had been meted out to them by ancient ancestors. The kelpie was a dangerous water-horse fairy that tried to drown you. The Good People (fairies) used to stop & rest on Skerryvore Rock (10 miles west of Tiree) on their way to & from Ireland.



Of course, there were many supernatural stories regarding Mull. These were likely based on unexplainable happenings or on the desire to shift blame or improve one's image. One such example centres around **cattle stealing** which, in the 17th century, was almost the only profession a Highland gentleman could undertake without shaming himself or his family.



Stealing Cattle, by R/W Macbeth, for "Rob Roy"
by Sir Walter Scott. 1928 p.66

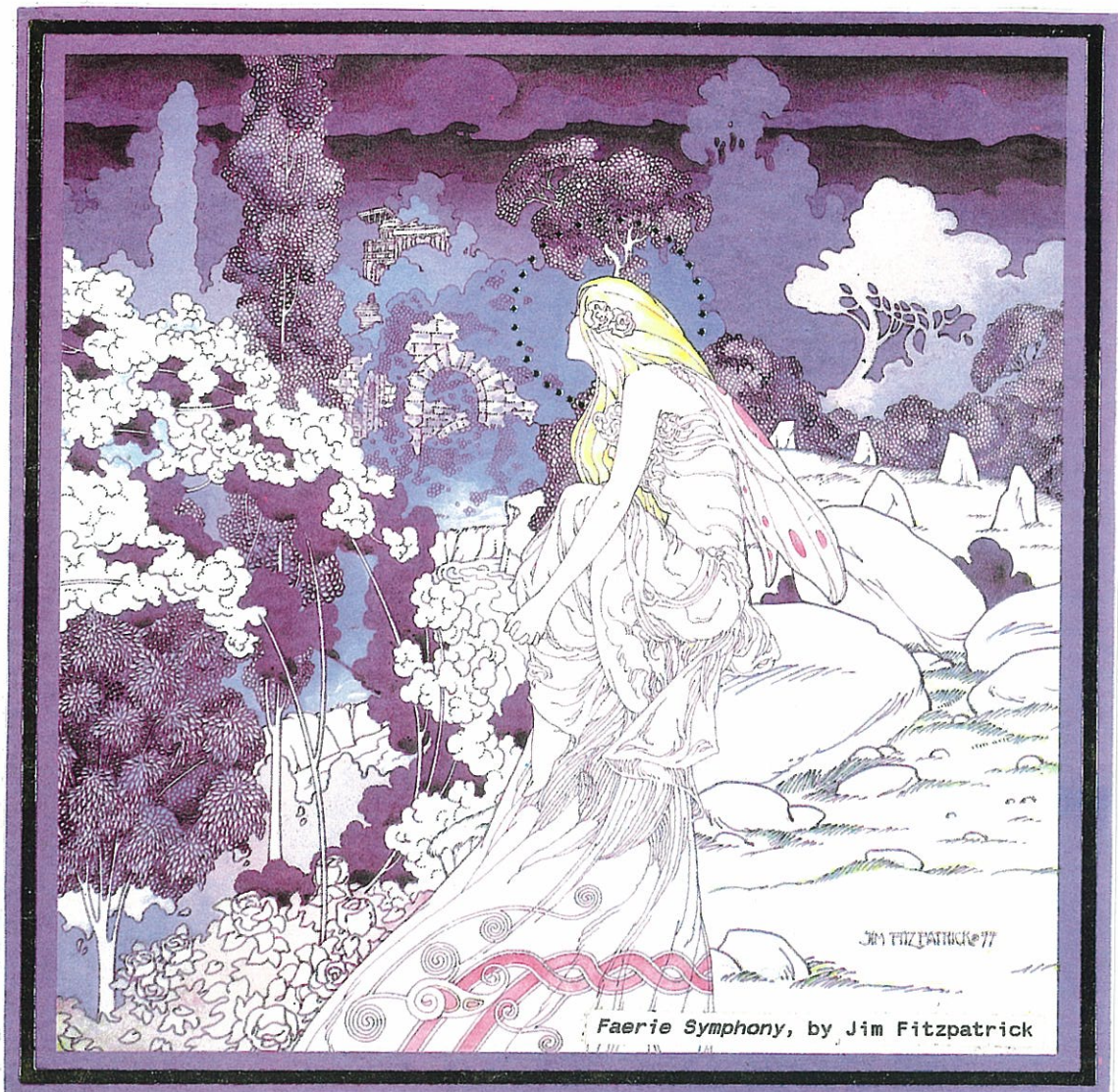
MacIain Ghiarr, of Ardnamurchan, was such a rustler & his adroitness caused him to become a thorn in the side of MacLean of Duart, although later they became firm friends. Their friendship dated from the night when MacIain was walking past the chapel of Pennygown on Mull. He noticed a light & found three witches sticking pins into a clay image of MacLean. MacIain grabbed the image just as the witches were about to pierce its heart. He gave the hags a beating & rushed to Duart Castle where he found MacLean racked with pains. He told him the story & as he removed the pins, one by one, so too the pain diminished until MacLean was well again. (205p.434)



