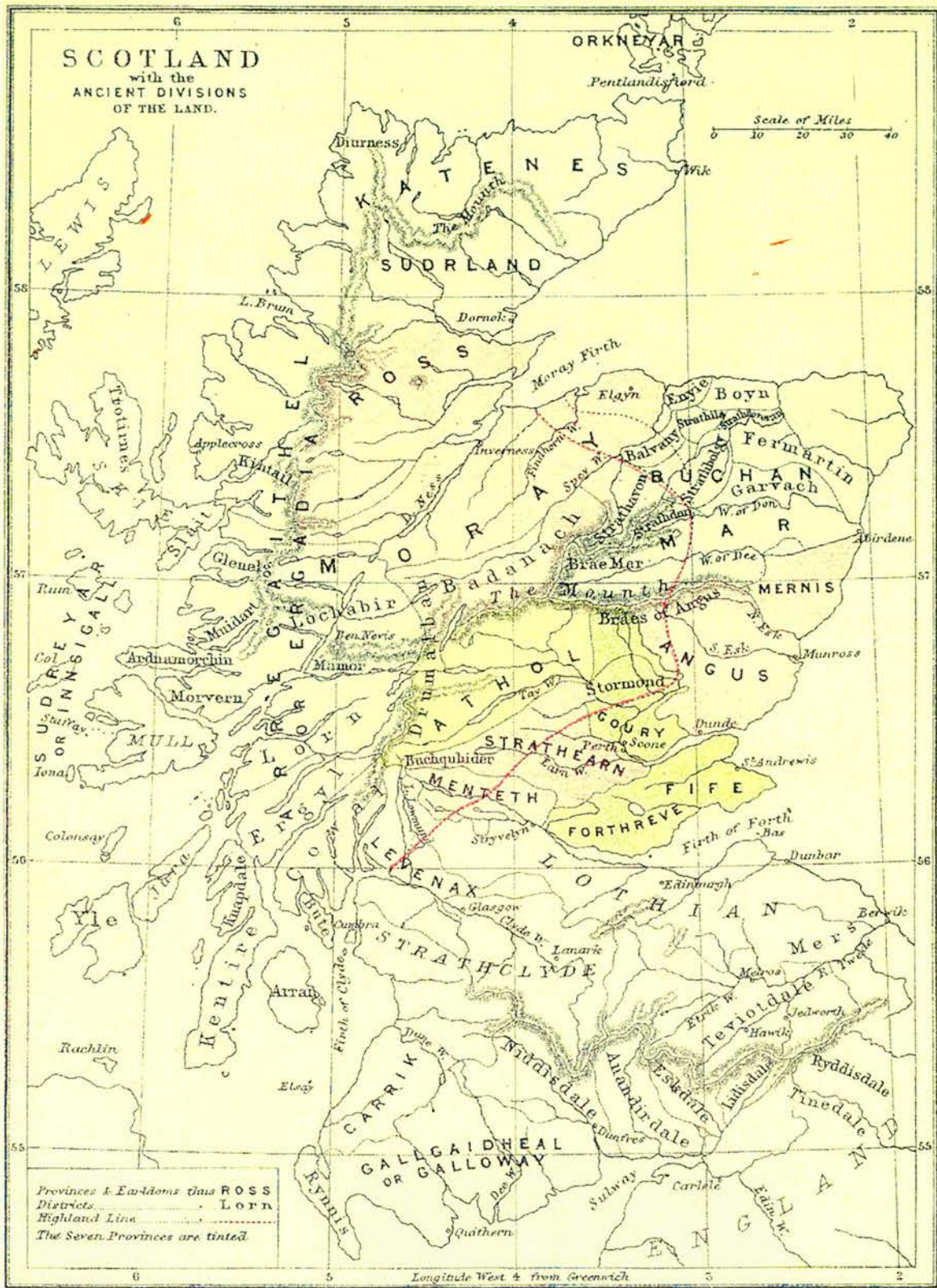


**They Lived on Meat and Milk: Dairy and Diet in Gaelic Scotland,  
Fifteenth through Eighteenth Centuries, including a glossary of  
animal husbandry terms - Gaelic to English.**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to identify and define how and what food was produced in the Western Islands and Highlands of Scotland, especially from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, and to test the hypothesis that the main dietary items were meat, milk and milk products in many areas of the *Gaidhealtachd*.

This thesis examines the husbanding of animals that was critical to the Gael's livelihood. A dairy economy requires extensive skill with animals and knowledge of animal physiology and behaviour, as well as labour intensive skills for the manufacture of milk products. For many years before the 'improvers' came into the Scottish Highlands, a satisfactory living was obtained from utilising available resources from milk cows, beef and wild game such as deer, salmon, trout and upland game birds. These facts have been underplayed or neglected by many historians, largely because of linguistic difficulties and the scattered nature of the evidence. In order to address this situation and explain it, a scientific foundation has been established in the first two chapters. The third chapter looks at first hand accounts of travellers in the area and their observations regarding available food in a Highland society. It also touches upon certain political events that influenced changes in the daily regime of food production.

Chapters four to fifteen provide linguistic analyses of the key word-families under such headings as 'The Milk Cow', 'Dairy Produce', 'Dairy Implements' etc. The sources for these chapters include a wide spectrum of Gaelic literary sources in the form of proverbs, songs, stories etc. This data is supplemented and controlled by data drawn from the principal Gaelic Dictionaries that have furnished animal husbandry words for a 1500 term Gaelic-English glossary which is included as an alphabetical listing within the body of the thesis. Fieldwork with native speakers from the Outer Isles, Skye and the mainland *Gaidhealtachd* has given a context for these terms, supplementing and complementing the contribution of Gaelic literature and lexicography.

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself alone from the result of my own research. Any work that is not my own has been clearly referenced.

Martha C Meeks

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Dr. Steve Zegura, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Arizona, brought my attention to an article regarding lactose intolerance which led to the first chapter and part of the scientific basis for the hypothesis contained in this thesis. Dr. Zegura, who specialises in genetics, was kind enough to give me his opinion and invaluable assistance in verifying my conclusions.

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Great appreciation goes to my supervisors: Mr. Ronald Black, my initial supervisor, whose unflagging diligence in finding my faults set me on the track; my second supervisor, Professor William Gillies, also deserves accolades for his unending patience and guidance. In fact, if it hadn't been for him this thesis would have been on an entirely different subject! But that's another story. And lastly my final supervisor Professor Donald Meek whose expertise in helping students "land their beasties" is second to none.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my Gaelic-speaking friends 'up North' for their patience, support and invaluable assistance in looking over the glossary and

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## **Introduction**

This thesis identifies how and what types of food were produced in the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland, especially in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, and preserves that part of the language relating to these subjects which appears to be in danger of irrevocable loss.

The hypothesis is that people, particularly in mountainous regions, lived on a basic diet of meat, milk, and milk products during this period. For various reasons scholars and historians, over the past several decades, have ignored or forgotten just how important cattle, and specifically the milk cow, were to the pastoralists of Gaelic Scotland.

Due to a lack of arable land, grain consumption was minimal, although during summer months (prior to the introduction of lowland sheep) nuts, berries and a variety of greens were available. So husbanding of animals was critical to the people's livelihood. A dairy economy requires extensive skill and knowledge of animal physiology and behaviour, as well as labour intensive skills in the manufacture of milk products. The Gaelic language illuminates the procedures of animal husbandry involved in the production of food; at the heart of this thesis, therefore, is the listing, defining and discussion of Gaelic terms.

The introductory chapters deal with essential concepts vital to the argument that a population could live and thrive on a diet of meat and milk. The first chapter is about a phenomenon peculiar to a limited number of pastoral cultures, and one that allows the people of these cultures to thrive on a diet which includes an abundant supply of fresh milk. Milk is considered a complete food, rich in carbohydrates, fats and proteins. This is why infant mammals thrive solely on mother's milk. However, contrary to popular thought, milk is not an adult food for a vast majority of the earth's



mammals including humans. The ability of adults to utilise fresh milk, brings with it the added bonus of an enhancement and absorption of Calcium ions normally dependent upon Vitamin D, as well as providing a good source of vitamin C. People in northern climates run the risk of insufficient sunlight to produce enough Vitamin D for healthy bodies, Vitamin D deficiency leads to rickets (bone malformation). Lack of Vitamin C, which is normally supplied in green leafy vegetables and fresh fruits, leads to scurvy. Thus, many northern cultures gain their antirichatic and anti-scurvy preventives through fresh milk. This advantage is thought to have come about through an evolutionary process, which may have taken place over many thousands of years.

During the 1960s, consumption of animal fat came to be associated with certain health problems, among which were heart disease and colon cancer. The medical profession reacted to this knowledge by counselling overwhelmingly against red meat. At that time, in the United States, cattle destined for slaughter were fattened to gross extremes; it was the thick rind of carcass fat that was the actual culprit. Lean red meat is still the best source of protein, iron, essential amino acids and many other minerals and vitamins required for a healthy body. This is particularly true in an area like the Scottish Highlands where certain foods are plentiful i.e. dairy, and certain foods are scarce i.e. carbohydrates, and fresh fruits and vegetables.

The third chapter deals with contemporary accounts regarding food production and with political influences which disrupted, to some degree, the agricultural practices (including husbandry of wild resources) of the Scottish Highlands. From the fall of the lords of the Isles in 1493, through the Statutes of Iona in 1609, to the rebellion of 1745, political events disrupted people's way of life and methods of producing food. The loss of upland and 'common' grazing brought about by certain

events within the *Gaidhealtachd* hastened the decline of dairying, which was of utmost importance to the health, and well being of the population.

Chapters four to fifteen identify and explain Gaelic terms contained in the glossarial index. These chapters group key Gaelic word-families associated with animal husbandry and other food sources available to the Gael. Literary sources are used to contextualize many Gaelic terms. Poetry, songs, stories and proverbs aid in understanding how various terms were used in everyday speech.

**Original spelling from the sources has been retained throughout the thesis,**

**unless otherwise indicated.** Where I quote edited texts with reputable translations (cf. Scottish Gaelic Texts Society publications) I follow these texts and likewise the translations. This involves occasional variations in the spelling of such words as kale/kail, crowdie/croudie and others.

In my conclusion I sought to draw together some of the underlying principles which governed the management of animal and plant resources for a very large and topographically varied part of Scotland before the Clearances. The picture of a vibrant and healthy community has emerged.

...

In compiling the index my aims have been to insure geographical and dialectical coverage, therefore, I have examined the following Gaelic to English Dictionaries.

*The Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary* by Edward Dwelly (1920), *A Gaelic*

*Dictionary in two Parts* by R. A. Armstrong (1825), MacBain's *Etymological*

*Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* (1896), *A Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* by

MacLeod and Dewar (1901) and *A Pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary* by

Malcolm MacLennan (1995 [1925]). I have also thoroughly examined *Gaelic Words*

*and Phrases from Wester Ross*, by Roy Wentworth (1996), the six volumes of

*Carmina Gadelica* by Alexander Carmichael (1928 vols. 1&2, 1941, 1954, 1971), *Gaelic Words from South Uist* compiled by Father Allan McDonald (1975), *Gaelic Names of Beasts* etc. by Alexander Forbes (1905). Other sources such as *A Pronouncing Dictionary of Scottish Gaelic* by Henry Cyril Dieckhoff (1932), Neil MacAlpine's *A Pronouncing Dictionary* (1903), Eobhan Mac Eachainn's *Faclair, Gailig us Beurla* (1842), and *A Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* composed and published under the direction of the Highland Society of Scotland have been used and are cited within the body of the text.

Dwelly was my primary resource for the terms in the glossary. Not only is his work a compendium of terms but it is presented in one of the most scholarly forms with regard to length marks, gender and case of all the dictionaries I have consulted. Professor William Gillies told me that his grandfather took his father, at a very young age, to visit Edward Dwelly. His father's vivid recollection of that visit is a humbling message to those of us who use this dictionary as a bible of the Gaelic language. Dwelly's house was completely boarded up and he was working feverishly in the basement to finish this work of several decades as his creditors hounded him. His greatest fear was that they would take his printing press before he could complete his work. Professor Gillies said, "Dwelly would be astonished to learn that his dictionary had not been improved upon in one hundred years and that we were still using his original printing" (personal communication 31 Jan. 2000).

Mr Ronald Black explained to me that the first edition of the dictionary was not very well received, possibly due to its having been produced in several parts, and also perhaps because it favours mainland dialects over island ones. It was a great disappointment to Dwelly at the time (personal communication 10 Feb. 2000). It appeared "in several parts under the title of *Faclair Gàidhlig le dealbhan*, and the

*nom-de-plume* of Ewen MacDonald'' (Dwelly 1994, i). The work was originally intended for his private use, but at the urging of his students he eventually published it.

King Edward VII awarded Dwelly a Civil List Pension in order to sustain him in his work. Although some mystery surrounds this as, according to research done by Peter Berresford Ellis, Dwelly did not receive the pension until six years after King Edward's death. The Preface to the Dictionary contains valuable insights into the problems that Dwelly encountered. Linguistic and logistic difficulties had to be addressed in addition to financial ones:

First, the majority of Gaelic speakers only a very few years ago could neither read nor write it. So when one heard an unfamiliar word or phrase and the first instinct was of course to write it down lest it should be forgotten, the question was how to spell it--of course the speaker could not tell! I was balked in this way times without number and my progress with the language immensely retarded in consequence. Next, the great difficulty of inducing a Gael to engage in a Gaelic conversation if he thinks he can make himself understood at all by means of indifferent English, or even if there is anyone present who cannot understand Gaelic. It makes the acquisition of knowledge of colloquial Gaelic much more difficult than is the case with other modern tongues. It is only by posing as a Highlander and one who knows Gaelic that one can ever hope to hear it spoken habitually and without restraint (Dwelly 1920, iv).

*The Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary* was first published in parts, according to Peter Berresford Ellis (2001, introduction to Dwelly) from 1902 to 1911 and not 1901 as indicated by Gairm. Another discrepancy, according to Mr Ellis, occurs in the claim of the Second Edition being published in 1920, whereas it was actually published in 1918. There were three volume issues; the first single volume issue was actually the Third Edition published in 1930. And with the exception of a gap of

approximately 20 years from 1949 to 1967, has been reprinted every nine or ten years since.

Beyond Dwelly there are a number of other dictionaries, which I examined. R. A. Armstrong's *A Gaelic Dictionary in two parts* (1825) proved to be one of the early sources most mentioned by Dwelly. I therefore, consulted his work extensively. Though his terms have been problematic due to a lack of length marks, I have followed Dwelly's lead and corrected these in most cases. Armstrong's use of 'obsolete' for many terms sometimes contradicted information found in later works.

Neil MacAlpine produced *A Pronouncing Gaelic Dictionary* in 1831. In 1925, Malcolm MacLennan published *Gaelic Dictionary* which was based on MacAlpine's work but also included all of the words found in MacBain's *Etymological Dictionary* published in 1896, and MacEachan's *Gaelic-English Dictionary* published in 1842. Several well-known scholars, including William J. Watson, assisted with the production of this work. Some of MacAlpine's entries were purged in the interest of clarity. And entries from other sources were added.

*Gaelic Words and Phrases from Wester Ross*, compiled by Roy Wentworth and produced in 1996, although of modern origin, contains many local terms that reflect their Gaelic past, and I feel that they should be included within this work. Some of the spelling has been edited (e.g. aid to iad in some instances) however, as Mr. Wentworth's aim was to preserve the dialect of Wester Ross the editing was kept to a minimum.

Alexander Forbes' *Gaelic Names of Beasts... etc*, contains many terms not found in most of the other dictionaries. Dwelly references Forbes for some of these terms but has chosen to omit others. Generally, I have followed Dwelly's lead and

have only included items from Forbes' dictionary that have also been included by Dwelly.

Father Allan McDonald collected material in South Uist and Eriskay from 1886 to approximately 1899. His manuscripts were brought to the attention of John Lorne Campbell in 1948 who edited them and published *Gaelic Words from South Uist* in 1958; a subsequent printing including a supplement was published in 1972 and reprinted in 1991. Included in this publication as an appendix are terms collected by the Reverend Dr. George Henderson as well as Reverend Angus MacDonald, Killearnan. Words from the poems and stories of Seonaidh Caimbeul of South Lochboisdale (1859-1945) have also been included.

Fr. Dieckhoff's (1932) dictionary is 'based on the Glengarry dialect according to oral information obtained from natives born before the middle of last century.'

Alexander Carmichael's six volumes of *Carmina Gadelica*, published between 1928 and 1971, contain an amazing corpus of folklore, poetry, stories and songs collected around the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries from the *Gaidhealtachd*. Much of his unpublished work is in the Special Collections branch of the University of Edinburgh Library awaiting attention.

These last sources were used because Dieckoff, Wentworth, Forbes, and Fr. Allan's publications contain an insight into the ethnography of their specific areas with terms especially rich with regard to folk-life. And it must be said that Alexander Carmichael's work defied exclusion simply because of his extraordinary presentation of the material which he collected.

...

After the glossary was compiled, key word-families were grouped together and various forms of Gaelic literature provided common usage for these terms. Native

speakers in Skye, the Outer Isles and the Mainland were interviewed in order to find what, if anything remained of the animal husbandry terms.

The loss is immeasurable. According to Alec MacDonald of Valtos and his mother, the terms and expressions remembered by her and never heard of by him reflect this great loss. Alec shakes his head in disbelief when reading through my glossary as his mother stops him time and again after he has mentioned a term saying, "I've not heard that before" and she says, "Well of course, I often heard that when I was growing up."

Donald John MacLennan MBE, MRCVS (retired) lives just outside of Broadford, Isle of Skye. Born and reared on Harris, he was educated at the Royal Dick Veterinary School of Medicine in Edinburgh. His practice encompassed most of Skye and the adjacent mainland for many years. Time and again when looking at the glossary he would say, "Oh, I've heard that on Harris, but never on Skye or the Mainland." Or, "I never heard that growing up, but it was used on the Mainland." Apparently words and meanings differed greatly between the Islands themselves and the mainland. Mr. MacLennan has been an invaluable source of information for Chapter 14 'Physical Characteristics and Animal Diseases'.

Jonathan MacDonald of Dun Tulum remarked that he could add nothing to the glossary, though in fact, his observations have been duly noted and gratefully received. As curator of the Folk Museum at Dun Tulum, Jonathon has preserved many things from the material culture of Highland life, and it is with great gratitude that I thank him for his collections and for the opportunity to see and photograph many of these items.

An attempt has been made throughout, to explain or note variations in spelling and pronunciation, as well as different meanings for identical terms. I have drawn on

literary as well as historical works about Gaelic Scotland for material. My own expertise and life-long experience with animals, their habits and care, has given additional information.

A vast void in Gaelic terminology exists, words and ideas have been lost because of a disruption of a way of life that was central to Gaelic Scotland for many centuries. I do not advocate a return to that way of life, but I do wish to retain the memory of a proud and healthy population who lived and thrived on the other side of the 'Highland boundary'. In order to do this, I feel we must preserve the language and terminology of the past. The true history of people can only be told in their own language.



## **Chapter 1**

### **Lactose Tolerance**

The purpose of this chapter is to lay the foundation for understanding a unique and abnormal phenomenon occurring in certain pastoral/agricultural populations. The phenomenon is known variously as lactose tolerance, lactose absorption, lactose persistence and high lactose digestion capacity. The converse is variously known as lactose intolerance, lactose malabsorption, lactose restriction and low lactose digestion capacity. All of these terms relate in one way or another to the ability of a human adult to utilise the nutrients in fresh milk.

The ability of human adults to gain nutrients from fresh milk is of great importance to people living in northern climates. One of the most important benefits is the absorption of calcium, which promotes healthy bones. Where milk and milk products formed a large part of a dietary regime, as in the Scottish Highlands, it is important to recognise the healthful attributes gained from this diet for people who are lactose absorbers.

It was not until the 1960s that the inability of adults to benefit from the consumption of milk was discovered to exist as a normal occurrence in distinct populations. Since that time, however, it has been found that the majority of world populations are lactose malabsorbers. It has been known for many years that mammals (other than human) cannot gain nutritive value from milk past the time of weaning. Lactose signifies the disaccharide sugar that is contained in fresh milk. Lactase is the enzyme that is necessary to break the disaccharide sugars into monosaccharides in order to be digested.

During the period when physiological research was largely limited to populations of European extraction, the human species was thought to be an exception to the general rule of

lactase restriction during the weaning period. Persistence of high lactase activity in adults was considered normal, and therefore the discovery of adults with constitutionally restricted lactase activity came as a surprise. It is now clear that humans are no exception to the developmental principle of lactase restriction in mammals (Flatz 1987, 9).

Once a mammal, whether it be whale or human, reaches the weaning stage, the ability to produce the enzyme lactase lessens. It is this enzyme, which is produced in the small intestine, which aids in the absorption of the lactose molecules (Durham 1991, 231).

The physiological cause of high lactose digestion capacity (LDC) or lactose absorption in adulthood is the retention of high levels of lactase in the small intestine beyond infancy (lactase persistence). This contrasts with the standard mammalian developmental pattern of a steep decline in small intestine lactase levels after infancy (Flatz 1987, 1).

Through an evolutionary process certain populations retain a high level of lactase in the jejunum (a section of the gut just above the colon) after infancy. Lactase breaks the disaccharide sugar of lactose into the monosaccharides, glucose and galactose, which can then be hydrolysed through the membrane of the jejunum and transported on into the bloodstream (Durham 1991, 230).

Not only is nutritive value not available in populations in which the production of lactase ceases in the gut, but the opposite quite often occurs. The ingestion of a certain amount of fresh milk, which varies between individuals, can cause abdominal distension, gastric pain, flatulence and diarrhoea with a resultant loss of water, electrolytes and nutrients (Durham 1991, 232).

It is possible that the decline in the ability to utilise fresh milk comfortably was meant to facilitate the weaning process. Weaning is a stressful time for infant and parent and this could be a natural device whereby the infant becomes uncomfortable

ingesting milk and therefore withdraws more and more from the mother's milk to a greater dependence on other nutritive sources (Rozin 1995, 240).

All placental mammals are born to suckle. Barring congenital abnormalities, disease or other defects in the jejunum, infant mammals are able to gain life nourishment solely from their mother's milk. Mother's milk for all mammals provides carbohydrates, protein, fat, and calcium sufficient for the health and well being of the infant. However, when the infant is weaned, according to whatever time-scale is normal to the individual species, it loses the capacity to utilise milk in its primary form (Johnson *et al.* 1974, 197).

The exception to this rule occurs in human populations of certain areas and cultures. Globally, these populations are in the minority. The areas of the world that show the greatest uses of fresh milk and hence primary dairy practices are northern Europe and parts of North Africa and Arabia (Flatz 1987, 47-49; see map #1). There are 'grey' areas between that demonstrate mixed ability to utilise milk. These are thought to be areas of intermarriage between high LDC (lactose digestion capacity) and low LDC (lactose digestion capacity) populations.

Two studies on indigenous, non-dairy populations, one in Nigeria and the other on Pima Indians in Arizona, were instrumental in validating the genetic theory regarding lactose tolerance. The summation regarding the Nigerian study concluded: "On the basis of historic and biological data, we assume that the ability to digest lactose by an adult human is inherited as a dominant characteristic" (Ransome-Kuti *et al.* 1975, 435).

The study on Pima Indians again lent support to the genetic hypothesis. "Family pedigrees are consistent with the hypothesis that adult lactose absorption is inherited as an autosomal dominant trait. Over-all results of this study, moreover,

support the geographic hypothesis advanced to explain ethnic or racial differences in prevalence of lactose malabsorption (LM) ” (Johnson *et al.* 1977, 1299).

As early as 1963 Dr. Arne Dahlquist (491) of the Chicago Medical School in Illinois wrote: “We have enough information to suspect a familial basis for lactase deficiency in the adult.” In 1966, another American doctor suggested a genetic aetiology for the “isolated lactase deficiencies seen so commonly in adults.” He based his observation on a study that he had conducted on 40 healthy male prison inmates. The group consisted of twenty black and twenty white men. Nineteen of the black subjects and two of the white ones gave a history of milk intolerance. Testing for lactose malabsorption found deficient levels in 70% of the black men in contrast to only one malabsorber in the white group (Bayless 1966, 968-72).

Confusion arises between the terms ‘lactose intolerance’ and ‘lactose malabsorption’. People with lactose intolerance experience abdominal pain, flatulence and diarrhoea after the ingestion of certain amounts of fresh milk. The rise (or non-rise) in blood sugar levels after ingestion of lactose indicates whether or not a person is an absorber or a non-absorber. A person who has malabsorption may not experience adverse symptoms but is unable to obtain nutritional benefit from fresh milk (Durham 1991, 232).

It was not until 1970 that the minority of lactose tolerators was seen as the abnormal population. “One might be tempted to focus on what might be called the ‘Oriental’ pattern of adult lactase deficiency and lactose intolerance. To this writer, however, it seems more promising to view the Western pattern of high levels of intestinal lactase and of lactose tolerance throughout life, as the aberrant one, which must be accounted for” (Simoons 1970, 699).

The cause of the evolutionary process has been much debated. There are three major hypotheses for the evolution of high lactose digestion capacity. The first is that it is an adaptation to millennia of pastoralism and milk consumption. The second is that certain populations, due to restrictive availability of sunlight, developed high lactose digestion capacity to assist in the absorption of vitamin D. The third hypothesis addresses the ability to maintain water and electrolytes in the body in highly arid environments where there are few alternative nutritional advantages.

The first of these hypotheses, called the “culture historical hypothesis”, was initially suggested by F. J. Simoons in a 1970 article in the *American Journal of Digestive Disease* (695-710) entitled ‘Primary adult lactose intolerance and the milking habit’. According to this theory, adult lactase persistence was pressured into play in a group of pastoralists or farmers by three things. They had a plentiful supply of fresh milk, they did not process the milk into less lactose-containing products like aged cheese, and they were largely dependent upon the milk for essential nutrients that were not available through other food supplies. The nomadic herders of arid climates meet these criteria. Gebhard Flatz had a chance to study such people in the Sudan.

The Beja, a large tribal group inhabiting the area between the Nile and the Red Sea, have a frequency of low LDC of only 16% [i. e. they have a high lactose tolerance]. In their natural habitat, a barren desert area, no agriculture is possible; the only vegetation is in the form of xerophytic plants unfit for human nutrition. In the dry season, which lasts for 9 months, the Beja depend almost entirely on the milk of their camels and goats. Milk consumption of up to 3 litres/day is not unusual. A biologic cycle seems to exist. The xerophytic shrub extracts water and minerals from the soil and enables the plant to synthesise cellulose. The goat feeds on the shrubs and converts cellulose, water, and minerals to milk. Humans milk the animal and obtain energy, minerals, and, last but not least, water; human and animal excrements serve as dung for the shrubs. Nomadic people face difficulties in processing milk, and long storage is impossible due to high environmental temperatures.

These conditions of true milk dependence prevail, with local variations, in the environment of other nomadic desert peoples, e.g., Bedouins in Arabia and the Libyan desert, Kabbabish in the western Sudan, Tuareg in the central Sahara, and the Fulbe (Peulh) in the northern Sahel. All these populations have been shown to have high frequencies of lactase persistence; they are convincingly explained by the culture historical hypothesis (Flatz 1987, 51).

The third hypothesis can also be seen to encompass the nomadic herders of the African and Arabian deserts.

The second hypothesis, known as the “calcium absorption hypothesis”, was first suggested in 1973 by Gebhard Flatz and Hans Werner. These two geneticists proposed that the ability to process lactose after weaning enhanced the body’s ability to metabolise calcium. “Experimental studies have shown that lactose substantially increases the permeability of the intestinal wall to calcium ions, but only in the jejunum and ileum – the same sites where lactase is produced – and only in lactose absorber individuals. It appears that this effect of lactose is clearly associated with the organism’s capacity to digest it” (Durham 1991, 255).

Vitamin D is normally obtained from sunlight in the form of ultraviolet B radiation which biosynthesises in human skin (Durham 1991, 258). But the lactose of fresh milk is also known to act physiologically like a vitamin D supplement facilitating the absorption of calcium from the small intestine. Vitamin D prevents rickets and osteoporosis, osteomalacia as well as hypertension (linked to Ca ion deficiency), neuromuscular disorders and a number of psychological syndromes (Durham 1991, 254-257). People living in northern latitudes, above 30 degrees north, could conceivably suffer from vitamin D deficiency due to an almost hyperbolic drop in energy levels of incident UV-B radiation (Durham 1991, 258).

It is this type of environmental stress that forces an evolutionary process such as lactase persistence. Early northern pastoralists utilising fresh milk would have had a better reproductive and survival rate than those unable to metabolise lactose. “Human milk is sufficient in all required vitamins except vitamin D; and no unfortified milk supplies enough vitamin D for the needs of infants and young adults. Nevertheless, breast-fed infants rarely develop rickets before weaning. Indeed, they are less susceptible than are infants fed on cow’s milk, even though the latter generally contains higher concentrations of both vitamin D and calcium. Lactose, one of the few nutrients present in greater concentration in human milk than in cow’s milk is the key” (Durham 1991, 257).

The enzyme lactase facilitates the absorption of the Calcium ions regardless of the amount of vitamin D present. “... There is evidence to suggest that lactose and casein increase the bioavailability of calcium” (Manual of Dietetic Practice 1994, 168).

The following statement was the product of a 1997 study on the biosynthesis of lactase proteins obtained surgically from 44 informed and consenting patients requiring bowel surgery. The study was an attempt to answer the question of factors leading to the persistence of lactase in adult humans.

With the generalised decline of lactase in essentially all mammals in mind, lactase persistence, rather than lactase decline, should be considered abnormal. Only after the beginning of the dairy culture, some 10,000 years ago, did it begin to be advantageous to retain high levels of lactase in adulthood, because it made milk an additional source of nutrients – possibly a decisive factor under extreme conditions. To achieve persistence of lactase, it has probably been biologically simpler to increase the biosynthesis of lactase rather than to act on each of the factors that contribute to the decline of lactase. Although (as shown in this and previous

studies) a variety of factors cause the decline in lactase activity, a constant feature in lactase persistence is the increased rate of its biosynthesis. At present, this seems to be the only single overriding factor discriminating between subjects with high or low lactase respectively. It is perhaps significant in this connection that lactase persistence is transmitted by a single, autosomal dominant gene (Rossi et. al. 1997, 1512).

Dairy practices could date from as early as 10,000 - 8,000 BC with the domestication of sheep and goats, or at least 8,000 BC with the domestication of cattle. A frieze from about 2500 BC at Al-'Ubaid in Mesopotamia (Iraq) shows two cows being milked with their calves tied in front of them. Given what we now know about lactose absorption and population patterns, we can suggest that the milk obtained from the cows in that frieze was most probably made into milk products such as cheese, yoghurt and butter rather than consumed as fresh milk. The question still remains when and how did dairy come to Britain, and specifically Scotland? In a BBC News Release dated 27 January 2003, archaeologist Dr. Mark Copley of Bristol University stated that: "the oldest direct evidence for the existence of dairy farming has been discovered in the UK. It is based on a chemical analysis of milk fat deposits left on pottery fragments found to be 6,500 years old." According to Dr. Copley, "it is clear that by the time farming reached Britain, milk was already an important commodity." The paper which this article is based on is (soon to be) published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Unfortunately we cannot tell by chemical analysis of pottery whether or not the milk in question was consumed fresh i.e. by people who were lactose tolerant, or in the form of cheese and yoghurt by those who were lactose intolerant.

Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic and Civil Wars*, translated by W. A. McDevitte (1893, 113), has this information.



The most civilised of all these nations are they who inhabit Kent, which is entirely a maritime district, nor do they differ much from the Gallic customs. Most of the inland inhabitants do not sow corn, but live on milk and flesh and are clad with skins.

This information is in keeping with the lactose absorption pattern for Italy, where the northern Italians (Ligurians) exhibit a 70% population experience for lactose absorbers (Durham 1991, 498), and the southern Italians show a very low lactose absorption experience - less than 30% (Holden and Mace 1997, 621). This suggests that the Gauls and Britons utilised their dairy produce in the form of fresh milk, whereas historically the Romans processed most of their dairy produce into low lactose products such as aged cheese.

Evidence from the archaeological site of Dun Vulcan, a broch in South Uist that was inhabited until approximately AD 700, has produced the following statement.

The pattern of cattle husbandry does not suggest that they were kept primarily to produce meat. They seem to have been used, almost exclusively, to produce milk and, perhaps more importantly, storable dairy products. Sheep were kept in higher numbers but, of these, the majority were only maintained until the first autumn/winter and then slaughtered before they had reached full size. That this method of farming is ubiquitous across the islands, and in some aspects more pronounced at Dun Vulcan, suggests that the high infant mortality and lack of prime animals was not linked to a site's social status. Milk, rather than being seen as a 'secondary product', was of primary importance (Mulville 1999, 274).

In early dairy cultures, most bull calves were killed at birth or shortly thereafter. In Scotland, it was not until the drove roads came into use in the 1700s that male calves were kept, castrated and sent south as part of a beef economy.

There is mention of milk in a story in Adomnán's *Life of St Columba*, written in the seventh century AD. It concerns a wooden vessel full of milk that a young man was carrying on his back. When the lad asked the saint to bless the milk a demon was exorcised from it. Many of the lives of saints in both Ireland and Scotland contain

miracles dealing with milk cows. Early travellers in Scotland, beginning with John of Fordun in 1380, also mention milk production at the family level. Traditional songs and stories are full of references to milking and milk products as well as to the cows themselves (Meeks 1999).

...

The ability to consume milk in its fresh form is not a normal adult mammalian trait. Studies since the 1960s have shown that the majority of the world population is lactose intolerant. Further groupings and levels of intolerance have shown that there were two 'Old World' populations that had a high degree of lactose tolerance, these being African and Arabian nomads and northern Europeans. Due to the difference in location, climate and economic situations, it appears that one did not evolve from nor assist in the development of the other. While two of the hypotheses presented could explain the desert nomad's reliance on fresh milk, I feel that only the calcium absorption hypothesis readily explains the shift from what was probably a universal lactose malabsorption trait to one of lactose absorption in northern European populations. It is this ability to fully utilise the calcium available in fresh milk that contributed to the bodily health of people living in the Scottish Highlands.

This map was taken from an article by Gebhard Flatz. Only 'Old World' countries are being considered. Milk consumption, in its fresh form, is the key to the distribution of people who are lactose absorbers. The crosshatched areas show milk dependent populations in North Africa and Arabia and northern Europe who have a high prevalence of lactose absorption in modern populations. Vertical hatching depicts areas of non-milking populations and the open areas show milk-using populations with variable lactase phenotype distribution. Many milk-using populations have as low a prevalence of lactose absorption as non-milking populations, indicating that the milk is being used in forms such as yoghurt and hard cheese (Flatz 1987, 77).



## Chapter 2

### Nutritional Aspects of a Meat- and Milk-based Diet

The previous chapter has outlined the benefits of a large dependence on dairy produce to a lactose absorbent population. Bearing this in mind, this chapter will address the issue of a diet in which meat as well as dairy products are consumed, and which is lacking in fresh fruits and vegetables for at least part of the year.

Meat has always been known to be a valuable source of nutrients. It has become stigmatised over the past few decades for a number of reasons, including links to heart disease, some forms of cancer and BSE. Although some correlation can be found between the consumption of saturated fatty acids (visible fat on meat, and fat in certain dairy products) and coronary heart disease, it has been noted that affluent lifestyles may be much more at fault. Even though affluence leads to more meat in the diet of some people, studies show that high stress jobs, smoking and alcohol abuse can contribute significantly to heart attacks (Sanders 1988, 97-99).

During the 1960s in the United States, beef animals were finished (fattened) to a grade of 'prime' at feedlots (beef bound for slaughter are not grass-fed on pasture but sent to stalling facilities where they are fed grain). In order to grade 'prime' it was necessary for the carcass to contain a rind of fat that would measure at least an inch thick. Most consumers were under the mistaken impression that in order for a cut of meat to be tender and juicy it had to contain 'marbling', i.e. fatty tissue running through the meat fibre, as well as a thick rind of fat on the outside of the meat. It was this over-abundance of fat that the medical profession reacted to, and is still reacting to, "... Consumption of meats (especially high-fat meats) should be limited" (New American Cancer Society guidelines on diet, nutrition and cancer prevention. *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* 1997; 89:198). The advice may be sound, but the

message to the general public is very misleading. High-fat meats contain elevated levels of animal fat and are suspected of causing health problems. Lean meat on the other hand is very beneficial to health in many ways. Since the 1960s, animals have been finished out to a grade of 'choice', in the United States, which denotes less fat on the carcass. Most wild game, as well as domestic animals fed on pasture alone, contains very little body fat. It was this type of meat that was available to people in the Scottish Highlands. Very little Scottish beef is grain fed even now and the meat is quite lean because of this.

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk and cheese are efficient sources of protein needed for healthy bodies. The Highland population had access to all of these items, prior to the clearances.

The following excerpt explains the changing sources for calcium, and the problem this presents to a modern population.

Dietary sources and calcium intake have altered considerably during human evolution. Early man derived calcium from roots, tubers, nuts, and beans in quantities believed to exceed 37.5 mmol (1500g) per day, and perhaps up to twice this when consuming food to meet the caloric demands of a hunter-gatherer of contemporary body size. After domestication of grains, calcium intakes decreased substantially because the staple foods became grains (fruits), the plant parts that accumulate the least calcium. Consequently, the modern human consumes on average insufficient calcium to optimize bone density. The food group that supplies the bulk of the calcium in the Western diet is now the dairy food group (Weaver, 1999, 146).

Calcium is supplied in abundance in milk and milk products, however, calcium is not the only benefit for lactose absorbers. "For adults, dairy products supply 72% of the calcium in the US diet, grain products about 11%, and vegetables and fruits about 6%... Many individuals have turned to dietary supplements to meet their calcium needs. However, it is prudent to remember that calcium is not the only nutrient

important to health supplied by dairy products. Users of milk in the US compared to nonusers, get 35% more vitamin A, 38% more folate, 56% more riboflavin, 22% more magnesium and 24% more potassium in addition to 80% more calcium” (Weaver 1999, 146). Plants rich in calcium include broccoli, kale, bok choy, cabbage, and mustard and turnip greens. The one out-standing representative of vegetables in this group in Scotland is kale. Kale is part of the ‘Brassica family’, and has been widespread in the Lowlands, eventually penetrating the Highlands as a staple in the diet. “Brassica are an anomaly in the plant kingdom in that they do not accumulate oxalate to detoxify excess calcium to protect against cell death” (as spinach, for example, does) (Weaver 1999, 147).

Phosphorous, which is necessary for proper utilisation of calcium in the formation of bone mineral (when calcium hydroxyapatite is being laid down) is contained in “protein rich foods and cereal grains...”(Knockel 1999, 157). “Milk and dairy products are the richest sources of phosphorus in the UK, although meat, fish, eggs, nuts, fruit, cereals and vegetables provide useful amounts” (Thomas 1994, 170).

Iron, which is critical to red blood cell formation, is found in liver, red meat, and egg yolks, as well as certain cereal grains and vegetables. “Iron is better absorbed from some foods than others and, in addition, some dietary constituents may impair or facilitate absorption. The iron in meat and fish is well absorbed and that in cereals and vegetables, except soya beans, less well so. Animal protein, however, will enhance iron absorption from vegetable sources” (Thomas, 1994, 521).

Seafood, as well as dairy products, meat and poultry, supply iodine. The amount of iodine contained in animal products depends upon the amount in the

ground where the animals are grazing (International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders, 2000).

Vitamin A, important for growth, normal vision, and healthy skin is contained in milk, butter, cheese, egg yolk, liver and some of the fatty fish like herring and salmon, and leafy vegetables (Davidson 1975, 146-147). “Vitamin A in the United States diet comes mainly from liver, yellow and green leafy vegetables, eggs, and whole milk products” (Ross, 1999, 307).

Vitamin B1, or thiamine, is contained in all animal and plant tissues. “Excellent sources of thiamine are yeast, lean pork, and legumes” (Tanphaichitr, 1999, 382). Though it is known that people in the Scottish Highlands preferred not to eat pork and legumes were scarce, they had an abundance of yeast. One source of yeast is fermented foods, such as cheese, yoghurt, buttermilk and soured cream (Thomas 1994, 194). An adequate amount of thiamine is necessary for the prevention of beriberi which has three forms: wet beriberi which is typified by oedema, anorexia and dyspepsia; dry beriberi which is marked by a degeneration of the nervous system; and infantile beriberi occurring in breast-fed infants. The clinical features of the latter are restlessness, puffiness and abrupt cardiac failure or convulsions and coma. Beriberi was endemic in populations whose main diet consisted of polished rice or individuals whose intake of thiamine was greatly restricted (Davidson 1975, 335-338).

Nicotinic Acid, or niacin, is also widely distributed in plant and animal foods, but only in relatively small amounts, except in meat (especially the organs), fish, wholemeal cereals and pulses (Davidson 1975, 168). “Significant amounts of niacin are found in meat (especially red meat), liver, legumes, milk, eggs, alfalfa, cereal grains, yeast, fish, and corn [sweet]. Although milk and eggs contain small amounts

of preformed niacin, their content of tryptophan provides more than sufficient niacin equivalents. Red meat is reported to be one of the best sources of niacin equivalents because of its abundance of preformed niacin and tryptophan” (Cervantes-Laurean 1999, 402) for further discussion on preformed niacin and tryptophan see pp 401-11 of *Modern Nutrition in Health and Disease*.

Nicotinic acid is necessary for the prevention of pellagra, which has manifested itself in certain poverty-stricken areas of the world where the population was totally dependent on maize. It is typified by loss of weight, increasing debility a form of dermatitis affecting parts of the skin exposed to sunlight, gastrointestinal disturbances especially diarrhoea and glossitis and mental changes (Davidson 1975, 348).