A man had a multitude of little people settle like a flock of black starlings on his house top. They told him he had to go with them to Glen Cannel in Mull (the McGilvray valley), where they were going for a woman. He refused to go unless he got whatever was obtained. When they arrived he was given the magic arrow to throw but he deliberately missed the woman & hit a lamb, which at once came out through the window. He was made to throw again & this time hit the woman, who was taken away, while a log of elderwood was left in her place. He claimed the woman & she lived happily with him & bore him three children. One night a beggar stayed with them & all evening stared at the woman. He said he had once been a comfortable & well-to-do farmer at Glen Cannel but his wife had died & he fell into poverty. He said the woman was exactly like the wife he had lost. The whole story was told & the former husband got his choice of the wife or the kids. He chose the wife & once again became prosperous. (31p.88)



A green mound near Pennygown was at one time occupied by a benevolent group of fairies. People had only to leave there at night, the materials for any work they wanted done, telling what was wanted & by morning it was finished. But, one night, a man asked that his small piece of wood be made into a big ship's mast. The unreasonable job was finished but they refused any more work. (31p.59)



This area of Mull was known for its fairies & even today people have seen them. Donald, 'the postie' of Bunessan, used to walk the whole distance from Grass Point to Tobermory & back (52 miles) & one time these fairies chased him.

Pennycross House (at Carsaig) is supposed to have the ghost of a fair haired maiden dating from early McGilvray occupancy in the 1500's. (89p.117) Who she was or why her troubled spirit continues to roam has long been forgotten.

Two McGilvray brothers were looking for a lost sheep one night & heard gay music flowing from a fairy cave. Rory entered but didn't return. A year & a day later, at midnight, Don (holding a Rowan Cross; i.e. made of Mountain Ash) entered & rescued him. Rory believed he had been dancing for only half an hour. (140v14p.166)



On the high rocks west of Carsaig (& just to the west of the Nun's Cave) is the site of Gorrie's Leap (Binnean Ghoraidh). It is a wild country & long ago a MacLaine of Lochbuie went deer hunting here. One of his retainers, named Gorrie (Godfrey), failed to stop the deer which stampeded past him & this error made the hunt a failure. The angry chief had the man castrated before the assembled group. But Gorrie's manly spirit remained & instead of disappearing in ignominy from the scene he looked for revenge. Nearby a nurse held Lochbuie's infant son & in an instant he snatched the baby & fled to the highest part of the rock. He then leaped down to a ledge not far from the summit, where none dared follow, & from there delivered an ultimatum. The chief should have his son back provided he himself should submit to the punishment Gorrie had endured. At first Lochbuie refused but, overcome with anxiety for his child, he at length agreed to suffer this painful procedure. When it was finished, Gorrie smiled at his chief &, holding the infant, sprang out over the abyss. Thus perished Lochbuie's heir & the man whom he had cruelly wronged. (140v8p.105 & 124p.133)



One summer, at the shielings, a woman missed a small cheese she had made. She suspected a young relative & when that young girl persisted in denying the charge the woman determined to extract a confession. Wrapping a plaid round the girl's neck she dragged her

to a rock & lowered her over the edge. But, the cloth tightened & to her horror the girl strangled despite the woman's attempts to revive her. With scant pity for her tears her neighbors decided she must die for this deed. They tied her up & placed her in a sack which was left on a seaside rock at low tide. The rock (on the Isle of Ulva off the northwest coast of Mull) where the young girl died was thereafter known as Creag na Nighinn (the Maiden's Rock). (191v7p.346)