Riboflavin, important for cell respiration, is found in abundance in liver, milk, eggs and green vegetables.

Vitamin B12 is unique amongst vitamins in that it is not found in any plants. However, probably because it is synthesised in the digestive system, deficiency is rare even among vegetarians and vegans. B12 deficiency probably affects every cell in the body but is most severely felt in tissues where the cells are normally dividing rapidly, e.g. in the blood-forming tissues of the bone marrow and in the gastrointestinal tract. The nervous system is also affected and this may lead to degeneration of nerve fibres in the spinal cord and peripheral nerves. Good sources of this vitamin are milk, meat, fish, eggs and other animal products.

Folic acid, which must go hand in hand with vitamin B12, prevents nutritional megaloblastic anaemia. “Unlike vitamin B12, which is present only in animal protein, folates are ubiquitous in nature, being present in nearly all natural foods. Again unlike vitamin B12, folate is highly susceptible to oxidative destruction: 50 to 95% of the



folate in food may be destroyed by protracted cooking or other processing, such as canning, and all folate is lost from refined foods such as sugars, hard liquors and hard candies. Foods with the highest folate content per unit of dry weight include yeast, liver and other organ meats, fresh green vegetables and some fresh fruits'' (Herbert 1999, 438).

Vitamin B6 is the last of the B complex and is widely distributed both in plant and animal tissues; meat, liver, vegetables and the outer coats (bran) of cereal grains are all good sources (Davidson 1975, 174-180).

Vitamin C requirements have been debated for many years. Vitamin C is necessary for the prevention of scurvy; its clinical name of ascorbic acid is a shortened version of its attribute, which is the antiscorbutic (scurvy-preventing) factor. Vitamin C is a relatively simple organic acid having six carbon atoms in each molecule; it is structurally similar to glucose, one of the sugars making up the disaccharide lactose, the other one being galactose (Wenck 1980, 256). I suggest that the small amounts of vitamin C in fresh cow's milk are enhanced and absorbed at the same time and place (the jejunum), as are calcium ions.

Clinical testing in Britain has shown that although 30 to 60 milligrams of vitamin C can maintain a normal healthy adult, the body will utilise its entire available resource on a daily basis. In a study known as the Sheffield experiment conducted in 1953, it was determined that 10 milligrams per day were adequate to prevent or even cure scurvy (Bartley et al., 1953). This level was once an accepted minimum requirement in the United States (National Academy of Sciences 1979, 64). "Beyond the absolute requirement of 5 to 10 mg/day to prevent scurvy, the human dietary requirement for vitamin C remains controversial. Current worldwide recommendations for vitamin C intake vary from 30 to 100 mg/day. The increase in

the allowances over that required to prevent scurvy are based primarily on providing a total body pool of ascorbate (e.g., 900-1500 mg) that will ensure against scorbutic symptoms even after weeks of low ascorbate intake...’’(Jacob, 1999, 477). I suggest that in a lactose absorbing society, enough vitamin C is contained in unpasteurized cow’s milk to satisfy an adult’s daily requirement as long as a half to a litre of milk a day, is ingested, which is not uncommon. Cow’s milk is known to contain 1-2 mg. of ascorbic acid per 100ml. of milk, which equates to 10-20 mg. of vitamin C per litre. The vitamin C, however, is easily destroyed by pasteurisation (Davidson 1975, 237). Although the cheese making process requires heating of milk and would destroy vitamin C, it is generally accepted that butter from fresh cows’ milk contains vitamin C (Stini 2001, personal communication). This may explain a low incidence of scurvy in the Highlands prior to the pasteurisation of milk, even though fresh fruits and vegetables were not available for several months of the year.

‘‘The contribution, which an individual food makes to nutrient intake, depends on three factors: 1. The nutrient content per 100 g. 2. The size of the portion eaten. 3. The frequency of consumption. Therefore, it is not sufficient, when identifying foods to increase or reduce intake, to simply run the eye down the tables of content per 100g. The other two factors also have to be considered. Parsley contains almost three times as much vitamin C as oranges, but makes a negligible contribution to total intake, while milk, containing 1/33<sup>rd</sup> as much makes a significant contribution.’’

	Parsley	Milk	Oranges
Portion weight (g)	1	30	80
x frequency	1/month	8/day	2/week

x content/100g	130	1.5	50
= intake per day mg	0.04	3.6	11.4

(Manual of Dietetic Practice 1994, 16)

The point taken by the above example must be applied to a complete dietary regime in order to ascertain whether or not it is healthful. The other point I want to make, is the contribution that milk makes with regard to vitamin C. I am assuming that this is pasteurised milk, which will have lost a significant amount of available C due to that process, but which still contributes significantly to the diet.

Vitamin D and its rickets prevention factor for people living in northern Britain were explained in the previous chapter. The following excerpt greatly supports the theory set forth there.

Non-European immigration into the United Kingdom has been predominantly from the Indian subcontinent and from the Caribbean. Immigrant families usually have a diet markedly different from the normal British diet, and first-generation immigrant women will continue to cook only according to their own customs. The nutrition of mothers, infants and children can cause special problems not exclusive to but largely confined to immigrant groups. Asian mothers are the most likely to be anaemic and deficient in vitamin D. There is a high incidence of osteomalacia in pregnant Asian women, with a high risk of foetal or neonatal rickets in their infants. Rickets in children has also been encountered in almost every centre of the Asian population in the United Kingdom. The cause of this deficiency is primarily the restrictions of the traditional diet combined with a failure to synthesise adequate amounts of vitamin D due to a lack of exposure to sunlight (Naismith 1988, 3).

Naismith has missed the point that the people listed above are probably lactose intolerant and therefore cannot utilise what he considers a 'normal British diet'. It is probable that the traditional diet of the immigrant population does not include fresh milk. If the traditional diet includes a quantity of hard cheese and/or yoghurt, then the addition of a vitamin D supplement would probably result in a healthier regime for

these people. Hard cheese, as mentioned before, contains little lactose but is high in calcium. Yoghurt, depending on what it is made from, can be lactose free. However, in order to utilise the calcium in a sunlight-restricted area, vitamin D should be supplemented.

In addition to protein, vitamins and minerals, discussed in sources above, other substances are available in food products for use by the human body; whether or not they are critical is the query here.

The question of a specific need for carbohydrate is only of academic interest. More than half of the total dietary energy of adult men and women is normally supplied in this form. Since almost all of the dietary protein is oxidised, and thereby provides carbohydrate by the process of gluconeogenesis, even a diet that traditionally contained very little carbohydrate, such as that of the Greenland Eskimos [Inuit], was particularly rich in its precursor, protein (Naismith 1988, 6).

Though carbohydrates are considered essential in modern diets, they have been proven not to be essential as a daily occurrence in certain populations. Nutrients, vitamins and minerals provided by carbohydrates can well be supplied solely by a combination of meat and dairy products. Differing food combinations worldwide and throughout history (and pre-history) have satisfied various populations under various environmental conditions. A prime example is the nomadic tribes mentioned in the previous chapter who ingest up to three and a half litres of milk a day as their sole source of nourishment for much of the year.

Carbohydrates are probably not an essential part of a diet. The Arctic explorer Stefansson and a colleague lived for a whole year on a diet composed only of meat and so almost devoid of carbohydrate. They kept in good health. Members of some meat-eating tribes get little or no carbohydrate in their diet and it does not seem as if carbohydrate is a dietary essential--at least for adult man (Davidson 1975, 48).

Grain growing in certain areas of northern Britain was necessarily restricted due to environmental conditions. Sir John Sinclair compiled the *General Report of the Agricultural State, and Political Circumstances of Scotland* in 1814. His statistics and observations bear this out.

Scotland contains about nineteen and a half million English acres; of which the cultivated land, and that which is under woods and plantations, extend to little more than one fourth or five million. Probably not more than 2/5 of even the arable land, or 10 acres in a hundred of the whole surface produce crops immediately applicable to the food of man. The remaining ninety [out of a hundred] acres, after a small deduction for fresh-water lakes, are appropriated to the breeding, rearing and fattening of livestock. The great importance of this instrument in the husbandry of Scotland, and the extent to which it must be applied may be perceived from considering the small proportion of its surface which can be rendered available by any other means to the subsistence and comfort of its inhabitants. Accordingly livestock has long been the staple commodity of the country (Sinclair 1814, 1-2).

Smout in *A History of the Scottish People* gives a good overview of the agricultural situation of Scotland at the end of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to grasp the exact situation in the Highlands due to its inaccessibility at the time, and what applies to the Lowlands certainly doesn't necessarily apply to Highland agriculture. "Around 1690, the population of Scotland numbered about a million – one fifth of the present numbers, and distributed much more evenly than is the case today. As late as 1750 one half of the Scots lived beyond the Tay, and fully a quarter of them in five counties of the Highlands which now hold only seven per cent of the whole... Eight or nine out of every ten Scotsman dwelt on the land, and depended for their living on the productivity of its farms. They were, overwhelmingly, a rural people" (Smout 1970, 119).

The mountainous areas beyond the Tay were particularly inaccessible to four wheeled vehicles. Transportation was by foot or horse, and adverse weather

conditions were (are) possible at any time of the year. The population was high, but reports of famine and sickness were uncommon outside of times of general troubles, for example the famine years of the 1690s, which were widespread throughout Scotland, and were a result of adverse climatic conditions. Smout has this to say about food supplies. “The standard of peasant diet, at least by the second half of the seventeenth century when grain prices had fallen from previous high levels, seems to have been rather above that of most very primitive economies at the present time. None of the travellers in Scotland speak of endemic starvation or acute emaciation among the population. The Highlanders exchanged their excess dairy produce for the Lowlanders’ meal... The regular consumption of fresh animal meat, on the other hand, was probably restricted to the husbandman and some Highland crofters” (Smout 1970, 153). The idea, however, that this area produced, or imported, vast quantities of grain is unlikely. The grain that was produced and imported was mainly used for brewing or animal fodder and the Highlanders who exchanged their dairy produce lived close to towns. For example, Menzies, a surveyor for the crown in 1755 says of the Beauly Estate, “There are a good many cattle reared on this part of the estate of a very good small kind... There is also a good deal of butter and cheese made here especially in the grass farms to the westward which are sold at Inverness, etc.” (NAS 1755, E729/1). This estate was only five miles from Inverness.

It is probably true that everywhere the arable land was divided into two types ‘infield’ and ‘outfield’, the terms being descriptive not of separate field areas but of types of ground that often lay in inter-mingled blocks. Infield, perhaps normally only a quarter or less of the tillable area, was fertile enough to bear grain crops year after year without ever enjoying a fallow break. Outfield was poorer land that could only be farmed by alternating several years of fallow with several years of oats. Infield was the division that carried the drink-crop of the community, bear, or four-rowed barley, that was sown in the spring (in April in the south of Scotland) some three weeks after the ground had been ploughed. This normally occupied a

third or a quarter of the total infield land, except in Galloway where it monopolised the whole and was therefore grown on the same ground year after year. Elsewhere it rotated with other crops and usually received a dressing of manure... The bear was generally malted and brewed by husbandmen at home and consumed in the household... Bear, though eaten as meal in an emergency was reckoned a very inferior food except as a pot-grain to put in the broth (Smout 1970, 127).

Although other crops such as pease and wheat in some Lowland areas were grown, the only other crop available to the people in the Highlands was oats. "Oats was the other, and more usual crop on infield [i.e. wheat, peas, flax etc.]. "The average return for oats does not seem to have exceeded 3:1, 'ane to grow, ane to gnaw, and ane to pay the laird withaw' as the bitter old proverb had it. The grains were more like wild oats than the fat seeds of modern husbandry" (Smout 1970, 128). He is speaking of Lowland production here which was probably higher than Highland yields. "...Stock was important to the peasants as direct providers of food and clothing. Every rural family kept at least one dairy cow to provide milk, cheese and butter. The herds of black beef cattle in which the Southwest and the Highlands particularly specialised provided meat, leather and tallow. They also provided animals to pay over to the landlord as rent in kind. Goats were an important dairy and meat animal, particularly in the Highlands where they existed in astonishing numbers: 100,000 goat and kid skins were sent to London in a single year at the end of the seventeenth century" (Smout 1970, 130). Prior to the changeover from common grazing, in the Highlands, to 'black cattle' being raised by the landlords to send south for beef, all the cattle formed a part of the dairy herd during the summer months. During the winter, certain cows were housed and kept in milk after their calf had been weaned, to supply dairy products to the family.

The consumption of greens was necessarily confined to the growing season, which could be quite late in the Central and Western Scottish Highlands. Kale has

been grown at least from the fifteenth century in Scotland but apparently wasn't in general use in the Highlands until the seventeenth century (Smout 1970, 153).

The tables following this chapter visually represent quantities of nutrients, minerals and vitamins contained in most foods. An examination shows that all of the necessary requirements for a healthy body can be gained primarily from meat and milk products for a lactose absorber.

This does not mean that I advocate this diet; it simply means that it was a viable and healthful option for people who did not have wheat and unlimited supplies of fresh fruits and vegetables at their disposal. What constitutes a 'healthful' diet by today's standards is not necessarily true in all situations.

Even though the need for fibre, or 'roughage', in the diet to help prevent constipation has been known for generations, in the mid-1970s fibre was rediscovered and touted widely as the new miracle food that would cure or prevent just about everything from cancer to heart disease. Unfortunately, the fibre fad is one of many examples of how a little research evidence is blown up all out of proportion to known facts by authors, manufacturers, and sellers who are profit oriented. ... Scientists have found some evidence that too much fibre can have harmful effects (Wenck 1980, 128-129).

A healthy diet is as individual as a fingerprint. Many factors contribute to a person's bodily makeup, and genetics, as well as age, physical condition and general health must be considered when determining what and what not to eat for a healthy body.

...







Meat and milk products contain all of the necessary requirements for a healthy body provided that people have the ability to derive nutritional benefit from drinking fresh milk. I suggest that not only does a lactose absorber gain enhanced absorption of calcium ions but also of vitamin C at the site of the production of the enzyme lactase that is in the jejunum. I also suggest that it is these biological functions which allow people to thrive under certain environmental conditions.








It appears that some 'requirements' for a healthy diet may have value only in certain dietary regimes. The over-reaction by the medical profession against red meat in the United States in the 1960s (and continuing), was again displayed by the over reaction in favour of fibre in the 1970s. The under-use of grain by the population in certain areas of northern Britain before the mid-eighteenth century was not detrimental to their health, nor was the consumption of meat and milk products. The sporadic consumption of green leafy plants available during the spring and summer months appears to have been adequate for nutritional purposes coupled with the consumption of fresh milk during the 'dark' months.

# KEY NUTRIENTS

This chart summarizes the key nutrients, why each is needed, and foods that are good sources of each nutrient. It will help you understand why you should eat a wide variety of food to be well-nourished and healthy.

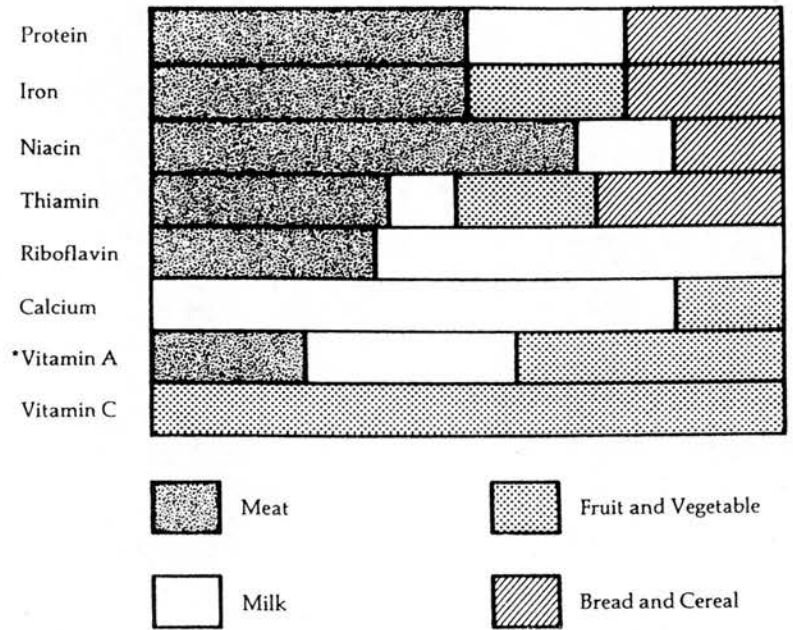
Nutrient	Why Needed	Some Important Sources
<p><b>PROTEIN</b></p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Builds and maintains all tissues.</li> <li>2. Forms an important part of enzymes, hormones, and body fluids.</li> <li>3. Supplies energy.</li> </ol>	<p>Proteins of top quality for tissue building and repair are found in lean meat, poultry, fish, seafoods, eggs, milk, and cheese. Next best for proteins are dry beans, peas, and nuts. Cereals, bread, vegetables, and fruits also provide some protein but of lower quality.</p>
<p><b>CALCIUM</b></p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Builds bones and teeth.</li> <li>2. Helps blood to clot.</li> <li>3. Helps nerves, muscles, and heart to function properly.</li> </ol>	<p>Milk—whole, skim, buttermilk—fresh, dried, canned; cheese; ice cream; leafy vegetables such as collards, dandelion, kale, mustard and turnip greens.</p>
<p><b>IRON</b></p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Combines with protein to make hemoglobin, the red substance of blood which carries oxygen from the lungs to muscles, brain, and other parts of the body.</li> <li>2. Helps cells use oxygen.</li> </ol>	<p>Liver, kidney, heart, oysters, lean meat, egg yolk, dry beans, dark-green leafy vegetables, dried fruit, whole grain and enriched bread and cereals, and molasses.</p>
<p><b>IODINE</b></p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helps the thyroid gland to work properly.</li> </ol>	<p>Iodized salt. Saltwater fish and other sea food.</p>
<p><b>VITAMIN A</b></p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helps eyes adjust to dim light.</li> <li>2. Helps keep skin smooth.</li> <li>3. Helps keep lining of mouth, nose, throat, and digestive tract healthy and resistant to infection.</li> <li>4. Promotes growth.</li> </ol>	<p>Liver; dark-green and deep-yellow vegetables such as broccoli, turnip and other leafy greens, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, winter squash; apricots, cantaloupe; butter, fortified margarine.</p>
<p><b>THIAMINE</b></p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helps body cells obtain energy from food.</li> <li>2. Helps keep nerves in healthy condition.</li> <li>3. Promotes good appetite and digestion.</li> </ol>	<p>Lean pork, heart, kidney, liver, dry beans and peas, whole grain and enriched cereals and breads, and some nuts.</p>

## Key nutrients (Wenck 1980, 21)

Nutrient	Why Needed	Some Important Sources
<p><b>ASCORBIC ACID</b> (Vitamin C)</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helps hold body cells together and strengthens walls of blood vessels.</li> <li>2. Helps in healing wounds.</li> <li>3. Helps tooth and bone formation.</li> </ol>	<p>Cantaloupe, grapefruit, oranges, strawberries, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, raw cabbage, collards, green and sweet red peppers, mustard and turnip greens, potatoes cooked in jacket, and tomatoes.</p>
<p><b>RIBOFLAVIN</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helps cells use oxygen to release energy from food.</li> <li>2. Helps keep eyes healthy.</li> <li>3. Helps keep skin around mouth and nose smooth.</li> </ol>	<p>Milk, liver, kidney, heart, lean meat, eggs, and dark leafy greens.</p>
<p><b>NIACIN</b></p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helps the cells of the body use oxygen to produce energy.</li> <li>2. Helps to maintain health of skin, tongue, digestive tract, and nervous system.</li> </ol>	<p>Liver, yeast, lean meat, poultry, fish, leafy greens, peanuts and peanut butter, beans and peas, and whole grain and enriched breads and cereals.</p>
<p><b>VITAMIN D</b></p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helps body use calcium and phosphorus to build strong bones and teeth, important in growing children and during pregnancy and lactation.</li> </ol>	<p>Fish liver oils; foods fortified with vitamin D, such as milk. Direct sunlight produces vitamin D from cholesterol in the skin.</p>
<p><b>CARBOHYDRATES</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supply food energy.</li> <li>2. Help body use fat efficiently.</li> <li>3. Spare protein for purposes of body building and repair.</li> </ol>	<p>Starches: Breads, cereals, corn, grits, potatoes, rice, spaghetti, macaroni and noodles. Sugars: Honey, molasses, sirups, sugar, and other sweets.</p>
<p><b>FATS</b></p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supply food energy in compact form (weight for weight supplies twice as much energy as carbohydrates).</li> <li>2. Some supply essential fatty acids.</li> <li>3. Help body use certain other nutrients.</li> </ol>	<p>Cooking fats and oils, butter, margarine, salad dressings, and oils.</p>
<p><b>WATER</b></p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Important part of all cells and fluids in body.</li> <li>2. Carrier of nutrients to and waste from cells in the body.</li> <li>3. Aids in digestion and absorption of food.</li> <li>4. Helps to regulate body temperature.</li> </ol>	<p>Water, beverages, soup, fruits, and vegetables. Most foods contain some water.</p>

Key nutrients (Wenck 1980, 22)

Key Nutrients in the Four Food Groups



\*Whole milk or vitamin-A-enriched milk.

## Chapter 3

### Contemporary Reports of Life in Gaelic Scotland, 1380-1803

This chapter examines accounts by people with knowledge of the Highlands, such as John of Fordun (*c* 1380), George Buchanan (*c* 1528) and Sir Thomas Craig (*c* 1603). It also includes information about the Islands from Martin Martin (*c* 1695). It deals with changing agricultural practices and everyday life in the Highlands as recorded by Archibald Menzies, Thomas Pennant, Richard Pococke, Edmund Burt and others.

The purpose of this chapter is to take testimony of first-hand (or at least close) observers of life in the Scottish Highlands and Islands for the 5 centuries leading to the Clearances. Unfortunately, due to inaccessibility of most of the area before General Wade's military roads, there is a scarcity of reporters. The information that I am interested in is that which deals with diet and food production. These were greatly influenced by the topography of the area. Though estate papers are invaluable to my research, only those, which have been published, are readily accessible as most are still in their original hand-written form in bundles and boxes at several repositories, an intriguing project but outside the scope of this thesis. Therefore, I consider the people listed here the best choice as informants to shed light on the chosen time and subject.

John of Fordun is generally acknowledged as the earliest reporter of life in the Highlands. Skene (1821, xiv) sets his original work as having been written after 1384 and before 1387. George Buchanan died in Edinburgh on the 28 September 1582 shortly after his *History of Scotland* was published. Sir Thomas Craig wrote in 1603, after he had helped to write the articles of Union. Martin Martin, a Skye-man, made his survey of the Islands in 1695. Burt's information relates to 1726-27 and comes in the form of a series of letters that he wrote while serving as the Crown's agent for the unsold forfeited estates of the Earl of Seaforth and Grant of Glenmoriston (Taylor

1976, 19 & 173). Archibald Menzies was a surveyor for the Crown who was sent to assess the forfeited estates in 1755. Pococke toured Scotland in 1747, 1750 and again in 1760. Pennant toured first in 1769, then again in 1772 and 1773.

### **Topography and environment**



A view of the Cuillins near Sligachan, Isle of Skye

Due to a lack of arable land in a great part of the Highlands, grain production was minimal. Barley and oats were the main grain crops both there and in the Islands. Neither of these grains is particularly suited for making bread, although oat and barley cakes formed a part of the people's diet. These grains were also used extensively for brewing and animal fodder. "The home grown corn was maybe of poor quality and largely unfit for human consumption, but it nonetheless was highly prized among the pastoral farmers of the Central Highlands. It was critical to the survival and prosperity of their cattle" (Bil 1990, 113).

The following observations are used in an attempt to grasp the nature of topography, social structure, game availability and livestock maintenance in the Highlands during specific eras.

John of Fordun wrote the following *c* 1380. The original is in Latin; this is a translation by John Bouchier.

Along the foot of these mountains are vast woods, full of stags, roe deer, and other wild animals and beasts of various kinds.

These forests oftentimes afford a strong and safe protection to the cattle of the inhabitants against the depredations of their enemies... Scotia, also, has tracts of land bordering on the sea, pretty level and rich, with green meadows, and fertile and productive fields of corn and barley, and well adapted for growing beans, and pease, and all other produce; destitute, however, of wine and oil, though by no means so of honey and wax. But in the upland districts, and along the highlands, the fields are less productive, except only in oats and barley. The country is there very hideous, interspersed with moors and marshy fields, muddy and dirty; it is, however, full of pasturage grass for cattle, and comely with verdure in the glens, along the watercourses. This region abounds in wool-bearing sheep and in horses; and its soil is grassy, feeds cattle and wild beasts, is rich in milk and wool, and manifold in its wealth of fish in sea, river and lake (Macaulay 1896, 37).

It appears that the majority of John of Fordun's accounts were eyewitness and that he actually had travelled the places he wrote about, even though many areas in the Highlands were not well travelled by visitors at any point in the time under this study. A map drawn by Matthew Paris in the thirteenth century describes the area as marshy, mountainous and unfit for anything except 'cattle and shepherds' (Brown 1891, frontispiece). An entry in one of Edmund Burt's letters (1876b, 41) to his friend in England *c.* 1726-27 sums up the situation. "...no stranger (or even a native, unacquainted with the way) can venture among the hills without a conductor; for if he once go aside, and most especially if snow should fall (which may happen on the very high hills at any season of the year), in that, or any other case, he may wander into a bog – to impassable bourns or rocks... In short, one might as well think of making a sea voyage without sun, moon, stars, or compass, as pretend to know which way to take, when lost among the hills and mountains."

Burt's first description of the mountains reflects his initial distaste for the area. "The summits of the highest are mostly destitute of earth; and the huge naked rocks, being just above the heath, produce the disagreeable appearance of a scabbed head,

especially when they appear to the view in a conical figure” (Burt 1876b, 27-29). His letters were addressed to a friend of his who had never been away from the south of England. “But after this description of these mountains, it is not unlikely you may ask, of what use can be such monstrous excrescences? ... They serve for the breeding and feeding of cattle, wild fowls and other useful animals, which cost little or nothing in keeping” (1876b, 36).

George Buchanan in 1528 wrote in Latin about Scotland and the Highlanders; this is a translation by Mr Bond (Buchanan 1722, 37).

In their food, clothing, and in the whole of their domestic economy, they adhere to ancient parsimony. Hunting and fishing supply them with food. They boil the flesh with water poured into the paunch or the skin of the animal they kill, and in hunting sometimes they eat the flesh raw, merely squeezing out the blood. They drink the juice of the boiled flesh. At their feasts they sometimes use whey, after it has been kept for several years, and even drink it greedily; that species of liquor they call *Blaedium*, but the greater part quench their thirst with water.

The drink called *Blaedium* in the above document is spelled *Blandium* in the alphabetical table contained in volume 2 of *Buchanan's History of Scotland*, and is listed as “an old drink amongst the Scots”.

Sir Thomas Craig, a well-respected Edinburgh lawyer, was summoned by the crown to assist in the writing of the Articles for the Union of the Crowns. He returned to Scotland after the signing of the Articles in 1603 and wrote *De Unione Regnorum Britannia Tractatus*, in which the following quote appears. This is a translation by Charles Sanford Terry (1909, 446-47).

Scotland, though far inferior to England in her resources, wealth and abundance, still has enough for herself and something to spare for foreign nations. Nowadays national plenty is a question of food and clothing; and in the matter of food we are as well off as any other people. As to fish, we excel England and every country in Europe in the variety, abundance, and delicacy of what we eat. We yield to none in the delicacy



and flavour of our meat. Though in the abundance of our cereals and fruits we are far behind the English, yet for our inhabitants there is never any dearth of corn for their sustenance, and should there be a bad harvest the Highlanders are able to supply us with cheese, which is often used, and without any injury to health, when the supply of cereals is short. Nowhere will you find people of robuster physique, higher spirited, or longer lived, more active in their old age and later in reaching it, than among the Highlanders; and that in spite of their entire dependence on cheese, flesh and milk. In the variety and delicate flavour of our meat we can bear comparison with the greatest countries.

The above quotations illuminate a way of life that was unfamiliar to many contemporaries. Clearly a diet of meat and milk furnished the Highland people with a healthy regime lacking in many of the cities.

The following is related about the Highlanders in *A Collection of Highland Rites and Customes*, c 1700. “In the time of scarcity they lance their cows’ neck and make meat of their blood; with butter or milk when boiled in time of dearth. The Lochaber men when they kill a cow, hang up the whole carcass, and eat it as they need. This is all over the Highlands. When they are in the hills they boil their flesh in the belly or haggis with a fire of the bones and other fuel” (Campbell 1975, 30).

Burt (1876b, 64-65) c 1726-27 gives a description of his dinner at a Highland *Inn* (his emphasis, he thereafter referred to them as huts), revealing his early displeasure at his circumstances. “My fare was a couple of roasted hens (as they call them), very poor, new killed, the skins much broken with plucking; black with smoke, and greased with bad butter. As I had no great appetite to that dish, I spoke for some hard eggs, made my supper of the yolks, and washed them down with a bottle of good small Claret.” The Claret was provided by himself.

In striking contrast to Burt’s meal, an account by B. Faujus Saint-Fond in 1799 of a Highland dinner gives this glowing report. “We sat down to table. Our supper consisted of two dishes of fine game, the one heathcock, the other woodcock,

cream, fresh butter, highland cheese, a pot of preserved vaccinium (bilberries) a wild fruit which grows on the mountain, and port wine. They were all served up together, and formed a truly luxurious repast for the country’’ (Saint-Fond, 280). These two meals indicate what food was available to travellers in the Highlands. Although other fruits and nuts are mentioned, bilberries appear to be the main fruit obtainable in the mountains.

It was very common for travellers to be given milk and whey by Highlanders and to be toasted with it as with a glass of wine. ‘‘As I was travelling in a very wild part of the country, and approaching the house of one of those gentlemen, who had notice of my coming, he met me at some distance from his dwelling, with his ‘Arcadian’ offering of milk and cream, as usual carried before him by his servants’’ (Burt 1876b, 110).

Pococke tells of going into a Highland cabin on Loch Shin in Sutherland. ‘‘A great pot of whey was over the fire, of which they were making Frau.<sup>1</sup> They have a machine like that, which they put into a churn, with stiff hairs round it. This they work round up and down to raise a froth, which they eat out of the pot with spoons, and it had the taste of new milk; then the family, servants and all, sat round it, and ate, the mistress looking on and waiting. She brought us a piggin of cream, and drank to me, and we drank of it round’’ (Pococke, 1888 [1760], 7). (See also *loinid*, Chapter 7). Pococke also says that the cabin housed animals and people and was partitioned off into five apartments all separated by hurdle-works of wattle (1888 [1760], 7).

Pococke gives the following account of Sutherland 22 June 1760, again mentioning the ritualistic drinking of whey.

We here took our repast; some boys came near with their cattle and afterwards two others; we invited them to take share, and

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Frau’ could be from Scots *frolfroh* meaning froth or foam. See *The Concise Scots Dictionary*, Mairi Robynson 1985, 216.

when we were going away, they said their mother was coming with some refreshments, and immediately she appeared at a good distance; she carried a piggin of cream, and her maid followed her with a small tub covered, which was warm whey. She drank to us, and we took it round and tasted of the whey (Pococke 1888 [1760], 9).

Burt (1876 [1726-27], vol. 2, 271) records the following, “In a wild part of Argyllshire, there was no bread of any kind till the discovery of some lead-mines, which brought strangers among the inhabitants; who before fed upon the milk of their cows, goats, and sheep. In summer they used to shake their milk in a vessel, till it was very frothy, which puffed them up, and satisfied them for the present; and their cheese served them instead of bread. The reason why they had no bread was, that there is hardly any arable land for a great space, all round that part of the country.”

Meat in the form of wild game is mentioned by most of the travellers. Pococke says (1888 [1760], 10-11): “They have great plenty of venison of red deer in this country, so it is commonly brought to table in most houses, and even when it is not fat, is excellent food minced and dressed like a hash, which they call minced collop.” Even Pennant mentions this form of venison (1775 [1769], vol. 1, 211). “Breakfast at the little village of Kinloch-Leven on most excellent minced stag, the only form I thought that animal good in.”

In support of the healthfulness of the Highlands, Burt claims (1876b [1726-27], 87): “it has been said that none of them are deformed by crookedness.” This implies that rickets was not a disease prevalent in the Highlands. The mother and aunt of a friend of mine travelled to Glasgow from their home in Skye when they were eighteen and nineteen years old (c 1930). They remarked at the ‘crooked’ people there, a thing unknown in the Highlands and Islands. I believe this to be due to the lack of milk consumption in the cities as compared to that in the country. They said that they had always had plenty of milk to drink when they were growing up.

Dorothy and William Wordsworth made a tour of Scotland in 1803. “We were now entering into the Highlands,” wrote Dorothy. “We had a poor dinner, and sour ale; but as long as the people were civil we were contented” (1874 [1803], 67-8). She remarks at the lack of ornamental gardens, as potatoes and cabbages were seen to be cultivated, but the wild gardens were beautiful. “The people of the [next] inn stared at us when we spoke, without giving us an answer immediately, which we were at first disposed to attribute to coarseness of manners, but found afterwards that they did not understand us at once, *Erse* being the language spoken in the family. Nothing but salt meat and eggs for dinner – no potatoes; the house smelt strongly of herrings, which were hung to dry over the kitchen fire” (Wordsworth 1874 [1803], 79). Next day they got ready to resume their journey. “We desired the landlady to roast us a couple of fowls to carry with us. There are always plenty of fowls at the doors of a Scotch inn, and eggs are as regularly brought to table at breakfast as bread and butter” (Wordsworth 1874 [1803], 81).

The next accommodation for Dorothy and William was a gentleman’s home on Loch Lomond. “She carried the tea-things into the room herself, leaving me to make the tea, and set before us cheese and butter and barley cakes. These cakes are as thin as our oat-bread, but, instead of being crisp are soft and leathery, yet we, being hungry, and the butter delicious, ate them with great pleasure, but when the same bread was set before us afterwards we did not like it” (Wordsworth 1874 [1803], 90). Later Dorothy reveals the importance of dairy and the relative unimportance of the grain crop for bread.

Saturday, August 27<sup>th</sup> – Before I rose, Mrs. Macfarlane came into my room to see if I wanted anything, and told me she should send the servant up with a basin of whey. “We make very good whey in this country;” indeed, I thought it the best I had ever tasted; but I cannot tell how this should be, for they only make skimmed-milk cheeses. I asked her for a little bread

and milk for our breakfast, but she said it would be no trouble to make tea, as she must make it for the family; so we all breakfasted together. The cheese was set out, as before, with plenty of butter and barley-cakes, and fresh baked oaten cakes, which, no doubt, were made for us: they had been kneaded with cream, and were excellent. All the party pressed us to eat, and were very jocose about the necessity of helping out their coarse bread with butter, and they themselves ate almost as much butter as bread (Wordsworth 1874 [1803], 91-92).

I. F. Grant (1961, 72) remarks about grain: “‘These supplies of meal were always only a small part of the people’s dietary and they lived very much upon the milk, butter and cheese of their cattle.’”

The final person to be quoted with regard to food is Dr. John Mackenzie who spent most of his childhood and later life on the Gairloch Estate. The following story involves dinner expected by a tenant known as a ‘Present-Man’. Following the tradition of the Highlands, tenants gave presents to the laird, normally in the form of foodstuffs. This tradition originated as rents given in kind but later became unrequested gifts.

My Father and we delighted in fish soup, made of fish stock and little sections of sea trout or even haddocks... A Present-Man, however, was grossly insulted by being set down to a tureen of such famous white fish soup, and dashed out of the house exclaiming: “*Ha gha mi splouterach*” – “I won’t eat rubbish.” Indeed, nothing but flesh was considered fit to set before a guest. When a greater insult than “splouterach”, or than poultry, was wished for, offering a ham to almost any Highlander, when I was young, was a clencher! (Mackenzie 1988 [1883], 39).

The above testimonies indicate that the diet of the people living in certain areas of the Highlands consisted largely of dairy products and meat, and that they were plentiful enough for the people to be selective. In his biographical introduction to *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald (Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair)*, Reverend A. MacDonald remarks about the situation in the Highlands at the end of the seventeenth century: “‘Many of

the old customs had not yet disappeared. The superstitious practises which had come down from their pagan ancestors were still prevalent everywhere. The people on the whole appeared to live a prosperous and contented life. They needed little from without. Their own country supplied them with the necessaries if not with many of the luxuries of life'' (MacDonald 1924, xxv).

In a recent evaluation of prehistoric remains of humans from the Crarae site on Loch Fyne, scientists have determined that 5500 years ago, people living there did not eat seafood, but ate mainly beef, mutton and pork (McEachran 2003, www)

### **Fosterage and Manrents**

The social structure of the Highlands had as much to do with food production and distribution as their topography.

The Black Book of Taymouth contains information from the Breadalbane Charter Room gathered by Master William Bowie who was notary to the family. A document signed at the Isle of Lochtay on 29 April 1510 gives information regarding fosterage, manrent and calps.

Obligation by Johne McNeill Vreik in Stronferna and Gregoure his brother to receive Coleyne Campbell lawful third son to Coleyne Campbell the eldest son and heir of Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenwrquhay knight in fostering and to give him a bairns part of gear; and giving to the said Sir Duncan and his heirs their bonds of manrent and calps that is the best aucht in thair houses [at] the tymes of thair deceiss: the said Sir Duncane and Coleyne his son being bound to defend the saids Johne and Gregoure in the lands of Stronferna and the rest of the rowmis they possess as law will (Campbell 1986,179).

Manrents were bonds of loyalty and honour. According to Martin Martin (1703 [1695], 183), "The heads of tribes had their offensive and defensive leagues, called bonds of mandrate, and manrent in the Lowlands; by which each party was obliged to assist one another upon all extraordinary emergencies". The 'calp' was the final form

of obligation from the clansman to his chief (whether he was related by blood or not was immaterial), and was the best ‘aucht’ or animal he owned to be given at the time of his death. In return for the fosterage, loyalty-oath and death-due, the chief pledged his protection. The concept of ‘calp’ will be addressed more fully in a later chapter entitled ‘*Bó Ursainn*’.

Fosterage was common in the Highlands and Islands. It was used to secure loyalty from a vassal and protection from a chief. The following shows that not only sons but daughters were fostered and also gives a description of expectations with regard to the ‘bairn’s part’, which was *sealbh*, ‘possessions’ or ‘inheritance’.

In 1665 a contract was signed between George Campbell of Airds in Argyllshire and Donald Dow McEwin in Ardmastill and Roiss N’Odochardie his wife, by which George Campbell gives them in fostering, Isobell Campbell, his lawful daughter. The document is dated in December and gives the fosterage seven years beginning at the next Beltane (May 1, 1666). Her father gives as her *McHeliff* (*Mac Shealbh*), literally ‘son’s wealth’, two new-calved cows with one calf between them, a year-old stirk and a two-year-old heifer at ‘Beltane next’, and another two-year-old heifer at Beltane 1667. Donald Dow and his spouse give to their foster-child, two farrow cows with a stirk and a two-year-old heifer at Beltane, and another two-year-old heifer at Beltane 1667, the whole of the cattle with their increase to be in the custody of the foster-father and mother during the seven years, the milk to belong to the foster-father and the increase of the cattle to the foster-child. But the father is to grass the ‘yeald kyne’ yearly, if the foster-father does not have sufficient pasturage for them. In addition to this, the foster-father and his spouse give the foster-child a ‘bairn’s part’ and portion of their whole goods and gear which shall belong to them at

their decease, as if she were their own lawful child (*Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis* 1847, pp. 20-21).

Within the document, Campbell reserved the right to take back his child at the end of three years for her education or leave her in her foster-father's care for the duration of the seven years. MacEwen had the option to deliver the cows and their increase back at the time the child was taken back or keep them for the full seven years, after which time the animals would be marketed for the benefit of the child. The increase of the cattle was stipulated to be one calf between two newly calved cows. This last point suggests an animal husbandry procedure when dealing with a dairy situation. The gender ratio (given enough births) will be 50:50 – that is, half of the calves born during one season will be heifers and half will be bulls. The bull calves, as previously noted, are normally culled at birth; therefore that calf's mother and the heifer calf's mother will raise the heifer between them. This also reduces the milk consumption by calves and allows more milk for consumption by humans.

This document demonstrates the importance of cows and their milk. All of the animals mentioned in my quotation are female. The 'yeald kyne' or 'yeld cattle' are ones without young at their side, or not producing milk, not necessarily barren but probably too young to be bred. Applying the formula suggested in the quotation, in May 1667 the fosterchild in question appears to have been in possession of 13 animals, four of which would probably have just borne calves, boosting the total to  $17 - 2 = 15$  (remembering the culling of bull calves). Carrying this further, by the end of the seven years, which is at Beltane 1672; she has a total of 41 head. The 'bairn's part' or *sealbh* was not only what was given at the beginning of the fosterage but also what was due to the fostered child upon the death of her fosterparents.



## Rents

Rents were paid by the tenants to their chiefs on an annual basis and varied from place to place according to what was produced. When Pennant toured Scotland and the Hebrides in 1772 he was shown a listing of rents paid from the Kintyre area dated 1542. Among the entries for money, oatmeal, malt, a cow, mutton and cheese was one for marts 'i.e. a stall-fed ox'. This is significant. The term 'mart' has come to mean any marketable beef, but, at least in this particular document, it is specifically an ox (neutered male) which has been stood in a stall and fattened for slaughter. Several acts of husbandry are inherent in the entry, that of castration and of keeping a neutered male for meat, as well as of stalling and feeding the animals to fatten them for food. The production of extra feed for stalled animals would have been critical to the success of such a situation.