In the 15th century a Clanranold chief, Allan MacRuari (son of the Red King) was renowned for his plundering exploits especially against the MacLean's of Duart. Having one day rashly put out from Castle Tirrim (in Moidart), without escort, Allan was alarmed to find that his galley was running into a strong fleet of MacLeans. Realizing that his only chance of escape lay in strategy, he ordered his men to lay him out as dead & to then continue unconcernedly on their course. Upon arresting the wayward galley, MacLean was delighted to hear that the body of his formidable foe was being taken to Iona for burial &, allowed the galley to proceed. As soon as MacLean was out of sight Allan grasped the opportunity & turned his ship to MacLean's lands for unhindered plundering. (47p.38)



The MacPhees were lairds of Colonsay (south of Mull) until about 1650 when Colkitto MacDonald (Colla Ciotach) is said to have dispossessed them. There is a Gaelic proverb 'Thig latha 'choin duibh fhathasd' (the Black Dog's day will come yet) which means that the person spoken of may yet do something worthy of note. The 'Black Dog' which gave rise to this saying belonged to MacPhee of Colonsay. It seems he had been most anxious to secure this pup &

on receiving it, was told to take good care of it as it would be of signal service to him some day. It grew to be a handsome dog but much preferred to lie in front of the fire than to go hunting. Thus many considered him worthless & fit only to be shot. MacPhee always replied "*Let him alone, the Black Dog's day has not yet come*".

On one occasion MacPhee & 12 friends arranged to sail to the then uninhabited island of Jura to hunt deer (which its Gaelic name; Diura, implies). They expected to stay a few days & to take up quarters in the big cave - An Uamh Mhor. They made ready a boat & as usual the black dog refused to follow. Their first two attempts to leave were prevented by sudden storms but the morning of the third day opened beautiful & as they proceeded to the shore no-one bothered to call the black dog. But, just as they were launching, the black dog leapt into the craft, looking unusually fierce. "*The Black Dog's day is approaching*" said MacPhee.

They slept that night in the big cave, its vaulted roof responding to the eerie sounds without. Inside there was a peculiar hole or shaft in the roof which acted as a chimney & ventilator. The next night, after the hunt, they prepared supper & ate around a blazing fire while the black dog lay slumbering in the darkest recess of the cave.

Later, just as MacPhee was falling asleep he saw a procession of 13 beings in long loose garments enter the cave. In the flickering light of the dying fire he saw one proceed to the side of each bed. A dreadful silence reigned, broken only by the fitful breathing of the black dog. By the embers glow he saw a tall female form clad in black stand over his bed with a 'sgian dubh' or dagger in her bony hand, as if intending to plunge it into his bosom. Just as he was about to shout for help the black dog bounded from the dark recess & with a growl, leapt at the figure standing over his master's bed. Instantly the mysterious figures disappeared through the mouth of the cave. The black dog pursued but soon returned. Just as MacPhee was recovering from his fright, he heard a peculiar noise above him, as if someone was trying to descend by the chimney. There was a terrific noise & for a time he imagined the cave was falling. A flash of lightning revealed a hand coming down from the hole as if to catch him by the throat. Instantly the black dog gave one spring & caught the hand above the wrist & hung onto it. The fight between the intruder & the dog was awful to witness. The dog at last chewed the hand off & it fell to the ground as the arm withdrew. The dog rushed out & continued the fight, but MacPhee did not venture out to witness the fierce contest.

At dawn the black dog returned wounded & panting &, reaching his master's side, lay down & died. In the daylight MacPhee was able to look about him & found all his companions stiff & dead. In terror he seized the mangled hand & rushed to his boat; returning to Colonsay alone, without man or dog. No man in Colonsay had seen such a hand as MacPhee displayed. They sent a boat to Jura to

bring over the dead bodies. Such was the end of the Black Dog & the origin of the proverb. (140v?p.48/9 by Fionn) It would be interesting to know what really happened.



Even ordinary life can hold the makings of a future 'tale'. A poacher, c1805, had long pursued his mode of life undetected, although the destruction of game was very great & his habits well known, for he used the silent bow & arrow. But one day when caught, he bragged of his prowess. His captor, the Duke of Athole, pointed to a stag & told him to shoot it in the off (hidden) eye. The Bowman gave a peculiar whistle & when the animal looked around he received the arrow in the intended spot. The poacher's descendants will likely embellish that story to prove a point.



Moon Magician by Peter/E Pracownik.