In times of distress, rents would travel down from the chief to his tenants. There are several instances on record of the chief 'forgiving' rents due, in the 1700s. "The poverty of the tenants has rendered it customary for the chief, or laird, to free some of them, every year, from all arrears of rent; this is supposed, upon an average to be about one year in five of the whole estate" (Burt 1876 [1726-27], vol. 2, 160). Martin Martin reports (1703 [1695], 162): "if a tenant chances to lose his milk-cows by the severity of the season, or any other misfortune; [the landlord] in this case MacNeil of Barra supplies him with the like number that he lost." The chief was very aware of his responsibility to his followers. "As long as the great landlords recognised a binding custom, mutual obligations, running to the foot of the social scale, shielded the individual, not against poverty – for that was the general lot – but against the sharpest ravages of misfortune" (Gray 1957, 21-22). It was this ideology of the clan system that allowed the sharing of goods and services. Food and drink

travelled both upwards from producers to the fighting aristocracy and downwards again in times of need.

### **Common Grazing**

Pasture rotation up to and including summer sheilings were the Gael's answer to the problem of winter-feeding. This was the determining factor in the fall of the year when cattle were counted. What were the resources available to keep the beasts alive through the winter? The pinch point was *geamhrachadh*, wintering (or feeding) the livestock through the dark months.

Souming, a form of stock-grazing allotment, was rigidly applied to common grazing. "The principle followed was that a landholder should only be allowed to graze on the 'outgerss' or common grazings what he could soum and roum on the 'ingerss' or infield in winter" (Dodgshon 1981, 170). Strict adherence to the removal of animals beyond the head dyke from spring to fall in many cases was to preserve winter forage. Where grain was grown, stubble fields served as some winter pasture. Souming will be addressed in a later chapter.

A contributing factor to reduced stock numbers was the common practice of killing bull calves at birth. Some writers express this as a sacrifice, when in actuality it has been a normal dairy husbandry practice for thousands of years. 'Staggering Bob', considered a delicacy in Ireland, is veal cut in strips and fried. The dish earns its name from first born calves being slaughtered before they have become steady on their feet. The term is used in Scotland for an unweaned calf (Forbes 1905, 72). As the demand for Scottish beef increased in England, this practice fell into disfavour and the calves were castrated and sold on the hoof. The loss in milk was made up for in cash at the end of the drove road.

## **Political Events**

Political events in the Highlands and Islands can be seen as a strong factor, which brought about the eventual breakdown of the pastoral economy. With the forfeiture of the lord of the Isles in 1493 the social structure of the Western Islands and Highlands of Scotland began to change. “From the extinction of this powerful dynasty may be dated the fall of the Highland clans, who now rapidly declined both in their political power and internal condition” (Skene 1880, 90). It took another 250 years to effect a total transformation from clan kinship to the conditions that brought about the Clearances. The Statutes of Iona, signed in 1609 by the various Highland chiefs, sealed the fate of the clan system.

After the rebellion of 1745 and the forfeiture of Jacobite estates to the Crown, surveyors were sent to assess the agricultural situation in the Highlands. The picture presented in many instances is one of ignorance and poverty. However some areas are seen to be productive of black cattle, butter and cheese, as recorded by Archibald Menzies reporting on the baronies of Strathgartney, Coigach, Beaully and Stratherrick. Others were much criticised for certain methods. “A very bad practice prevails over Perthshire of destroying their cattle and sheep, by tathing them. In the Highland parts they bring their cattle in the beginning of harvest from their sheilings where they leave good grass. During the time of tathing they eat all the grass near the houses which ought to be reserved for winter-feeding. By this practice their cattle are destroyed, by keeping them amongst their own dung and starved for want of winter keeping, so that for the value of a few shillings worth of dung, they lose many pounds in the value of their cattle” (NAS 1755, E 729/1- E 729/8). However, speaking of a different area, Menzies acknowledged the expertise shown by the people. “They have the grass for each season divided into as many divisions as it will admit of, as they

look upon it of consequence to change their grass often. It is remarkable the skill they show in choosing their pasturage for the different seasons. It is not the local situation but the quality of grasses they study. Every farmer is so far a botanist as to be able to distinguish the particular season each grass is in perfection.” (NAS Annexed Estates Papers 1768, E741 - 40, p. 6) He was speaking here of the farmers on the Barrisdale Estate located on the mainland just across the Sound of Sleat from Skye.

### **Demand for Beef**

Coinage had been used in Scotland since the reign of David I; however, it was the increasing demand for beef from the South that encouraged the chiefs to use their land for grazing for personal profit rather than the long accustomed common use. The drove roads, by the expansion of the medium of money into the Highlands, lent impetus to the change from common use of land to money rents.

Daniel Defoe (1971, vol. 1, 59-60) toured Great Britain in 1724 and had this to say about the meadowland between Norwich and Yarmouth. “In this vast track of meadows are fed a prodigious number of black cattle which are said to produce the fattest beef though not the largest in England. The gross of all the Scots cattle, which come yearly to England, are brought thither. These Scots ‘runts’ as they call them, coming out of the cold and barren mountains of the Highlands of Scotland, feed so eagerly on the rich pasture of its marshes that they thus in an unusual manner grow monstrously fat, and the beef is so delicious for taste that the inhabitants prefer them to the English cattle which are much larger and fairer to look at.”

### **Enclosures**

Once the surveyors for the crown had made their reports regarding the forfeited estates, improvements to Highland agriculture were deemed a necessity. According to some sources, enclosure was the first order of business. “Every step in an ascending

series of innovations in agriculture depended on and involved the one essential preliminary of enclosures” (Argyll 1888, 389). Enclosure meant an end to the commonly held run-rig system and the common pastures. It did not come easily or quickly into the Western Islands and Highlands. With the loss of the common pasturage and the eventual introduction of Lowland sheep onto the land, more and more of the population was pushed onto the arable land around the perimeter.

For those tenants who stayed on the land, increasing rents were the norm. “On the whole it seems clear that by 1815 landlords were taking a much larger proportion of the money income derived from husbandry than they had half a century before. Indeed it had become the accepted policy to set rents so as to remove the whole cash income (of husbandry) in return for the tenants’ right to use arable plots for subsistence production” (Gray 1957, 148). The landlords were in no better predicament. “Many of the estates remained so debt-encumbered that the first breath of falling rents was sufficient to sweep them onto the market” (Gray 1957, 149).

...

This chapter, through reports written by contemporary observers, indicates that people living in the Highlands lived by pastoralism and hunting. Very little grain was produced in the upland areas, nor was it needed as a main dietary commodity. Milk cows were of prime importance throughout the Highlands and Islands. Under the social system, food products and animals were shared in the form of rents to the chief in times of plenty and subsidies from the chief in times of dearth. It would appear from contemporary observations that the people had a healthy diet.

This chapter also examines land use and changes that occurred in food production during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Land was taken out of common use and used more specifically for pasturing black cattle and eventually

sheep for the English market. As seen by contemporary reports from travellers, those tenants who stayed on the land still subsisted mainly on meat and milk.

## Chapter 4

### The Milk Cow

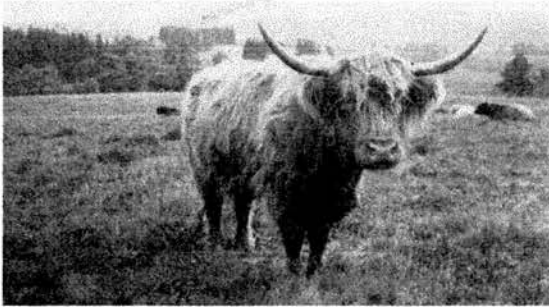


Photo courtesy Scottish Studies photo archives  
Edinburgh University

The Highland cow was immensely important to the Gael. Thought to be an indigenous breed to the Scottish Highlands and Islands, it is hardy and thrifty and well adapted to surviving in harsh conditions on scanty resources. The terms listed in this chapter refer to the cow and her productivity (both calving and milking). The knowledge and ability of a pastoral population to manipulate an animal to supply food meant for her offspring is inherent in the terms set out below. To keep a cow in milk beyond the time of infant feeding required careful husbanding and to maintain a steady supply of food during the winter months was not an easy task given the harsh conditions of the Western Islands and Highlands. The importance of a productive milk cow is apparent.

What were the animal husbandry practices in force that allowed an animal to be manipulated by people to provide what nature initially intended for her infant? The study of relevant Gaelic terms provide an answer and are significant in their focus on individual concepts of husbandry as applied to home dairy practices.

The idea of a home dairy differs from a commercial dairy in various ways. Although volume of produce, i.e. milk, is important to both, continuous milking is more important than volume in the home dairy.

The 'fresher' the cow, the more milk is produced; therefore in a commercial dairy, cows are bred every year. Since they are in a controlled environment (barns) they can calve year-round, ensuring that most of the cows will be in milk all of the time. The calves produced by dairy cows in a commercial herd, are taken away just after birth and sold as 'day-old' calves to farmers who either hand-raise them or put them on milk cows of their own. Some are sold for veal. A commercial dairy is a business and the economics, which govern it, require the greatest volume of milk possible. In order to accomplish this, special feed is given to the cows and is figured into the overhead.

The home dairy, on the other hand, requires milk all year from a limited number of cows; the limiting factor being the amount of winter feed available for housed animals. This was particularly critical in pastoral areas, like the Scottish Highlands, where winter conditions could be quite severe. Restricted feeding over the winter months also resulted in a reduced volume of milk, but certain breeds are more adept at turning a little bit of feed into an adequate supply of milk than others, and this is where the Highland cow excelled.

Calves produced in a home dairy society were almost as important as milk. Heifer calves would be kept as future producers of milk and/or beef; bull calves would either be castrated and kept for beef or traction, or culled at birth (Kelly 1998, 59-61; Mulville 1999, 256).

Richness of milk, that is the amount of butterfat contained within a certain volume, differs greatly between different breeds. Holstein cows give an enormous amount of milk per milking, but their milk is very low in butterfat. Jersey cows on the other hand, do not give as much milk, but it is much richer. Highland cows give very rich milk; this quality is required in a home dairy, as milk produce, that is butter,



cheese, cottage cheese etc., is extremely important. Holstein cows are chosen for most commercial dairies where the primary product is milk in great quantities. The Highland cow produces rich milk on scanty feed. In a controlled test measuring output and butterfat content to intake between Highland cows and Ayrshire cows, Ayrshires produced more milk, but Highland cows produced richer milk and a higher percentage of product per pound of intake than Ayrshire cows. In other words the Highland cows could survive and produce more and richer milk on less feed than Ayrshire cows.

Animal husbandry practices, which are highlighted by Gaelic terms specific to home-dairy practices, will be discussed throughout the thesis although this chapter deals primarily with the milk cow.

Many terms found in Gaelic dictionaries can be traced back to Early Irish. Accordingly *The Dictionary of the Irish Language* (DIL) has been consulted as has the *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien* (LEIA). Some etymological explanations by Alexander MacBain have also been included.

Dwelly has proved to be the most reliable source of the Gaelic dictionaries; however, he cites Armstrong and Forbes as well as MacLeod and Dewar, Alexander Carmichael, MacAlpine, MacEachan, *The Highland Society Dictionary* and others. I have usually gone to the earlier source where possible. I have cited Forbes only when Dwelly included the term in his work, giving it a measure of endorsement, though, in other cases, I have included terms not found in Dwelly: see 'Introduction' for a complete analysis of sources.

### **Milk Cow**

A fundamental term for milk cow, listed in all sources, is *bó-bhainne* (*bó* being a common word for cow and *bainne* for milk). *Bó* according to *the Dictionary of the Irish Language* (1975 124-125) is an ox or cow, *cethracha bó mbreith i mbalcc*, 'forty

strong birthing cows i.e. milk cows, *in bó derba* are ‘milk cows’, literally ‘cows of the milk pail’. According to DIL (B, 31), *bannae* meaning a ‘drop’ later became *bainne* meaning ‘milk’. The earlier word for milk was *mlicht* (DIL M, 120).

*Bó marta* is a beef cow. *Bó* is not used for an ox in Scots Gaelic; instead *damh* is generally used. *Mart-bainne* also exists, most sources list *mart* to be used mainly for an animal that is going to be slaughtered for beef, though according to Professor Donald Meek from Tiree, *mart* was used there and in many other places instead of *bó*. This is found in H. C. Dieckhoff’s *A Pronouncing Dictionary of Scottish Gaelic*, where *mart* is given in general use instead of *bó*. *Bó*, according to Dieckhoff, is a feminine noun for cow, the genitive is also *bó* (instead of *ba* which is customary in other sources). The dative is given as *boin* and the plural *baan*. “These forms are known (owing to the vicinity of Glenmoriston, where *bó* is used, as also in Kintail) but not used in Glengarry, except in compound expressions.” The reader is then directed to *mart* where Dieckhoff explains that *mart*, genitive *mairt* is a cow – for the plural *crodh* is substituted – (Dieckhoff 1932, 21 & 119). An example of *mart* being used is found in *Òran do na ciobairean Gallda*, ‘Song to the Lowland shepherds’ by Ailean Dall (‘Blind Allan’) (Meek 1995, 48). He speaks of the brown-haired maiden singing a song as she milks a cow, *bleodhain mairt aig gruagaich dhuinn*. Another phrase would be *tha i bleoghann na bà* ‘she’s milking the cow’ (Wentworth 1996, 102). However, Ailean Dall, though born in Glencoe, became bard to MacDonald of Glengarry, and would presumably make use of terms best known to the area. According to DIL (M 64-65) *mart* is a death, “especially one caused by accident or slaughter, it is also an ox or cow slaughtered for meat, an ox- (cow-) carcass and by extension ‘a living ox or cow’,” ‘*ar carna mairt* is the ‘beef of a cow’, *a mairt*

*gemre[i]d* is 'winter beef' and *mart-fheoil* is 'beef'. For further discussion of *mart* see Chapter 8 'Flesh and Other Food'.

*Biride* or *bireid* is a breeding cow. The word is listed in Armstrong, Forbes and Dwelly. It is from Early Irish *beirid*, 'bears, brings forth or is born' (DIL B, 55-56).

Armstrong (1825) lists *ligheach* as a cow. It is possibly from Early Irish *lulgach* 'milk cow' (DIL L, 244). A newly calved cow is *laogh-ligheach* (Forbes 1905, 13) from *laogh* - calf and *ligheach* - cow (Armstrong 1825). Forbes (1905, 13) gives the terms *liobhgach* and *lobhgach* to mean a cow with calf, and lists *loilgeach* as a newly calved cow, a milk cow. Armstrong (1825) gives the same word for a milk cow in two alternative forms, *luilgeach* and *lulgach*. Although some of the above forms are unsupported in Early Irish and it is possible that they are based on a false etymology, it is also conceivable that a dialectical derivation of *lulgach* may be involved.

*Bó-laoigh* is a 'cow in calf' i.e. pregnant cow (Dwelly 1920, 102) or one that has a calf (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 44).

*Bleach* and *bleachd* according to Forbes (1905, 5) are milk cows. Armstrong (1825) gives *bleachd* for milk or 'kine'. It is from Early Irish *blicht* (*mlicht*): 'milk, milk-giving, yield of milk.' Also given in Early Irish are *blecht*, *lann bleacht*, *bhleachd* 'milk, in milk, milk giving; flowing, abundant'. *Teora ba blechta*, [three] 'milk cows' and *blichtach* 'milk cows' (DIL B, 120). *Bleachdair*, literally 'cow-milker', describes a soothing flattering person (MacBain 1896, 35). Early Irish has *bligre* for milker (DIL B, 121).

Dwelly (1920, 207) describes *cleathar* as a milk cow.

*Seamlach*, according to Dwelly (1920, 798), spelt *siomlach* by Forbes, is a “cow that gives milk without her calf beside her,” and also, according to MacAlpine, “one that allows another cow’s calf to suck her.” Forbes has the same meaning for *sioltach*, probably from *sil* ‘flow freely’. This cow would certainly be treasured, as it is unnatural for most cows to allow any calf other than her own to suckle (personal experience), and the Highland cow was exceptionally difficult to draw milk from without her calf beside her (Carmichael 1971, 15).

*Gamhnach/gabhach* is described by most sources as a cow with a year-old calf and still in milk, a ‘stripper’ (Forbes 1905, 11). The term comes from *gamhainn*, a year-old calf, from *gam* (winter), in other words ‘winter-old’ (MacBain 1896, 169). For the etymology of *gam* see s.v. *ghiöm*, *ghiiöm* (Pokorny 1959, 425-426). *Gamnach* according to DIL (G, 41) is a ‘stripper’, a cow with a year-old calf and *gamuin* is a yearling calf. The term ‘stripper’ comes from the action of (the milker when) milking a cow that has not recently had a calf. A stripping motion with the fingers is required to get milk out of the teat, rather than a squeezing from top to bottom of the teat as is required when a cow has freshened and has an abundant supply of milk (personal experience). *Gamhnach*, in Lewis, is a cow that has been one year without calving (Dwelly 1920, 475). *Crodh-gamhnach* is farrow cattle – ‘giving milk, but not with young’ (Dwelly 1920, 275). Under *gamhnach* Armstrong (1825) refers to ‘a stripper, an unbullied cow’ (an unbullied cow is one that is not pregnant), Dwelly (1920, 475) has it as ‘a farrow cow, cow still being milked, stripper’, and Wentworth (1996, 52) ‘a farrow cow, in particular a cow that is milked all winter’. The most valued animal is the cow that gives milk to the family during the winter months. *Bó-ghamhna* is a farrow cow, according to Forbes (1905, 5).

*Bainne-gamhnaich* is the “milk of a farrow cow – one with a year-old calf and still being milked, literally the yearling’s milk – signifying the scanty results yielded by sucking it” (Dwelly 1920, 60). This comment by Dwelly is ambiguous. It could refer to the milk from a cow (which has a year-old calf weaned in the fall) and who produced milk during the winter for the family. It could refer to the milk of a cow with a yearling (stirk) at her side that was never weaned and continued to nurse; it certainly does not mean milk from a yearling, as that would be a physical impossibility. The mother’s production after a year without being bred was scanty anyway and a lack of fodder certainly would not help the situation. As noted above, to be economical, cows in a commercial dairy herd are bred every year in order to assure an abundant supply of milk. Professor Meek explained that *bainne-gamhainn*, literally the stirk’s milk was meant as an insult meaning watery or blue milk or something that wasn’t worth much.

*Bainne gamhnaich*, the ‘milk of a farrow cow’, is one of the items prescribed for impotency in the poem *Dòmhnallan Dubh* (Black 2001, 80-81). Farrow, according to the *OED* (1970, 79), “is a cow that gives milk in the second year after her calving, having no calf that year.” The calf that has been kept with its mother over the winter is called a *gamhainn*, as seen above, and is considered a follower; this pair most likely would not be housed. In some areas the *gamhainn* was allowed to be counted as part of the ‘solum’ (grass rights) with its mother and was usually a heifer, as very few bulls or castrated males were raised. ‘Souming’ was the allotment of grazing stock given to each grazier according to his right on the common. The milk cow, due to her vital role, was the basic unit used – all others were in relation to her. ‘Souming’ will be addressed in a later chapter.

Dwelly (1920, 968) lists *treathghamhnach* as a cow that has a calf in two years (Islay), but has *tri-ghamhnach* as a cow that has been three years without calving (Lewis). According to MacLennan (1995 [1925], 348), *treath-ghamhnach* is a cow that calved three years ago and has milk, *seachlach* a cow that calved two years ago, and *gamhnach* a cow that calved last year. The confusion with the term *treathghamhnach* as a cow that has a calf in two years may stem from the first calf being weaned at six months and the cow actually being milked for three seasons before calving again.

*Crodh-laoigh* are milk cows. An anonymous poem, *Thig trì nithean gun iarraidh*, ‘Three things come without seeking’, contains the following *A dh’ fhàg mi an caraibh chruidh-laoigh*, ‘I left looking after the cows’ (Thomson 1993, 176-177). *Crodh* is found in Early Irish for cattle, herds and stock (DIL C, 542). *Lóeg, láogh, lóegh* is a calf (DIL L, 181). The obvious inference here is that *crodh* can be any cattle but if they have calves they are giving milk. *Crodh-bainne* is given by Dwelly (1920, 275) for milk-cattle.

Other words for cow and full-grown cow are *bolan* (Armstrong 1825) and *bó-làn* (Forbes 1905, 5). Armstrong’s *bolan* presumably represents *bó làn*.

*Maithreach*, according to Forbes (1905, 14), can be a mother cow or sheep; the word is *màithreach*, from *màthair* ‘mother’.

*Gabhla* ‘a cow with calf’ is listed in Forbes (1905, 11) and Dwelly (1920, 468), though Dwelly gives it as obsolete.

Forbes (1905, 12) has *guarag, guarag-bleothainn* as a cow and a milk cow respectively.

*Aidheach* is given as obsolete for a milk cow (Armstrong 1825). It is found in Early Irish as *aidech* a ‘milk cow’ (DIL A, 103).

As seen above, there are several Gaelic words for a cow that has no calf beside her and is still being milked. My personal experience as a child growing up on a ranch in Colorado was of the family milk cow, Susi Bell. She was a Jersey who gave enough milk to supply the milk and butter needs of a family of three for three years before needing to be bred to produce a calf to ‘freshen’. When Susi had her calf, my father would buy two more baby (day-old) calves to put on her, as she could supply enough milk for all six of us until the calves were weaned at six months. Then her duty as sole milk provider for the family would begin again and continue for the remaining two and a half years.

### **Milking**

Though *bainne* is the most common word for milk others occur in the language. *Leum* is a term for milk (Forbes 1905, 104) as well as for animal semen (Dwelly 1920, 586). (See Chapter 14 ‘Physical Characteristics and Animal Diseases’). *Lac* is an obsolete word for sweet milk (Forbes, 1905, 104), cf. *lacmhor*, also obsolete, ‘giving much milk and abounding in milk, prolific’ (Dwelly 1920, 562). *Lacht* in Early Irish is milk, particularly cow’s milk and *lachtmar* is milky or abounding in milk (DIL L, 15-16).

The importance of milk relative to grain is indicated by the following two proverbs:

*Is fhearr aon sine na ceathramh coirce.*  
One teat (of a cow) is better than a quarter of oats.

*Is fhearr aon sine bà na bolla dhe ’n mhin bhàn*  
Better one teat of a cow than a boll of Lowland (white)  
meal (Nicolson 1881, 242)

The idea that a cow will give her milk other than to her calf is taken for granted by modern dairy farmers who are dealing with specialised breeds such as Holstein, Jersey, Ayrshire and Guernsey. The Highland cow, which appears to be an old breed, indigenous to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, is different. One of the over-

riding concerns was how to make her let down her milk without her calf beside her. Songs and poetry are full of charms, prayers and pleas to the cow to give her milk (Meeks 1999, essay 2). She was one of the most difficult breeds to milk without her calf in front of her. According to Carmichael (1971, 15), *blàinteag* is a lullaby or crooning song sung to children or more especially to milk cows. *Blàinteagan bleoghain* are “the milking melodies common at one time among the Isles people and still to some extent. The cows will not give milk without them, which makes cow-buyers from the Mainland reduce their prices for Island cows and reluctant to take them.”

As mentioned previously, bull calves are normally culled, from birth to six months old, in a milk-dependant society (Mulville 1999, 256). One of the devices used by the early Irish and Scottish Gaels to encourage the mothers of these calves to give down their milk was a wicker frame covered with the dead calf’s skin. The scent of her own calf reassured her that the calf was nursing. It would be the job of one of the young children of the house to sit under the cow and shake the wicker frame, making the motions of a calf sucking, while the dairymaid milked the cow (Carmichael 1928, 317). The device was called a *tulachan*, ‘little hillock’, a term later applied to Bishops after the Reformation, as they were Bishops in name only and had no real power as in the past (Dwelly 1920, 982). The word also means a tomb, which is appropriate since it personifies a dead calf. This device was also called a *laogh-balgain* that is imitation calf, ‘stuffed calf used to deceive the cow, her own calf’s skin being used’ (Dwelly 1920, 569). *Laoicionn*, *laoghcionn* and *laoighcionn* (literally calf-skin), are variant spellings of a term that described the imitation calf presented to the cow (Forbes 1905, 13; Dwelly 1920, 569; MacBain 1896, 201). Another was *lulagan*, according to Forbes (1905, 13) and Carmichael (1928, 317). It



was called *laogh-fuadin* in Tíre i.e. the false calf. The *tulachan* method also works when the skin of a dead calf is put on a living one, the mother of the dead calf accepting the new one because the scent of her own offspring is on it (personal experience).

Terms for milking are many and varied. *Ceud-bhainne* is the ‘first milk’ of a cow after calving, seen in Early Irish cf. *cet bleogun na mbo* ‘fresh milk’ (DIL B, 118), also known as *bainne-nòis*. *Nòs* (or *bainne nùis* in Argyll) is ‘beastings’, ‘chyle’ a cow’s first milking after calving, first of anything (Armstrong, 1825; Dwelly 1920, 700). *Nòs* is a cow’s first milk; it is from Early Irish *nús*, which in turn is from *nua*, ‘new’ and *ass*, ‘milk’ (MacBain 1896, 238; DIL N, 72). There was debate as to whether or not it was good for people to drink. One source lists it as among the worst things one could have. “The milk produced by a cow for the first few days after calving (*nús* ‘colostrum, beastings’) is strong-flavoured and yellow, and its consumption is not recommended by the author of the wisdom-text *Tecosca Cormaic*: he includes it among the foods which are worst for a person’s body” (Kelly 1998, 324). Others show it as having been a delicacy (Fenton 1976, 157). Donald John MacLennan remembers that his mother used it to make a sort of custard from the first milk and that he relished it (personal communication 2002). It contains the colostrum that is vital to an infant’s health. The milk of a newly calved cow is also known as *lulaic*, according to Forbes (1905, 104), the word actually means ‘of a milk-cow’.

*Tiomsachadh* from *tiomsach*, literally ‘collecting, bringing together’, is the second milking of a cow (Dwelly 1920, 952). It is from Early Irish *timsaigid* ‘brings together, collects’ (DIL T, 174).

*Iar-bhleothann* means ‘after-milk’, according to Armstrong (1825) and *iar-bhleoghann* is second or after-milking, according to Dwelly (1920, 537). *Íar* in Early

Irish is the end or hinder part (DIL I, 18). Dwelly (1920, 537) lists *iar* as the ‘the end’. The second milking is known as *ath-bhleoghann* in Tíree. *Ath-bhliochd* is the second milking or the second month after calving according to Dwelly (1920, 52), *dhàireadh as a h-ath-bhliochd a bhó*, ‘the cow was lined the second month after calving’, meaning that the cow had taken the bull when her calf was two months old. It could also reflect the period of milking after a calf is weaned, that is the winter milking. This would have important significance as a form of food sustenance for the winter.

*Uanan* is a term for milk coming from a cow for several milkings after calving (Dwelly 1920, 988). Dineen has ‘*uanán*’, froth, as of milk, beer, etc. “‘froth lasts longer (or goes further) than broth, i.e., a cow living and milk-producing is more serviceable than if slaughtered and broth producing (Munster saying): ‘*bainne sá uanán*’, milk with its froth” (Dineen 1996 [1927], 1286). Early Irish has *úan* for foam or froth (DIL U, 27). When a cow is newly ‘freshened’ she has an abundance of milk and when milking her, a good milker milks so rapidly as to raise froth in the milk pail (personal experience). “*Màg* is a paw, claw, and ludicrous term for the hand. *Gu ’n gleidheadh Dia a’ mhuirichinn ’s a’ mhàg-bhleòthainn*, may God keep the children and the milking hand – a Perthshire wish when one gets a drink of milk” (Dwelly 1920, 622).

*Sramh* is milk gushing from the teat of a cow (Armstrong 1825), MacBain (1896, 309) has “‘a jet of milk from the cow’s udder.’” *Luimlinn* is a stream of milk (Armstrong 1825).

*Bainneach* means ‘milk producing’ (Armstrong 1825). *Oran an t-Samhraidh* by Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair has *Bainneach*, *buadhach gu dàir*. *Bainneach* is translated as ‘milky’ and is used again later in the poem to help describe the month of Beltane:

*A Bhealltainn bhog-bhailceach, ghrianach,  
 Lònach, lianach, mo ghràidh,  
 Bhainneach, fhionn-mheòghach, uachdrach  
 Omhnach, loinideach, chuachach,  
 Ghruthach, shlamanach, mhiosrach,  
 Mhiodrach, mhiosganach làn...  
 (Macdonald 1924, 24).*

These lines have been translated in various ways, but if we look at what Alasdair intended by turning nouns into adjectives for his description of May-time, the words themselves become strong identifiers with what was, at that time, considered the wealth of the season. ‘White-wheyed, creamy, frothy, churney, cup-full, curd-full, curdled milk-full, measure-full – where measure in this instance is referring to a churn full of butter – dish-full and butter-dish full.’ The English translation is awkward, but the Gaelic is clean, flowing and expressive.

*Bleagh* means to milk i.e. draw milk. *Co dhiùbh ’s ann air srath no ’n gleann, ’s ann as a ceann a bhlighear a’ bhó.* ‘Whether on strath or in glen, ’tis from her head the cow’s milk comes’ (Nicolson 1881, 153). This is a maxim that every cow person is aware of. Good milk production depends on the cow getting enough to eat. If a cow eats a noxious weed, the taste comes out in the milk (personal observation).

*Bleoghann* is milking, *a’ bleoghann a’ chruidh*, ‘milking the cows’ (Dwelly 1920, 101). In Early Irish it is listed as *blegon*, *bleogan*, *blegan*, ‘a later form of *mlegon*’, it is the act of milking; yield of milk or milking according to DIL (B, 118).

*Bomluchd*, is listed in Dwelly (1920, 109), as an obsolete word for cow and profit, from *bó* + *mlicht*. It is *bómlacht* in Early Irish (DIL B, 142).

*Bliochdach* means milky or lacteal, milk producing, giving plenty of milk, e.g. *Chinn an spréidh gu bliochdach*, ‘the cattle became teeming with milk’; *an coire bliochdach*, ‘the milk-producing dell’ (Dwelly 1920, 101). The last entry again

emphasises the type of feed needed to produce milk; i.e. the pasture must be fertile and full of good grass. *Blichtaide* in Early Irish is ‘milk-giving’ (DIL B, 121).

*Drioganach* means dropping slowly, *bó dhrioganach* is a cow giving milk in driblets (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 135). This could relate to the farrow cow or ‘stripper’. *Sìodail* is to milk the last drop (Dwelly 1920, 841).

The verb *Leig*, basically ‘permit, allow, release’, also means ‘milk’. *Leigeil* is permitting, the act of permitting, allowing, or granting, or a milking, the act of milking (Dwelly 1920, 579 & 581). *Leigte* is permitted, let, let off as well as milked (MacLeod and Dewar 1901, 364).

### **Milking Time**

Armstrong (1825) says: “*Eadar-thrath* ‘noon’. *Eadar thrath* is perhaps a corruption of *edrath* (obsolete), the time of the morning when cattle are brought home from pasture to give milk, literally ‘meal-time’.” *Tráth* is a period of time, hour or point of time (DIL T, 275). *Lethtrath* (*leth* ‘half’) is half rations or half allowance also milking once a day (Dwelly 1920, 586), as opposed to two or three times.

Mary Mackellar (1888) adds this, “Sometimes the summer grazings were within a couple of miles of the homes, and although they shifted the cows there, they did not require to leave their own homes, and they went morning and evening to milk them and feed the calves. This place of pasture was known as *buaile*, and the milking-hour that, morning and evening, divided the day was known as *An t-Eadar-adh* (*Eadar-thràth*).” The *buaile* mentioned above is found in Early Irish as *búaile*, a cow house, byre or cattle pen cf. *i n-eatarfhásach na búailedh* ‘of the milking yard’ (DIL B, 223-224). Dwelly (1920, 379) gives *eadar-thràth* as an interval of time, noon, or midday milking, and *Dòmhnach an eadar-thràith* as ‘a certain Sunday in May when cows were brought to the milking-place for the first time in the year’. I have not found

another reference to this, but it would appear to be significant. It was customary to remove all animals 'beyond the head-dyke' at Beltane, 'May first', in order to plant any crops and also to preserve the pasturage contained there for the next winter. Cows would calve in April and May meaning that animals that had been kept near at hand during the winter and also those that had been allowed to forage for themselves would be 'freshening' about the same time. It is quite likely that the first Sunday after Beltane (depending on the weather) would have been chosen to herd all of the newly calved cows to one place to begin the milking process which would continue all summer in the sheilings. *Eadradh* is given by Dwelly (1920, 379) as a 'division of time', 'morning time of milking', 'folding of cows, goats and sheep', and 'noon'; also, from Uist, the 'process of milking'. DIL (E, 251-252) has *etrud*, *eadraidh*, *eadartha* as first a milking pail, second a milking place and third a milking-time with the following quotation: '*an rosaig bo co etrud for ingilt*, 'as far as a cow reaches in grazing until milking time'.

*Teairt*, also *tràth teairt*, according to Dwelly (1920, 939), is morning milking-time, or grazing before morning milking in Wester Ross, e.g. *Tha 'n crodh air an teairt*, 'the cows go out before being milked'. *Sguir iad den tairt*, 'they have ceased to go out before being milked'. *Tha tìm teairt ann*, 'it is time to take the cows in to milk them' - 'about 11 a.m. in summer, in the northern counties' (Dwelly 1920, 939). According to DIL (T, 122), '*teirt*' (Latin *tertia* 'hora') is the canonical hour of '*tierce*', the service performed at that hour, '*terce*'.

MacLennan (1995 [1925], 337) has *teasd* and *tràth teasd* to mean milking-time.

## Value

Because of her abilities and the food she produced, the cow was the most significant unit of measure in early Celtic societies.

Forbes (1905, 17) has *sed*, *set* and *seod* for a cow (as property), also a cow with calf. Dwelly (1920, 803) gives *sed* (referencing Forbes) as an obsolete word meaning a standard of cows or cattle by which prices etc. were determined, i.e. one milk cow, and *sed bó dile* ‘a standard made up of different kinds of livestock’. *Seòd*, listed as obsolete by Armstrong (1825), means a cow or property. Dwelly (1920, 808) gives *seòd* as a jewel, cow as property or cow with calf. I think it is significant that the word can mean a cow as well as a jewel. In Early Irish *sét* was an object of value, a chattel (used especially of livestock), it was a unit of value which equalled one half of a milk cow, it was also treasure, possession or wealth (DIL S, 200-201).

*Cumal*, which was the price of three cows according to Dwelly (1920, 299), was originally the price of a slave girl (Dinneen 1996, 294). *Cumal* is found in early Irish law texts in the context of white red-eared cattle though, according to Professor Fergus Kelly, *cumal* may also be used as a unit of value in relation to any type of cow. There is an example of the “payment of seven white cows with red ears (totalling two *cumals* in value) as part of the fine for satirising Cernodón, a legendary king of Ulster;” “this valuation agrees approximately with the common equation of one *cumal* to three milk cows” (Kelly 1998, 33). The discrepancy between seven cows for two *cumals* and three milk cows for one *cumal* can be explained by the varying value of cattle. The *cumal* also meant other things in the Law texts, including an area of land.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See *Early Irish Farming*, Fergus Kelly, pp 574 & 592-593.

*Marruinneach* means productive of cream, milk etc. *Mart math marruinn* is a good productive cow (Dwelly 1920, 634), probably from *mair*, *a' maireann*, 'last', 'lasting', as a cow lasting in milk for a long time. DIL (M, 65) gives *marthain* as 'lasting', the verbal noun of *marriad*, *mairid* 'lasts', 'remains'. *Marthanach* is 'remaining', 'continuing' or 'lasting' (DIL M, 66).

*Sumaich* means to give due number, as cattle at pasture from Scots 'soum' (MacBain 1896, 318; MacLennan 1995 [1925], 328). The *Concise Scots Dictionary* (1985, 646) lists 'soum' as a 'unit of pasturage which will support a certain fixed number of livestock'. The restriction of the number of animals one could graze was of vital concern to the husbandman, each family was allotted a certain number of animals and how they varied the species within that number was of concern to all those who grazed in common. The 'souming' for a particular area is a good indication of the productivity of the grazing land available there. (See Chapter 11 'Pasture'). The milk cow was the basic unit of value against which other animals were indexed to determine souming numbers.

### **Barren**

Barrenness in cattle was an important problem that had to be identified and dealt with. *Diosg* is barren or dry, applied to a cow that gives no milk, and *diosgadh* is the "state of being barren or dry, not giving milk, as a cow, barrenness, dryness" (Dwelly 1920, 340), also, 'a running dry (as a well, or cow)' (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 128). *Diosg* was used as a noun on Tíre but not as an adjective: *Tha i a bho an diosg* (Meek, personal communication). *Dísc* (*dí* + *sesc*) is Early Irish for barren, dry or run dry (of cattle or rivers) (DIL D, 139). MacLennan implies that *seachlach*, mentioned above, is a cow that calved two years ago and has milk, while other sources indicate that *seachlach* is actually a barren heifer. Dwelly (1920, 795), for example, defines it as a

“heifer that continues barren when of the age to have a calf.” *Seach* means to go past, i.e. the time for calving. There is all the difference in the world between a cow giving milk without her calf beside her and a barren cow. One is a vital member of the family, the other a liability, as the barren cow is eating her share of scanty resources but is non-productive.

*As-chrodh* is given by Forbes (1905, 4) to mean a dry cow or cows; this could mean either barren or bred, as a barren cow will give no milk, but a bred cow also ceases to give milk during the latter months of her pregnancy. *Bó ceud-laoigh* (‘a cow of first calf’, ‘a first-calf cow’) is given by Dwelly (1920, 189) as applied to a cow that has calved once, again meaning a cow with one calf beside her or one that has had only one calf but is now barren.

Forbes (1905, 4) has *athgamhnach* as a calfless two-year old cow, in other words a heifer that is too young to have a calf. According to Dwelly (1920, 53) *athghamhnach* is a cow that has been two years without a calf; this implies that the cow is barren as even in the Highlands a cow would normally calve every other year. Once again, one term appears to mean two quite different things, as we face the dichotomy of the heifer that is valued and the barren cow that is a liability.

*Raoine* according to Forbes (1905, 16) is a young barren cow, or, as Dwelly (1920, 749) puts it, “a young cow that has had a calf, or even two, but is barren and has the calf’s share of milk on her thighs.” I remember as a teenager working with my father and I admired a shiny, fat cow in the herd (a Hereford); he said, “She is barren.” She was sold at the next sale. MacLennan (1995 [1925], 266) gives *réidhne* as a well-conditioned heifer, but Forbes (1905, 16) lists *reidhneach* as a barren cow in Sutherland. For Wester Ross Dwelly has *reidhne-mairt* as a cow that does not give milk and is not with calf.



Forbes (1905, 16) lists *seachbha*, *seachbho*, *seachlach*, and *seachlaoghach* as a barren cow or heifer. *Seach* is past, so these would be the ‘past’ or ‘beyond’ cow, i.e. beyond the calf bearing ‘start point’. Literally, she is the ‘without calf one’.

Armstrong (1825) points out that *seasg* means barren, dry, yielding no milk, unprolific, and that *crodh-seasg* are barren cattle, cattle that yield no milk. According to DIL (S, 195), *seisc* or *seisc* is dry, barren or unproductive, a dry cow. Dwelly (1920, 802) has *seasgach* as a collective meaning cows giving no milk, farrow cattle, barren cattle, or young cattle kept on the hill all summer. Young cattle kept on the hill for the summer could mean one-, two- and three-year old heifers. They might be animals too young to be bred but valuable for the future. These are the ‘yeld’ cattle mentioned in early documents; they could also include castrated males intended for training in traction or subsequent fattening for slaughter. Armstrong (1825) lists variations of *seasgach*: *seasgachd* ‘barrenness’ or ‘a herd of barren cattle’ and *seasgaich*, ‘a barren cow’. For a barren cow or barren cattle Forbes (1905, 17) lists *seasg-bha* (or *bhò*), *seasgachd*, *seisgeach*, *seasglach* and *seasgrach*.

Forbes (1905, 17) notes that the term *seasaich* means ‘stand-bye cattle’ or a ‘herd of barren cattle’, this would appear to be young ‘yeld’ cattle that are waiting their turn to be productive. And a barren cow or barren cattle are *seasaich*, *seasaid*, and *seasaidh*.

*Uairneach* is a barren heifer of age to have a calf (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 357). The etymology for this is obscure, though Dineen (1996, 493) lists *fuairthneach* as a “stripper goat, ewe, etc.; a she-goat or ewe suffering from miscarriage or barrenness, especially a two-year old sheep without a lamb.” Barren animals to the husbandman are the antithesis of productivity and while some barrenness is exemplary (the bred cow and the cow still giving milk), the unproductive barren cow

must be disposed of rapidly. I think that barrenness in cattle must have been a serious problem in the Highlands given the many words describing it. Lack of winter feed could certainly have been a factor, but the circumstance in which I find the subject addressed was that of the heifer having already had one calf then becoming too fat to conceive again (Carmichael 1971, 118). Cows calving only every two years were also attested to (Grant 1924, 61). Infertility in bulls has been linked to external pressures such as low temperatures and minimal sunlight (Black 1992, 310).

“A Highland cow yields nothing like the quantity of milk that an Ayrshire does, but the quality is much richer. The age at which Highland cows calve is usually four years, because it is found that, unlike softer breeds, the heifers are not at maturity until they are three years old, and of course breeding at an earlier age stops their growth” (Coleman, 1887).

...