The



LAN



SYSTEM

The word clann or cloinne in Gaelic means children or kin. Throughout the centuries, as the family grew in size, semi-autonomous yet allied septs or branches were formed by clansmen, usually closely related to the chief. To these were added 'broken men', individuals or groups from other districts or clans who had sought & obtained protection from this chief. (As the McGillivrays did with the Clan McIntosh) Further, many unrelated individuals, living in the district, would assume the surname of their district leader. Over the years these outsiders were absorbed into the clan by marriage & the whole was bound together by a combination of blood, heritage, tradition, duty, common interest & mutual security. Besides having their own particular tartan, each clan had its own Gaelic war cry or 'slogan'.

THE CHIEF

He was the head of the society & it was his job to look after his 'family's' interests. He had become powerful or prominent through personal achievement. To him fell the responsibility of leading the clan in war & of governing his people in peace. The care & social well being of every clansmen was his concern. He protected his followers in their disputes with outsiders (regardless of 'their' laws), mediated all internal conflicts, freed the needy from their arrears of rent & maintained those who by accident had fallen into total decay. A chief was distinguished not by wealth or dress but rather by the number of followers & the number of guests he entertained (as in old Rome). What his retainers gave him was spent amongst them in a kind & liberal manner. At the 'Big House' everyone was welcome & treated according to his station.

The chief had the power of life & death over his followers: yet the system was not a dictatorship. Theoretically, in the old days, the chief ruled over his people solely because they wished it. An unpopular decision by a chief could be (but was rarely) laid aside by the clan council of leading men. (132) In reality, however, the humble clansmen had no mind other than that of their leaders.

The ordinary Highlanders esteem it the most sublime degree of virtue to love their chief & pay him a blind obedience, although it be in opposition to the government. Next to this love of their chief is that of the particular branch whence they sprang; &, in a third degree, to those of the whole clan or name, whom they will assist, right or wrong, against those of any other tribe with which they are at variance. They likewise owe goodwill to such clans as they esteem to be their particular well-wishers. And, lastly, they will back any other Highlander in opposition to the people of the low country, whom they despise as inferior to them in courage, & believe they have a right to plunder them whenever it is in their power. This last arises from a tradition that the Lowlands, in old times, were the possessions of their ancestors.

Yet, some felt the Highlander was easily appeased & even more peaceful than other people except when the chiefs caused trouble.

The Western Highlanders considered themselves not only autonomous from the Lowland Scot but they believed also that they were separate & distinct from the Northern Highlanders. The Western Isles, at this time, were populous & quite well advanced as a result of the learning & arts brought home by their bold & skilful sailors. (146p.93) But, why then, were they so late to emigrate especially as the Scots had been noted for their wanderlust?

The differences between Highlanders & Lowlanders went deep & were largely racial. The Highlanders were descended from the Celts while the Lowlanders were of Saxon & Teutonic origin. A Highland tenant on his chief's estate never adopted the servile approach of the Englishman under similar circumstances. There was no bowing or scraping, no pulling the forelock; he stood straight & addressed his clan chief as, for example, 'Pennyghael'. All the emphasis within the clan was not on land but on the blood connection between the chief & his clansmen. In the Lowlands there was the same grouping of tenants around the great landlords (eg. the Maxwells, Douglasses or Hamiltons) but this grouping was based on land tenure & not on kinship.

As social status became more important in the Lowlands, many 'common' landowners often signed their letters & documents by their property & farm names; i.e. Pennyghael. To counter this, an Act of 1672 established the office of 'Lyon King of Arms' to ensure the proper use of coats of arms & titles. This allowed only Nobles, Barons & Gentlemen to sign as such. It was legally acceptable, however, for others to sign as, for example; 'McGilvray of Pennyghael'. (140v18p.180) The old way seems to have continued to be acceptable in the Highlands, albeit 'illegally'. As well, a chief could wear three eagle feathers in his bonnet. Similar 'rules' seem to have existed for all tribal societies.

The chief was also the clan judge & as there were no lawyers, he often depended on his 'doomsters' for knowledgeable advice. This appears to have been a McGilvray role for Duart, continuing the position they likely held for the Lord of the Isles, & possibly even as Druids. An excellent memory would be indispensable for unwritten laws based on age old precedent.

Some of these old Celtic laws would have certainly affected our clan's line of succession. For example, the law of Tanistry meant that brother succeeded before sons which allowed the most suitable male to become chief (with the relatives' consent) & which avoided rule by a minor. The law of Gavel, on the other hand, caused lands to be divided in equal proportions among all male heirs. (187p.172) All these Celtic rules broke down under Scottish imposed Feudal Law (probably in the mid-1500's) where the eldest son always succeeded before daughters or relatives. Further restrictions such as Talzied meant that succession had been previously restricted & might, for example, descend only via the closest male relative.