This chapter has described the cow in relation to her productivity. The milk cow was the most important animal to the Gael. Her importance rose as food supplies diminished through the long winter. People could stay alive and healthy on a diet of milk even if they had nothing else. The Highland cow was particularly difficult to milk if her calf was not in front of her, therefore, if necessary, certain devices were implemented to ‘fool’ her into thinking her calf was present. Barrenness in cattle appears to have been a problem in the Highlands most probably due to harsh environmental conditions. The following chapter is on the heifer. She was the next most important animal to the Gael, as she was the ‘promise’ to be fulfilled.

## Chapter 5

### Gaelic words for heifer



Photo courtesy Scottish Studies photo archives  
University of Edinburgh

There are many distinct terms in Gaelic for heifer. The only other single animal to rival her is the cow. In English there is only one term for each. The reason for the abundance of terms in Gaelic for these two animals could be because the heifer calf was the treasure or the 'promise', of what I am arguing that the Gaelic people depended on most, that is meat and milk. And the cow was the fulfilment of that promise.

If the cow was the crown then the heifer was the jewel in the crown, the promise of plenty. She was the provider (eventually) of calf, milk and blood on a regular basis. Her life cycle was monitored with astonishing rigidity. She was honoured above all else except the cow in the pastoral society of the pre-1800 Highlands.

Many poems and songs tell of her virtues and of the trials and tribulations of those that cared for her. They tell of her idiosyncrasies, her rejection to being milked if her calf was not in front of her or if her favourite song was not sung. As a mature cow, it was hoped that mellowness would become a part of the heifer's makeup and that she would become more amenable to the manipulation of mankind. But, as a heifer, it was well known that she must be coaxed and handled in a gentle manner (Meeks 1999).

### **Heifer Calf**

*Airghir* is found in Armstrong (1825), Dwelly (1920, 20) and Forbes (1905, 3) meaning a 'cow calf'. I originally thought that this might be a unit of measure, as a cow and her follower, but Forbes (1905, 91) lists *airghir*, *aitheach*, *aithre*, and *aitherinne* as meaning 'quey', the Scots word for heifer. Dwelly (1920, 24) lists *aithre* for ox, bull or cow, giving it as both a masculine and feminine noun.

The term *gamhainn* according to Armstrong (1825) and Dwelly (1920, 475) means, among other things, a six months old cow i.e. heifer. MacLennan (1995 [1925], 175), MacLeod and Dewar, and MacBain simply have it as a year old calf. Wentworth (1996, 161) ties the two together: "'stirk (female calf, 6 months to 1 year old) *gamhann* f. gen. & pl. *gaimhne*. 'S e *gaimhne shnoga th' unnta*, 'they're nice stirks'. This is borne out by the saying regarding Hallowe'en and St. John's Eve cited below. Most of the calves will be born from March at the earliest to June at the latest. In order to set some standard, the two dates of 31 October and 23 June are used to 'catch' all of the young and group them accordingly. The standardisation of ages for livestock is known throughout the world, for example all Thoroughbred horses are yearlings on the first of January following their birth regardless of the month they are born in, even if it is the preceding December.

Forbes (1905, 87) says “the first day of winter (old style) was held at the date on which animals had their names changed, thus the foal becoming a filly, *loth* or *lothag*, the calf a stirk, *gamhainn*, and the lamb a ewe, *othaisg*.” This would seem logical; however, we must also include St John’s eve (23 June) as a time that the names change. It might be significant that 21 June is the summer solstice and was a definitive marker in the agricultural cycle. Name changes (because of age) for certain animals are also noted on St. Bridget’s Day on the first of February, and at Beltane on the first of May.

### **One-year old**

*Beathach* is defined by Dwelly (1920, 85) only as a beast or animal and given as a masculine noun. Forbes (1905, 5) lists it as a beast, cow, or animal. Wentworth (1996, 74) is very specific: although confirming that the word is grammatically masculine he defines it as a female cattle beast between one and two years old. *Cà ’m beil am beathuch an dràsda?* ‘Where’s the yearling heifer just now?’

*Dairt* is a widely used term for heifer. *Dartaid* and *dartaig* mean heifer and yearling cow respectively (Forbes 1905, 91& 171). DIL (D, 37) lists *dairt* as a heifer of one or two years (depending on sources)... ‘before they are productive’, and gives *dartaid* as a heifer or a bull calf growing into *bó*, *tarb* or *dam*. “A *dartaid* is reckoned among the ‘*minchethrae*’ and ‘*sesc-slabrae*’, the small and still unproductive cattle” (DIL D, 106).

According to Carmichael (1971, 15), *bioran* means *cóig ràitheach gamhna*, ‘a fifteen months’ old stirk’. MacLennan (1995 [1925], 264) gives *ràith* as a quarter of a year, so literally the stirk is five quarters old keeping in mind that it is not  $4 \times 5 = 20$ , but rather 4 quarters for the first year and 3 months making up the first quarter of her second year.

*Urchallach* is a heifer of a year and a half old according to Dwelly (1920, 998) and Forbes (1905, 18).

### **Two-year old**

Dwelly (1920, 96) and Forbes (1905, 5) list *biorach* as a two-year-old heifer, among other things. MacLennan (1995 [1925], 38) gives 'heifer' after 'pointed' and 'sharp'. MacBain (1896, 33) gives the etymology as Irish 'cow-calf'. Dinneen (1996, 89 & 98) lists *bearach* as a two-year-old heifer and *biorach* as a heifer and also a spiked muzzle for calves, colts' etc. *Biorach* literally means 'pointed'. Both Dwelly and MacLennan also say that it means an instrument to prevent calves from sucking. This is not the only instance of a word for 'sharp' or 'pointed' also meaning 'female bovine' (see *adhail*). It could possibly be in reference to the teats. Since some of the terms also mean calf, it could mean the sharp action of a calf butting against the udder while nursing. *Berach* (also *birach*) is listed in DIL (B, 81) as pointed or sharp, of animals—having pointed ears, horned. 'Note also *biorach* 'a heifer two years old'.

*Dòbhlannach* is given by Wentworth (1996, 33) to mean a two-year-old female cattle beast, usually in calf for the first time; again we find the reference to breeds other than the Highland cow. Dwelly (1920, 345) has *dò-bhliadhnach* as an animal of two years of age, "said of cattle and sheep in Outer Isles and Argyllshire, for *dà-bhliadhnach*."

Armstrong (1825) gives *collaid* as a two-year-old heifer. DIL (C, 328) has *collaid* for heifer and *collaidh* 'a two year old heifer'.

Forbes (1905, 6) lists *caithne* as a two-year old heifer. *Fìor-agh* means a two-year old cow (heifer), according to Forbes (1905, 11).

### Three-year old

*Adh* is listed by Dwelly (1920, 6) as ‘heifer’. The entry for *agh* by Dwelly (1920, 9) refers to the heifer as a young cow, or a three-year-old, with the well-known saying *Oidhche Fhéill Eoin theirear aighean ris na gamhna*, ‘on St. John’s eve the stirk is called a heifer’. This follows *Oidhche Shamhna, theirear gamhna ris na laoigh*; ‘on Hallowe’en the calves are called stirks’. A stirk, according to Allen (2000, 1383), can be either a heifer or a bullock between one and two years old. A bullock is a young castrated male bovine (Allen 2000, 182). *Agh*, according to DIL (A, 82), is a bovine animal, cow or ox. *Agh ndára* is ‘an in-calf heifer’, that is, she is bred, ostensibly for the first time.

*Dartaidh-Inide* is a heifer who is three years old at Shrovetide (Forbes 1905, 171).

The following excerpt from a milking song was probably sung to ‘first-calf’ heifers to soothe them so that they would allow the dairymaid to milk them, it was also seen as a charm.

#### *Cronan Bleoghain*

*Bith buarach chioba air m’ aighean siocha,  
Bith buarach shioda air m’ aighean laoigh,  
Bith buarach shugain air crodh na duthcha,  
Ach buarach ur air m’ aighean gaoil.  
Ho hi holigan, ho m’ aighean.*

#### “Milking Croon”

A shackle of lint on my elfish heifer,  
A shackle of silk on my heifer of calves,  
A shackle of straw on the cows of the townland,  
But a brand new shackle on my heifer beloved.  
Ho hi holigan, ho my heifer.

First calf heifers are very often temperamental when being handled and require patience and expertise when milking. The Highland heifer was notably difficult to milk unless she thought her calf was getting fair treatment (MacKenzie 1921, 13).

### **Young Cow**

*Òg-mhart* is given in Forbes (1905, 15) and Armstrong (1825) as a young cow or heifer. Dwelly (1920, 704) just lists young cow. It is an obvious combination literally meaning ‘young cow’; Armstrong (1825) gives *òg-bhó* for a young cow, heifer or beef.

Forbes (1905, 7) lists *colag*, *colam* and *colan* as a young cow.

### **Breeding**

*Bodag*, according to Dwelly is a ‘short fit of passion’. *Bodagac* [sic] is a ‘heifer that wants bulling’, *bodagach* is ‘apt to fly into a passion, like a heifer’ (Dwelly 1920 104). *Bodagachd* is ‘rage for copulation’, ‘*furor interinus*’ (Armstrong 1825). Anyone who has ever worked with cattle has seen the absolute futility in attempting to keep the cow from the bull during the heat cycle, and it is not the bull that is normally the aggressor in the courtship, but the female.

Although Dwelly (1920, 16) shows *ainmhidh* to mean only a brute, animal or beast, both Forbes and Wentworth give it as heifer. Forbes (1905, 3) uses the spelling *ainbhidh*, and Wentworth (1996, 74) retains the masculine gender for it but is quite specific about the age and sex of the animal. “A female cattle beast in calf for the first time, generally two years old.” His informants told him that everyone had Highland cattle before the 1920s, but that after the first World War a lot of Black Aberdeen Angus and Red Shorthorn were introduced into the area. So the terms which were originally applied to Highland cattle were now applied to the newcomers with some resultant confusion to scholars (personal communication 20 March 2000). In America



the term heifer is used from the time a female calf is born until the time, usually three years of age, when she bears a calf. The Highland cow did not normally have her first calf until she was four.

Even though poor nutrition was considered to be the reason for slow maturity, modern breeders find that the Highland breed is inherently slow to mature, but if husbanded properly produces as well and more efficiently than larger, faster-maturing breeds on less feed. “Four years is the recognised age at which a horse or cow is mature, till which time they were never worked nor allowed to breed, if under proper control, giving as a very good reason that the animal lasted longer and bred better when so treated” (Forbes 1905, 87). Some modern breeders are also finding that Highland cattle do not grow during the winter months, even though they have plenty of feed. They then grow rapidly during the spring and summer months (Sue Campbell personal communication, Feb. 2000). It is possible that some of the attributes, which had been blamed on poor feed, are actually a part of the genetic makeup of the breed.

### **Barrenness**

*Seachbho*, *seachlach*, *seachlaoghach* and *seagaid* are all terms that mean a barren cow or heifer according to Forbes (1905, 16). Dwelly (1920, 795) lists all of the above referring them to *seachlach*, which he defines as a cow that has been two years without a calf or a heifer that continues barren when of the age to have a calf. Dwelly (1920, 795) via Forbes also gives *seafaid* as meaning heifer; this is the only reference I find for this term, but it and *seagaid* could be variations of spelling for *seachaid*.

### **Condition**

*Cullach*, given by Forbes (1896, 8) to mean (among other things) a fat heifer, is accepted by Dwelly. Interestingly MacLeod and Dewar do not give that meaning to it but do assign to it the common elements of a boar, a yearling calf and an impotent

man, which the other two list. Armstrong (1825) has it as *collach*, which Dwelly (1920, 234) gives as a yearling calf among other things. DIL (C, 327) gives *collach* as ‘corpulent’. One might surmise from the method that Dwelly uses in listing words found in Forbes is that many of the words were used only in certain locales and at certain times, and that Dwelly discarded those he felt too narrow in usage to be of benefit to the average scholar.

### Other Terms

Dewar and MacLeod, and Dwelly (1920, 171) define *colpach* as a heifer, a steer, bullock, and a colt. MacLennan (1995 [1925], 97) gives *colpach*, and defines it only as a heifer, Early Irish *colpthach*. Dinneen (1996, 233) gives *colpach* as a yearling heifer, a stirk, a cow (*colpach fhireann* as a bullock). Armstrong (1825) lists *colbhtach* as an obsolete word for a cow-calf. Forbes (1896, 7) gives *colbthach* as a ‘cow calf’, heifer, steer, bullock, colt, a two- or three-year-old cow, a cow that has never calved and a cow, he also has *colpach*, *colpindach*, for a heifer, a steer, colt. Dwelly (1920, 235) has *colpach-seamlach* as an uncalved cow. *Colpach* alone can mean a heifer, cow, steer or colt but also a duty payable by tenant to landlords. (See Chapter 10 ‘*Bó-ursainn*’, also Chapter 8 ‘Cattle as Wealth’). According to DIL (C, 328) *colp(th)ach* (*colp(th)ae*) is a yearling heifer and *colp(th)ae fhirenn* is a yearling bull(ock). Forbes (1896, 7) also lists *colbthach seamlach* as an uncalved cow. This normally indicates a heifer, but Dwelly’s (1920, 798) definition of *seamlach* is a cow that gives milk without her calf beside her. A similar term, *seasgach*, is given by Wentworth (1996, 74) as meaning a heifer not in calf, *seoll na seasgaich a’s a’ raon a tha sin*, ‘look at the heifers in that field there’. All other sources give *seasgach* to mean barren or farrow cows. This term appears to have become specific in Wentworth’s area for heifers not yet in calf, as opposed to barren cows, i.e. cows

unable to calve. DIL (S, 195) gives *sesc*, *seisc* as dry, barren or unproductive ‘a dry cow’.

Two terms for heifer listed by Dwelly and Forbes are *eannraidh* (*iannraidh*) and *earc* (*erc*). The first is used in Sutherland. The second is an old word for cow shown in MacLeod and Dewar as being obsolete. MacLennan (1995 [1925], 143) gives *earc* for cow or heifer and cites *Carmina Gadelica* (1971, 65), where *earc* is also shown as being applied to a filly in foal, or any filly. Carmichael also gives an early Irish meaning of a spotted or red-eared cow, ‘a cow’, *erc*. This can be found in DIL. Dinneen (1996, 394) has ‘*earc*’ for an animal of the cow kind but gives ‘*earcán*’ as a heifer calf.

*Maoiseach* is a female deer (doe), according to all sources including Dinneen. The Scottish sources, except MacLennan, also give ‘heifer’. Forbes (1905, 14) identifies *maoisleach* as meaning a heifer. Dwelly (1920, 704) simply says ‘see *maoiseach*’. MacLennan (1994 [1925], 221) gives the etymology of *maoisleach* meaning she-deer as *maolsech*, hornless one. Dwelly has *maoilseach*, ‘see *maoisleach*’, implying that the two are interchangeable.

*Coilt*, a heifer, is found only in Armstrong (1825) and Dwelly (1920, 225).

...

Heifers were the pride and promise of the Gael. The sheer numbers of terms for them describing their condition and various stages of maturation attest to their importance in the pastoral society. Their different life stages from birth to maturity were marked with rigidity and care. The favoured heifers were looked upon as part of the family unit and the songs used to placate them indicated their high status. This esteem given to heifers is only evident in a pastoral/home dairy society. That they were often difficult to deal with was readily apparent. The next chapter deals with the most

important reason for the prominence of the milk cow and the heifer in Gaelic society,  
i.e. milk and milk produce.

## Chapter 6

### Milk and Milk Produce



Photo 'Peigi MacRae & Dora, in North Glendale South Lochboisdale, ca 1932' courtesy Dr. Margaret Fay Shaw Campbell of Canna.

The produce of the milk cow was an important part of the diet of the Gael. The many different products made from milk required experienced handling and processing and demanded expertise and ingenuity. The following terms reflect these products.

Proverbs and superstitions are included as they tell the story in their own unique way; expressing views held by the people regarding production, protection and use of dairy food.

The cow was the most important animal in the Gael's life because of what she could give. *Is fhearr aon sine bheò na dà bhoin mharbh.* 'One living teat is better than two dead cows' (Nicolson 1881, 387). Even though milk production would be cut to one-eighth of its norm, it would still be worth more than the meat from two cows, as milk was a renewable resource.

## Fresh Milk

The most common word for milk is *bainne*. *Bainne blàth* is warm or fresh milk straight from the cow. Milk at the time of milking is at the cow's body temperature, which is slightly higher than our own (102 degrees Fahrenheit, as opposed to 98.6 in humans) (Black 1992, 577). This is different from milk that has been heated. A proverb attributed to the 'Ollamh Ileach' as prescribing the proper care for the elderly is, '*Cóinneach do 'thigh, crìonach a chonnadh, blàth o'n bhoinne, teith o'n teine*', moss to his house, brush-wood for his fuel, warm milk from the cow, heat from the fire (Nicolson 1881, 154). Some confusion attends this particular proverb as different editions of Nicolson exchange the word *bhoinne* for *bhoìn*. On the one hand I am pretty certain that *bhoinne* means milk straight from the cow rather than heated milk. It translates literally as 'heat from the drop', the drop being milk from the teat. On the other hand *bhoìn* means 'of the cow' so it would translate as heat from the cow, literally body heat that was an important part of the cow's function in winter. It makes sense both ways. A friend from Skye remembers as a child that *blàth bhainne* was milk brought in from the milking - warm and frothy. As discussed earlier, heating destroys one of the most important nutrients in milk, vitamin C. With all of the other items mentioned in the proverb, it is apparent that it is referring to the cold months when sunlight and fresh vegetables would not be available and fresh milk would be vital for good health. *Òran na Banaraich* 'Song to the Milkmaid' by John MacIachlan of Rahoy, has:

*“ 'S mi gun òladh air do shlàinte  
Deoch den bhainne bhlàth o bile.”*

“I would toast your health  
With a drink of warm milk from its brim (Thorner  
1985, 76-77).

Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair sees milk as a precious item as shown in these lines from *Oran a rinneadh an 1746*.

*Seo a' bhliadhna chòrr  
An tilg ' ghrian le meadh-bhlàths biadhchar  
Gathain chiatach oirnn;  
Bidh driùchd air bhàrr an fheòir,  
Bainne 's mil gun luach gun mhargadh,  
Airgead agus òr.*

This is the surpassing year  
In which the sun will cast on us  
Warm, fruitful, golden beams;  
There will be dew on grass-tips,  
Milk and honey, silver and gold,  
Without reckoning, without charge (Thomson 1993, 52-53).

*Bainne* as seen in Chapter 4 'The Milk Cow' is in Early Irish as *bannae* meaning 'a drop', later as *bainne* to mean milk. *Bainne buaile*, 'fold milk' (Dwelly 1920, 60), is milk from the sheilings as opposed to milk produced by cows that are housed during the winter. *Ballan-buaile* was the tub suspended on a pole in which milkmaids carried home milk from the fold to the house (Carmichael 1971, 11). (See Chapter 7 'Dairy Implements'). *Bainne buidhe* is 'yellow milk', yielded by a cow during the first two days after calving (Dwelly 1920, 60), specifically colostrum milk, discussed in the last chapter. The colostrum is what makes it yellow. It is also called *bainne nois* or 'beastings'.

*Bainne lom* ('bare milk') is skimmed, *bainne milis* is sweet milk and *bainne ùr* ('new milk') is fresh milk (Dwelly 1920, 60). Jonathan MacDonald, curator of the Museum at Dun Tulum, says that *bainne ùr* would be fresh milk but the term was never used in the place of *bainne blàth*, which indicated milk straight from the cow (personal communication, July 2002). *Bainneachas* and *bainnearachd* are both listed for 'miliness' by Dwelly (1920, 60).

*Air a thogáil* ('lifted') means skimmed, e.g., *iùsaig am bainne th'air a thogáil*, 'use the skimmed milk'; *gabh a' mhìos a th' air a togáil*, 'take the bowl that's been skimmed' (Wentworth 1996, 150).

*Leamh-lachd* is sweet milk, insipid milk according to Armstrong (1825) with *leamhnacdh* being a 'corruption' of the same. Interestingly enough, rather than being a 'corruption' *leamhnachd* is closer to the older Irish word *lemnacht* which stems from the even earlier *lemlacht* meaning 'new milk' (DIL L, 96). Thus it appears that the term has come full circle. Forbes (1905, 104) gives *lac* and *luim* (*leum*) for sweet milk. Armstrong (1825) lists it as *lachd*, as well as *luim*, both obsolete. *Lacht* is in Early Irish for milk, particularly cow's milk (DIL L, 15). *Luim* (see *loimm*) is listed for milk in DIL (L, 187).

*Àis* is milk, milk preparation, also dainty, delicacy, nectar, ambrosia as well as wisdom (Dwelly 1920, 22). *Asach* meaning milky, watery, like milk, beer or ale is obsolete, as is *segh* for milk. According to DIL (A, 421) *as* is milk and *ais* is the genitive 'of milk'. *Seg* is listed in DIL (S, 140) for milk, relating it to *lacht* and *bliocht*. *As* is an obsolete term for milk, beer or ale according to Armstrong (1825).

*Bliochd*, according to Dwelly (1920, 101) is milk, milkiness or the produce of cows, Armstrong (1825) has it as the profit arising from selling milk, i.e. dairy produce. Carmichael (1928b, 232) lists *bliochd* as "milk, whey, whey when in the curd, skimmed milk, sour milk, milk that has lost any of its original character. In Assynt '*bliochd*' or '*bleachd*' is the general term for dairy produce." *Bliochdar* means milky or teeming with milk (Armstrong 1825), *bliochdas* is a tendency to milk or 'lactescence' and *bliochdmhorachd* is an abundance of milk or milkiness (Dwelly 1920, 101-102). *Blicht*, according to DIL (B, 120) comes from Early Irish *mlicht*



meaning milk, a milking, or a yield of milk. Also *blecht* or *bliocht* (as in ‘*bó bliocht*’) means milk, in milk or milk-giving.

*Laithe* is sweet milk, according to Forbes (1905, 104).

Carmichael (1928, 297) has *géis* as plenty, abundance or food, though he says, “probably ‘*geis*’, milk, milk produce, gestation.” Dwelly (1920, 489) has *géis* for milk or milk produce, also gestation. (See Chapter 14 ‘Physical Characteristics and Animal Diseases’).

*Crodhaich* is something that adulterates the milk – Sutherland (Dwelly 1920, 275).

Forbes (1905, 104) gives a gallon of milk as *seisreach*, a sixsome, an allowance for six people. A gallon is approximately 4.5 litres. That would allow each person just over 0.7 litre per day, which would be sufficient to supply enough vitamin C to prevent scurvy, especially when the high consumption of butter, which also contains vitamin C, is considered.

Forbes (1905, 103-104) has *fior* for milk i.e., true, pure, white; also *sile*, literally a drop or flow, Dwelly (1920, 839) defines *sile* as spittle and *sil* as drop with the genitive singular *sile*. *Siled* is in DIL (S, 226) as the ‘act of dropping, flowing, dripping’.

Armstrong (1825) and Dwelly (1920, 474 & 487) give *gall* and *geart* as obsolete words for milk. *Gall* is possibly from Early Irish *galla* meaning fairness or whiteness cf. *co ngne gile no bhaine* ‘appearance whiteness as milk’ (DIL G, 40).

Forbes (1905, 105) lists *tomhladh* for milk while Armstrong (1825) has it as an obsolete term. *Tomlacht* is a verbal noun from *mligid* to mean the ‘act of milking’. *Tomlachtaid* is the verb ‘milks’ (DIL T, 244).

*Meilg* is an obsolete term for milk, according to Armstrong (1825). Though it looks as if it could simply be a Gaelic spelling of milk it is found in Early Irish as *melg* and is a derivative of *mlig* ‘to milk’ (DIL M, 95), see LEIA s.v. *mlig*.

*Finn*, *fionn* and *flaith* are all listed in Armstrong (1825) as obsolete words for milk. DIL (F, 141) lists *finn* for milk with a question mark (*laith find* i.e. milk). *Flaith* is also given for milk (DIL F, 143).

### **Sour Milk**

Sour milk and butter milk were two very important forms of milk for the Gael. Because fresh milk could not retain its quality for any length of time, it was important to preserve the liquid in some palatable form. As seen below milk could either ‘turn bad’ or sour properly. Buttermilk was simply the ‘dregs’ from butter making but was in itself an important item.

*Bainne goirt* is sour milk, also butter milk (Dwelly 1920, 60). *Bainne breun*, according to Dwelly (1920, 122 – referencing Alexander Carmichael) means ‘soured milk’, from *breun* (‘stinking, foetid, putrid’), so it might be assumed that this would not be fit to drink, as opposed to *bainne goirt*. *Brén* is stinking, foetid, putrid and rotten according to DIL (B, 176). This probably means that *bainne goirt* was an intentional and therefore ‘good’ souring and that *bainne breun* was accidental and simply went bad or ‘soured’.

Wentworth (1996, 179) gives, *tha 'm bainne a' gabháil car*, ‘the milk is on the turn’. Apparently milk could either turn bad as in *bainne breun* or sour properly as *bainne goirt* under different conditions. *Bainne geur* is milk of an acrid taste (Dwelly 1920, 490). *Geuraich* means ‘sour’, that is ‘turn sour’, e.g., *am bainne a' geurachadh*, the milk turning sour (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 179). As mentioned above this was

not necessarily a bad thing. DIL (G, 71-72) has *géraid* (from *gér*) to turn sour, though *gér* simply means sharp or keen.

### **Curdled Milk**

*Bainne binnichte* and *bainne briste* both mean curdled milk (Dwelly 1920, 60), the latter being literally ‘broken milk’. *Pinnlich* is used in Uist for *binndich* that is to curdle or coagulate. *Tha am bainne ’ga phinnteachadh*, the milk is curdling (McDonald 1991 [1899], 195).

*Leasaichte* means ‘renetted’, as milk (Armstrong 1825).

*Plam* is anything curdled or clotted and *plamach* means curdled, thick (Dwelly 1920, 725). “Suppose when milking that some rain went into the pail the milk would likely in warm weather be thick or *plamach* next day” (McDonald 1991 [1899], 195). *PlaMr.achadh* is ‘warming of milk for curdling’, *plaMr.aich* means ‘to warm or prepare milk for curdling’; *plumaich* is to coagulate without yeast, as milk, and *plumaichte* is curdled, while *bainne plumaich* is curdled milk (Dwelly 1920, 725-29). *Teasach* also means warm water in milk according to Dwelly (1920, 942).

*Pleod* means warm slightly, as milk (Dwelly 1920, 726). Milk showed very different properties according to how much heat was applied to it (and for how long). Milk produced commercially and pasteurised no longer has these attributes.

*Bainne tiugh* is thick milk, according to Wentworth (1996, 102.)

*Tomhlachd*, according to MacAlpine (1903, 265), is thick milk, Armstrong (1825) has curds.

Armstrong (1825) lists *carraighin* as the thick part of buttermilk.

*Lamban* is milk curdled by rennet and *lambanach* means ‘abounding in (or ‘like’) curdled milk’ (Dwelly 1920, 565). MacBain lists *lamban* (see *slaman*). *Slaman* is curdled milk from Early Irish *slaimred*. *Slaimred* (*slamm*) also *slamred* is a

collective for small heaps, clots, flakes, *slaimredach* is flecked, clotted (DIL S, 259). Armstrong (1825) has *slagan* for curdled milk and gives *slamaich* ‘to clot or curdle’, *slamaichte* ‘clotted’. *Slaman* or *slamban* is curdled milk not separated from the cream (Armstrong 1825), also, coagulated milk not separated from the whey; *slamanach* means coagulated or curdled, as milk, or like coagulated milk or producing curds. *Slamanachd* is the state of being curdled, coagulation, a tendency to coagulate (Armstrong 1825), while *bainne slamán* in Ross-shire is curds and whey (Wentworth 1996, 35). My father was accustomed to eating ‘clabbered’ milk with sugar on it as a delicacy, which would be the same thing as *slaman*. Though *clabar* is not used in Scots Gaelic it is in Irish as ‘sour thick milk; *bainne clabair*’ (Dinneen 1996, 197). Dorothy Wordsworth, as mentioned in Chapter 3, says that she didn’t understand why the whey she was served tasted better than any other she remembered as they only made ‘skimmed-milk cheese’. Butter was a precious commodity and skimming milk for the cream for butter making would have been a priority. *Slaman*, therefore, would have been a rare treat, though milk skimmed by hand contains much more residual butterfat than processed skimmed milk, which is done by machine (personal experience).

Hard milk was a white, cheese-like substance made by adding hot water to buttermilk. It was then hung in a cloth to drain. It was quite perishable (Fenton, 1976, 157).

Pasteurised milk, as mentioned above, behaves quite differently from ‘raw’ milk. It will not perform any of the above mentioned changes and simply goes bad. All of the variations of dairy produce available to pastoralists ceased when milk was produced commercially and pasteurised.

## Whey

Dwelly's first choice for whey appears to be *meòg*, he lists *fionn-mhèag* as white whey, 'whey wrung from cheese when pressed in the vat' (Dwelly 1920, 437).

Carmichael (1928, 327) has *meang*, "*fionna-mhiong*, the thicker whey pressed out of the curds, literally white whey, from *fionn*, fair, and *meang*, *miog*, whey." Armstrong (1825) gives *deoch mhéig* and *deoch mhiùg* as 'a drink of whey'. The word for whey is variously spelt *meag*, *meig*, *mìg*, *meog*, *meug*, *mìge* and *miùg* (Armstrong 1825).

*Meagail*, *meogail*, *meugach* and *meugail*, all mean serous or whey-like (Armstrong 1825). It is *medc* (*medg*) in Early Irish noted as a "common item of fare for fast days." *Gruth agus medc agus ìm* (constituents of milk). Compound *uiscedmedc* 'whey-water' (DIL M, 78). Whey is the watery part of milk separated from the curd, especially in cheese-making, and rich in lactose, minerals, and vitamins (Allan 2000, 1605).

*Drùchdan* is whey according to Armstrong (1825), and *milcein* or *meilcein*, according to Carmichael (1928, 328) is 'solid warm white whey; from *mil*, honey, sweetness'.

## Milk Essence

*Urarachd na bà* is the 'fat of the cow', milk, cream, butter, also neat foot oil (Forbes 1905, 121). Neat foot oil is oil rendered from the boiling of cow hooves and used as leather preservative in the UK and America (personal experience). Dwelly lists *toradh* as fruit, produce and milking; I found the term used extensively in Highland folklore to mean the essence of the milk that could be stolen by witchcraft or destroyed by the evil eye (Meeks 1999, essay 2). Fr. Allan says, "It should be said, as Mr. Hector MacIver pointed out to me, that *toradh* is the product of milk, i.e. butter or cheese,

rather than the milk itself” (McDonald 1991 [1899], 316). The following excerpt from ‘*Aoir an Luchd-Riaghlaidh*’ by Donald MacIntyre supports this.

*A h-uile annlan bhios aca  
Gun toirinn seachdain gan àireamh:  
Chan fhaighinn toradh na buaile  
A dh’im no uachdar no chàise...*

All the side-foods they have  
I’d take a week to relate:  
I’d get no yield from the cowfold  
Of cream or butter or cheese... (Black 1999, 190-91).

*Toradh na féudalach gun am faicinn*, ‘the fruit of the cattle that have not been seen’ (Nicolson 1881, 371), could mean the promise of things to come or the loss of something that might have been. Early Irish has *torad* as produce, increase, result or profit (DIL T, 253).

*Marruinn* is milk, cream and their products (Dwelly 1920, 634). (See also Chapter 4 ‘The Milk Cow’).

Rich standing milk, that is milk set for cream, is *cugann* (Armstrong 1825), but it also means delicacy or kitchen (Dwelly 1920, 287). Part of a Gaelic proverb has *Cha dean bean gun nàire cugainn*, ‘A shameless woman no kitchen makes’ (MacDonald 1926, 76). In Early Irish *cucann*, *cuigean* and *cuigeann* are kitchen or a provision i.e. ration of food (DIL C, 581).

Another word meaning rich as applied to milk is *brac* (Dwelly 1920, 112). It is possibly from Early Irish *bracht*, which can mean juice, grease, fat; pith or substance (DIL B, 151). Dwelly (1920, 112) has *brachd* as an obsolete word to mean sap or juice, also an increase of riches.

*Eanghlas*, on the other hand, is gruel, any weak drink, *deoch eanghlais* being a drink of milk and water (Armstrong 1825). The various spellings: *Englas*, *anglas*, *anghlas*, *eanghlas* all mean a weak mixed beverage, milk diluted with water, ‘whey’.

*Englais* is 'milk and water mixed' in Early Irish, according to DIL (E, 139). Or, going the other way again, *eanraich*, 's e th ann an eanraich, meadhg air a thigheachdainn le min-chorc, i.e. 'eanraich is whey thickened with oatmeal' (Wentworth 1996, 171).

### **Puddings**

*Fuarag* is 'a beverage of wrought cream into which oatmeal is put' (Armstrong 1825). Dwelly (1920, 460) says *fuaraig* can be a mixture of meal and water or milk, hasty pudding (Scots crowdie).

Dwelly's entry for *dramag* (1920, 357) appears to reflect a difference of opinion, as it can, he says, mean both 'a foul mixture' as well as 'crowdie'. Crowdie is a 'fine grained cottage cheese' according to Allen (2000, 333).

*Sgathach*, (Gaelic Society of Inverness xiv, 148), could be either a drink of water and milk in equal proportions or the sour thick milk under the cream that was kept for butter, churned into froth. Carmichael (1971, 122) has it as the thin fluid remaining in the bottom of the dish when the cream is drawn off for churning. A passage in a story collected in the 1800's by John Francis Campbell of Islay uses *sgathach Agus fhuair i cuman, agus rànaig i am muidhe, 's thug i spionadh a mach air a' chnag, agus bha i leigeadh an sgathaich do 'n chuman*. 'The hag got a milk pail, came to the churn and jerked out the stopper, and began to let the dregs of the milk fall into the pail' (Campbell 1994, 298-299). (See also Chapter 6 'Dairy Implements'). The story of the hag would indicate that 'the dregs' was what was left after butter has been made. All of the items mentioned here differ. In my experience, milk from the cow was 'set' in pans to allow the cream to rise and was then 'skimmed' within a period of twelve to twenty-four hours. The milk left was still fresh and would have contained as much butterfat as modern 'whole milk'. It would have been drunk as *bainne ùr*. The second item i.e. the thick sour milk left under the

cream and churned into froth, is something completely different. *Bainne blath* would have been poured into pans and left for a much longer period of time, the cream would still retain its original flavour (possibly a bit stronger), but the underlying milk would sour and thicken, apparently in the above example it was then churned into something resembling *omhan*. Carmichael's example would indicate something different again, though I think it is simply what is thought of as 'skim milk'.

*Gròmag*, says Dwelly (1920, 528), is a 'mixture of oatmeal and churned cream'. I am assuming that they stopped churning the cream before it became butter in order to make this.

Dwelly (1920, 530) lists *gruth* for curds. Early Irish has *gruth* for curds or cheese (DIL G, 168). A Gaelic proverb says: *An taobh a chuir thu 'n gruth, cuir 'n a 'shruth am meug*, 'where you made the curds to go, you may set the whey a-flow' (Nicolson 1881, 37). I suppose this means that after you eat the curds you could drink the whey, or one good thing follows another. *Gruthach* (from *gruth*) is curdled or coagulated, like curds or curd-producing (Armstrong 1825). *Gruth* could also be made from ewe's milk and might have formed an important part of winter food as seen in the poem by Duncan Ban MacIntyre entitled *Òran do Chaora*.

*Bhiodh aice dà uan sa bhliadhna  
'S bha h-uil h-aon riamh dhiubh fallain.*

*'S nuair a thigeadh mìos roimh Bhealltainn  
B' fheàrrde mi na bh' aice bhainne.*

*Chumadh i rium gruth is uachdar  
Air fhuairead 's gum biodh an t-earrach.*

*Dh'fhóghnadh i dhomh fad an t-samhraidh  
Chumail annlain rium is arain.*

*Cha robh leithid chun an eadraidh  
Am fad as freagradh do Mhac Cailein (Black 2001, 224).*



*Gruigh* is a dish of curds dressed with butter on Islay, *gruitheam* is curd-butter (that is half butter and half curd finely mixed), crowdie, curd-pie (Dwelly 1920, 529).

*Gruithim* was curds, worked curds used as kitchen (i.e. *annlan*, something taken with bread) with no butter mixed; though the word is from *gruth* + *im*, no butter was mixed in the curds in Strath Carron, Wester Ross, by Carmichael's time (1971, 88). *Crugh* (*grugh*) is curds according to Armstrong (1825). *Geat* is given by Forbes (1905, 103) for curds.

A verse in *An t-Earrach* 'Spring' by Ewan MacLachlan gives a list of the abundance of May.

*Nuair thig òg-mhìos céitein chiùin oirnn  
 Bidh a' bhliadhna 'n tùs a maise,  
 S tlathail caoimhneil soillse gréine –  
 Mios geal ceutach, speur-ghorm, feartach,  
 Flùrach, ciùbhrach, bliochdach, maoiniach,  
 Uanach, caorach, laoghach, martach,  
 Ggruitheach, uachdrach, càiseach, sùghmhor,  
 Mealach, cùbhraidh, driùchdach, dosrach.*

When young month of calm maytime comes upon us  
 The year will be at the start of its beauty,  
 Princely and kind is the gleam of the sun –  
 Bright month that's lovely, blue-skied,  
 renowned,  
 Flowery, drizzly, milky, productive,  
 Lamby and sheepful, calvy and cowful,  
 Curdy and creamful, cheesy and sapful,  
 Honeyed, scented, dewy, luxuriant (Black 2001,  
 350-51).

*Liath-bhrochan* (Gaelic Society of Inverness, xiv, 149) is 'a thick gruel made of milk and meal, well boiled with a piece of butter in it'. *Stapag* is a mixture of meal and cream, milk or cold water and crowdie (Dwelly 1920, 899). Professor Donald Meek says that *stapag* was well known in Tiree, but the term was not used in Skye.

*Tiagh*, according to Forbes (1905, 105), is thickened milk or a milk-dish, *Tiughachadh* is a thickening, condensing, coagulating, while *tiughalach* is the thickest part of liquids (Armstrong 1825).

According to Forbes (1905, 104), *leastar* is a milk dish. *Leastar* also means a cup or vessel, as well as stale butter (Dwelly 1920, 578), so, as well as the milk-dish being something to eat it, may also be the dish it is served in.

*Biadh-bainne* ('milk-food') in Wester Ross, according to Wentworth (1996, 102), is milk-pudding, that is curds and cream.

*Cobhar*, spelt *cothar* by Wentworth (1996, 60), is froth or 'syllabub'. *Tha cothar air a' bhainne*, there's froth on the milk. Syllabub, 'a word of unknown origin', means "a cold dessert usually made by curdling sweetened cream or milk with wine, cider, or other acidic liquid" (Allan 2000, 1425). It is possible that the acidic liquid used in the Highlands was *blaedium* (Buchanan 1550, 37), milk left after churning and kept for a long time which became acidic and sparkling. This was probably *blàthach* 'buttermilk' (Dwelly 1920, 100). *Blàthach* (*bláth*), *bláitheach* is listed as 'buttermilk' in DIL (B, 116).

## **Cream**

*Bàrr* meaning the top or uppermost part of anything is also a word for cream; *barragach* is creamy or frothy (Dwelly 1920, 70). *Barr* in Early Irish is top (DIL B, 37). *Barrag* is posset, scum, or cream - *cha chinn barrag air cuid cait*, 'the cat's milk makes no cream' (Nicolson 1881, 88). The cat will not allow the milk to stand long enough for the cream to rise to the top - probably said about people who were too impatient to wait for something better to come along.

Armstrong (1825) has *uachdar* meaning the top, surface or upper part of anything, cream; also *uachdarach* 'uppermost, highest, creamy, producing cream'.

Said to be a Highland housewife's sarcasm on unreasonable men, this proverb seems to sum up a good life.

*Na'm faigheamaid an t-im a's t-Earrach,  
'Us uachdar a' bhainne a's t-Samhradh,  
'S ann an sin a bhiomaid fallain,  
'S cha bhiomaid falamh de dh' annlann.*

If we could get butter in Spring,  
And cream in Summer,  
It's then we should be healthy,  
And well off for kitchen (Nicolson 1881, 328).

The housewife supposedly said the above proverb to her husband, according to Mary Mackellar, when he wanted plenty of cream and then expected a plentiful supply of butter; meaning that you can not have both.

A careful housewife was much more lavish with her butter and cheese to her household than she would be with either her warm milk or cream, as she took great pride in the quantities of dairy produce in her 'cellar' at the end of the season. Yet there were times when even the richest cream would be freely produced, and this was especially at the demands of hospitality. Water was never offered as a drink to the meanest wayfarer. *Deoch fhionna-ghlas* was the most effectual drink for quenching thirst. This "whitey-grey" mixture was milk and water in equal proportions and the sour thick milk that was under the cream that was kept for butter was churned into a froth, and it made a cooling drink. It was called *sgathach*. When strangers had to be entertained, *fuarag* was made plentifully and curds and cream were laid out with oatcake, butter cheese, and whisky. They made the yearning, or yeast that turned the milk into curds, by putting milk and salt into the stomach of a calf. The he-calves were generally killed, and their stomachs supplied them for this purpose. *Fuarag* was made of the sour thick cream, churned into a froth with a *lonaid* made for the purpose and some oatmeal stirred in it. The meal made on the quern was considered by far the best for making it (Mackellar 1888, 148).

*Úachtar* in Early Irish is the upper part or surface of anything, the top, the upper part i.e. milk, cream (DIL U, 415).

Carmichael also lists *blac* for cream; Dwelly (1920, 98) queries it as being a possible equivalent of *bliochd* though Carmichael specifically lists *bliochd* for skimmed milk.

Dwelly (1920, 878) has *spairteach* meaning thick, 'as cream'. *Spairt* in Early Irish is a lump, clod, mass or 'clot of blood' (DIL S, 352).