The chief's men-at-arms guarded the land & the stunted, black cattle. These cattle were the clansmen's prized possessions, the source of their social standing & the cause of unending strife. Every new heir or young chieftain of a tribe in the Western Isles had, at one time, to prove his valor by leading a cattle raid (with other neophyte friends) against a feuding neighbor - or die trying. (19v1p.256) But, like most other clan features, this practice had stopped by the 1600's. (187p.170) By then, heredity had become the only criteria for a new chieftain, & the clan suffered for it.

When the chief sent out the 'Fiery Cross' it was the duty of the men of the clan to follow where he led. (106p.67) This 'Cross of Shame' was a small lighted piece of wood. Its extremities were kindled & then extinguished in blood. A swift messenger ran with it to the nearest village, gave it to the first person he met & told him the place of rendezvous. That person took it to the next village. All men aged 16 to 60 had to appear, in arms, at the appointed spot. Failing this duty meant fire & sword to him as shown on the cross. (146p.640) This custom came from their Viking heritage. (140v17p.109). The last time it was ever used was in Glengarry township, Canada, in 1812, during the war with the USA.

The humblest clansman shared not only his chief's name but also his belief in being descended from the first father of the clan (such as Somerled, Gillean of the Battleaxe or Olaf the Black) &, through them, each man was further descended from countless generations of Norse or Irish Kings. Everyone was a genealogist & felt; "*though poor, I am noble*". The native of Mull was no respecter of persons, but he was a profound respecter of spirit. From their mountain or island fastness, & surrounded by their loyal clansmen, the Highland chiefs paid scant heed to kings & governments & relied on their own resources & friends.

However, it is also written (albeit for a later period) that there was a great cleavage between the idle upper class compared to the cultivators & laborers. The owners & gentlemen, along with their dependants & personal servants, all disdained labor as unworthy of their standing & birth. (139p.9) And, chiefs are known to have taken the best cow or horse of a deceased tenant (as under English feudal law). As well, there are enough stories illustrating the dictatorial aspect of the clan system to substantiate the theory that absolute power corrupts absolutely. One old McLean lord on Tiree used to hang the last person to pay his rent.

If nothing else, the system did lead to a general population unaccustomed to question 'authority'. The Highlander's silence was a sullen acceptance of the inevitable, whatever it might be. (201p.476) Resistance to the 'clearances' was led by the women & there was never the boycott or retribution, as was the case in Ireland. Correspondingly, the hatred had less to feed on & dissipated much faster.

THE CHIEFTAINS

They came beneath the chiefs & were the heads of affiliated branches. They were either related directed to the chiefly line or were heads of prominent families who had prospered & become influential land owners (as were the McGilvrays under the McDonalds & the MacLeans). They were minor chiefs in their own right & in some cases they became even more distinguished than the chief to whom they owed at least a nominal allegiance.

THE SHENACHIE (or Bard)

This was the clan historian & story teller & he was part of the chief's retinue. On formal occasions he would recite the chief's pedigree, relate the exploits of the clan's ancestors & exhort the clansmen to emulate past achievements. The Celts loved poetry & their shenachies would have memorized sufficient tales to entertain them for weeks at a time. The last of the great bards died in 1726. Even today, there are men who continue this art in tribal societies such as Kazakhstan.

THE HARPER & THE PIPER

They, too, were in the chief's retinue & were as important as the Bard. These posts were often (but not necessarily) hereditary & entitled the holders to tacks (i.e. leases) or grants of land on the chief's estates. The holders were not obliged to work this land themselves but were rather to spend their time in more creative pursuits.