*Cè* ('cream') is from *ceó* or *ceò* 'mist, covering, milk' (MacBain 1905, 67). "Is ni air leth cè dòirte, 'spilt cream is a thing by itself' - an irremediable loss" (Nicolson 1881, 282). This shows how precious cream was to the people. *Ceó* in Early Irish is milk or cream (DIL C, 134). *Ceath*, also *cia* (presumably the same word) is listed by Dwelly (1920, 184 & 191) as an obsolete term for cream; Armstrong (1825) has it as a living word but also meaning to skim, as milk.

*Sreamag* is a thin layer (on liquid). *Tha sreamag dhe bàrr air a' bhainne*, 'there's a thin layer of cream on the milk' (Wentworth 1996, 89).

*Criomairt* is listed as an obsolete term by Dwelly (1920, 272) for second milk, also cream.

### **Froth**

*Bainne cnàmha* is the fermentation of fresh milk and buttermilk, frothed with the *loinid* or frothing stick (Dwelly 1920, 60), from *cnàmhadh* ('decaying'). *Cnám* in Early Irish is the act of gnawing, wasting (DIL C, 265).

There were several different forms of frothed milk. *Bainne maistrídh* is whipped cream or milk, frothed with the *loinid* (Dwelly 1920, 60), the difference between *bainne maistrídh* and *bainne cnàmha* being that the former was made from fresh cream or milk and the latter with milk fermented by adding something acidic to both fresh milk and buttermilk.

*Omhan* was the froth of milk or whey, especially the thicker whey pressed out of curds (Dwelly 1920, 709). *Omhan* was made by heating milk and whipping it into froth with a *loinid* or frothing stick. “A quantity of milk or whey is boiled in a pot, and then it is wrought up to the mouth of the pot with a long stick of wood, having a cross at the lower end. It is made up five or six times in the same manner, and the last is always reckoned best and the first two or three frothings the worst” (Martin 1703, 242-43). Though Martin Martin reported *omhan* as substantial food, a proverb shows another view: *Is ceannach an t-omhan air a’ bhainne-theth*, ‘the froth is scarcely worth the hot milk’ (Nicolson 1881, 222). *Omhan fuar* in Wester Ross is ice-cream, actually the frozen or chilled froth of churned sweet milk (Wentworth 1996, 80). This appears to be a blending of old and new where froth is put into a freezer to harden. *Omhanach* is frothy or ‘abounding’ in froth of milk or whey (Dwelly 1920, 709). Armstrong (1825) gives *othan* as the froth of boiled whey or milk and *othanach*, frothy, foaming like boiled whey or milk.

*Crannachan* is a churn but is also beaten milk, “a Hallowe’en treat into which a ring, etc., is put” (Forbes 1905, 103). (See also Chapter 7 ‘Dairy Implements’).

### **Butter**

The most common word for butter is *ìm*. In Early Irish it is *imb* (*imm*) ‘butter’ (DIL I, 65). *Ìm ri ìm, cha bhiadh ’s cha’n annlann e*, ‘butter to butter is neither food nor kitchen’ (Nicolson 1881, 210). You are poor indeed if all you have to eat is butter. Butter was also seen as a sign of wealth in this proverb *fear an ime mhóir, ’s e ’s binne glòir*, ‘the man of great wealth has the sweetest voice’ (Nicolson 1881, 182). Literally, it is the ‘man with the greatest amount of butter’ who is the wealthiest. *Ìmeach* means abounding in butter, like butter, or producing butter. *Ìm éiginn* (‘emergency butter’) is custard, an omelette, or a “substitute for butter made with

milk and eggs and a little salt stirred together over the fire for a few minutes” (Dwelly 1920, 540). A proverb shows how important butter was to the people’s diet. *Leisgeul arain gu ith’ ime*, ‘the excuse of bread for eating butter’ (Nicolson 1881, 300).

*Breachdan* is fresh butter (Armstrong 1825) and custard (Dwelly 1920, 119) from Early Irish *brechtán* (*brecht*) meaning butter, fat or relish spread on bread: *brechtán uirimme* is a ‘roll of fresh butter’ (DIL B, 170). (See Chapter 8 ‘Flesh and Other Foods’). MacBain (1896, 42) gives it as custard coming from Irish ‘*brecht*’ motley. Butter and cheese made from sheep and cows milk combined is streaked. Burt (1876, 132-133) has the following in one of his letters: “Here (the sheilings) they make their butter and cheese. By the way, I have seen some of the former with bluish veins, made, as I thought by the mixture of smoke, not much unlike castile soap; but some have said it was a mixture of sheep’s milk which gave a part of it that tincture of blue.”

*Àn, àna, àin, àine*, are all listed in *Carmina Gadelica* as; liver, fish liver, oil, grease, suet, fat and butter. *Cha dèan corrag mhillis àn, cha dèan glam càise*, ‘sweet finger will not make butter, nor will glutton cheese’. The following verse from the same source also uses *àn* for butter.

*Thig, a storrach, thig!*  
*Thig, a storrach, thig!*  
*Àn gu uileann,*  
*Blàthach gu dorna,*  
*Thig, a storrach, thig!*

Come, store (?), come,  
 Come, store (?), come,  
 Butter to elbow,  
 Buttermilk to wrist,  
 Come, store, come! (Carmichael 1941, 84-85).

Forbes (1905, 103) lists *gruitin* as old or sour butter. According to one of Dwelly's informants, Reverend C. M. Roberston of Jura, speaking about Perthshire and Wester Ross, *paoic* is a piece or lump, as of butter (Dwelly 1920, 716). *Paiteag* is a small lump of butter, and *puingean* a roll of butter (Armstrong 1825).

Father Allan has *sochair*, the food, thing or product. *Beagan do shochair an t-samhraidh* (literally, a little of the summer product) is a little butter (McDonald 1991 [1899], 224). *Bruan* is shortbread, a cake made of butter etc., 'to keep children quiet' (Dwelly 1920, 130).

*Teagair* means 'collect, provide, economise, gather milk for butter by stinting the allowance for the family' (Dwelly 1920, 938). *Teugair*, according to MacLennan (1995 [1925], 339), is to 'gather milk on short allowance, to make butter'; *teugradh* is thus the 'act of gathering milk economically; milk or butter so gathered' (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 339).

*Bilistear* according to MacBain (1905, 32) is a 'mean, sorry fellow, a glutton.' In the 'Isles' it was rancid butter or tallow, according to the Highland Society Dictionary (1828, 117). Dwelly (1920, 721), lists *pileistreadh* as rancidness. *Piliostar*, according to Carmichael (1971, 15), is the substance that sticks to the side of a vessel when milk has been left in it for a long time.

Not all butter was taken as food; *sailm-uchd* is an ointment made of fresh butter and healing herbs (Armstrong 1825). Rancid butter was used to smear sheep as a preventive to the scabies mite. (See 14 'Physical Characteristics and Animal Diseases').

The efficacy of butter and goat's milk is seen in the following verse.

*Is leigheas air gach tinn*  
*Cneamh 'us im a' Mhàigh;*  
*Ol 'an fhochair sid*  
*Bainne-ghobhar bàn* (Nicolson 1881, 262).

The cure of all ill  
Garlic and May butter;  
Drink with that  
Goat's white milk.

Garlic is supposed to be beneficial to health, and goat's milk has long been recognised as a boon to good health. It is relatively low in carbohydrates (that is lactose) and fairly high in protein (Davidson 1975, 236). My personal experience has been that new-born infants, both animal and human, will normally derive instant benefit from goat's milk where other mother substitutes require an assimilation period. "The vitamin content of butter depends on the quality of the cows' diet" (Davidson 1975, 242). May is recognised as the bountiful month as the cattle have plenty of grass to eat and produce great quantities of milk, hence 'May butter' in the proverb.

*Bainne nan gobhar fo chobhar 's e blàth, 's e chuir a' spionnadh 's na daoine a bha.* 'Goat milk foaming and warm, that gave their strength to our fathers' (Nicolson 1881, 382). Goats do not appear too much in the literature or even in rent rolls, possibly because they were considered of lesser value than sheep and cattle. An example of this is seen in Rob Donn's *Oran nan Casagan Dubha* 'Song of the Black Cassocks'.

*Bidh bhur duais mar a' ghobhar  
A thèid a bhleoghain gu tarbhach,  
'S a bhithear a' fuadach san fhoghar  
Is ruaig nan gadhar r' a h-earball.*

Your reward's like the goat's one:  
After milking for profit,  
It is chased out in autumn,  
Hounds at its tail snapping (Thomson 1993, 114-115).

Goats tend to be hardier and more aggressive to predators than the old style sheep and were probably not housed during the winter.



## Buttermilk

Buttermilk is *blàthach*, *blàdhach* and *blàghach*, Scots ‘*bladach*’. *Deoch bhlàthaich* is a ‘drink of buttermilk’ (Dwelly 1920, 100). Wentworth (1996, 20) has: *Bhiodh deoch bhlàthach math airson glanadh an adha aig neach*, ‘a drink of buttermilk was good for cleaning the liver,’ an indication that people were aware of the healthy attributes of milk. A proverb, that apparently means a bad thing can follow good, however declares that: *Is minig a thainig boganach á blàthaich*, ‘buttermilk has often made a bumpkin’ (Nicolson 1881, 278). Derick Thomson recalls his past in *Troimh Uinneig a’ Chithe*:

*Agus mo shinnsrean, a-muigh air àirigh,  
A’ buachailleachd chruidh-bainne ’s ag òl a’ bhlàthaich.*

And my ancestors, out on the shieling,  
Herding milk-cows and drinking buttermilk (Macaulay 1976,  
148-149).

*Blanndaidh* means rotten, stinking, stale – as milk (Dwelly 1920, 99), from Norse ‘*blanda*’, whey ‘*blend*’ (MacBain 1905, 34). This is one of the few Norse words I have found in terms for animal husbandry or diet. This is probably the word that George Buchanan heard when he visited the Islands. “Throughout the Shetland Isles whey is soured and used as a beverage under the name of ‘*blēnd*’ (Carmichael 1928, 234 vol. 2). (See Chapter 3 ‘Contemporary Reports’).

## Cheese

*Binid* is cheese rennet, or the bag that holds the rennet, i.e. the stomach (MacBain 1905, 32). *Binit* in Early Irish was rennet, curds and also the name of a plant producing rennet (DIL B, 102). According to Carmichael (1971, 15), “people used to make *binid* by putting half a cup of warm milk per day in a calf’s stomach.”

*Binndeach* means coagulative, curdling or apt to coagulate, according to Dwelly (1920, 95). He also lists *binndeachadh* for curdling, coagulating, and making cheese.

As pointed out above, under **Curdled Milk**, *binndean* or *binntean* are rennets, *binntich* means curdle or coagulate and *binntichte* is curdled or coagulated (Armstrong 1825).

*Deasgainn* is rennet, also yeast (Dwelly 1920, 324). *Descad*, *descaid* in Early Irish is ‘ferment, leaven, barm or yeast’ (DIL D, 44). Cheese-making differs from curds and whey. To make cheese, the rennet – a curdling substance found in animal stomachs – is added to milk and then the milk is heated. When the mixture is cooled it is placed into a cheese press and slowly, over time, the press is tightened more and more until all of the whey has been squeezed out of the cheese. Cheese made this way keeps for a much longer time than the ‘soft’ or ‘cottage cheese’ described above. I think that ‘hard’ cheese making was brought to Britain by the Romans, Tacitus says that the Britains have cattle and use milk but do not make cheese. As cheese is a lactose free dairy product and the southern Italians were non-lactose absorbers, we know that they utilised their dairy produce in the form of hard cheese, it stands to reason then that the advent of cheese-making into Scotland via England came with the Romans. Once learned, however, it proved a very useful way of preserving dairy produce.

The English word ‘cheese’, according to Allan (2000, 235), is from Old English ‘*cese*’ from a prehistoric West Germanic word borrowed from Latin ‘*caseus*’. *Càise* is the most common Gaelic word for cheese. *Càise* can also be found in a place-name in Cromarty in the form of *Càiseachan*, meaning ‘abounding in cheeses’, “‘probably a sheiling name’” (Watson 1904, 160).

*Càise cruidh* is cheese made from cow’s milk, *càiseach* is abounding in cheese and *càisear* is a cheesemonger (Armstrong 1825). *Clàr càise* is a slice of cheese (Carmichael 1971, 42). *Cùl-càise* is the rind of a cheese (Dwelly 1920, 298).

*Bidh rud uime nach robh mu'n chùl-chàise*, 'something will come of it more than of the cheese-back'. This proverb, according to Nicolson (1881, 66), stems from an incident involving three parties of MacDonald from Glencoe who went on a 'gentle begging' expedition, Christmas 1543. When they met again to divide the spoils, all went well until it was discovered that a 'remnant of cheese' was left. In the ensuing fight, only one survived of the eighteen participants.

*Mulachag* is a cheese; *mulachagan càise* is cheeses (Armstrong 1825), also a lump, a kebbuck. *Giùlain a' mhulachaig*, 'carry the cheese,' *mulachagach* is 'abounding in cheeses, shaped like cheeses' (Dwelly 1920, 680). In Early Irish *mulach* is some object of rounded form (?) *méit mullaig for gut* 'the size of a cheese on a withe'. *Mulchán* is some kind of cheese, cheese-curd compressed... and baked for food (DIL M, 201).

*Laomachan*, 'little mouldy one', (literally 'little curved one') was a rind of cheese used for divination. (See Chapter 15 'Folklore').

MacBain gives *càbag* for a cheese, Scots 'cabback' or 'kebbock', the latter form probably being from Gaelic *ceapag*, *cepac*, obsolete in Gaelic in the sense of 'a cheese' but still used for the thick wooden wheel of wheelbarrows; it is from Gaelic *ceap* ('a divot')', however see below. In Early Irish, *cáep* is a clod, clot, lump or mass (DIL C, 18). Scots 'cabback' is a form of 'kebbock' and it seems to have been re-borrowed into Gaelic as *càbag*. MacBain (1905, 53) says the 'real' Gaelic word for a cheese is now *mulachag*, presumably meaning that the most common word in use for a 'wheel' of cheese is *mulachag* and *càise* is the word for cheese in any form.

The following story indicates that *ceapag*, regardless of MacBain's observation, was in use in certain areas at the end of the nineteenth century.

Superstition regarding the evil eye was prevalent in the Highlands. A local laird in

Breadalbane met a girl on her way home from the sheiling. She had a *muileann brath* (quern) on her back, that he assumed was a *ceapag càise* (small cheese), he put his 'eye' on it and when she got home the mill-stone had been broken in half (MacLagan 1902, 220). This story was also ascribed to St Columba who performed the miracle of breaking the stone he carried to teach an envious man a lesson.

*Mulchag Bhealltainn*, according to Father Allan, was the cheese made on the first of May and kept in the house till next *Latha Bealltainn*. It was ordinary cheese kept in the house to prevent the *toradh* or produce from being bewitched or lost. "It was a charm" (McDonald 1991 [1899], 185). *Mulchag imbrig*, a special cheese called the flitting 'kebbock', was kept in the house all through the winter and spring, and was not broken till the cattle were led out to the hill pastures in early summer (McDonald 1991 [1899], 185). *Imbrig* is possibly from Early Irish *immerge*, 'moving about, migrating' (DIL I, 145).

Armstrong (1825) gives *faisge* and *faisgre* for cheese, presumably from *fàisg* 'squeeze, wring' (Dwelly 1920, 407).

*Castaran* is a measure for butter equalling one quarter of a stone (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 74). Dwelly has *catran* as the fourth part of a stone of butter, cheese, wool, etc., in Islay. *Catar* (Latin 'quattuor') is a quarter (one set of four) (DIL C, 86).

*Ceapaire* is a piece of bread with butter spread on it according to Armstrong (1825); Dwelly (1920, 180) gives it as bread covered with butter and cheese. *Ceapaire Sàileach* (literally a Kintail piece) is a slice of cheese covered with butter of equal thickness (Gaelic Society of Inverness xiv, 148); it would appear from this that bread and cakes were not readily available in Kintail.

*Dìol* means a complement or portion, and *clach chàis le a dìol de dh'ìm* is 'a stone of cheese with its complement of butter' (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 127). *Dìl* in Early Irish is 'equal' or 'complement' (DIL D, 98-99).

The place where all of these products were stored was called the *ioslann* or *iorlann*, meaning cellar, buttery, larder, or pantry, and storehouse (Dwelly 1920, 556). It is cognate with Gaelic *ìosal* 'low, not high' (Dwelly 1920, 556) and Early Irish *ísel*, a low-lying place (DIL I, 321). In days before refrigeration, earthen dugouts were used in many rural areas to afford a cool place to store perishables (personal knowledge). The dairy house is mentioned in an interview by Margaret Bennett with Jean Innes who was born in 1900 at Inverochtery. When asked how dairy things were kept cool in the summer, she replied: "Well, the dairies were very carefully built, you know. They'd stone shelves and stone floors... The stone shelves had places underneath for things... They were very cool places, they faced north-east" (Tocher 1953, #46 pp 209).

### **Later Use of Milk**

A collection of 'the dietaries of Scotch Agricultural labourers' 1869, in Caithness-shire, Sutherland-shire and Inverness-shire gives some interesting examples. Of seven diets listed, five included milk in quantity in the daily regime. This appeared to be the common denominator for good health. Of the other two diets: one man had only milk with his breakfast and was in fair health. The last diet contained no milk at all, the man was in poor health with scrofula and the family (mother and 4 children under 10 years of age) were subject to 'cutaneous eruptions' (Mathieson 2000, 244-246).

The following verse is an example of a sparse though seemingly healthful diet. *Buntàta proinnt' is bainne leo, biadh bodaich Uachdar-chlò*. A dinner of potatoes and milk, is food for the old man on the windy hill (Watson 1904, 134). Though the same

proverb apparently can mean something else: *Buntàta pronn is bainne leò, biadh bodaich na h-Aird*, ‘Mashed potatoes with milk is the food of the old men of Aird.’

This proverb denotes laziness, and alludes to their meanness (Meek 1978, 38).

...

This chapter, and the ones before it, have shown the extreme centrality and importance of the cow and her produce to Gaelic Society. The sheer number of terms descriptive of milk and milk produce attest to their importance in everyday life. The multitude of products derived from a single source shows the ingenuity and resourcefulness of Highland pastoralists. Everything from *bainne bhlath*, milk straight from the cow, to *omhan*, the whipped or frothed milk in times of scarcity, was relished by the people. The next chapter will address terms for the implements needed to perform dairy activities.

## Chapter 7

### Dairy Implements



Photo taken at Folk Museum, Dun Tulum, Isle of Skye

Dairy implements played a large and important part in the daily regime of people in the Western Islands and Highlands. Their manufacture, which included woodcarving and coopering, as well as use and care, were specialised crafts. Diligent cleaning of the items was necessary to prevent spoilage of milk products. Specific duties surrounding the implements involved gathering, production and storage of dairy products vital to health and survival.

Most of the items used by people for gathering and processing dairy produce, within the time under discussion in the Scottish Highlands, were made of wood, though anything that came to hand could be put to good use.

#### Coopering and Carving

Coopering is the making or repairing of wooden staved implements and requires knowledge and skill.<sup>3</sup> Originally the buckets were bound with withies made from supple branches and reeds. *Clàr-buideil* is the stave of a cask (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 87). *Clàr* is from Early Irish *clár* and is a board or a plank as ‘a plank goes out

<sup>3</sup> See I F Grant *Highland Folk Ways* pp.244-245.

of the side of a cask' (DIL C, 219). Dwelly (1920, 137) has *buideil* as a cask or bottle. *Buidél* is shown as a Norman-French loanword meaning bottle or flask, see LEIA s.v. *buidél*. The influence of the loanword into Irish and emerging again in Scots Gaelic to mean both a bottle and a cask is apparent. It was subsequently compounded with another Irish word *clár* to give a 'stave'.

*Gad* or *gaid* is a withe, or withy, a twisted twig; *gaidean* is a small band of twigs, that is, a withie' (Dwelly 1920, 470). As mentioned above, these would have been used instead of metal hoops to bind the staves together. Skill and patience was required to fashion a watertight implement using these materials.

*Dèabh* means dry up, shrink, as the staves of a dish (Dwelly 1920, 314). This is the most common damage that occurs to wooden, staved implements; it would have been an important part of the dairymaids' duties to see that this did not happen. Due to a scarcity of wood in many areas and the skill required to make the items, their maintenance in good repair was vital to a well-run dairy.

According to I. F. Grant (1961, 214), the large round, flat bowls used to 'set' the cream, were carved from trunks of trees, and "because trees of the size to furnish this type of bowl were in short supply, the bowls were scrupulously cared for."

### **Cleaning items**

Cleanliness of dairy implements was of paramount importance to prevent spoilage of milk products. As seen by the following proverb, a dairymaid's job was considered exceptional and depended on her ability to complete her routine with satisfactory results. *Is lionmhor bean-bhleoghainn, ach is tearc banachaig*. 'Milking women are plentiful, but dairy-maids are rare' (Nicolson 1881, 263).

Unlike modern facilities where hot water and soap are readily available, the hill dairy had to make use of whatever was at hand.



*Badag*, according to Dwelly (1920, 57) is ‘a small bunch, cluster or tuft’. It is a brush for rinsing pots, generally made of heather, though John MacLean told Father Allan that it could also be made of strong feathers (McDonald 1991 [1899], 34).

*Mealag* is matted roots of grass or bent (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 224), also used to clean utensils in some areas. *Sopachan* from Early Irish *sop* - a wisp or tuft (DIL S, 346) is a ‘handful of fine heather, tied tightly together and used for scrubbing dishes, particularly milk-dishes’ (Dwelly 1920, 874).

A routine of heating water with stones and putting them into the milk implements filled with water was used (Mackenzie 1921, 14).

### **Milking Pails**

A milking pail was a utensil made specifically for milking. A pail used for milking a cow must be large enough to be placed between the knees of the milker and also have a handle for ease in carrying without danger of spilling milk as the *pùlás* (*pùlais*) described below.

Wentworth (1996, 117) gives a Gaelic spelling, *bucáid*, of the English word ‘bucket’ to mean a pail made of wooden staves with a *pùlás* or round handle over the top, for milking. According to Dwelly (1920, 740), *pùlais* is south Sutherland for *bùlas*, a pot-hook.

*Stò* is a pail, *stò bleoghainn* is a milking pail (Dwelly 1920, 903).

*Cuinneag* can be a pail or churn, see below. *Cuinneag bhleothainn* or *bhleoghainn* is a wooden milk-pail (Armstrong 1825). Presumably these two have handles. If not they would have been used for storage rather than for milking. Watson (1904, 74) describes *Càrn Cuinneag* as a huge double peak in Kilmuir, Easter Ross and says it may be called this from the fact that “when viewed from a distance, the peaks may be considered to represent a gigantic *cuinneag* with its ‘lug’.” Another

mountain, located in Sutherland, is called ‘*Quinag*’, possibly for the same reason. The ‘lug’ was a different type of handle than the one described by Wentworth. The staved buckets had one stave that was quite a bit longer than the others and was shaped rather like a lollipop. This style carried over into the next ‘generation’ of buckets that were made of metal but still had an elongated piece for a handle. The picture below was taken at the Dun Tulum folk museum on the Isle of Skye. Note the metal bucket in the lower right of the picture, as well as the bucket to its immediate left. The wooden (staved) bucket, three items to the right of the metal bucket, has two *cluasan* ‘ears’ and would have had a *pùlais* or round handle, as listed in Wentworth’s dictionary, possibly made of rope. The two square wooden items with holes, between the wooden bucket and the metal bucket, are cheese presses. The two large, round pans on the right would have been used to allow milk to stand over-night for the cream to rise, here they are metal instead of wooden.



There are six butter churns in this picture, three are of the plunger type and two at the back left are barrel with a handle and gear mechanism. There is a glass jar with a paddle inside (just in front of the two barrel churns). This is the type that was used on the ranch in Colorado.

*Cuachain* is a pail for milking into – *a' stealladh bainne ann an cuachain*, ‘spouting milk into a pail’ (Armstrong 1825). Dwelly (1920, 284) has *cuach-bhleoghainn* for a milking pail or cog. It is from the Early Irish *cúachán* (*cúach*) which was a cup, bowl, basin or vessel: *a chúacháin* ‘o little bowl’ (DIL C, 569).

Armstrong (1825) cites, *a cumán eadar dà ghlùn*, ‘her pail between her knees’ (from an old poem). The milkmaid sat on a *stòlán* ‘milking-stool’ (Wentworth 1996, 102) or on her heels with the bucket placed between her knees for steadiness. From Armstrong’s citation we know that, at least in some areas, the *cuman* was the milking pail, rather than a small pail or dish used by the dairymaid for other functions (see below). In other areas it could have been used to drink from or to skim cream. Dwelly even refers to it as a churn. The same word was not used for all of these different utensils in the same area; different areas had, and still have, specific meanings for a common word. Dwelly was interested mostly in mainland Gaelic, while other collections contained Gaelic primarily from the Isles.

*Binneal*, according to Carmichael (1971, 15), is the same as *cuman*, ‘a milk vessel’, and *binneal binndichidh* is a vessel in which milk was curdled.

*Curasan* is a milk pail (see also below). *Dearbh* is a churn as well as a milk pail according to Armstrong (1825). *Derb*, in Early Irish, is a vessel for liquids, i.e. a pail or churn (DIL D, 30).

### **Tubs and Storage Implements**

*Curasan* was also a firkin for butter (Armstrong 1825). A firkin, according to Allan (2000, 522), is ‘a small wooden tub or cask used for storing liquids, butter, or fish, also any of various British units of capacity, usually equal to nine imperial gallons (about 41 litres)’. *Cuach is curasan* are a ‘cup and milk-pail’ (Armstrong 1825). This would imply that the *curasan* is for storing milk rather than a pail for milking into.

Dwelly lists *currasan* as a large deep vessel or pail in Arisaig. When visiting the Museum of Butter in Cork, Ireland I saw a large metal milk container equipped with a lid. I had always known this type of vessel to be used for storage and transporting milk but it was labelled a churn. When I questioned the guide, he simply said that he had always known that to be called a churn even though it was not used for making butter.

Forbes (1905, 103) lists *drochta-bhainne* as a milk-tub and *drolmad-bhainne* as a milk pitcher. *Drochta* is found in Early Irish for tub or vessel ‘in medical texts used for a certain measure. Apparently a vessel of prescribed size’ (DIL D, 402-3). *Drolmad* is perhaps cognate with Early Irish *drolmach*, a wooden vessel with rings or handles attached to the sides; used for carrying water, etc. (DIL D, 404).

*Ballan* means a tub or vessel but can also be a teat (Dwelly 1920, 63). *Ballan-blàthaich* was the buttermilk tub, according to Dwelly (1920, 63). The wooden vessels, being porous, were very difficult to clean; the dairymaids had to be very careful to scrub them thoroughly or the milk would spoil (Meeks 1999, unpublished MSc p. 8). The use of a special or separate tub for buttermilk was probably necessary, as buttermilk would be stored for longer periods of time than fresh milk and the tub would tend to be more difficult to clean than vessels that were cleaned on a daily basis. *Ballán* in Early Irish was ‘a type of drinking vessel, vessel used for holding drink’ (DIL B, 26).

The *ballan-buaile* or ‘cowfold tub’ was a tub suspended on a pole in which milkmaids carried home the milk from the fold to the house. In carrying home the *ballan-buaile* they would keep step and to aid them in this they sang a milking song (Carmichael 1971, 11). *Bainne-buaile*, mentioned in Chapter 6 ‘Milk and Milk Produce’, was milk from the fold carried in the *ballan-buaile*. Even though ‘tub’

usually means a wide-mouthed open container, it is probable that the *ballan-buaile* was covered in order to keep dirt out of the milk.

The *buidhean*, a staffless churn (see also below), was a circular vessel of tanned skin used for carrying milk from the *buaile*, ‘fold’, in the hill to the dairy at the house. It varied in size according to the number of cows being milked; ranging from one-and-a-half to two feet in diameter. It was carried on the dairymaid’s back, the *buarach*, spancel, being passed through its two *cluaiseanan* (little ears) or ‘handles’, and its two ends fastened in front of the dairymaid. It was used only when there was a sizeable *buaile* and a large quantity of milk. It was higher, but not broader than the *cuman*. It had two short ears like a ‘ship’s bucket’, with a rope between them. It was also used for water (Carmichael 1971, 25). *Buidhean* is from the Early Irish *muide*, a vessel for holding liquids, especially milk; in size intermediate between a ‘*cilarn*’ and a ‘*drolmach*’, also a churn, a vessel of cooling drink and a vessel full of milk (DIL M, 184).

*Stòp*, according to Dwelly (1920, 904), “is a wooden vessel used for bringing home the milk from the sheilings or for carrying water. The mouth is covered with a piece of sheepskin called an *imideal*. The *stòp* is narrower at the mouth than the bottom and about 18 inches in height.”

Dwelly (1920, 219) has *cnò-bhainne* as a wooden vessel for carrying milk from the sheiling, literally the milk-nut, as it was made in the form of a nut. Carmichael lists it as *cruth-bhainne*. Bands of leather, *irisean*, were attached to it at each side and came round the upper part of the chest of the carrier. Sometimes it was plain and sometimes interlaced (Carmichael 1971, 54).

*Cuach-bhleoghainn* was a “milking-pail or cog, a vessel that superseded the *cnò-bhainne*, and is itself now replaced by the tin pail” (Dwelly 1920, 284). Peter

MacGregor in *Na Frithean Gaidhealach* 'The Highland Deer Forests', has: *Bu bhinn am fuaim cur stràc air cuaich*. 'Sweet was their sound as they filled up the milking-pails' (Thornber 1985, 42-44).

The *coidhean* was a vessel for storing milk. Like the *buidhean*, this was made in size suitable to the number of cows being milked. It was generally made of white and black staves (*clàr geal agus clàr dubh*). There were twelve staves, the twelfth stave was six inches or so higher and also wider than all the rest. This was the handle. The condition of the *coidhean* indicated the diligence of the *bean-bhleoghainn*, milkmaid: if it was specially clean it showed she might be trusted to make butter and cheese i.e. *annlan*. If not, she was 'taken from her high office', as Carmichael puts it. "The staves should show their original colours and the hoops their whiteness" (Carmichael 1971, 44). The hoops would have been made from withies or twigs, the fact that they were white meaning that the bark was probably stripped from them. They would have been doubly hard to keep clean, as stripped wood is much more porous than wood with the bark on it. However, they were on the outside of the bucket so would not be in contact with the milk. The staves themselves, being alternately white and dark, were probably made of the outer wood (light) and sapwood or heartwood used for the dark staves, or from two different types of wood cf. oak and birch.

### **Lids**

There is a story in Adomnán's *Life of St Columba* that mentions a wooden vessel full of milk that a young man was carrying on his back. He asked the saint to bless the milk, but when he did, the cask shook violently and the peg that held the lid to the pail was shot back through both holes and thrown some distance (Adomnán 1995, 166).

The two holes mentioned appear to be like the *cluaiseanan* of the *buidhean* above. I

have found several references to vessels being carried on the back but have not found another reference to this type of lid – most of the lids are skins tied over the mouth of the implement. For example, *fuirleach* is the parchment or skin to cover a milk-dish (Dwelly 1920, 464), given by Carmichael (1971, 76) as *fuileach*. *Faircill* is a lid of a cask or pot (Dwelly 1920, 406). *Forcle* (*far-*, *foir*, *fair-*) is a top surface; a top, cover or lid in Early Irish (DIL F, 321-2).

In the Isles, an *imideal* (also spelt *imdeal*), according to Carmichael (1971, 91), was a piece of sheepskin tied securely round the mouth of a *cuman*, ‘milk pail’. The *imideal* was in this case the *bùilig* of other places. In Uist, according to Dwelly (1920, 540), it was fastened on the mouth by “the *snàthainn imbhuideil*, a strong supple thong, which secures the skin lid, by tightening it between the two hoops on the edge of the pail or keg. When so fastened, the keg could be carried on one’s back without spilling any milk... The usual manner of carrying the kegs so secured, was in a ‘plaid’ or sack made of *muran* or sea-bent sewn together.” See poem “*Or an Ime*” below.

In addition to being the skin lid mentioned above, the *imideal* is a vessel in which the milk was carried home from the sheiling. It was sometimes on a pole called *maide a’ bhallain* (Dwelly 1920, 623) shouldered between two persons and sometimes slung on horseback (Carmichael 1971, 91). Dwelly (1920, 540) says that *imbhuideal*, pronounced *imideal*, ‘*m* long’, is a “wooden keg or pail for carrying home milk and cream on the back from the sheilings. Sometimes, carried on horseback slung one on each side – Wester Ross. The piece of skin tied over its mouth is called *iolaman*, and the piece of string that ties the *iolaman* is *snàthainn imbhuideil*.” The following verse from Lochcarron in Ross-shire bears out the above descriptions.

*Cumain is snàthain is im'ideil*  
*Ceithir thimchioll Lùb TheaMr.adail.*

Milk pails and threads and coverings  
All round the bend of TeMr.adal (Watson 1904, 197).

'The very fact that these 'everyday' type of things were noted down in verse and song signifies their importance to the people in the Highlands.

### Churns

A churn is an implement designed to agitate cream in order to turn it into butter.

*Crogán-ime*, according to Wentworth (1996, 26), is a small churn of earthenware, a crock or a glass jar, with a wooden top and churn-staff.<sup>4</sup>

Dwelly (1920, 261) lists *crannag* as a churn. MacBain (1896, 93) has it as a pulpit, a frame for holding fir candles, or a wooden structure of various kinds, citing: "Irish '*crannóg*', a hamper or basket, Middle Irish '*crannoc*', a wooden vessel, a wooden structure, especially the '*crannogs*' in Irish lakes." DIL (C, 511) lists *crannóc* as a wooden structure, wooden drinking-vessel or container. *Crannachan* is a specific kind of churn. (See Chapter 6 'Milk and Milk Produce'). It is called a *biota* in Lewis (Dwelly 1920, 261). A *biota* elsewhere can be a churn, pitcher or vessel, according to Dwelly (1920, 97). MacBain (1896, 33) compares Norse *byatta*, a pail, a tub, Anglo-Saxon *bytt*, Latin *buttis*, and English *butt*.

*Crannlochan* is a 'provincial' word for churn, according to Dwelly (1920, 262); although it should be *crannlachan* which is the diminutive of *crannlach* 'boughs'.

*Cuinneag*, as well as being a pail, is given also by Dwelly (1920, 293) as a churn which may have been its earlier designation as it is given in DIL (C, 596) as *cuinneóc* 'churn'.

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<sup>4</sup> For further discussion on pottery ware see 'Crogans and Barvas Ware' by Hugh Cheape in *Scottish Studies* 31.



*Crath* means shake, tremble, quiver, churn, it is seen in Early Irish as *crith*, ‘the act of shaking’ (DIL C, 534). *Crath bainne* is to churn milk (Dwelly 1920, 267). Since cream is required to make butter, *crath bainne* might refer to *omhan* (see Chapter 6, ‘Milk and Milk Produce’, also below), or to the milk (buttermilk) left in the churn after the butter is made. Wentworth (1996, 27) has *dèan crathadh*, *bi crathadh*, make butter, *bha i crathadh*, she was churning, *crathadh* churning.

*Maistir* is also a churn (Armstrong 1825). *Maistreachadh*, according to Dwelly (1920, 626), is the act of churning, making butter, mixing, agitating, also the quantity of butter taken off a churn. The last is important, as it becomes a measure of the product. *Maistreadh* is the process of churning and *maistrich* is the verb for churn, mix together or agitate (Dwelly 1920, 626). *Maistrid* is ‘churns’ in Early Irish, *maistred* is the verbal noun of *maistrid* i.e. ‘churning’ and *maistriugad* is the noun ‘churning’ (DIL M, 43).

*Measradh* is the quantity of cream or butter in the churn at any given time. *Am bheil measradh agad an diugh?* ‘Have you a churning today?’ *Tha i a’ measradh*, ‘she is churning’ (Dwelly 1920, 644). *Measair* is a verb meaning churn, e.g. *measair am bàrr* ‘churn the cream’; it can also be a noun meaning a dish, tub, measure, or milk-dish (Dwelly 1920, 643). *Meisrín* is listed in DIL (M, 90) as a noun “(dim. of *mesar*?) a measure (? vessel) containing twelve times the full of a hen’s egg-shell.” It also lists *med(s)ar* as being found in Middle Irish. Also *mesair* which is a measure, measurement, limit or a vessel used as a measure of a specified quantity (DIL M, 112). In an Old Irish Testament or Will of 1388, according to Forbes (1905, 104), *maser (measair) ligata*, is given for a bowl hooped or bound with silver. Watson (1904, 91) has *Loch Mhiosaraidh (Loch Measach* on the Ordinance Survey Map), as Loch of dairy produce which is in the uplands of Kiltearn Parish in Ross.

*Meadar* is also a milk-dish or measure, *metar* in Old Irish is a measure or a wooden vessel, ‘*do bleogain a mbo i meatraib*’ ‘milk pails’ (DIL M, 117). Armstrong (1825) has “*meadar* (from *mead* ‘measure’), a small ansated wooden dish, bicker, churn, or milk-pail. The Irish *meadar* is of one piece, quadrangular, and hollowed with a chisel; the Highland *meadar* is like the lowland ‘luggie’ or ‘bicker’, round-hooped and ansated.” Dwelly (1920, 638) gives *meadar*, ‘small pail or circular wooden vessel’, ‘bicker’, ‘churn’. Forbes (1905, 104) gives it as a milk-dish. “*Miodarach* means ansated – like a wooden dish” (Armstrong 1825). *Meadar-bleoghainn* is a milk pail, *meadar-ime* a butter pail, and *meadar-imideal* a pail whose mouth is covered with a skin, used for any liquid (Dwelly 1920, 638).

A story in “More West Highland Tales” (Campbell 1994, 298-299) mentioned in Chapter 6 ‘Milk and Milk Produce’; involves a young man, a *cailleach* and her daughter. At one point, the *cailleach* “*fhuair i cuman, agus rànaig i am muidhe, ’s thug i spionadh a mach air a ’chnag, agus bha i leigeadh an sgathaich do’n chuman.* ‘The hag got a milk pail, came to the churn and jerked out the stopper, and began to let the dregs of the milk fall into the pail.’ I had not come across the stopper in the bottom of the churn before, but it made sense to have such an arrangement to let the buttermilk out of the churn, though most of the old churns that I have seen do not have such a stopper. When I spoke to Jonathon MacDonald, curator for the folk Museum at Dun Tulum (July 2002), he said that he too had never seen a churn with a stopper. However, in an interview with Mrs. MacDonald of Valtos, I learned that the round churns which stood on legs had such a stopper.

*Muidhe*, a churn, gives *ri muidhe*, churning, also *muighe* (Armstrong 1825). *Thoir a mhuidhe*, means literally ‘bring to churn’ (Dwelly 1920, 676).

*Deirbh* is an obsolete noun for churn (Armstrong 1825), it is from Early Irish *derb*.

In Gairloch *eireannach* is the word for a plunger type churn (Dwelly 1920, 391). The word possibly stems from *èirigh* as the plunger churn used a rising motion with the plunger.

There were several different types of churns. There are early references to butter being made in the Highlands by putting milk into a skin bag, wooden tub or earthenware jug covered tightly with a sheepskin or goatskin and tipping it back and forth between two people. “Straw was used to cushion the shock or, in the sheilings, the work was done on a bed” (Fenton 1976, 150). This method, understandably, took many hours. A quicker method, also mentioned by Fenton, was using a wooden vessel with a mouth opening just large enough for the dairymaid to insert her hand and arm. She then used her arm as a plunger and churned the milk into butter. An iron pot could also be used for this method (Fenton 1976, 150).

The churn with staff was considered an innovation in the Isles and not necessarily well received, as seen by the following verse from Kate MacNeill of Barra.

*Or an Ime*

*O'n chailleadh a' chuinneag  
Chan fhaicear a' bhùilig,  
Is cleachdannan ùr  
Air tighinn dh'an àit  
Ach seasamh ri crannachan  
Is faide shlat-shiùil  
Do mhaide 'ga stiùradh  
Fodha gu mhàs.*

Charm of the Butter

Since lost is the stoup  
Not seen is the covering,  
New-fangled fashions

Having come to the land,  
 But standing at a staff-churn  
 With the length of a sailyard  
 Of a stick driven hard  
 Down to its base (Carmichael 1941, 82-3).

*Còrn* is the sleeve on a churn lid, where the churn staff goes through a hole in the lid, to stop splashing (Wentworth 1996, 27). *Creatachan*, according to Armstrong (1825), is a churning stick or churn-staff. The staff became the important innovation for churning as it speeded up the butter-making process. This is possibly a misprint in Armstrong as Dinneen (1996, 262) has it as *creathachán*.

### **Small Implements**

Dwelly (1920, 293) has *cuinneag* as a small pail, milk-pail (Scots 'stoup'), as well as churn as seen above.

Armstrong (1825) lists *cuman* as a pail, a small wooden dish without a handle, and a 'skimmer'. The 'skimmer' was used to take cream from the top of the milk once it had set up. A shell was often used for this purpose. It might or might not have holes drilled in the shell to allow the thinner milk to drain from below the thick cream. I have also seen wooden skimmers shaped like a spatula, with a handle and a shallow cupped scoop, which had holes in it.

*Cuach* is a bowl, cup, goblet or a drinking cup, according to Armstrong (1825). The Scots term 'quaich' meaning a small shallow drinking cup with two handles (Allan 2000, 1140), comes from this word. *Cuachag* is a little cup (Dwelly 1920, 284). A line from *Do'n Mhorbhairne* by Peter MacGregor has '*Dol do'n bhuaill' le cuach is cuman*, 'Going to the milking-fold with cup and pail' (Thornber 1985, 18-19).

*Deil' bhainne* is a milk-dish or cup according to Forbes (1905, 103). *Dela* or *deil* in Old Irish is a teat or dug and *deilech* (from *dela*) is a milk cow (DIL D, 6).

*Leastar* is a milk-dish (Forbes 1905, 104); it is from Early Irish *lestar*, a vessel, container for liquids or a dispensing vessel (DIL L, 120).

Dwelly (1920, 386) has two spellings, *eascra* and *easgradh*, for a cup or drinking vessel, now obsolete. Found in Early Irish as *escra*, “a vessel for dispensing water, wine or other liquids (apparently intermediate in size between a large jar and a drinking cup, but small enough to serve as the latter occasionally)” (DIL E, 193).

*Gogan* is a small wooden dish made of staves with one handle, also a pail. *Laogh-gogain* was a hand-reared calf (Dwelly 1920, 514); the significance of this is that the calf either lost its mother or was taken from the mother and raised on milk given to it in the *gogan*. A hand-reared animal seldom forgets its human connections and usually remains a pet for life. This was probably not as common an occurrence in the Highlands as in a non-dairy society. There is much evidence of two cows raising one calf from the killing of bull calves at (or shortly after) birth noted in Chapter 4 ‘The Milk Cow’. MacBain takes *gogan*, a wooden milk-pail, also *cogan* from Scots ‘*cogue*’, ‘*cog*’, apparently allied to Middle English ‘*cog*’, a ship.

*Maolag*, according to Dwelly (1920, 629) is a small dish without handles – a milk-dish; the term also refers to a hornless cow, stemming from *maol* meaning ‘bare, bald or hornless’. *Mullan* is a ‘kind of milking vessel’ (Dwelly 1920, 681), possibly also from *maol*.

MacLennan (1995 [1925], 256) has *peula*, a milk-pail, presumably from English ‘pail’.

Dwelly (1920, 731) has *pola*, a bowl, *pola bainne*, a bowl of milk, and *polachan*, a small clay jar about 15 to 18 inches high used in Lewis for holding cream.

A *noigean* is a ‘noggin’ (quarter-pint measure), a wooden cup, a small wooden vessel used in milking sheep and goats; when full it was emptied into a *coidhean* or

*cuman* (Dwelly 1920, 700; Carmichael 1971, 44). Scots ‘noggie’ is a wooden dish with one handle or ear (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 247).

*Coindean* is a small tub, according to Dwelly (1920, 226). Dwelly (1920, 227) gives it as *coinndean* in Arisaig and Badenoch.

*Sùileag* (a ‘little eye’) was a little circular wooden or clay vessel containing one Scots pint, used for keeping milk (Dwelly 1920, 914). One Scots pint is the equivalent of two English pints approximately 1.136 litres.

*Cnagan* was an earthen pipkin, a small earthen drinking cup (Dwelly 1920, 217). An alternative spelling is given as *crogan* ‘a pitcher or little earthen dish’ (Dwelly 1920, 275).

*Dabhan* according to Dwelly (1920, 305) is a pitcher or bucket.

### **Butter Dishes**

*Caiteag* was a pot, specifically butter pot (Armstrong 1825).

*Meagan* or *moisten*, according to Armstrong (1825), is a ‘small dish of butter’, a small wooden vessel for containing butter. Dwelly (1920, 644 & 661) has *Meagan* (*moisten*) as ‘a dish to hold butter, a butter-crock’. According to Dwelly (1920, 661), *moisten* can also be a cheese-vat, while *miosganach* means abounding in butter-kitts, like a butter-kitt, butter-making (Armstrong 1825). ‘Kitt’ or ‘kit’ in this context relates to the Middle English ‘kyt’ meaning a wooden tub (Allan 2000, 772). *Mescán* in Old Irish is from *mesc* ‘mix’ a mass or lump: *mesgan* a lump or pat of butter... it is produced by churning (DIL M, 114). Also related is *mescad*, the verbal noun of *mescaid* ‘mixing’: ‘*do mescad ind loma*’, ‘churning milk’ (DIL M, 113).

After the butter was taken from the churn it was put in a bowl and rinsed with water, a wooden paddle called a *boisean* or *clapan* was used for removing water and milk from it (*Museum nan Eilean* poster *Obair a' Bhainne*).

*Miosraichean bainne*, from *miosair*, is a large vessel in which milk is allowed to lie to wait for the cream to rise to the top (McDonald 1991 [1899], 180). *Miosair* is from Early Irish *mes(s)ar*, and *mesair* as seen above. The procedure was that any milk that was not going to be consumed in its initial fresh form would be poured into large shallow pans. According to I. F. Grant (1961, 214), these pans were originally hollowed out from slabs of a tree. The milk was left for at least twelve to twenty-four hours for the cream to rise to the top. The cream would then be skimmed off and placed in the churn to be made into butter. Initially the dairymaid would strain the milk through a cloth in order to catch any dirt that might have fallen in the pail; this was called *sìoláth* – *tha i sìoláth a' bhainne*, she's straining the milk (Wentworth 1996, 163).

### **Frothing**

Armstrong (1825) lists *loinid* as a churn-staff, a wooden instrument for frothing cream. Found in *Sgian Dubh an Sprogain Chaim*, a poem by Lachlan MacKinnon, is *loinidean is omhnaichean, an còmhnaidh dhuibh bu bhiadh*; 'whisking sticks and milkshakes have ever been your food' (Black 2001, 14-15). According to DIL (L, 189) *loinid* is a churn-dash. Dwelly (1920, 595) has it as a 'churn-staff', 'whisk', an 'instrument like a churn-staff but of smaller size and with a twisted rope of hair round the horizontal part of it, with which milk or whey is frothed, also called *loinid-omhain*'. It was also called a *slamhach*, according to Armstrong (1825), being used to make a frothy milk substance by heating the milk and beating it into foam. The froth was then skimmed and consumed and the procedure repeated until all of the milk had been used. In the Western Isles the froth stick was called a *maide slamain*, where *slaman* or curdled milk was used for the basis of the froth. (See Chapter 6 'Milk and Milk Produce'). *Maide* in Early Irish is a stick or a staff (DIL M, 27).

*Ròn* or *ròin* is the hair of the mane or tail of a horse, or the hair of a cow's tail, wrapped around the *loinid* (Armstrong 1825), the head of the *loinid* that the hair is wrapped around is called the *riamlach* (Carmichael 1971, 118). *Ròn*, according to Forbes (1905, 104), is a milk-whipper or frother, a wooden instrument with a rim of hair around it. *Rón* in Early Irish is horsehair (DIL R, 97). Dwelly (1920, 770) lists it as *ròn lonaid*, a circle of hair around the frothing-stick. Carmichael (1971) has *simid* as a mallet or churn staff. "The head of the *simid* for churning was made of horsehair, preferably the hair of the tail of an un-castrated horse." I believe there is a bit of confusion here: a regular churn staff for butter was much larger than the item used for frothing and did not have hair around it, as far as I can tell. The hair was to give an action like that of a whisk, i.e. a whipping action rather than the plunging action of the butter churn. The hair of the stallion was said to keep the fairies away and also help ward off the evil eye (Meeks 1999, essay 2 p. 4).

### **Cheese**

*Ballan-binndeachaidh* literally a 'renneting tub', is a cheese press (Dwelly 1920, 95). Armstrong (1825) has *ballan-bintiche*, a cheese-press, and *ballan-bainne*, a milk tub.

*Dlochd* is a strainer or colander, *dlochdair* means to strain, press and squeeze (Dwelly 1920, 343). It is from Early Irish *dlochta* to split or cleft and *dlochtaid* (from *dlochta*) is rending or lacerating (DIL D, 164).

*Fàisg* and *fàisgean* both mean a cheese press (Armstrong 1825). *Fàisg* is only given in the singular; the plural of *fàisgean* is *fàisgeanan* (Dwelly 1920, 407).

*Fàsgadair* or *fàsgadair càise* is a cheese press (Armstrong 1825). Dwelly (1920, 407) lists *fàsgadair* under *fàisgeadair*, meaning only a presser, not specifically a cheese press. *Fàiscid*, in Early Irish, is pressed or squeezes (DIL F, 29) and *fàiscre* is pressure or that which is compressed i.e. pressed curd cheese (DIL F, 30).



*Fiodhan*, literally ‘a wooden object’, is a cheese-press, also written *fiughan* (Armstrong 1825).

*Cliabh* was a kind of basket or hamper used in the Highlands for carrying burdens, and generally slung on each side of a horse as a creel, also, a cheese-chest (Dwelly 1920, 208). It is found in Early Irish as *cliab*, a basket (DIL C, 237).

Hard cheese was made by first adding rennet to the milk and heating, it was then put into the *ballan-binnteachaidh*. The cheese presses varied from small wooden boxes or barrels with a lid and stone arrangement, to heavy blocks of stones in an iron frame lowered by a winch to squeeze out the *drùchd* (whey, literally ‘dew’). This type of cheese would last in storage for a long time.

### **Protection**

The plant *cuibhreachan* was used as a safeguard against spiriting away the *toradh* (substance) of the milk. As mentioned in Chapter 6 ‘Milk and Milk Produce’, *toradh* is the product of milk, i.e. butter or cheese, rather than the milk itself (McDonald 1991 [1899], 316). The plant was placed under the milk-vessels. Any house that had it was safe against the wiles of witches and wizards (Carmichael 1971, 55). This statement by Carmichael was in the present tense, indicating that this practice was continued as late as 1860-1900 when he was collecting data in the Highlands.

...

This chapter has looked at various implements used in the Highlands for processing dairy products. It described their manufacture and care as well as specific uses. Proverbs, verse and folklore add to the general knowledge that can be gained by studying the related Gaelic terms, placing them in context of everyday use. The next chapter will deal with the importance of flesh and other foods to the diet of people in the Western Islands and Highlands.

## Chapter 8

### Flesh and Other Foods



Photo courtesy of Alasdair MacIntyre and Electric Scotland

This chapter will examine some aspects of meat provision and consumption, as well as other foods available to people in the Western Islands and Highlands. Domestic animals, and wild game in the form of deer and fowl, provided meat for the Highland people. People in the Western Islands and Highlands did not eat pork and only the pink flesh of salmon and trout was acceptable, as white fish were considered famine food. Some of the questions I will be attempting to answer are; was meat available to everyone or only to the aristocracy, was it available on a daily basis or only for special occasions, how important was meat in the overall diet of the people for the time period? And what other foods were available to the people?

#### **Flesh**

Caesar had this to say about the people of Britain, “Most of the inland inhabitants do not sow corn, but live on milk and flesh and are clad with skins” (McDevitte 1893,

113). Meat has always figured large in Celtic tradition, Irish sagas are full of descriptions of food at feasts. The Highlanders were no exception; John Taylor known as the ‘water poet’ describes his experience when travelling with Lord Erskin in 1618. “I thank my good Lord Erskin, he commanded that I should always be lodged in his lodging, the kitchen being always on the side of a bank. Many kettles and pots boiling, and many spits turning and winding, with great variety of cheer. As venison bak’d, sodden, roast and stewed beef, mutton, goats, kid, hares, fresh salmon, pigeons, hens, capons, chickens, partridge, moore-coots, heath-cocks, caperkellies and termagants; good ale, sacke, white and claret, tent (or Allegant) and most potent ‘aquavitae’” (Taylor, 135).

The following terms describe various types of meat. *Feòil* is flesh of any kind; *mairt-fheoil*, beef; *muil-fheiol*, mutton, *circe-fheoil*, chicken, *muic-fheoil*, pork and *laogh fheoil*, veal, literally calf’s flesh (Armstrong 1825). *Daimh-fheoil* means beef according to Armstrong (1825), i.e. the meat of the ox. *Feòil, rud a bh’ agad gho do dhìothad*, is ‘meat, which you had for your dinner’ (Wentworth 1996, 101). *Feòlmhach* means flesh-meat (Armstrong 1825). DIL (F, 79) lists *feóil* as meat in Early Irish. The following passage from “*Moladh Chabair Féidh*” belittles porridge and kale as food unfit for warriors.

*Tha 'm brochan a' toirt sàr dhuibh,  
 'S tha 'n càl a' toirt at oirbh,  
 Ach s beag as misde 'n t-àrmann  
 Ur sath thoirt an-asgaidh dhuibh;  
 Ge Mór a thug sibh chàise  
 Far àirighean Asainne  
 Chan fhacas cuirm am Fòlais  
 Ge mòr bha de chearcann ann;  
 Caisteal biorach, nead na h-iolair',  
 Coin is gilleann gortach ann,  
 Chan fhaicear bioran ann ri tine  
 Mur bi dileag bhrochain ann;  
 Chan fhaicear mairtfeòil ann am poit ann  
 Mur bi cearch ga plodaigeadh,*

*'S gan tional air an déirce  
Nuair thréigeas gach cosgais iad.*

You're sated with porridge, Munros,  
And swollen with kale,  
But no warrior's the worse of it  
For filling you up free;  
Though you carried much cheese  
From the shielings of Assynt  
I've seen no feast in Foulis  
Though many were the chickens there;  
Pointy castle, nest of eagles,  
Starving dogs and servants there,  
Not a stick is seen on fire there  
Unless there's a drop of porridge there;  
No beef is seen in any pot there  
Without a chicken to make gruel,  
For they're gathered in by begging  
When the cost goes up too high for them (Black 2001,  
116-17).

*Chan fhaicear mairtfheòil ann am poit ann*, 'no beef is seen in any pot there,' is a significant item in this stanza as it points to a lack of basic fare. And though chickens are plentiful and of apparently lower status than beef, they are not even being used. A verse from *Oran a' Gheamhraidh* 'Song of Winter' by Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair lists beef as part of the food available although crowdie is not.

*A' mhìos chnatanach chasadach lom  
A bhios trom air an t-sonn-bhrochan dubh;  
Churraigeach, chasagach, lachdann is dhonn,  
Bhrìsneach, stocainneach, chom-chochlach thiugh,  
Bhrògach, mheatagach, pheiteagach bhàn,  
Imeacach, aranach, chàiseach, gun ghruth,  
Le'm miann bruthaiste, mairt-fheòil is càl,  
's ma bhios blàth nach dèan tàir air gnè stuth.*

The bare month of colds and of coughs,  
When heroes' black brose is much sought;  
Month that's munched, coated, tawny and brown,  
Breeched, stockinged, breast-hooded fast,  
Booted, white-vested and gloved,  
Bready, croudie-less, buttery, cheesy,  
Fond of brose, of beef and of kail,  
and of anything else if it's warm (Thomson 1993, 28-9).

Crowdie is only plentiful when fresh milk is plentiful which would be in spring and summer, all of the other items listed are storable items or available in winter.

*Spold*, according to Armstrong (1825), is a piece of meat or a joint of meat; *spold laoi* is a loin of veal, *spolla* is a joint of meat or a fragment and *spoilinn* is a small joint of meat. Early Irish *spólla* is listed as a ‘piece of meat’ or ‘joint’ in DIL (S, 358). Fenton (1976, 173) notes “It is amusing to think that one of the results of the enclosures was that the general use of mutton became more confined to the higher classes in the Lowlands whilst it remained a food of the common man in the Highlands and Islands.”

*Beil* is an obsolete word, according to Armstrong (1825), meaning a ‘meal of meat’ a ‘diet’. O’Reilly has the modern Irish meaning for ‘*beile*’ as a ‘meal’s meat’: the genitive of *beil* is *beile*. *Béil* is noted in DIL (B, 52), as an English loan word into Irish for ‘meal’.

*Breachdan* has become obsolete in its meaning of wheat or fresh meat, but is retained as meaning fresh butter (Armstrong 1825). MacBain (1896, 42) gives it as custard coming from Irish *brecht* ‘motley’. (See Chapter 6 ‘Milk and Milk Produce’). In order to justify the term ‘motley’ to the various items, it is necessary to examine their physical appearance. Coarsely ground wheat flour would be mottled from the bran and seed, and fresh meat is mottled with marbling.

Armstrong (1825) has *colog* as a collop or steak. It is referenced in DIL (C, 328) as *cológa méathuis* ‘collops of fat’. Armstrong also has *toitean* as a ‘collop’, a ‘steak’ or a ‘bit of flesh roasted on embers’.

According to Armstrong (1825), *colt* is meat or victuals, while in DIL (C, 329) it is simply listed as food.

*Coth* is an obsolete term for meat or victuals (Armstrong 1825), in DIL (C, 500) it is said to be food or sustenance.

*Mír* is a 'bit', *mìr mòr* is a 'mess' composed of chopped collops and herb seeds or a 'mess' composed of chopped collops mixed with marrow and herb-seeds (Armstrong 1825). *Mír* in Early Irish is 'a bit, small piece, morsel, commonly used of food' (DIL M, 147). Gaelic poetry records that this was the favourite "morceau of Fingal, and his heroic ally Goll Mac-Mhuirn, Gaul son of Morni, who always sat on Fingal's right hand and received the *mìr-mòr* over and above the customary ration of the band of Caledonian warriors" (Armstrong 1825).

In Wester Ross, according to Dwelly (1920, 520), *gràilleag* is a morsel, little bit, as of meat, cheese, etc.

*Croic*, according to Armstrong (1825), is a skin, hide or a venison feast. *Sigheann* and *sighne* mean venison, though 'more frequently written *sitheann*' (Armstrong 1825). Early Irish has *sideng* for deer or venison and *sidheann* 'venison' (DIL S, 221-222). A boat song from Lewis, *Iomair Thusa, Choinnich Cridhe* 'Row hard, Coinneach, my heart's dear', has Mac Gille Mhoire urging his boatman to row swiftly as Niall Odhar is pursuing them. A line from the poem explains what Mac Gille Mhoire would provide for his people after he has killed Niall. '*S gun dèanteadh feòil 's gun dèanteadh sitheann*, 'there would be made venison and red meat' (Ó Baoill, 1994, 48-49). The word order has been transposed in translation. Armstrong (1825) has *crubh-sithne* as a haunch of venison. Dwelly (1920, 847) lists it as *crubha-sithne* and gives *sithionn* (1920, 847) as venison or the flesh of rabbits, hares or poultry. It is originally from *sidheann* as seen above.

An anonymous poem written in the Eighteenth century, '*S mòr mo mhulad*, 'Great is my Sorrow', tells how a hunter would provide for his love.

*Gar am bheil mi eòlach air cur an eòrna  
 Ghleidhinn duit feòil nam mang,  
 Fiadh à fireach is breac à linne,  
 'S damh biorach donn nan càrn,  
 Damh chinn riabhaich sa' bheinn liath-ghlais,  
 Bhiodh san t-sliabh uam marbh.*

Though I know little of growing barley  
 I'd get you the meat of the harts,  
 Deer from forest and trout from pool,  
 Brown-snouted stag of the crags,  
 The brindled stag from the grey mountain  
 Killed by me on the upland moor (Thomson 1993, 192-  
 193).

*Feòil nam mang* is the meat of a young hart, known to deer hunters as the choicest meat (personal experience). Older deer tend to be tough and stringy, and, as this is a hunter/warrior poem, the killing of a hind would seem out of place, although *mang* is listed in DIL (M, 56) as a term for “a young (female?) deer; a fawn (?doe), *lúathithir fria maing bá cet-laeg* [as swift as] ‘a hind about her first fawn’.” The hunter brags of his ability to hunt by mentioning the stags of crags and the grey mountain that he would kill for her. His taking the trout from the pool for her places it in the same elevated status as stags. The following excerpt from *Beannachadh Bàird* by John MacKay, the Blind Piper reflects this:

*Spé bhon tigeadh an t-iasg thar muir  
 Agus fiadhach ri taobh glan—  
 Gu bradanach poll a chum sruth,  
 Braon bhreac dubh bho bheinn gu srath.*

Spey that could yield both fish from the sea  
 And hunting by her fair bank—  
 Pool formed by current is full of salmon,  
 Dew of black trout from mountain to strath (Black  
 2001, 122-23).

Though salmon and trout were acceptable, red meat was the preferred food with wild fowl a close second. An excerpt from *Dèan cadalan sàmhach*, ‘Sleep softly’, by John

MacRae, gives his thoughts about the place he left and reflects his unhappiness at being in America.

*Thoir mo shoraidh le fàilte Chinn t-Sàile nam bò  
Far an d' fhuair mi greis m' àrach 's mi 'm phàisde  
beag òg.*

*An toiseach an fhoghair bu chridheil ar sùnn,  
Am fiadh anns an fhireach, 's am bradan an grùnn;*

Say farewell but greet kindly Kintail of the cows,  
Where once I was reared at the time I was young.

At onset of autumn we'd be of good cheer,  
The deer in the forest, the salmon in the stream  
(Thomson 1993, 196-197).

A satirical song by Mairi Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh, who flourished in the middle of the seventeenth century, reflects the preference to red meat:

*--um faighte an tigh m'athar-s'  
Sitheann 's cnàimhean an fhéidh:  
Is e gheibhte an tigh t'athar-s'  
Sùgh is cnàimhean an éisg.*

In my father's house were found venison and bones of  
the deer;  
In thy father's house bree and bones of the fish were  
your fare (Watson 1965, 12-13).

*Lòn* is a diet, dinner, store, provision or food (Armstrong 1825). DIL (L, 197) lists *lón* as 'fat, provision(s), food, victuals, sustenance or feast. "The Gael of former times, like other ancient nations had but one meal or diet a day, the *lòn*"' (Armstrong 1825). Also *proinn* and *pronn* are listed by Armstrong (1825) as a meal, diet, or a dinner, *proinneachadh* is 'a dieting, dining, diet or dinner'. DIL (P, 206) has *proind* (*proinn*) as a 'meal, refection, generally of the chief meal of the day.'

*Saill*, according to Armstrong (1825), is fatness, fat or grease. *Gibeann* is a 'fat pudding made in the Hebrides' and *crèachan* is a pudding made of calf's entrails



(Armstrong 1825). For information that offal was a beneficial part of the Highland diet as a source of vitamin A see Smout.<sup>5</sup>

*Eanraich* is a kind of fat broth or gravy; *eun-bhrìgh* is chicken broth, gravy or soup (Armstrong 1825). *Sùgh* means broth according to Armstrong (1825). *Súg* is juice (in a large variety of applications) according to DIL (S, 409).

“*Taigeis* is a haggis, or kind of blood-pudding, much relished by the Scot and Gael” (Armstrong 1825).

*Marag* is a blood pudding or a sausage. *Mar* is described in DIL (M, 58) as a Norse loan word for sausage and pudding (?), *maróc*, *maroc* and *maróg*, all diminutive of *mar*, mean sausage. The proverb, *uaisle gun chuid, 'us maragan gun gheir*, ‘birth without means, and puddings without suet’, indicates that suet had to be added for the pudding to be worthwhile. Armstrong (1825) describes *marag dhubh* as a blood-pudding hardened in smoke. Pennant notes this, when visiting the Gairloch parish, on his tour of the Highlands in the summer of 1772, “The cattle are blooded at spring and fall: the blood is preserved to be eaten cold” (Pennant 1775, 334). *Crup-phutag* is blood-pudding (Armstrong 1825).

*Cosgairt* is dressing food (carcass), according to Armstrong (1825) who lists it as a feminine noun, Dwelly (1920, 173), under *casgair* has it as a verb, to slay, slaughter, butcher, massacre and lists *casgairt* as the verbal noun, slaughtering, butchering. DIL (C, 492) has *coscrad* for destroying, hacking and tearing apart.

*Feòladair* (from *feòil*) means a butcher or a slaughterer of cattle (Armstrong 1825). *Fleisd* is slay, slaughter, butcher and *fleisdear* is a butcher or flesher (Armstrong 1825).

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<sup>5</sup> *Prices, Food and Wages in Scotland 1550-1780*, T. C. Smout, p 239.

## Cooking Meat

*Amh* means raw, *feòil amh* is raw flesh (Armstrong 1825). According to Dwelly (1920, 28-29), it means ‘unsodden, unboiled, unroasted’, these being the accepted ways of cooking red meat by people in the Highlands as will be seen below.

*Grisg* means to roast or fry, *grisgean* is roasted meat or boiled meat (Armstrong 1825). *Grís* according to DIL (G, 162) is heat, fire, embers and hot ashes. *Ròstadh* according to Dwelly (1920, 772) is roasting, as of meat. According to Allen (2000, 1208) it is probably from Middle English ‘rosten’ meaning roasted or toasted. *Feòil rosta* is roast meat (Armstrong 1825). Though DIL (R, 102) has *róstaid*, *róssaid* as a late Romance loanword for roasts or grills.

*Sod* is ‘boiled meat, the noise of water when meat is boiling in it’ (Armstrong 1825). Armstrong says *bruich* is to boil seethe or simmer: *Bruichibh an fheòil*, ‘Boil the flesh’. *Bruithe* (part. of *berbaid*), according to DIL (B, 215), is boiled or cooked. Burt notes “I have been assured, that in some of the Islands the meaner sort of people still retain the custom of boiling their beef in the hide. Or otherwise (being destitute of vessels of metal or earth) they put water into a block of wood, made hollow by the help of dirk and burning. Then with pretty large stones heated red-hot, and successively quenched in that vessel, they keep the water boiling till they have dressed their food. It is said likewise, that they roast a fowl in the embers with the guts and feathers; and when they think it done enough, they strip off the skin, and then think it fit for the table.”

“*Fàs-lomairt* [is] an expeditious method of cooking victuals in the stomach, once practised by the Gael” (Armstrong 1825). Froissart mentions this in his chronicles when he witnessed the Scottish army travelling in England. “They take with them no purveyance of bread nor wine, for their usage and soberness is such in

time of war, that they will pass in the journey a great long time, with flesh half sodden, without bread, and drink of the river water without wine: and they neither care for pots nor pans for they seethe beasts in their own skins” (Froissart 1901, 49).

*Searcall*, according to Armstrong, is an obsolete word meaning ‘flesh or delicate meat, the best part of flesh-meat’. *Sercol(l)* is listed in DIL (S, 190) as a titbit, relish or delicacy, and is a borrowing into Early Irish from Latin *ferculum* (see Kelly 1998, 317).

*Cua-mhargadh* is an obsolete word meaning a flesh-market or a shambles (Armstrong 1825).

### **Fattened for food**

The deliberate feeding of an animal for more than just subsistence, that is to fatten for slaughter is given by the following words. *Biadhtha* means fed or nourished, ‘*damh biadhtha* is a stalled or fed ox’ (Armstrong 1825). It was mentioned in a previous chapter that a stall-fed ox was considered a *mart*, i.e. part of rents paid from Kintyre in the sixteenth century, indicating a series of planned acts of animal husbandry. The language bears out what we have found historically. *Biath* meaning to fatten, *bhasinna* ‘*marbhadh bó uaireannan, bó a rachadh a bhiathadh*, ‘we used to kill a cow sometimes, a cow that had been fattened’, also *laogh biaththa*, a fattened calf (Wentworth 1996, 52), or a well-fed calf (Wentworth 1996, 192). According to DIL (B, 95) *biathad* is the verbal noun of *biathaid* (feeds, nourishes) and is the ‘act of feeding’. The stall for the ox was called *damh-lann* (Armstrong 1825). DIL (D, 58) has *dam* ‘an ox’ and *lann* ‘a house or building’ (DIL L, 52).

*Loinn* is good condition or fatness (Dwelly 1920, 596).

*Meathusradh* (Forbes 1905, 14) means ‘fatlings’ which, according to Allen (2000, 504), is “‘a young animal fattened for slaughter.’” *Méthrad* is ‘fat’ in Early

Irish as seen in Chapter 4 ‘The Milk Cow’. *Meidh-alach* is fat cattle (Forbes 1905, 14) spelled by Dwelly (1920, 647), *mèithealach*. DIL (M, 118) has *métha* as plump or fat, later also *méith*. DIL (M, 281) lists *alacht* as pregnant, so these cattle could have been heavy with calf instead of fat market cattle, or it is possible that the word evolved from one meaning into the other.

*Reamhar* is the adjective ‘fat’, *reamhar am feòil*, fat fleshed. *Reamhraich* is to fatten, make fat, *reamhraichte* is fattened or fed (Armstrong 1825). *Remor*, *remur*, *remar*, according to DIL (R, 44) is stout, thick or corpulent.

*Réidhne* is a well-conditioned heifer (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 266). (See also chapters on heifer and milk cow).

Armstrong (1825) has *bó-gheamhraidh* as a cow slain for winter food; he also lists *bó* (or *mart*) *geamhraidh* for a winter mart or heifer slain for winter food. Dwelly (1920, 102) has *bó-bhiadhtha* as a mart for killing. *Bó-bhaith* is an obsolete term for cow slaughter according to Dwelly (1920, 103). There is a different concept here of a heifer or cow being slain for winter food and an ox being slaughtered. It is difficult to tell from the fragmentary evidence what was considered the norm and what might have been emergency measures. Cattle herd management in a home dairy society, as mentioned before, involved bull calves being killed between birth and six months except the few that were castrated and kept as oxen to be trained for traction, or fattened later for slaughter (this would not include the males kept intact for herd bull replacements). This practice leaves mainly heifer calves of one-, two- and three-years of age available for winter food; if this were the case; a heifer that might eventually be very productive could easily be sacrificed for meat. Decisions would have to have been made about which heifers to keep and which to slaughter. The other factor was the pinch-point of winter-feeding and how many could survive on the feed available. I

think that this was actually more critical after the Clearances for the people trying to live on the Islands and in the coastal areas where the population had increased and the grazing allowances had decreased.<sup>6</sup> However, Carmichael's informants (1941, 38-39) paint a somewhat different picture. This statement is about herds returning to *baile geamhraidh* (winter town) after being at the *àirigh* (sheiling) in Lewis. "While the flocks are away at the moorland pastures the home pastures have grown rich and green, and on reaching home after a weary march and long fasting the cattle, like children, have to be restrained from eating too much. This good feeding produces good milking, and there is food for man and beast all autumn and winter through, and joy in house and byre." It was certainly the intention that enough grass and forage would be preserved around the townland to keep the beasts in feed all winter. It is possible that because Lewis had summer and winter pasture longer than other areas, stock could be maintained in better condition for the entire year after a time that saw other areas in the Highlands and Islands struggling.

Dwelly (1920, 634) has *mart* as a cow or steer fattened for killing. According to Donald John MacLennan of Broadford, the common expression was *mart-lamhaig*, or *mart-tuaighe*, (literally a 'hatchet cow'). A line in Roderick Mackay's poem '*Òran na Caillich Bhuana*', reflects this usage. *Ach thug Aonghas mart làmhaig – 'S chan eil i ceàrr – á Loch Eubhat*, "But Angus brought a hatchet-cow – No error she – from Locheport" (Black 1999, 58-59).

MacBain has "mart, a cow: Irish 'mart', a cow, a beef: Early Irish 'mart', a beef; hence Scots 'mart', a cow killed for family (winter) use and salted, which Jamieson derives from Martinmas the time at which the killing took place." MacBain (1896, 219) also has "the idea of *mart* is a cow for killing; *martâ*, from root *mar*, die,

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<sup>6</sup> See Napier Commission Report for further details

of *marbh?*” For the correct etymology of *mart* see LEIA s.v. *mart* = *tuerie*, ‘massacre’.

An informant to J. F. Campbell (1994 [1860], 35-36) says of his boyhood in early 1800: “In those days, when people killed their *Marte* cow they kept the hide, and tanned it for leather to themselves.” Wentworth (1996, 32) has *mart* for cow (generally used when counting), e.g. *tha trì mart aice*, ‘she has three cows’. One of Dwelly’s informants (1920, 634) says that *mart* is used for ‘milk-cow’ in Gairloch. *Mart geamhraidh* is a winter ‘*mart*’. Professor Donald Meek says that *mart* was used in Tiree for any cow and that *bó* was not used at all. According to Dwelly (1920, 634) *mart* in a general sense is applied to cattle of any description, *gille dubh nam mart*, ‘the black-haired drover,’ Wester Ross.

*Sgabag* according to Armstrong (1825), is a “‘winter-mart; a beef slain for winter food, beef.” Forbes (1905, 17) has it as a cow salted for provision. Dwelly (1920, 811) says it was a ‘cow killed for winter provision, beef’.

### Vegetables

*Amaraidh* is scurvy-grass according to Armstrong (1825). Scurvy was a recognised problem in the Highlands, as several plants were known to be beneficial for the relief of symptoms and as a preventive,<sup>7</sup> though it appeared to be endemic only in certain areas.<sup>8</sup> *Barraist* is the herb called ‘borage’, that is green kail, *praiseach* is broth, pottage, gruel and also a kind of kail (Armstrong 1825). This is probably *praiseach fiadhain* (wild pottage), *praiseach glàs* (green pot-herb) or *praiseach bràthair* (brother – friar’s – pot-herb), all related plants, which grow in Scotland, with *praiseach fiadhain* being the most common, and all used as food (Cameron 1883, 60; Darwin 1996, 95).

<sup>7</sup> See *The Scots Herbal*, Tess Darwin and *Healing Threads*, Mary Beith.

<sup>8</sup> *Statistical Account of Scotland*, Sir John Sinclair, 1891.

*Brisgean* is a gristle or cartilage but also wild skerret or skirret. “(It) is a succulent root not infrequently used by the poorer people in some parts of the Highlands for bread or potatoes” (Armstrong 1825). According to Mary Beith (1995, 242), *brisgean* (silverweed) served as an alternative food during the Clearances for the dispossessed, ‘since it is one of the few edible plants that sheep abhor’.

“*Cabaisd* is cabbage, and *càl* is kail or colewort, *càl agus cabaisd*, colewort and cabbage” – old song (Armstrong 1825). Scotch broth can contain *càl* as its principle ingredient, *càl cearslach* – cabbage, *an d’fhuair thu do chàl*, have you got your kail (dinner)? *Gàradh cail* is a kitchen garden, and *càdhal* means colewort or kail, also the broth of which either is an ingredient (Armstrong 1825). Armstrong has *colais* as an obsolete word for cabbage.

*Sgealan* is wild mustard. “In addition to nettle kale there was a kale made of the *sgealain* (or Scots ‘*skellig*’) boiled with milk and butter. They do not use it now since the tea and meal come from the south” (McDonald 1991 [1899], 213).<sup>9</sup>

*Duileasg* is a sea plant (Dwelly 1920, 371), much used for making soup (personal correspondence, Marion Nicolson, Edinburgh 2001).

*Subas* is a ‘mess’ of wild berries and milk (Armstrong 1825).

### **Instruments**

*Adhal*, *athal* is a flesh hook, also *tadhal*, according to Armstrong (1825), seemingly where *an t-adhal* has become amalgamated to form one word. Dwelly (1920, 919) also shows *tadhal* as being an obsolete term for flesh-hook. *Áel* is listed in DIL (A, 77) as a flesh fork. Dinneen (1996, 1154) glosses *tadhal* as a flesh-hook or fork, and gives ‘*adhal trí mbeann*’, a three pronged flesh fork, a trident (1996, 6). It also means the udder of a cow (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 3). Dwelly (1920, 7) has *adhalach* ‘like

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<sup>9</sup> For more on mustard and nettle uses in the Highlands see *Healing Threads*, Mary Beith.

a flesh-hook, of or pertaining to a flesh-hook' and *adhalach* as an obsolete word meaning a nourisher. The implication here is that both cows' udders and flesh hooks were instruments to gain nourishment, milk on the one hand and meat on the other.

*Gramaiche* is a flesh-hook, from *gramag* (hook) (Dwelly 1920, 521).

*Bùlas* is a pot-hook, according to Dwelly (1920, 141). (See Chapter 7 'Dairy Implements'). *Cua* is an obsolete word for flesh and *cua-chromag* is an obsolete term for flesh-hook (Armstrong 1825). DIL (C, 567) has *cúa* 'flesh' and *crommán* (from *cromm*) as a hook, reaping hook (C, 546).

*Scàbhal* is a cauldron, kettle, baking-trough; a large bowl also spelt *scàl* (Armstrong 1825). *Beille* is an obsolete word meaning a kettle or cauldron (Armstrong 1825).

Alexander Carmichael collected the following story. A fairy woman entered a house and said, "*Thàna mi a shireadh na preis gu feòil a bhruich,*" that is, "I am come to ask for the cauldron to boil meat." In order to have the pot brought back, the following reply was required.

*Dlighe coire cnàmh,  
'S a thoir slàn gu taigh;  
Dlighe gobha gual  
Gu iarann fuar a bhruich.*

A pot deserves a bone,  
And to be brought home whole;  
A smith deserves coal  
To heat cold iron (Carmichael 1954, 242-43).

The use of the word *preis* or *prais* in the Carmichael story could place it in Wester Ross per Dwelly (1920, 733), who lists it as a cast-iron pot. The answering rhyme, which has been found elsewhere, gives a more general term for cauldron or pot. Professor Meek says that *preis* meant a huge brass pot on Tiree sometimes used for boiling clothes.



Dwelly (1920, 231) appears to make a distinction between *coire*, meaning pot and *cōire* which is a ‘circular hollow surrounded by hills’, but there is no difference between the two. *Coire* is found in DIL (C, 315) for cauldron or pot.

*Brothair* is a butcher, also a caldron, *brothlach* is a ‘‘pit made in the ground, in which the ancient Gael dressed their food, a place for dressing meat’’ (Armstrong 1825). According to DIL (B, 205), *broth* is meat or flesh and *brothlach* is a pit, especially a cooking-pit.

...

The terms in this chapter help to round out a picture of the Gael’s diet. Though dairy products played a large part, as seen in previous chapters, other foodstuffs were available and used. Meat had always formed part of a traditional ‘Celtic’ diet, as seen from literary and historic sources. It appears to have been available in many forms; not only domestic but also game animals were in good supply and were an important part of the Highland diet. It is evident that wild plants and vegetables were also utilised to a great extent when available during the growing season. The previous chapters have looked at the value of dairy and meat animals for food. The following chapter will address the importance of animals as wealth other than for food.

## Chapter 9

### Cattle as Wealth



1872 painting by William Smellie Watson "Highland Cattle - By the Sea". Photo courtesy of Dr. Sheila Schmutz, University of Saskatchewan.

This chapter deals with terms that reflect cattle as wealth. All of the preceding chapters have indicated the value of animals as far as food and food production is concerned. There is a subtle difference between the perceived value of a cow that produces milk and the value of a herd of cattle as collateral. Wealth in cattle was expressed with many and various terms. Cattle represented monetary gain through the markets but they also reflected a value in their own right. They were used to determine the worth of everything from a king's life to the dowry of a maiden. They were used to pay rents, tributes and death dues. They were eventually used to determine who was required to send their oldest child south to learn to read and write English.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Skene 'Statutes of Iona' in *Historians of Scotland*.

### **Flocks and Herds as units of value**

The terms in this section describe units of animals in relation to value. Father Allan (McDonald 1991 [1899], 112) gives *eàrnais* as a word used for “‘cattle, furniture, airts or earnest or engagement money.’” *Airneis* is a ‘herd of cattle’ according to Forbes (1905, 3), ‘cattle’ according to Armstrong (1825), or ‘stock’ per Dwelly (1920, 21). DIL (A, 233) lists *airnéis* as possessions, especially cattle, stock. All of the English terms imply a subtle difference; i.e. a herd of cattle is a unit in itself, whereas ‘cattle’ means that a value of ‘some kind’ would be attached to varying sums of animals. ‘Stock’ implies a composite of animals, not necessarily all of the same species.

*Mart*, as seen in a previous chapter, is a cow or steer fattened for killing and *martach*, according to Dwelly, (1920, 634), is having many cows or pertaining to cows. A line in a lengthy poem by John Roy Stewart entitled *Clann Chain an t-Sràil*, dealing with the battle of Culloden, has ‘*Cha bu phàigheadh leinn mairt ’nan éirig*’. ‘No cows could make up for their loss to us’ (Black 2001, 172-72). This line, with all the rhetoric that goes before and after it, appears to be a bit of an anomaly. However, the concept of cattle being of great worth to the Highland people shows in the idea that even cows could not make up for the loss of these brave men on the field of Culloden. In another lament about Culloden, Christiana Fergusson says ‘*Cha chrodh is cha chàirdean*’. ‘It’s not for cattle or kinsfolk’ that she mourns but for her husband who fell on the field (Black 2001, 174-75).

*Marbhuas* means many cows, according to Forbes (1905, 14). DIL (M, 166-167) lists *már* (see *mór*) as a great amount and *búas* as wealth (in kine); *buas* ‘cows, oxen’ (DIL B, 230). *Marchainn* is a stock of cattle (McDonald 1991 [1899], 175).

*Meanbh-chrodh* are small cattle, as sheep and goats and *meanbh-spreidh* is a collective term meaning a mixture of small cattle, i.e. sheep and goats (Armstrong

1825). *Menb* is listed in DIL (M, 99) as something minute or small (?) and *spréidh* as ‘cattle, stock, wealth or property’ (DIL S, 361). Alexander Carmichael (1954, 132-33) has a story in vol. 5 of *Carmina Gadelica* which mentions both ‘big cattle’ and ‘small stock’. *Bha nighean tuathanaich turas a’ buachailleachd a’ chruidh mhóir agus a’ meanbhchruidh aig a h-athair ann an Trosairigh am bràigh Coire Chrothadail an Uibhist*. ‘A farmer’s daughter was once herding her father’s big cattle and small stock in *Trosairigh* in the upland of Corry Corodale in Uist.’ Many times the distinction is not made between cattle of the bovine type and the smaller sheep and goats though husbandry practices amongst the three different species could vary considerably. Cows which were not housed during winter were left pretty much on their own over the winter months, but sheep appear to have been housed to a large extent, in some places both winter and summer. Although the original breed of sheep in the Highlands was quite hardy they were small and very susceptible to predators. A Gaelic proverb has this advice:

*Oidhch’ a-muigh is oidhch’ a steach,  
Math nan caorach, is olc nan each.*

In to-night and out to-morrow,  
Good for sheep, bad for horses (MacDonald 1926, 128).