Scene in Hall of a Highland Chieftain in the 17c; a bard reciting the deeds of the clan, by H/I Draper; from "History of the Scottish People" by Rev Thos Thomson, v3p.279

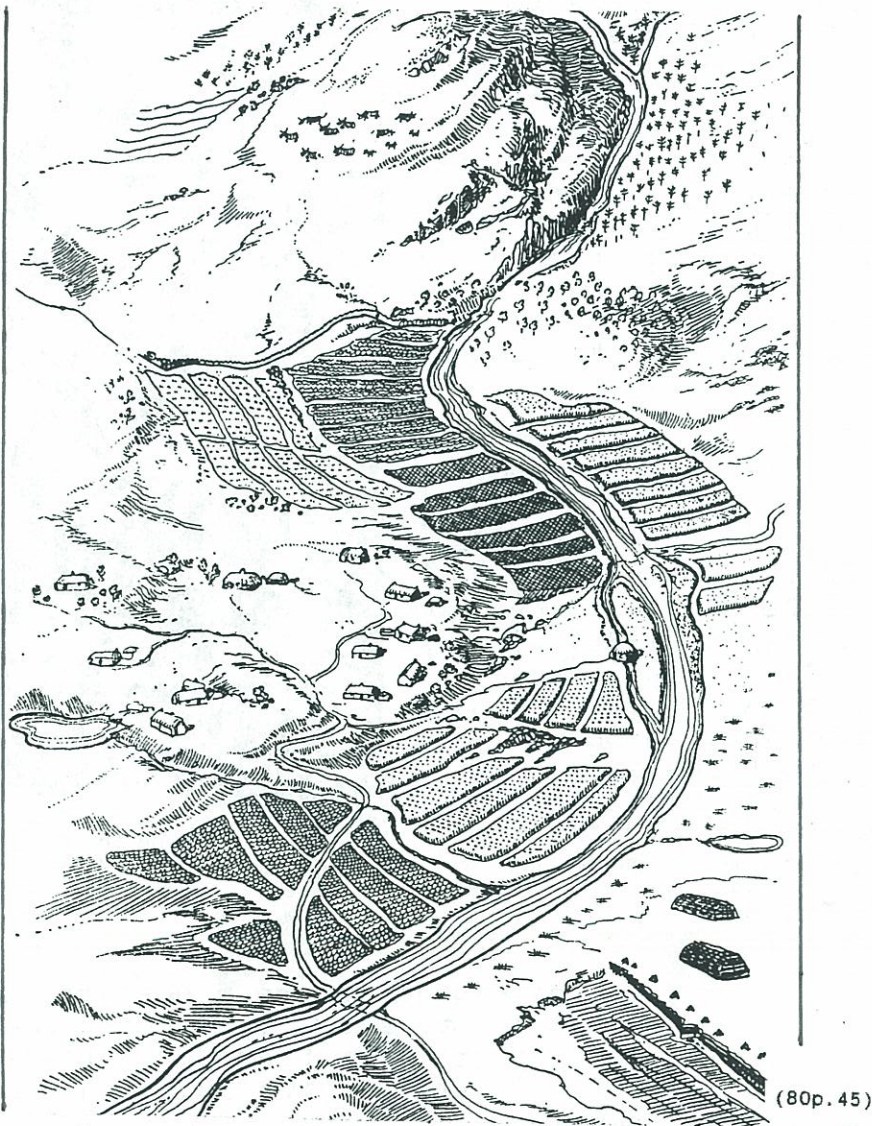


In the Highlands the pipes were always played outdoors (except in inclement weather) for they were meant to be heard at a distance. Pipers also played to give galley rowers the beat.
(68p. 14)

THE TACKSMEN (Tack is Scottish for lease)

This was a later 'invention' after the runrig system of group ownership died out with an Act of Parliament in 1695 (139p.32); which gave the previously tribal lands to the chiefs. Tacksmen were usually closely related to the chief & were the educated leaders of the community. They were much like the English country squire &, as such, they set the social standards & linked the community together. They were middlemen, paying rent to the chief or owners & subletting at a larger rent (in money, labor & produce) to the numerous crofters or small subtenants on their holdings. Often, they were themselves farmers or ranchers.

A tenant on a pennyland size farm might pay £10 - £12 per year. He might keep four or five cows (plus four calves); 20 to 25 black cattle; six or eight horses; & some sheep. A $\frac{1}{2}$ pennyland rent would be £5 or £6, while a farthing land renter might pay 3-40s. (246p. 56)



(80p. 45)
Reconstruction of old settlement with irregular cluster of houses; rigs of 'infield' and more distant 'outfield'.