There is not much information regarding management of goats, though there is evidence of large numbers being kept for milk and meat (Smout 1998 [1969], 121). Goats are mentioned as part of wealth in a song thought to have been written around 1611 in the Kintail area:

*Nan robh agam-sa an sin saidhbhreas,  
Crodh is caoraich, greigh is goibhre,*

Now, if I had then had riches,  
Cattle and sheep, goats and horses (Ó Baoill 1994, 64-65).

Forbes (1905, 14), also lists *meamnachair* and *meanachair* to mean sheep and goats.

*Seud*, as seen in Chapter 4 ‘The Milk Cow’, means jewel as well as milk cow.

The twinning of the meanings can be seen in an excerpt of the following poem.

*Miann na h-Oighe Gaidhlich*

*A threudan a' tighinn thairis air,  
Le barrachd dhe gach seud,  
Cha n-fhàgadh saoihbreas sona mi,  
Gun toileachas 'na dhéidh.*

The Highland Maid's Wish

His flocks and herds o'er whelming him  
With riches beyond measure,  
Wealth would never make me happy,  
Unless augmenting pleasure (Calder, 1937, 52-53).

Using *treudan*, from *treud*, ‘a drove, flock, herd’ (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 349), the poem emphasises and combines all livestock in ‘his’ possession. *Trét* is a flock or herd in Early Irish (DIL T, 301). *Sread* is a herd of animals; *sreadach* means ‘in herds or flocks’ (Armstrong 1825). Dwelly (1920, 892) shows *srèad* as being obsolete for herd or flock. According to Professor Meek, *srèad* comes from *treud* in the following progression, *treud* – *streud*– *sreud*. It was not obsolete on Tìree as *sreud* was a common term for a herd of animals (personal communication February 2003).

*Sealbh* is a herd, drove, number of cattle; a ‘tocher’ or ‘possession’ of cattle (Forbes 1905, 16), Armstrong (1825) has “‘property, stock, cattle, a drove or herd of cattle and a field. *Sealbh chaorach*, a stock of sheep; *sealbh chrodh*, a possession or stock of black cattle.’” (See Chapter 3 ‘Contemporary Reports’). Black cattle always meant cattle of the cow type, and normally marketable beasts. The reasons for the description are discussed in Essay #3 (Meeks 1999). Armstrong (1825) also has *seilbh* and *seilbhe* for a possession, property and farm-stock, as well as a herd or drove of cattle. *Selb* is listed in DIL (S, 162) for a flock or herd.

The following verses from the Book of the Dean of Lismore give a rather poignant side to the value of cattle.

XXV. *A Ughdar An Barún*  
*Eóghan MacCombaigh*

*Fada dhomh an laighe-se*  
*allmhurach liom mo shláinte;*  
*bheirinn do luach leaghais bhuaim*  
*dá mbudh liom na táinte.*

*Táin bó Cuailnge, ceathra throm,*  
*táin bó Dartá is bó Fliodhais*  
*do bheirinn is an tarbh trom,*  
*dá mbudh liom, i luach leaghais.*

Long I deem this lie-abed;  
my health is a stranger to me;  
I would give the cattle-herds,  
were they mine, as fee for healing.

The cattle-drove of *Cuailnge*, cattle of weight,  
the cattle drove of ‘Dartaid’ and of ‘Flidais’;  
all this I would give, and the weighty bull (of *Cuailnge*),  
as fee for healing, were they mine (Watson 1978, 194-  
95).

*Ceathra throm*, the weighty cattle, implies value in their own right as well fed beasts.

*Cethrae* (plural of *cethir* ‘a four footed beast’) is listed as ‘animals, cattle or flocks in DIL (C, 160). The idea of value and weight is again brought out with *tarbh trom*, the weighty bull. *Tarb* is listed in DIL (T, 77) for bull.

*Tàin* is ‘cattle, cows, flocks, also land and country’, *tàn* is ‘cattle, a herd of black cattle; a flock of sheep; farm stock’ (Armstrong 1825). DIL (T, 30) lists *táin* as a driving out or off, a cattle-raid or driven cattle, herd or flock. MacLennan (1995 [1925], 333) has *tàn* as a cattle raid and Forbes (1905, 18) lists *tainte* as cattle taken as booty or spoil. The following prayer uses *tàn* as cattle and because Carmichael translates it as ‘kine’, I take it to mean the large kind. *Achanaidh Taimh* – “*Dhe, teasruig an tigh, an teine, ’s an tòn...*” A Resting Prayer – “God shield the house, the

fire, the kine...’’ (Carmichael 1928 vol. 1, 100-101). In the prayer to St Magnus these excerpts show specific terms used to highlight the different species.

*Manus Mo Ruin*

*Tog ar seilbh mach ri leirg,*

*Cuartaich tòn agus buar,  
Cuartaich caor agus uan;*

*Crath an druchd o’n speur air crodh,  
Thoir fas air feur, deis, agus snodh,  
Dubhrach, luc-feidh, ceis, meacan-dogh,  
Agus neoinean.*

Magnus of My Love

Lift our flocks to the hills,

Surround cows and herds,  
Surround sheep and lambs;

Sprinkle dew from the sky upon kine,  
Give growth to grass and corn, and sap to plants,  
Water-cress, deers’ grass, ‘*ceis*,’ burdock,  
And daisy (Carmichael 1928 vol. 1, 178-181).

This prayer, as well as many others, demonstrates the importance people placed on protection from outwith their own capabilities, and also how important that each of the species is named. Here again we find no mention of goats.

*A’ latha mharbhar am mart is a’ latha theirigeas am mart, an dà latha ’s a tarbhaich am mart*, ‘the day the cow is killed and the day the cow is used up, the two days the cow is most profitable – proverb (Wentworth 1996, 127). This proverb is a reflection of the worth of a cow that is only realised after the fact, which is after she is gone or after her milk is gone.

### **Dowry**

A dowry, according to Allan (2000, 421), is ‘‘the money, goods, or estate that a woman brings to her husband in marriage.’’ *Slabhraidh* is a word for cattle and herds

(Forbes 1905, 17) It is found in Early Irish as *slabrae*, *slaibre* meaning stock (usually cattle) according to DIL (S, 256). Dinneen (1996, 1047) has *slabhra* for a beast, cattle or a dowry showing *bó-slahhra* as a cow, especially considered as part of a dowry.

*Spréidh* is cattle; a herd or a marriage portion (Armstrong 1825). Dwelly (1920, 887) lists *spréidh* as cattle of any kind, livestock. *Spréidheach* is ‘abounding’ in cattle, rich in cattle (Armstrong 1825). *Spréidh* used as ‘dowry’ is seen in the rather cynical poem from Eachann Bacach, who tells his love that her other suitors wouldn’t marry her without her dowry, implying that he would. “*Mo gheall nach pòs iad thu gun spréidh*” (Ó Baoill 1979, 108-109). An anonymous poem, ‘*N rèir a bhruadair mi ’m chadal*, ‘Last night when sleeping I dreamed’, also mentions not wanting a dowry. *Chan iarrainn do spréidh leat* (Thomson 1993, 178).

Other terms for a dowry are: *croidheachd* (from *crodh*) (Armstrong 1825), *fol*, *foladh* as cattle, a dowry of cattle (Forbes 1905, 11), and *libhearn* as a dowry or cattle (Armstrong 1825).

*Eallach*, according to Forbes (1905, 9), is cattle given as a tocher or ‘dot’, see also under **Rents and Tributes** below. Dwelly gives it as herd, (see Chapter 12 ‘People and Places of Herding’) and MacLennan (1995 [1925], 142) lists it as cattle, gear, herd or dowry; *ni àill leam gun eallach i*, ‘I like her not without dowry’. ‘Dot’ is an archaic word for dowry (Allen 2000, 417).

*Tionnsgradh* is a dowry, also *tochar*, *tochradh*, is a dowry or marriage portion (Armstrong 1825). Only Dwelly (1920, 956) has *tochair* as a verb to ‘give a dowry or marriage portion’.

## **Markets**

Markets were an obvious place for the value of animals to be realised and the *Gàidhealtachd* had its share. The markets were a sacred place where buyers and



sellers operated on an honour system that was exceptional within the world of marketplaces. This poignant nineteenth century poem shows the loss of the markets and the resultant loss.

*Oran do Dh'Ameireaga*

*Chan fhaic mi margadh no latha fèille  
No iomain feudalach ann an dròbh,  
No nì nì feum dhuinn am measg a chèile:  
Tha an sluagh nan èiginn 's a h-uile dòigh;  
Cha chulaidh fharmaid iad leis an ainbhfiach,  
A' reic na shealbhaicheas iad an còir;  
Bidh fear nam fiachan is cromadh cinn air  
Ga chur don phrìosan mur dìol e an stòr.*

Song to America

I see no market or day of selling  
Or the driving of cattle in a drove,  
Or anything to help us in our predicament;  
The people are in desperation of every form:  
They are not to be envied as they are indebted,  
Selling everything they rightly own;  
The shameful debtor must hold his head down  
Since he goes to prison unless he pays the store (Meek  
2003, 70-71).

*Féill*, according to Dwelly (1920, 426), is a feast, festival, fair or market. *Margadh* is also a market or fair i.e. buying or selling a 'sale', *baile margaidh* is a market-town (Dwelly 1920, 633).

*Antlas* is a cattle fair according to Armstrong (1825). According to DIL (A, 357) it means merriment and amusement. Armstrong lists *tlàs* as an obsolete term for cattle, also a 'fair'. Forbes (1905, 18) has *tlas* or *tlus* as cattle. *Tlus* is listed in DIL as cattle or property. *Antlas* is probably just the amalgamation of *an tlas* (the fair).

*Ceide* is an obsolete word for a market or fair, also a green or a hillock (Armstrong 1825). *Céite* is a hill, mound, eminence or open space in Early Irish, also a square or marketplace (DIL C, 106).

## Market Cattle

George Culley (1807, 70) wrote “It is in the northern and western Highlands and all the Islands and particularly the Isle of Skye and that tract of country near Kintail that you meet with the native breed of *kyloes*. A hardy, industrious and excellent breed of cattle, calculated in every respect to thrive in a cold, exposed, mountainous country.”

Known in Scots as ‘*kyloes*’, many of this type of small, black cattle were bartered around the Islands and Highlands and sent south to the Lowland and English markets for beef from about the sixteenth century (Haldane 1952, 69). There has been much debate about the term *kyloe*. Some people attribute the name to come from swimming the cattle across the narrow straits known as a *caol*. However, both of my supervisors disagreed with the above theory, and Professor Meek set me on the track of the ‘slender or thin one’. *Caol* is slender in Scots Gaelic; DIL (C, 10-12) lists *cáel* as ‘thin, slender’ and notes *alma* (from *alam* ‘herds’) *chóelbó* to be ‘herds of lean kine’. It is possible that the Gaelic *caolbó* came into Scots as *kyloe*. Another etymology, offered by Dr. Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh, is the change from -ach to -o occurring from Scots Gaelic into Scots giving *kyloe* from *Gàidhealach* (Ó Maolalaigh 1998, 43). One other speculation comes from the name of a place in England just south-south-east of Berwick upon Tweed by the name of *Kyloe*. It is possible that the Highland cattle were brought here to be fattened for the English market.

Burt (1876 [1726-27], 134-35) describes the swimming of these cattle.

The cows were about fifty in number and took the water like spaniels. When they were in, their drivers made a hideous cry to urge them forwards: this they told me, they did to keep the foremost of them from turning about; for, in that case, the rest would do the like. Then they would be in danger, especially the weakest of them to be driven away and drowned by the torrent. I thought it a very odd sight to see so many noses and eyes just above water, and nothing of them more to be seen, for they had

no horns, and upon the land they appeared in size and shape like so many large Lincolnshire calves.

The cattle in question were probably about four years old, as that was the common age to send them south with the drovers. We might assume that they were predominantly black. “The cattle of the Highlanders were mostly of the small black kind” (Dixon 1886, 136). The main question raised by the above account is “what about the horns?” Highland cattle, as we know them today, are specifically, a ‘long-horn’ breed, as opposed to a ‘short-horn’ breed. De-horning could have been a standard practice, but I have no other references to it. Once a bovine is de-horned the horns normally do not grow back and the de-horning is best done at the same time as weaning and castration to avoid a great loss of blood. If it was part of animal husbandry procedure, it was on the level of castration and stall-feeding and required skill to implement. Hornless animals were known to the Gael as seen by this proverb, *adharc na bà maoile 's duilich a toirt dith*, ‘it’s hard to take the horn off the hornless cow’ (Nicolson, 1881, 5). A natural ‘polled’ animal is not unknown, that is one born without horns. Known as a ‘muley’ in America (most likely borrowed from the Gaelic *maol*), the polled calf could be either a mutation or a breed characteristic as in Aberdeen Angus. Ena MacNeil, a crofter in North Uist, told me that she de-horns her marketing stock, which would make sense for modern markets, as the animals are bought and sold by live weight and the hide and horns skew the carcass value. But in earlier times, the animals were sold as a unit. Pennant (1775, vol. 2, 175) says: “The horned cattle of Skye are swam over, at the narrow passage of ‘kul-ri’, at low water; six, eight or twelve are passed over at a time, tied with ropes, fastened from the horn of one to its tail, and so to the next. The first is fastened to a boat, and thus are conveyed to the opposite shore. This is the great pass into the island, but is destitute even of a horse-ferry.”

Martin Martin (1934 [1703], 245) wrote about the swimming of cattle from Skye to the mainland, though he does not say, these cattle would also appear to be hornless from the procedure used. “They begin when it is near low water and fasten a twisted ‘with’ [withy] about the lower jaw of each cow. The other end of the ‘with’ is fastened to another cow’s tail; and the number so tied together is commonly five. A boat with four oars rows off, and a man sitting in the stern holds the ‘with’ in his hand to keep up the foremost cow’s head; and thus all the five cows swim as fast as the boat rows; and in this manner above a hundred may be ferried over in one day.”

*Creiche* [sic], according to Forbes (1905, 8), are ‘selling cattle’. Dwelly (1920, 269) gives this as a noun, implying that it is a term for cattle to be sold rather than the act of selling or marketing cattle. According to DIL (C, 517), *cre(i)ce* is the ‘act of buying’ or the ‘act of selling’ also ‘trading’ i.e. buying and selling. *Crodh-creic*, according to Forbes (1905, 8), are ‘selling stock’ or ‘cattle’. Dwelly (1920, 275) has *crodh-reic* as a noun for ‘selling stock’.

*Crodh*, according to Armstrong (1825), are cows, black cattle, herds, though rarely a portion or dowry. “*Caoraich agus crodh*, flocks (of sheep) and herds of (black) cattle” (Armstrong 1825).

### **Rents and Tributes**

Cattle were used extensively in Scotland and Ireland to pay rents and tributes, they were very much considered the currency of the time.

*Bóroimh* is an obsolete word for a tribute of cattle (Dwelly 1920, 110).

*Bóraime* (*bó* + *ríme*) is cattle-tribute, prey i.e. cattle spoil (DIL B, 144). *Bóraime* (*Bórama*) was a cattle tribute levied by the kings of Tara against the men of Leinster (Kelly 1998, 28).

*Càin* is a tribute, tax, rent or fine. *Nach ioc iad càin?* Will they not pay tribute? (Armstrong 1825). *Cáin*, according to DIL (C, 30), is a law, regulation, rule, fine, tax or tribute.

*Calpach* is “a duty once paid to a Highland chieftain by his vassals” (Armstrong 1825). Probably from *colpa*, which according to Armstrong via Shaw means a single cow or horse (Armstrong 1825). Martin Martin has *colpach* as an obsolete term for duty payable by tenants to landlords. As seen in an earlier chapter, *colp(th)ach* according to DIL (C, 328) is a yearling heifer, *colpthach firenn* is a yearling bullock (castrated male).

*Cìs* is a tax, tribute or impost and *cìs-chàin* is a tribute tax or poll-tax (Armstrong 1825). According to DIL (C, 202) *cìs* is a tax or tribute.

Forbes (1905, 10) gives *féin-eallach* as cattle given in restitution. *Fein*, *fadéin*, *féin* is ‘self’ in Early Irish (DIL F, 4) and *eallach* is a collective for goods, property or stock, especially live-stock i.e. cattle (DIL E, 112).

*Màl* is rent, tribute or tax supposedly forming part of the term ‘black-mail’, from tributes imposed on farmers by Rob Roy MacGregor, and others, in order to keep them safe from cattle-lifters. *Mál* is listed in DIL (M, 48) as a tribute. *Màladair* is a tenant or one who pays rent, a farmer of the customs, and *màlair* is a renter, a cottager, holding of a farmer (Armstrong 1825). *Tasgal* is money offered for the discovery of cattle lifted by Highland ‘freebooters’ (Armstrong 1825). DIL (T, 87) has *tásc* as a ‘notice’ or ‘information about offences’.

*Crò*, according to MacLennan (1995 [1925], 106), means blood or gore. Armstrong has *cro* [*sic*] to mean cattle, cows, blood-money also a dowry or portion. “*Crò* is the name of a fine imposed by the ancient Scots on one who was guilty of murder. The *crò* of every man differed according to the dignity that the person held.

The *crò* of a king was one thousand cows; of an earl, one hundred and forty; of a thane or earl's son, one hundred cows; of a villain or plebeian, sixteen cows'' – Scottish Statistical Registry of Their Majesty's Library iv ch. 24 – (Armstrong 1825). The implication is that blood-payment or blood-money related directly to the number of cows owed for the killing of a person. The relationship between the cost of a person's life and a certain number of cows reflects the immense value placed on cattle in early Scotland.

...

The value of cattle to the Gael cannot be stressed enough. They were sum and substance of their livelihood and set the standard of living in a largely pastoral society. The milk cow was the mainstay of the home, but the marketable beasts, the *kyloes*, determined a man's worth in numbers of cattle, or a woman's worth in the size of her dowry. Getting the animals to market and the markets themselves gave clear indications of the value set on the black cattle of the Highlands and Islands. The next chapter examines one of the most valuable animals of all, i.e. the *bó-ursainn*.

## Chapter 10

### *Bó-ursainn*



Photo courtesy Dave Beveridge

Husbandry relating to housed animals appears to have been associated with a set plan. Much effort was spent in assuring a winter's supply of milk and on feed necessary to survival of the animals. On the other hand, the efforts expended on harbouring the best animal under the best conditions possible also made for the eventual removal of that animal by the landlord. The best animal of a tenant was given over to the proprietor of the land upon the tenant's death. A long-standing tradition, which apparently began as payment for protection, ended as an extreme burden on the widow.

*Bó-ursainn* is defined by Dwelly (1920, 111) and Forbes (1905, 5) as “the best cow taken by a proprietor or other (of old) from a newly-made widow.” The term literally means doorpost cow. During the winter it was customary to house the

most necessary animals under the same roof as the family. The best or most favoured animal was closest to the door. In most houses in the Highlands, the door was in the middle of the side of the house. Animals went in and went left or down, people went in and went right or up (personal communication with Catriona Mackie, 1999). Perhaps the 'doorpost' animal gained the most share of a scanty food supply. It is possible that the term simply denotes the 'supporting' cow, that is the one that supplied most of the winter food in the form of milk and milk products.

The Highland cow served a dual purpose, which is unusual for most bovines. She was expected to produce beef calves as well as milk for the family, and she was to accomplish this on very scarce feed. Modern experiments with different breeds of cattle in the United Kingdom have produced some enlightening results. The Ayrshire, while producing more milk than the Highland cow, cannot compete with the Highland when it comes to richness of milk and efficiency of production. The Highland produces more milk per gram of intake than most other breeds and a very high quality of milk with respect to fat content. The *bó-ursainn*, then, was a unique blend of milk cow and beef producer. Her calf was weaned in the fall and she was kept in milk by hand milking through the long winter months. Not all cows can produce a good quantity of milk as a *gamhnach*, 'stripper'. It takes special qualities, probably strongly inheritable, to meet such requirements. The 'cow of the door-post' was a treasured member of the family. She came through with food, including blood, when all else failed, and she did it on a meagre portion of rations. In the end though, it was this treasured family member who was sacrificed to the proprietor upon the death of the tenant.

The milk cow was the most crucial animal to those of lowest means. If the family had nothing more than a milk cow, at least they had her produce of milk,



butter, cheese and the various forms of buttermilk, cottage cheese etc. A more affluent tenant in an area of arable land could have a *damh ursainn* ‘ox’, which as a trained tractable animal was greatly valued. An entry in Forbes (1905, 75) gives *laogh-buabhall an doruis*, ‘the calf of the door-stall’: “Likely to be first attended to.” Though it is highly unlikely that this ‘door-stall’ animal would be considered good enough to go to the proprietor.

The ‘end-stall’ was reserved for the cow that had lost her calf. This position, according to some sources, took the name of ‘*tulchan*’ i.e. *tulchann* – gable, or end-wall of a house. Other sources say that ‘*tulchan*’ is derived from *tulachan*, as mentioned in Chapter 4 ‘The Milk Cow’, meaning “hillock, knoll, mound or tomb, ‘calf-skin stuffed, and presented to the cow, as if living, to induce her to give milk’ ” (Dwelly 1901, 982). The implication of a tomb is valid, as the entity described by the device is a dead calf. It is very likely that the ‘end-stall’ cow would eventually become the *bó ursainn*. The cow (or cows) chosen to be housed during the winter months would most likely be the ones who had had bull calves in the spring. When these calves were killed – at any time between birth and weaning – the skin would be preserved and used to induce the cow to let down her milk to the milk-maid. There would probably have been a select few cows that were noted for their ease in handling and their ability to produce milk for the family; these would be rotated between winter pasture and winter housing. It might also depend upon which cows had produced bull calves within that select group.

It seems logical that the best milk cow would command the position of honour at the ‘door-post’ as she produced a vital supply of food for the family under sometimes-harsh conditions. However, according to Dwelly (1920, 377), this honour could also be given to a horse or an ox. “*Each-ursainn*, the best horse on a farm

always claimed by a proprietor on the death of a tenant.” “*Damh-ursainn* (*lit.* doorpost ox, i.e. the supporting ox). The best or only ox of a widow, taken by the proprietor on the death of her husband” (Dwelly 1920, 309-310). The supporting animal has the double implication of being the favoured animal but also the family’s support whether it is cow or ox. To argue in favour of support is a verse in *Blàr na h-Òlaind* by Alexander MacKinnon.

*Bha an leóthann colgarra gun ghealtachd  
Le mhìle fear sgairteil làmh ruinn,  
An Camshronach garg on Earrachd  
Mar ursainn chatha sna blàraibh.*

The fierce lion without cowardice  
With his thousand eager men was close by us,  
Aggressive Cameron of Erracht  
Like a doorpost in the battlefields (Black 2001, 354-550).

The doorpost was seen as a significant symbol of support whether it was on the battlefield or in the household.

### **Each-ursainn**

*Each-fuinn* (*calp, herezeld*), “was the symbol of dependence paid by the native man to his lord, but in later ages it was exacted by the chief from his vassals. On the death of a tenant the best horse had to be given over” (Dwelly 1920, 377). A law in 1617 (*Laws and Acts of Parliament* 1682) forbade the payment; however, it appears that this custom lasted into the eighteenth century. In a marriage contract of 1710, according to *The Clan Donald* account, a wife surviving her husband, would among other gear, obtain the second best horse he possessed, clearly implying that the best horse went to the chief (MacDonald 1904, 118). ‘*Herezeld*’ is the same as ‘*heriot*’ which, “under English law in medieval times was a duty or tribute due to a lord on the death of a tenant, originally the return of military equipment. Old English

*heregeatwe* military equipment, from *here* army + *geatewe* equipment” (Allen 2000, 652).

There is mention of the death payment in *Bachd Gràis air an t-Saoghal* by Mary MacPherson (*Bean Torra Dhamh*).

*Bidh a' bhantrach dhaibh fo chis,  
S tric a dhìobair i 'n t-each-toiseach—  
S cruaidh an cridh' a bh' aig an linn  
A dh'òrdaich lagh cho millteach crosta.*

The widow will be taxed by them,  
She's often surrendered the heriot horse –  
Hard was the heart of the generation  
That ordained a law so severe and perverse (Black  
2001, 312-13).

Martin Martin (1934 [1703], 175-176) in *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* c. 1695 gives a very different slant. “It is common in these islands, when a tenant dies, for the master to have his choice of all the horses, which belonged to the deceased. This was called the *eachfuin horizeilda*, i.e. a Lord's gift: for the first use of it was from a gift of a horse granted by all the subjects in Scotland for relieving the King from his imprisonment in England.” I believe the king in question here was David II, as his ransom exacted a heavy burden on the Scottish people for quite some time. Exports were taxed and that money was specifically earmarked for payment to the English crown. David visited the Highland chiefs and received a grudging acquiescence from them for their assistance. No specific reference has been found that the Highlanders paid in horseflesh though they raised many horses.

### **Calp**

Martin (1934 [1703], 176) also writes of “another duty payable by all the tenants to their chief, though they did not live upon his lands. This is called *calpich*: there was a standing law for it also, called *calpich* law; and I am informed that this is exacted by some in the mainland to this day.” According to MacBain (1911, 68), *calp* is

“principal set to interest, Scots ‘*calpa*’, death-duty payable to the landlord from the Norse ‘*kaup*’, stipulation, pay.” Dinneen’s *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla* (1996, 233) lists ‘*colpa*’ as “a bullock, a cow, a steer; a full-grown animal, whether cow or horse; taken as the unit for grazing animals, equivalent to six sheep.” This relates to the souming of animals on common grazing. One must keep in mind that sheep mentioned in the early contexts were much smaller than the sheep being pastured in Ireland and Scotland after 1800, and therefore ate less than the modern breeds. One reference I have found to death duties being paid in Ireland was in *Celtic Law in Ireland* where one-third of a person’s worth was paid to the Church upon his death. The *Senchus Mòr* has “The chief will not be defrauded of his death-benefits when he is not guilty of neglect, or malice, or treachery, or negligence” (Hancock 1869, vol. 2, 273).

More light is shed on this tradition by an entry from Kirkwood’s manuscript edited by John Lorne Campbell (1975, 57-58) and presented in *A Collection of Highland Rites and Customs*.

They reckon him their chief, whom they choose for their patron: though he be not of their name. They’ll engage for their chief against all, deadly. Every considerable ancient family hath clans who depend on them owning these for chief; and when they die, they leave the chief a legacy. Some families will have seven or eight of these clans, who give a bond of fealty unto the chief. When they are a dying they leave a legacy to their chief, a *collopy* (*colpa*) viz. The best horse *eih-kolloy* (*each-colpa*) or cow etc. according to their wealth in retaliation of which the chief gives to their eldest son a sword, or gun or both when he comes to years. When tenants die they leave the best cattle which they have to their master called *damh iwrsin* (*damh ursainn*) the door ox. They have very few titles of honour.

A note by the editor regarding the above passage reflects the controversy that surrounded this practice. “The door ox: so called because it was the best beast, kept

nearest the door. Kirkwood implies that this was a voluntary legacy, but the fact is that on a tenant's decease his heirs had to give his best horse or cattle beast to the landlord or the tacksman, a burdensome exaction'' (Campbell 1975, 57-58).

It is possible that what began as a bond from a dying 'kinsman' to his chief, to ensure that his family would be protected, became a 'loop-hole' for the landlord to gain at a widow's expense. There is late evidence that, in the Highlands, a widow or widower would approach the chief for guidance in choosing another spouse after the death of the first, indicating a continuing responsibility on the part of the chief to the family.

The transaction can equally be seen as the payment of 'fealty dues'. The land was not heritable and therefore reverted to the chief (clan) upon the death of an individual. Payment of an animal (the best animal) renewed the lease to the family of the deceased (personal communication, Alex Woolf, Dec. 1999). The best animal, according to above definitions, could be a cow, horse or ox. Also, the phrase "according to his wealth" appears to have significance with regard to which of the three animals would be most likely considered best.

The Breadalbane papers contained in the Black Book of Taymouth have many references to manrent and calps, where manrent was the pledge of arms to a superior and calps were the death duties paid by a fighter to the same person.

A document presented in *Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis* (1847, 87-88) regarding a bond between Archibald, fourth Earl of Argyle, and Ninian Bannatyne of Kames in 1538 states:

Be it kend till all men be thir present lettres, us, Archibald Erle of Ergyle, to be bundin and oblist, lykeas we bindis and oblissis us and our airis and successouris, to Niniane Bennachtin of the Cammis, and till his airis hys sorneim, freindis and servandis, to manteyne, supple, and defend thame in all materis thay haif ado, baith in the Hieland and Lawland; and attour we, the said

Erle, oblicis us and our airis to tak the said Niniane, his airis, hyn, freindis, and servandis, thair afauld part in all materis thay haif ado, als weill as we will do for ony utheris kynnismen or servandis within our Erledome of Ergill, and sall manteyne and defend theame, alsweill as ane maister suld do for his servandis; and thairfoir the said Niniand binis and oblicis himself and his airis, etc. to tak the said Erle and his airis pairt againis all men leifand, the kingis grace allanerlie acceptit; and the foresaid Niniane and his airis gyffis to the said Erle and to his airis thair **calpis, in takyne of manrent**, and for to be their gude Lord and Maister, manteyne thame ay quhen they charge the said Archibald Erle of Ergyle. Dated at Inverary, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1538, before these witnesses, Colyn Campbell of Ardkinlass, Dougal Campbell his brother, Gillespick McAllastar McEvir, and Duncan McCharlie of Innistreinzie.

The emphasis is my own. In these documents, it is clear that the ‘calps’ or death-payments were in exchange for great protection by a powerful person. Though they were abolished by an Act of Parliament of 1617, there is evidence that they lingered on, long after the protection system was no longer necessary, and became a huge burden on the tenantry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

...

This chapter has explored legal issues regarding death payments (calps) and bonds of man rent. What started out as a beneficial situation to laird and vassal (and his family) became an intolerable burden exacted upon a newly-made widow and her family. The best animal, whether it be milk cow, horse or oxen, was taken upon the death of a tenant by the landlord. The role of animals in this instance again supports the idea of their extreme value in Highland society.

## **Chapter 11**

### **Pasture**

One of the most important resources for pastoralists is pasture for their animals. This may be an obvious statement to some, but it is so crucial to the argument for successful animal husbandry management that it must be addressed. The following terms, by their sheer numbers, show just how important grass was for the beasts. Common grazing, that is free land available for pasture to an entire community, was an important part of Highland life. This practice was so vital to northern pastoralists that when it was taken away, hardship and poverty resulted. This photo was taken during the winter months and shows 'rough' pasture on the southern end of the Isle of Skye near Tormor looking across the Sound of Sleat to the mainland.



### **Common Grazing**

Although most of the rough grazing (sheiling, meadow and pasture) was held in common and some of the terms described all of them, the term for 'common' usually referred to common grazing around a township. The term varied from island to island and into the Highlands, but the concept was universal to the area.

*Cùl-cinn* is outrun or common grazing, especially in Uist, according to Dwelly (1920, 298), though Professor Meek says that it was a term also found on the north-west mainland.

*Gearradh* is a summer grazing place for cattle in Lewis (Dwelly 1920, 486). *Gearraidh* is a point or knuckle-end of land, often used in place-names in Uist, as *Houghary*, *Tigharry*, *Gearraidh Dubh*, etc. It also means the green pastureland about a township. In Lewis it is the land between the *machair* and *monadh*, the strip where the houses stand. It can be a fenced field, and in Perthshire and Wester Ross it is the enclosed grazing between the arable land and the open moor. According to Dwelly's informant Reverend D. M. Cameron of Ledaig, it is the common grazing and arable land between the moor and the crofts. Another informant, P. J. MacIver of Kyle, says it is 'where the sheilings are built' (Dwelly 1920, 486). *Gearraidh* means home pasture, or sheiling according to MacLennan (1995 [1925], 178).

*Coitcheann* was another term for common grazing in the Western Isles (Dwelly 1920, 233). *Coitcheann* in Early Irish means: common, general, public or owned in common (DIL C, 319).

*Mórearrann*<sup>11</sup> was a term used by the small tenants in Uist for common grazing (McDonald 1991 [1899], 183).

*Geamhraich* is the verb 'winter', that is feed during winter, furnish provender, *geamhraichte* is 'wintered' (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 177).

*Sliabh*, according to Professor Meek, was common or rough grazing in Tiree. Dwelly (1920, 852) has it as extended heath or mountain grass.

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<sup>11</sup> For more discussion on this term (*mór-earran/mór-fhearann*) see Ronald Black's article on 'Runrigs' in *West Highland Free Press* 6/9/91.



## Sheiling Pasture

One of the most important parts of the pasturage cycle was the summer sheiling pasture. Not only did it afford abundant grazing during the summer months (in common) but it also allowed pasture around the *baile geamhraidh* ‘winter town’ to refurbish itself for winter feed.

*Àiridh* or *àirigh*, according to Armstrong (1825), is a sheiling, hill pasture, a mountain booth or hut, *àiridh dhamh* a pasture for oxen. Though some authorities describe *àirigh* as only the pasture and *bothain àirigh* as the huts, the English term ‘sheiling’ has come to mean the composite of pasture with huts for summer grazing. According to Allen (2000, 1290), ‘shieling’ (*sic*) is “a mountain hut used as a shelter by shepherds. A summer pasture in the mountains. (Scots ‘shiel’ shed, hut, from Middle English (northern) ‘schele, shale’). Dwelly (1920, 20) has *àiridh* as a summer residence for herdsmen and cattle, a hill pasture or a level green among hills. MacBain (1896, 9) gives *àiridh* as a hill pasture or sheiling, Early Irish ‘*airge*’, ‘*áirge*’, place where cows are, dairy, herd of cattle; Early Irish ‘*airgech*’, herdsman (of Brigit), Irish ‘*airghe*’, plural ‘*áiríghe*’, a herd of cattle. An early mention of sheiling use in Scotland occurs in a late twelfth-century document of Arbroath Abbey, where the benefactor grants the monks and their peasant tenants ‘skeling’ (sheiling) for the nourishment of their cattle beasts from Easter to All Saints in Tippetty, Corsebauld (Barrow 1981, 2). ‘Easter to All Saints’ verifies that this was considered summer grazing.

Historically in the Highlands, Beltane marked the time for *imrich* (flitting), the removal of people and livestock from the *baile geamhraidh* (winter-town) to the *àirigh*. The first of May signalled the change from winter to summer on the Celtic calendar. However, as is known to agriculturists and pastoralists the world over, what

the calendar says and what nature does may be two different things. Research by Ronald Black, first published in the West Highland Free Press (1990) regarding the actual date for flitting shows a wide variation from place to place and time to time. There could be multiple ‘flittings’ where men would take dry livestock and go early to repair the sheiling huts. Milk cows and women would follow at a later date. Or there could be one or more grazing places where the livestock would be taken in stages, finally to reach the summer grazing (Livingston 1973, 153). Sometimes there were *cròdhan* ‘folds’ for livestock – without huts, located near enough to the home-place to allow the women to milk morning and evening (Campbell 1896, 64). When dealing with livestock and Mother Nature, people learned at an early stage that flexibility could mean the difference between feast or famine.

*Triall* was the summer procession of cattle and people to the sheiling (Carmichael 1928, 372). In Early Irish, *triall* is the act of journeying or an expedition (DIL T, 304).

“*Beinn* is not merely a mountain but also hill ground or simply pasture or grazing. North Lochboisdale, formerly the pastureland of Dalibrog and Kilphedir, is still called *beinn*, and very few places are so low and flat. The highest elevation is about 50 feet above sea level. Eastern townships in Barra and South Uist are called *beinn*, and the inhabitants are called *beinnich* or *muinntir na beinne*” (McDonald 1991 [1899], 40). *Beann*, according to Dwelly (1920, 82) can be a corner, as well as a top or peak. It was used to mean a corner or wedge of land in Tiree (Professor Donald Meek, personal communication). An obsolete term in Armstrong’s Dictionary (1825) is *bainnseach* meaning a plain, a field, a sheep-walk or solitary place.

*Leargainneach* means having steep pasture ground, *àirde* also means ‘a rising ground’ (Armstrong 1825). *Lerg* in Early Irish is ‘a sloping expanse’, ‘stretch of

ground' etc. or 'a hillside' (DIL L, 111) and *ardae*, *airde* is 'a height' or 'high place' (DIL A, 388).

*Ruidhe* is a dairy or sheiling according to Dwelly (1920, 776). *Ruighe* is a "shepherd's cot, a sheiling or hut built in the midst of hill pasture, where cattle are tended during the summer months, also called *bothan àiridh*" (Armstrong 1825). *Ruighe* is also the outstretched part or base of a mountain, as well as a sheiling ground; in Early Irish it was '*rige*', '*rigid*', a reach or reaches, from '*reg*' – 'stretch' (MacBain 1896, 268). *Righe*, according to Dwelly (1920, 760), is the bottom of a valley, also a summer residence for herdsmen and cattle, a sheiling. This indicates that sheilings were not always on high ground but could also be in places that might have been suitable for tillage, implying a choice for pasture as opposed to arable.

*Monadh*, according to Dwelly (1920, 670), is a 'mountain, moor, range, heath, heathy expanse, desert, tolerably level hill-ground' – 'any hill pasture as distinguished from meadow and arable land'. *A' chrìoch eadar monadh Eàrradail agus a' Rubha Dheirg* is given by Wentworth (1996, 18) as 'the boundary between the Erradale and Redpoint hill-grazing'. *Monanda* means 'like hill-ground' - *bha 'lota sin na bu mhonanda*, 'that croft was more like hill-ground' (Wentworth 1996, 75). In Early Irish *moned* (*monad*) is a mountain (DIL M, 165) "but it is a Pictish loanword only found in Pictish place-names."

### **Fields, Plains and Meadows**

A field, according to Allen (2000, 513), is "an area of open land surrounded by a hedge or fence and used for cultivation or pasture." Admittedly few enclosures were used in the Highlands even for arable fields. A plain is "an extensive area of level or rolling treeless country: A broad unbroken expanse of land" (Allen 2000, 1063). And "a meadow is an area of moist low-lying usually level grassland" (Allen 2000, 860).

*Achadh* is a field, a plain, a meadow or a cornfield according to Armstrong (1825). MacBain connects it with Latin ‘*acies*’, ‘*acnua*’ a field. A field or cornfield would signify plowing, while plain or meadow indicates grazing. In Early Irish *achad* is an expanse of ground, pasture or field (DIL A, 19).

*Lombair*, according to Armstrong (1825) is a field with a meagre crop of grass on it. *Lompaire*, according to DIL (L, 197) is a well-grazed pasture, a piece of rough moorland or a bare pasture.

*Clòbhar* means a meadow, *tha 'n crodh a 's a' chlòbhar*, ‘the cows are in the meadow’ (Wentworth 1996, 100); this appears to be a Gaelic spelling of English ‘clover’.

*Àilean* is a meadow or plain according to Armstrong (1825). Dwelly (1920, 12) has it as a green, plain or meadow.

*Cluain* is a pasture, meadow, or green field; *cluaineach* means meadowy, abounding in meadows, while *cluainean* (diminutive of *cluain*) is a little pasture, little meadow, little lawn or pasture ground (Armstrong 1825). *Clúain* in Early Irish is a meadow, pasture-land or glade (DIL C, 256-257).

*Glas-mhagh* is a green field or a green plain (Armstrong 1825). *Glasrach*, according to Dwelly (1920, 501), is uncultivated land, a green plot or abounding in lea - or unploughed land, having green groves or meadows, also *glasraich* is to convert into meadows or pastureland. It also means green growth, *théid a' chaora mùth feitheimh ris a' ghlasraich*, ‘a sheep will die off waiting for the green grass’ – proverb (Wentworth 1996, 68). *Glas-talamh* is unploughed or pasture land, lea ground (Dwelly 1920, 501).

*Croiceach* means ‘meadowy’, according to Armstrong (1825), from *cròic* – foamy etc., giving the same idea as *molach*, in Duncan Bàn’s poem.

Armstrong has (1825) *comhnard* (*còmhnard* - per Dwelly) as a plain, a field or a level ground (Armstrong 1825).

*Dail* is a dale, a field, a meadow or plain, *dail fhearainn*, a level field, Irish ‘*dail*’, Welsh and Cornish ‘*dol*’ (Armstrong 1825). *Dail* according to MacBain is a meadow, Norse ‘*dalr*’, English ‘*dale*’.

*Fàiche* [*sic*], according to Armstrong (1825), is a field, a plain, meadow, green or forest. Dwelly (1920, 403) has *faiche* (without the long vowel), *saidhe na faiche*, meadow-hay. MacLennan (1995 [1925], 149) lists *faich*, as does the Highland Society’s Gaelic Dictionary (1828, 407) for a green or a plain.

Dwelly (1920, 647) gives *meòdar* as luxuriant pasture, he lists *miodar* as a provincial term for *meadar* meaning pasture-ground, meadow or good pasture (Dwelly 1920, 659). Armstrong (1825) lists *miodarach* as ‘meadowy’ or ‘having pasture ground’. Also, *miodarach*, according to Dwelly (1920, 659), is having good pastures or abounding in pasture. Armstrong gives *miad* as a meadow or a plain, and *miad-fheurach* as ‘having meadow-grass’. Variants listed by Armstrong (1825) are *miadan* and *miadar* for a meadow or plain and *miadanach* for meadowy or belonging to a meadow.

*Feòran* is a green, a mountain-valley or a land adjoining a brook (Dwelly 1920, 429), and *feuran* is a green grassy field (Dwelly 1920, 430).