All the lessor groups, in these later 'civilized' years, were entirely at the mercy of these 'overlords'. Some tacksmen were careless, some benevolent, some intelligent & enterprising, while not a few were exacting taskmasters: habitually severe & occasionally unscrupulous. Tacksmen often acted as 'sharecroppers' & employed a 'Bowman' to loan equipment, seed & animals to poor cottars with whom they split any increase. Tacks were usually given for a period of 19 years. (Valuation & Sale of Lands Committee, that Hugh appealed to in Mar 1784; see p.206- maybe in 246p.839)

On the other hand, "most tenant & subtenant leases were for one year. This precarious situation is the most effectual obstacle to the spirit & industry of the people that could possibly be devised." (246v1p.63) "The tenants (& their beasts) are obliged to plough & harrow the landlord's farm in the spring, to plant potatoes, to work at his hay & corn harvest, to build fold dykes, to cut & dry peats, to weed the corn & to thatch the houses." (246v1p.79) Most tenants would have liked to buy their way out of such servitude. (246v1p.81)

THE CROFTERS

They usually had informal leases on their three to five acre plots & worked the farm or 'town' on a communal basis. Forming the bulk of the chief's followers they were the source of his power & importance. They held their lands inherently & even the laird couldn't remove them in the old days. (187p.178) But, after the social & land ownership changes in the late 1700's, most leases were for one year which resulted in few improvements being made to the property. (246p.63). They never knew when they would be thrown out to make room for sheep. Even with a lease one could be evicted for disobedience to outside imposed values.



(82p.92) SCOTTISH CROFTER AT WORK.

It must have been this group that supplied the other, more professional, type of labor required by even a self-sufficient society. Some people are more adept at certain tasks & they would tend to specialize in them & be called upon for important jobs. There had to be boat builders, carpenters, blacksmiths, armourers, weavers, potters, tailors & shoemakers in any form of society.

THE COTTARS

They were a poorer sort of crofter (often widows or the elderly) who were granted little pieces of land & a few head of stock.

THE FARM LABORERS

These were the lowest members of the society, who tried to eke out a poor existence as best they could.

But, in reality there was a much wider diversity of men's occupations than the above categories would indicate. In 1808 a writer commented that each of his boat's four crewmen were at once a farmer, a cattle dealer, a fisherman & occasionally a boatman, & in addition two were weavers & one a shoemaker. (80p.257)

At one time there was a system of fosterage. If a chief or tacksman had many sons he sent some to be raised by respectable clansmen. These families were ever after bound in mutual affection & brotherhood. (140v8p.233) Another source says the chief handed over his eldest son, as an infant, to one of the tacksmen of the clan & there the child remained as one of that family until he reached manhood. Thus, the future chief was brought up in the full awareness of conditions at all (the upper) levels of his clan's society & the ties of family within the clan were reinforced. This is summed up in a Gaelic proverb, "*Affectionate to a man is a friend, but a foster-brother is as the life blood of the heart*". There is no recorded instance of this in the Clan McGilvray although my great-grandfather, John (1829-1899) was adopted by the James Campbell family, c1833, in Glasgow (after, it appears, his birth family had all died).

Prior to 1750 the chief's home was full of idle people: his defenders, his servants, his dependants & his family. He thought little of riches beyond his paternal inheritance. Hunting, shooting & fishing were the sole employments of the higher classes.



Even the crofters cultivated just sufficient oats & barley for the clan's consumption & then emulated their chief's pursuits. Every other industrious pursuit was beneath the attention of a gentleman, for such each Highlander esteemed himself, as being related to, & bearing the name of their chief. "*The true Highlander is an aristocrat; venerating old families & old traditions.*" (68p.12) They had no luxuries, consequently few wants: they had no ambition, therefore made no efforts to aggrandize their situation.

In all their actions there appeared a certain air of freedom & a contempt for comfort & those trifles, luxuries & ambitions, which we servily creep after. They bound their appetites by their necessities & their happiness consisted, not of having much, but in courting little. The women seemed to have the same sentiments ... though their habits were mean & they had not our sort of breeding yet in many of them there was a natural beauty & a graceful modesty which never fails at attracting. (?v2p.93)

The Celts loved the open air. (22p.98) Because they often slept out in the snow & always washed in cold water they became impervious to the cold. "The men of Mull were large-bodied, stout, subtle, active & patient of cold & hunger." (?v2p.93) Their robustness led to an independent spirit & to a contempt for danger. They were also found capable of deep friendship. Hospitality was a virtue. They had a underlying reverence for nature & became romantically attached to 'their' glens & mountains.

There are many aspects of our ancestors' way of life that would be appreciated by their descendants today.



A HIGHLAND BOTHY
Myles Birket Foster, R. W. S.