*Ruith* is a run, an area with slowly flowing or seeping water (often from a small loch), which is greener than the surrounding hill. *Tha ’bho ’g ionaltradh a’s na ruithean a tha sin*, ‘the cow is grazing in the runs there’. Near Diabaig in Wester Ross is *Ruith a’ Lochán Duibh*, the run of the black *lochan* (Wentworth 1996, 137). *Lochan* is a little lake: the length mark that Wentworth uses over it emphasises the dialectic difference of Wester Ross.

The following terms are various pronunciations and forms for a basic word for meadow. The variety probably stems from usage in different localities. *Lèan* is a meadow or swampy ground according to Armstrong (1825) though he lists it without the length mark, all other sources contain the long e. Dwelly (1920, 576) has ‘see *lèana*’ and gives it for a meadow or swampy plain, and *lèanag* is a little plain or meadow. *Leun* is a meadow, as is *lian*, according to Armstrong (1825) and *lòinean* is a little meadow. *Lianach* means having many fields, plains or meadows (Armstrong 1825). *Liannachan* is a little meadow, and *lianag* a small field or meadow (Dwelly 1920, 588). *Lón* is a meadow according to Armstrong (1825); the following proverb gives the appropriate locations for it and a cornfield. ‘*Lón tuathair, ’us sguabach dheisear*, ‘meadow facing north, corn facing south’. The best exposure for each crop’ (Nicolson 1881, 301). *Lénae*, according to DIL (L, 98) is a meadowland.

*Learg* is a sloping green or green slope also a plain or field, *leargann* is a small sloping green field, the side of a green hill, steep pasture ground and *leargainneach* is ‘having steep pasture ground’ (Armstrong 1825). *Lerg* is found in DIL (L, 111) for a sloping expanse or hillside. It appears in place-names, cf. ‘Largs’ on the West Coast of Scotland.

*Raon* is a plain, field, or green, an upland field or down (Dwelly 1920, 749). *Raonach* means meadowy, having fields or greens, of a field or green, of an upland plain (Armstrong 1825).

*Réidh* is a meadow or level ground and, according to Armstrong (1825), *reathlan* (spelled *réidhlean* by Dwelly 1920, 753), is a plain, a field and a level field, while *réidhleanach* means smooth, a plain or meadowy (Armstrong 1825). *Réid*, according to DIL (R, 32), is level or smooth, *ferand réid amréid ria ar* ‘a land for tillage, smooth and rough alike’.

*Céide* is an obsolete term, according to Armstrong (1825) and Dwelly (1920, 185), for a market, fair, a green or a hillock.

## Grass

The following terms reflect the expertise of the Gael for identifying all types of grasses for pasture.

*Feur*, according to Dwelly (1920, 429), is grass or hay. *Feur gorm* is green grass. Armstrong (1825) lists *miad-fheur* as meadow-grass and *miad-fheurach* as grassy, having long grass, like meadow-grass. Dwelly (1920, 649) has *miad*, see ‘*meud*’ and ‘*miadan*’ where *meud* is ‘greatness or largeness’ and *miadan* (see above) means a meadow, plain or grassy plain, he also lists *miad-fheur* for meadow grass (Dwelly 1920, 649).

*Mìn-fheur* is soft grass, smooth grass, a meadow, and *mìn-lach* is the finest of grass (Armstrong 1825). *Mìn* according to DIL (M, 142) means (of food) ‘digestible’ or ‘palatable’ and *fér* is grass (DIL F, 83).

*Feòirn* is grass. *Feòirnean*, the diminutive of *feòirn*, is a pile of grass, a cock of hay, a blade of grass, a straw (Armstrong 1825).

‘*Fioran-grass*’ (‘*Agrostis alba*’) is part of a family of grasses that are important to Highland pastoralists due to their availability and nutritive value as livestock feed see Dwelly s.v. *fioran*. Cameron (1883, 87) says: “*Fioran-grass*. Gaelic and Irish: *fioran*, *feorine*, or *fior-than*, derived from Gaelic: *feur*, *feoir*, grass, herbage, fodder” (1883, 87).<sup>12</sup> However, there is no connection with *féar* which, according to Dinneen (1996, 436) is grass or hay, pasturage, standing or fresh grass as distinct from *féar tirim*, which is saved hay.

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See also, *The Scots Herbal: The Plant Lore of Scotland*, Tess Darwin. And *Healing Threads*, Mary Beith.

*Canach* and *cìob* (Dwelly 1920, 159 & 195) are both important plants to the herdsman. *Dar thig cìob is cainichean air bhrath, tha biadh a' chruidh a mach.* 'When deer grass and cotton grass are come, the food of the flocks is outside,' these are the first grasses to appear in the spring and are a welcome relief from winter (Carmichael 1971, 28).

*Féisd* is a feast as applied to grass (Dwelly 1920, 427). Though appearing to originate from the English 'feast' it actually comes from Early Irish *feis(s)*, *fess* the verbal noun of *faid* 'spends the night' and by extension comes to mean 'entertainment for the night', 'food', 'supper' i.e. 'feast' (DIL, F, 67).

Other words for grasses include *feur nòsa* 'juicy grass' (Armstrong 1825) and *tràthach* 'long sweet meadow grass' (McDonald 1991 [1899], 247).

*Mòthan* is bog-violet, also called *lus a' bhainne* or milk-wort. It is found in steep places and is thus called 'steep grass'; it is also called 'earning grass' in Lanarkshire, from the plant's use instead of rennet to make cheese. It acts like rennet on cows' milk (Cameron 1883, 56). If a man makes a miraculous escape, it is said of him, *dh'òl e bainne na bó bà a dh'ith am mòthan*, 'he drank the milk of the guileless cow that ate the *mòthan*' (Dwelly 1920, 673). The importance of this plant is shown in the following song.

### Crònan Bleoghain

*Hò-an, hò-an, canam crònan;  
Sil, a bhóthag, sil a' mhòthain,  
Lus na meala, lus an Domhnaich!  
An comhnadh Chrìosda bhuaib mi mòthan,  
Is gleidhidh e mo bhainne air dhòigh dhomh.*

### Milking Croon

*Hò-an, hò-an, I'll lilt a croon;  
Pour, little cow, milk of the pearlwort,  
Herb of sweetness, herb of the Lord!  
With aiding of Christ I culled the pearlwort,*



And it will keep for me my milk aright  
(Carmichael 1941, 78-79).

*Millteach* is good grass, according to Dwelly (1920, 656), it can mean ‘tufts of grass’ or ‘mountain grass’; *barr a’ mhilltich* is the ‘top of the grassy tufts’ and *gleann a’ mhilltich* is the ‘grassy glen’. MacLennan (1995 (1925), 230) lists *milleach* for tender, sappy grass, and *millteach* as sweet hill grass, arrow-grass, also *milneach*. Father Allan has *mìleach* as fine grass (McDonald 1991 [1899], 179).

A beautiful poem by Duncan MacIntyre, better known as *Donnachadh Bàn*, describes the herbage of ‘*Coire a’ Cheathaich*’ - ‘The Corrie of the Mist’.

*’S e Coir’ a’ Cheathaich nan aighean siùbhlach,  
An coire rùnach as ùrar fonn,  
Gu lurach, miad-fheurach, mìn-gheal, sùghar,  
Gach lusan flùar bu chùbhraidh leam;  
Gu molach, dubh-ghorm, torrach, lùisreagach,  
Corrach, plùranach, dlùth-ghlan grinn,  
Caoin, ballach, dìtheanach, cannach, mìsleanach,  
Gleann a’ mhilltich, ’s an lìonmhor mang (Calder 1912, 43).*

The terms listed in the poem combine to form a picture of the finest summer grazing. ‘*Gu lurach, miad-fheurach, mìn-gheal, sùghar*’ describes a very lovely place full of meadow grass, which is soft and fair and full of sap and substance – as opposed to tough stringy grass which has no nutritional benefit. His description varies between fair and smooth to shaggy and dark (*gu molach, dubh-ghorm*), indicating a variety of grasses which are beneficial to animals. Not all grasses are edible, especially for cattle, and pastoralists are keenly aware of the difference. According to Armstrong (1825), *mìslean* is a wild flower, a kind of mountain-grass, while *mìsleanach* means grassy, abounding in mountain-grass, vegetative – *glacag mìsleanach* is ‘a grassy dell’.

*Mòin-fheur* is waved hair grass, mountain grass; coarse meadow-grass also a meadow (Dwelly 1920, 668).

*Mòran* is meadow grass according to Armstrong (1825), Dwelly (1920, 671) has *morán* for a meadow, though there is a drawing of a stalk with flowers on it entitled *morán*, indicating that it was a particular plant.

## Hay

Historians have questioned whether or not hay was used in the Western Highlands and Islands. Given the many terms for both natural grass hay and cultivated crops for hay it would appear that the concept was certainly not unknown and most probably used in certain areas.

*Feur tioram* (dry grass) is hay (Dwelly 1920, 430). *Feòrnanach* means grassy, abounding in grass, full of haystacks, gathered into cocks, as hay (Armstrong 1825). *Feòrnan* is a pile of grass, a cock of hay (Armstrong 1825). *Feur-caonaichte* is hay, according to Dwelly (1920, 164), literally ‘dried grass’, from *caoinich* ‘dry, expose to dry, season’. *Caoinichadh* is a drying, as of hay; exposing to the sun’s heat for the purpose of drying, *a’ caoinichadh na saidh*, ‘drying the hay’. *Feur-lann* is a hayloft according to Armstrong (1825) and hay house or hay-stackyard according to Dwelly (1920, 430), and *cruach fheadir* is a hay-rick (Dwelly 1920, 429).

*Acair* is an acre of ground; this measurement is still used in North America and the U.K. It has also come to mean a mow or measure of hay, for example *acair fheadir*, ‘a mow of hay’. *Tha thu dèanamh acair*, ‘you’re making a mow’. *Tha thu air an acair*, ‘you’re up on the mow’ (Wentworth 1996, 105). *Mìre*, according to Armstrong (1825), is a mow of hay or corn.

*Saoidh, saidh* – means hay, *a gearradh na saidh*, mowing the hay-grass; *saoidheadair* is a hay-cutter or hay maker (Armstrong 1825). MacBain (1896, 270) gives *saidhe* as “formed from the English hay by the influence of the article (‘an t-hay’ becoming a supposed de-eclipsed ‘say’).” *Saoidh na fàiche* is meadow-hay

(Armstrong 1825). *Feur-saidhe* is hay or natural grass as distinct from rye grass (Dwelly 1920, 430).

Wentworth has *coibhle* as a small coil or heap of hay. *Tha 'feur uileadh ann an coibhleachan*, 'the hay's all in coils'. *Bha mi fad an fheasgair a' coibhleadh feur*, 'I was coiling hay all afternoon.' *Tudán*, plural *tudánan*, *rinn sinn tudánan dheth*, 'we made coils of it'. *Prabag*, plural *prabagan*, means a very small coil, smaller than a *tudán* (Wentworth 1996, 29). *Prebán* in Early Irish means a 'small piece' (DIL P, 200).

*Ròl* is a swathe or roll of hay or grass, cf. *ròlag*, a little roll, a swathe or roll of hay or grass, *ròlag fheoir* (*recte fheòir*), a roll or swathe of hay or grass (Armstrong 1825).

*Muilleán* is a truss of hay weighing 56 pounds, *muilleán feur* – an armful of hay (Wentworth 1996, 6). *Mullán* in Early Irish is a hillock or a heap (DIL M, 202).

*Fodair* as a verb means to give food or provender to cattle, to fodder; *fodar* is straw or provender, while *fodradh* is the hand-feeding of cattle (Armstrong 1825). MacBain has *fodar*, fodder, Irish '*fodar*', from English 'fodder'. DIL (F, 211) has "'*fodairecht* – refers apparently to tillage or agriculture.'

*Fosradh* is the grazing of cattle when tethered, or hand feeding for cattle (Dwelly 1920, 452). *Fosair* in a literal sense is 'strewing of straw' (DIL F, 374) while *fosrethnaigid*, it's derivative, means 'distributes' (DIL F, 379). Due to the lack of enclosures in the Highlands, several methods of grazing restraints were used. One was simply herding, but portable hurdles and tethering were also used especially when corn or grass needed to be protected, the cattle would then be fed by hand if grazing was not available.

*Iarspealadh* is after-grass, a second crop of grass (Dwelly 1920, 538). This must be grass cut for hay, from *iar* ‘after’ and *spealadh* ‘scything’. *Spel* in Early Irish is a scythe (DIL S, 354).

*Beitean* is the scorched or frostbitten grass of the hills (Armstrong 1825), neither of which has much nutritional value as cattle feed. A proverb attests to this, *Am fiar a thig a mach 's a' Mhàrt, théid e 's tigh 's a' Ghiblean*, ‘the grass that comes out in March shrinks away in April’ (Nicolson 1881, 24).

*Innlinn* is forage, provender or fodder, “the third part of the straw left by the tenant who is removing for the one entering a farm, for bedding to the cattle to help manure” (Dwelly 1920, 543).

### **Grazing**

*Feur* is grass, (as seen above), herbage or fodder; *air an fheur*, ‘on the grass’, ‘on grass’, ‘grazing’; *bhàrr an fheòir*, ‘off the grass’, ‘off the pasture’, ‘from grazing’ (Armstrong 1825).

The verbal noun *feuradh* means ‘feeding on grass’, ‘grazing’, while *feurach* means grassy, abounding in grass or hay, verdant or, as a noun, grazing, i.e. a grazing allotment (Dwelly 1920, 430). *Pàidhidh am feaman am fiarach*, ‘the tail [manure] will pay the grazing’ (Nicolson 1881, 337). This shows that the manure was as valuable as the grass in the agricultural cycle. Dwelly (1920, 430) has *feurach* used in Uist for *feurachadh*, *a' feurach na bà*, ‘grazing the cow’, *feurachadh*, feeding on grass, grazing, pasturing; *feurachair*, a fodderer. *Feuraich* is to feed on grass, graze and pasture (Armstrong 1825).

*Ingealtas* is pasture ground, ground fit for feeding cattle, while *ingilt* is feeding, grazing, pasture (Armstrong 1825). *Ingeltid* (from *ingelt*) is ‘pastures’ that is ‘brings to feed’ in Early Irish (DIL I, 259). *Ingelt* (from *i* + *gleith*) is the act of

cropping or grazing, also the feeding of cattle, birds and fish (DIL I, 258). *Inealtair* means to feed cattle, pasture or graze; *inealtrach* (*inaltrach*) is pasturing or grazing, *inealtradh* (*ionaltradh*) a pasturing or grazing, pasturage, a wandering – ‘as of cattle on pasture ground’ (Armstrong 1825). *Ionaltair*, according to Dwelly (1920, 553), means ‘‘pasture, feed, browse, and graze, feed in rough ground or in the fields after the removal of the crops. The word implies more movement on the part of the animal than is required in an enclosed field of good grass. When used of animals in such a field the word means that they are eating, not lying down or standing still.’’ *Inilt* is pasture, fodder - *tha 'n crodh air an inilt*, ‘the cattle are on the pasture’. It is also a verb meaning to feed cattle, pasture, graze (Dwelly 1920, 542).

*Craoim*, usually spelt *creim* (Dwelly 1920, 269) means to nibble or crop grass as cattle (Armstrong 1825).

*Gleithe* is an obsolete word for grazing or feeding (Armstrong 1825).

### **Other Grazings**

*Ceannamhag* is the part at the end of a field where the horses turn in ploughing, literally the end-rig, from *ceann* ‘head’ and *màg* ‘field’. (See Chapter 13 ‘Cultivated Land and its Produce’). *Ceannamhagan* are the scraps of grass adjacent to growing corn (Dwelly 1920, 178). *Fasanadh* is an old custom of giving an hour’s grazing to milk cows on the green patches (*ceannamhagan*) adjacent to the corn prior to their being sent to the hill for the day (Dwelly 1920, 417).

*Fàsach*, primarily ‘wilderness’, is also stubble, the grassy headland of a ploughed field (Armstrong 1825). According to Dwelly (1920, 417) it can also mean ‘choice pasture’. Stubble is what is left after harvest, and was used for winter feed. The grassy verge of the field would also have been a good source of pasture.

According to DIL (F, 42), *fás* means; empty, void, vacant, deserted, uninhabited, waste, and *fásach* is an uninhabited spot or region, a waste or wilderness (DIL F, 44).

### Carrying Capacity

*Dabhach* can mean a district, lot, portion of land or farm for carrying approximately 60 cows or head of cattle, ‘*davoch*’ (Dwelly 1920, 305). According to DIL (D, 4), *dabach* was a measure of land or a portion of land. ‘In this sense only Scotch’.

In Lochaber, five ‘penny lands’ were equal to a forty-shilling land. The portion of land called a *dabhach* was also called a *tirung* (*tìr unga*) or ounce land and each *dabhach* or *tirung* contained twenty ‘penny lands’. The precise carrying capacity of a *dabhach* varied according to area. A ‘merk’ land was a fourth of a *dabhach* and in Saddell it would graze twelve milk cows, ten yield<sup>13</sup> cows, including three three-year-olds, twelve two-year-olds, twelve year-olds, four horses, four fillies, mares and followers, one hundred sheep and eighty goats (Statistical Account vol. xii. p. 477). ‘*Tirung*’ and ‘merk’ or ‘mork’ were Norse measures from a standard of value derived from the weight of silver, the unit being the ounce or ‘*Eyrir*’, eight ounces forming the ‘*Mork*’ or pound, and twenty ‘*pennings*’ one ounce. Thus the land-measures consisted of ‘*Oers*’ or ounce lands, the ounce lands containing either eighteen or twenty penny-lands. They seem to have been called this because under Norwegian rule each homestead paid one penny as ‘*scat*’ (Skene 1890, 224). Most of the land was not utilised though it was ‘owned’ by the local chieftain. In the earliest rentals for Islay and Kintyre, for example, the figures representing the total of the ‘merk lands’ held by the tacksmen from the local chieftains do not amount to more than about one-third of the total extent of these areas as shown on modern maps. The rest was

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 3 on Contemporary Reports.

wasteland that was gradually merged into the tacksmen's holdings with the progress of agriculture (McKerral cited in Haldane 1953, 210).

*Cleitig* is one cow's grass, a croft, or a measure of land containing an eighth of a penny land (Dwelly 1920, 208). *Cleit* is a piece of land surrounded by the sea but accessible on foot at low water, *cleite feòra* is rich pasture (Carmichael 1971, 430).

*Sum* according to Armstrong (1825) is as much grazing ground as will suffice for four sheep. MacLennan (1995 [1925], 328) has *sumaich* – to give due number, as cattle at pasture; MacBain (1896, 318) gives it as being from Scots 'souv'.

*Colpachadh* is the equalising of cattle stock on common pasture. The formula given by Dwelly (1920, 235) for most of the Outer Hebrides is: one horse was equal to 2 cows, where one cow was equal to 8 calves, or 4 stirks, or 2 two-year-old queys (heifers), or one three-year-old quey and 1 one-year-old stirk or 8 sheep, 12 hogs [ewes], 16 lambs or 16 geese. The formula for Argyll, given by Dwelly, was one cow equal to 4 calves; 2 stirks; 1 two-year-old and calf; 1 three-year-old; 5 sheep; 10 hogs; or 20 lambs. The difference in the numbers may not be due to the land of Argyll being less productive than the Islands and other places in the Highlands but to landlords being stricter. Forbes gives this as referring to the 'West Highlands': *Bó le h-al* ('the cow and her offspring') varies. In one case a cow is said (for souming purposes) to consist of only the cow and her calf – to which she is entitled for a year and a day. In another district it means the cow and her three immediate descendants, i.e. the calf, a one-year-old stirk, and a two-year-old quey, in a third, five animals, i.e. the latter and her three-year-old heifer. At four years the first calf is not included in the soum, but classed with the cows (Forbes 1905, 86). It may be noted here that the line is made up of females, as one would expect in a dairy economy, 'stirk' is an Old English term for a one-year-old heifer or steer, and 'quey' is a Scots term for heifer.

*Theirear tribhliadhnaich ri aighean la Bride*, ‘on St Bridget’s day (2<sup>nd</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> Feb.), heifers are called three-year-olds’ (Forbes 1905, 112). This line finishes the saying beginning *Oidhche Shamhna theirear gamhna ris na laoigh*, ‘on Hallowe’en calves are called stirks’ (Nicolson 1881, 334), and designates the time that the heifer is no longer part of the soum of her mother.

...

The vast number of specific words available in Gaelic to identify and describe various types of grazing, pasture, and grass as well as the methods for allotting the grazing, cf. the common and souming, show just how important this aspect was to the people in the Highlands and Islands. The enormous importance of pasture with respect to a minimum of available arable land indicates the specialised nature of land use for a pastoral economy.



## Chapter 12

### People and Places of Herding

Terminology for caretakers of livestock can be very revealing as to the duties expected, as well as to the types of people carrying out the duties. This chapter deals with all aspects of herding, how, where and why it was done as well as those who did it. Because the Highland people did not use enclosures to a great extent until after the improvers came, herding was an extremely important part of husbandry. The following photo was taken of *Loch Airigh na Saorach*, a well-known landmark on the road from Armadale to Broadford on the Isle of Skye.



### Husbandman

A husbandman is generally someone in charge, that is the owner of livestock or an overseer for someone else.

*Àitear* is a husbandman according to Dwelly (1920, 23), who refers to *àiteachd* meaning agriculture. *Aitreabhach* is a tenant or farmer (Dwelly 1920, 25). In English, husbandry is associated with the tending of livestock and farming is associated with tilling the land. Although, one person certainly could do both, the jobs themselves are seen as separate and distinct processes, and agriculture is the combination of both (Allan 2000, 26 & 684).

*Àireach* is a noun meaning a grazier, a keeper of cattle, a shepherd or a watchman (Armstrong 1825). According to Dwelly (1920, 20), it specifically means cattleman or dairyman. MacBain (1896, 9) lists it as a keeper of cattle with the following explanation. *Àireachas* means pastoral life, tending cattle, office of a herdsman as well as summer pasture for black cattle (Dwelly 1920, 20). *Aithreach* is a farmer according to Armstrong (1825).

*Gnàithsear* is a husbandman or countryman (Dwelly 1920, 508). A related word is *gnàithseach* meaning arable land under crop, also 'a farmer', *ceum a 'ghnàithsich*, the ploughman's step - heavy and solid (Dwelly 1920, 508). According to Mr. Black, the word properly is *grainnsear/grainnseach*, from English 'grange': being misinterpreted as being from *gnàth* 'custom'. Dwelly (1920, 521) has *grainnsear* as a farmer, farm-servant, agriculturist. DIL (G, 146-147) gives *gráinne* (from *grán*) meaning grain or a seed and *gráinnsech* as a grange or granary with *gráinseóir* for a winnower or gleaner.

*Tuath* is tenantry, peasantry, laity, country people, husbandmen, and an aggregate number of land proprietors, farmers or tenants. *An tuath, an tuath-cheathairn*, the tenantry; *is treasa tuath na tighearna*, 'tenantry are stronger than laird' (Dwelly 1920, 978). *Tuathach* is a North Highlander, rarely a lord or proprietor, *tuathanach* a farmer, rustic, peasant, husbandman, agriculturist, *tuathanachail* is agricultural and *tuathanachas* is farming, agriculture and husbandry (Dwelly 1920, 978). *Tuathanachd* is agriculture, husbandry or the condition of a farmer or peasant (Armstrong 1825). *Tuathánas* is a farm, *tha tuathánas math aige*, 'he has a good farm' (Wentworth 1996, 52). All of these stem from *tuath*, 'people', with the exception of *tuathach*, which is from 'north' (Dwelly 1920, 978). DIL (T, 348) lists

*túath* as a people, tribe or nation and *túathach* as a populous, also a northern Highlander. *Túathannach* is a countryman or rustic (DIL T, 350).

*Taigheadas* means husbandry, as does *taigheas* (Armstrong 1825). DIL (T, 168) has *tiges* as householding or husbandry and *tigedas* for housekeeping and husbandry (DIL T, 166).

*Treòdas* or *treabhadas* is livelihood or husbandry according to Father Allan (McDonald 1991 [1899], 248). DIL (T, 281) has *trebad*, the verbal noun of *trebaid* ‘cultivates’, as the act of ‘ploughing, cultivating or husbandry’.

*Fearanda* and *feine* are obsolete terms, according to Armstrong (1825), for a countryman, a boor or a farmer. *Fearanda* is from Early Irish *ferann* ‘land’.

### **Cowherd/Shepherd**

Traditionally, one who herds cows takes their title from a word for cow and one who herds sheep takes a word stemming from sheep, hence *buaghair* is a cow-herd, and *aodhair/aoghair* is a shepherd, the latter, according to Professor Kelly, is from Early Irish *óe* ‘sheep’ and *gaire* ‘caller’ (personal communication July 2003). However, just as in English, the two terms have become intertwined. So a *buaghair* can be a cowherd, herd or shepherd: *thachair orra buaghair bhó*, ‘a cow-herd met them’ (Dwelly 1920, 134). It is worth noting that *buaghair* here requires a qualifier (*bhó*) to specify the animals involved. According to DIL (A, 397) *ar-gair* is forbids, hinders or prevents and by extended application *argairt* becomes ‘she herded’. *Argair* is the verb to keep or herd (Dwelly 1920, 46).

As seen above, *aodhair/aoghair* (Dwelly 1920, 38) is a shepherd, pastor or protector. In this case the English and Gaelic both are specific in sheep-herd (shepherd) as opposed to cowherd. *Aodhaireachd* is a shepherd (MacLeod & Dewar, 1920, 28). The following statement by Pennant shows the term being used to mean a

herder of all types of animals as well as a cultivator. “The *aoghairean* of the Hebrides are farm servants who have the charge of cultivating a certain portion of land and of overseeing the cattle it supports. They have grass for 2 milk cows and 7 sheep, and also one tenth sheaf of the produce of the said ground, and as many potatoes as they choose to plant.”

*Aoir*, a contraction of *aodhair*, is a keeper of cattle according to Armstrong (1825). The translators used the term ‘cattle’ at times to mean any of the herding animals. Armstrong (1825) also has *aoireannan* (for *aoghairean*) plural of *aoghair* meaning cowherds or keepers of cattle.

*Cuallach* is a keeper of cattle, or, more generally, the herding or tending of cattle, *agus e a’ cuallach na spréidhe*, and he tending the cattle (Dwelly 1920, 285), also *cuallachadh* is a tending of cattle, herding (Armstrong 1825). The following derivatives occur: *cuallachd*, the occupation of herding, can also be ‘a number of followers or dependants’ (Armstrong 1825), *cuallach nam bò* is ‘herding cattle’ (McDonald 1991 [1899], 89). There is also *cuallaich* ‘to tend cattle’ and *cuallaiche* ‘a keeper of cattle’ (Armstrong 1825). The last is more descriptive of a husbandman as seen above.

*Buachaille*, according to Dwelly (1920, 133), is a cowherd, a shepherd, a watch or protector of cattle of any kind (meaning any four-legged herd animal). Thurneysen (1998, 40) gives *bó* as probably coming from *\*bous* (originally *gṵōus*, *Buachailleach* means pastoral, of or pertaining to a shepherd or cowherd (Armstrong 1825), while *buachaillich* and *buachailleachd* mean herding, watching cattle or the occupation of a herdsman (Dwelly 1920, 133). For the etymology of *buachaille* see LEIA s.v. *buachail(l)*.

*Muthach* is a herd, a cowherd (Armstrong 1825); Dwelly (1920, 682) defines it as a herd, herdsman, cowherd, milk contractor. *Caillear bó an droch mhuthaich seachd bliadhna roimhn mhithich*, the bad herdsman's cow is lost seven years before the time (Nicolson 1881, 74). The bad herdsman is so bad that his cow dies, is stolen, or wanders off, seven years before it would ordinarily die, which is quite a long time in the life of a cow, whose productive life is from seven to twelve years.

*Buarachan* is a cowherd from *buarach* 'a cow-fetter, spancel'. DIL (B, 229-230) has *búarach* (from *bó* + *árach*) as a spancel for cows at milking-time.

*Flèidh* is to keep or tend, as cattle (Armstrong 1825).

*Cìobair*, from English 'keeper', is a shepherd, a herd or a keeper. *Fead cìobair an aonaich* is 'the whistle of the mountain-shepherd' (Dwelly 1920, 195).

*Cailbhearb* is an obsolete word for a cowherd listed in MacLeod and Dewar, and also Dwelly (1920, 147).

### **Township Herd**

The English term for one who herds as well as those they herd is often simply 'herd', but this tends to create confusion in translation. Because grazing was in common, it was often necessary to have someone designated to take care of animals grazing around the *baile geamhraidh*. The following terms deal with the people, rather than the animals, involved in that work.

*Coimheadaiche* or *coimheadaidh* (from *coimhead*, watching or tending) was the keeper, grass-keeper or township herd in Uist (Dwelly 1920, 225). *Fàd a' choimheadaidh* was the peat of the grass-keeper (McDonald 1991 [1899], 78 & 182).

*Cuartaich* is a farm-servant among the Islands, whose sole business is to preserve the grass and corn of his employer. His wages are grass for four cows, and as much arable land as one horse can plough and harrow (Armstrong 1825). Probably

from *cuairt*, which means to encircle, that is the person would literally be responsible for encircling the land in question with protection from unwanted grazers. Carmichael has the following for *cuartachadh baile* that is circuiting the townland.

Being tenants at will, and liable to eviction, the crofters erected no fences round their fields; consequently when the crops were in the ground they had to guard them by night and by day from their own and their neighbours' herds. During the day the townland herdsman tends the animals and keeps them from the crops, but by night the townland is patrolled by a man from each of two families taken in rotation. These men are called *cuartaiche*, circuiters. If the townland be a large one this duty coming at long intervals is not much felt, but in a small townland the night watching becomes oppressive. In crofting townlands adjoining deer forests, geese, duck, or other game resorts, the men patrol their crops all night to safeguard them, and kindle fires where incursions are most feared. Should damage result through the remissness of these two men, the families represented are responsible and make reparation. The damage done is appraised by men set apart and sworn for the purpose (Carmichael 1928, 262).

*Feur-ghartadh* in Wester Ross, from *gart* 'standing corn', is "the keeping of his own cattle next to the crops by the crofter whose turn it is to do the herding of the township" (Dwelly 1920, 430). Each area would have had its own practices and traditions for taking care of herding on the common grazing. This would be an interesting study in its own right.

### **Droving and Herding**

There is a great difference between the concepts of droving and herding. Herding can mean either to drive animals from pasture to pasture or home to pasture; or it can mean to simply keep the animals in one place while they graze which does not require movement over any distance. Droving, on the other hand, has the connotation of 'going to market'. A drove, though, can be just a 'herd' of animals.

*Tional* is ‘gathering, act of gathering, collecting’ (Dwelly 1920, 952), it is also used for a gathering of cattle as in the following excerpt from *Calum A’ Ghlinne* by Malcolm MacLean.

*S ioma bodachan gnù  
Nach dùirig mi aithris  
Le thional air spréidh  
'S iad ga thréigsinn as t-earrach, (Black 2001, 240).*

*Tinól* is found in Early Irish for the act of collecting or gathering but also that part of the marriage contribution which consisted of cattle (DIL T, 185).

*Iomain* is a drove of sheep, or black cattle (Armstrong 1825), also, used as a verb ‘to urge’, ‘drive slowly’ as cattle, and, as a verbal noun, driving, act of driving or urging (Dwelly 1920, 547). *Iomainiche* is a driver of cattle i.e. a drover (Armstrong 1825).

*Saod* is a track or journey, *saodach* is the verbal noun driving (as cattle), *a saodach a’ chruidh*, ‘driving the cattle’, *saodachadh*, ‘act of driving cattle’, as to pasture, taking care of, tending (Armstrong 1825). *Saodaich* means to drive cattle or flocks to pasture, or to a resting-place for the night, *saodaichte*, driven to pasture, tended taken care of (Dwelly 1920, 788).

*Teàrnadh* is ‘driving’ used transitively, *tha ’n crodh ’gan teàrnadh le leathad*, the cattle are being driven downhill (McDonald 1991 [1899], 239).

*Ponnanaich* means to herd, from *ponnan*, a bunch, cluster, group or herd (Dwelly 1920, 732).

*Utrod*, according to Armstrong (1825) is a cattle-road and *utrodach* is “‘having a road for cattle or belonging to a cattle road.’” Dwelly (1920, 990) has *ùdrathad* as free egress and regress to common pasture i.e. a common road to common grazing. It was *ùtraid* in Tìree, according to Professor Donald Meek, “‘most likely of Old Norse origin meaning ‘outer road’” (personal communication 2003).

*Loinig* is a lane for cattle; also *lonainn* means a lane or passage for cattle (Armstrong 1825).

### **Other Duties**

One of the duties of the caretakers involved the weaning process; *tearbadh* is separating, weaning (Dwelly 1920, 941). *Terba* in Early Irish is the verbal noun of *terbaid* ‘severs, separates’, it is the act of severing or separating (DIL T, 150).

### **Flocks, herds and droves**

*Spréidh* or *spréidhe* is cattle and is probably the most common word for herds of livestock. *Buailtean spréidhe* are herds of cattle (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 57).

*Cròilean* is a little fold or group (Armstrong 1825), also group or bunch, *bha 'n crodh 'nan cròileán air a' bhruthaich*, the cows were in a bunch on the hillside (Wentworth 1996, 20).

*Dròbh* from English is a “drove of cattle, a number of cattle or a cavalcade. *Thig dròbh nam mart*, droves of cattle shall come” (Armstrong 1825). *Bualachd* is a drove of cattle (Armstrong 1825).

*Dartan* (Armstrong 1825) and *dartan-eallaigh* (Forbes 1905, 9) are nouns meaning a herd (of cattle) or drove. *Dartán*, according to DIL (D, 107) is a herd of cows and *dartán bó* is a drove of cows. The difference between a herd and a drove is subtle and sometimes non-existent; however, a herd is simply a collective of animals, whereas a drove is a collective being driven (usually to market).

*Ealbh* is an obsolete term for a herd, or a drove (Armstrong 1825). Forbes (1905, 10) has it as *eallbh*, being a current word for a herd or drove of cattle. This is possibly from *elba*, Early Irish for a flock, herd or drove (usually of deer, but also of domesticated animals) (DIL E, 106). *Seilbh* and *sealbhan* are terms for a drove or group of animals (Armstrong 1825), though Dwelly (1920, 804) has *seilbh* as “a herd



of cattle at grass, (not used of a drove in Wester Ross).” DIL (S, 162) lists *selb*, genitive plural *sealbhann*, as property, a flock or a herd.

*Treud* is a drove, flock, herd, a procession, such as a line of cattle or birds, from Early Irish *trét* ‘a herd’ (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 349). *Treudach* is gregarious, in herds or flocks, belonging to a herd or a flock, hence *treudaiche* a keeper of cattle, a shepherd, a cowherd or swineherd (Armstrong 1825).

*Eallach* means a herd in Perthshire and Wester Ross, according to an informant of Dwelly’s (1920, 381) – Reverend C. M. Robertson, of Jura. *Ellach*, according to DIL (E, 112), is a collective term for goods, property or stock, especially livestock i.e. cattle.

*Ealt* is a “number of quadrupeds, as a drove of cattle etc.” (Armstrong 1825). Forbes (1905, 10) has *elta* and *eltlagh* as a flock or herd. *Elta* is a flock or multitude of any kind of animal in Early Irish (DIL E, 115-116). *Iall* and *sath*, according to Forbes (1905, 12), are terms for a herd or a drove. *Íall* is listed in DIL (I, 14) as being identical to *ealta*.

*Prasgan* is also a flock or herd according to Armstrong (1825), possibly from Early Irish *prascán* meaning a rabble, mob or gang (DIL P, 200).

*Sreath* can mean a herd, troop or flock (Forbes 1905, 17). DIL (S, 370) lists *sreth* for ranks or lines of people, soldiers etc.

Forbes (1905, 3) has *greidh* and *aidhre* as herds and flocks, *greidh is aithre Mhanain*, the herds and flocks of the Isle of Man (Book of the Dean of Lismore). Dwelly (1920, 524) has *greigh* as a herd or flock.

*Airnmheadh*, according to Forbes (1905, 3) is a ‘herd of cattle, etc.’ Dwelly (1920, 21) lists it only as a herd of cattle referencing Forbes. Since cattle can mean cows, sheep and goats, the etc. might possibly include horses or other animals such as

geese or chickens. Because Forbes lists it with *àirneis*, which can mean furniture, livestock or movable wealth, it is possible that he thinks it is cognate with this term.

*Cuanal*, according to Carmichael (1928, 262), is “cattle, horse, sheep and goats; generally the younger generations.”

A song given by Carmichael (1928, 307) as having been sung by the ‘*gruagach* of Bannan’ gives *na boidhean* as ‘the kine’. The word is specifically different from *crodh* (cows), which occurs later in the song. ‘Kine’ is given in the *Concise Scots Dictionary* to mean cattle of the cow kind.

*Ho, hi, ho! mach na boidhean,  
Boidhean biodheach brogach beannach,  
Ho, hi, ho, mach na boidhean.  
Crodh Mhicugain, crodh Mhiceannain,  
Crodh MhicFhearachair mhoir a Bheannain,  
Ho, hi, ho! mach na boidhean.*

Ho, hi, ho! out the kine,  
Pretty cattle hoofed and horned,  
Ho, hi, ho! out the kine.  
Cows of Macugan, cows of Mackinnon,  
Cows of big Macfarquhar of the Bannan  
Ho, hi, ho! out the kine (Carmichael 1928, 307).

*Boidhean* probably means, specifically the milk cows of the herd, as it appears to stem from *bó*. *Crodh* is usually specific for herds of black cattle (as opposed to sheep and goats) it also means dowry so would be looked upon as a ‘unit of value’ where the value lies in the wholeness of the herd rather than the individual values given to milk cows. The differences are subtle, but apparent. Within the same context, Carmichael has another rhyme, this time said by a dairymaid making libation to the *gruagach*.

*A ghruagach, a ghruagach,  
Cum suas mo spreidhe,  
Cum sios an Guaigean,  
Cum uap an Geige.*

Brownie, brownie  
Uphold my herds,  
Keep down the ‘*Guaigean*,’

Keep from them the '*Geige*' (Carmichael 1928, 306).

Within the two pieces there are three different terms for herds of milk cows. The *Guaigean* is found in another poem as a place where the *Geigean* comes from. *Geigean* being 'king' of the 'death revels' celebrated during the wintertime (Carmichael 1928, 306). The inference is that *Guaigean* represents death.

*Bàchruidh* is a provincial word for cattle or cows, according to MacLennan (1995 [1925], 25).

Armstrong (1825) lists the following: *Feudail* is a word for cattle, a herd but also a cow; *buar* is cattle, a herd of cattle or oxen; and *stuidh* is a flock or herd of animals. *Sgann*, according to Forbes (1905, 17), is a herd or drove of cattle. *Slonnadh* is flocks (Dwelly 1920, 855).

*Buar*, according to Dwelly (1920, 136) are 'cattle, oxen or a herd of cattle'. *Buair air buailibh*, 'herds in the folds'. DIL (B, 229) has *buár* (from *bó*) as a collective noun i.e. cows, cattle herds. *Buar* is used in a line from an early twentieth century poem by Donald MacIver telling of a pleasant way of life that used to be in his village.

*Le màthraichean suairc'*  
*Làn uail 'nan companaich gràidh*  
*Le caoraich is buar*  
*Air ghluas 'd moch mhadainn nan tràth.*

Their mothers serene  
 Well pleased with their partners in life  
 With sheep and with cows  
 Setting out at the morning's first light (Black 1999, 20-21).

*Buas* is an obsolete term meaning 'abounding in cattle' (Dwelly 1920, 137). *Buás* is listed in DIL (B, 230) for cows or wealth (in kine).

*Aoi* is an obsolete term for a flock of sheep, according to Dwelly (1920, 38).

*Aoileach* is an obsolete term for grazing stock (Dwelly 1920, 39) and *ai* is an obsolete

word for herd and cow (Dwelly 1920, 137). Armstrong (1825) also has it obsolete for a sheep and a swan. Carmichael (1928, 222) lists it for sheep or swan. *Cuir a stigh an ai*, 'put the sheep in'. *Chi mi ai air ailn an eilein*, 'I see a swan on the loch of the island.' "Ai seems to mean white, whiteness, perhaps akin to *aigh* 'beautiful'." Unfortunately he does not list *aigh*, nor does anyone else, to mean beautiful. According to Armstrong and others, it means a deer. *Aí* is listed in DIL (A, 89) for a swan.

*Aoilbhinn* is an obsolete term for a small flock (Armstrong 1825). *Ailbín* is listed in DIL (A, 115) for a small flock.

### **Women**

*Banachag* is a dairymaid or milker, *banachaigeachd* is the business of a dairymaid, the making or preparing of dairy produce, or the office of a dairymaid, also *banarachas* (Dwelly 1920, 64-65). *Banarach* is a dairymaid or milkmaid (Armstrong 1825). *Buaileachan* is a milker of cows or a place where cows are milked (Armstrong 1825).

*Ban-tuathanach* is a female who farms, a farmer's wife, while *ban-tuathanachas* is agriculture done under the direction of a female (Armstrong 1825). *Bana-bhuachaille* is a shepherdess or female who tends sheep or cattle, also *ban-bhuachaill* (Armstrong 1825).

### **Other workers**

*Seirbhiseach* (Wentworth 1996, 52) and *scalag* (Armstrong 1825) are terms for a farm-servant. According to DIL (S, 151), *seirbis* is an English or Romance loan word from 'service'.

*Feurachair* is a fodderer or feeder (Dwelly 1920, 430), that is, someone who feeds the animals, from *feur*, grass or hay. *Fodair* is to give food or provender to

cattle, fodder, *fodar* is straw or provender and *fodradh* is the hand-feeding of cattle (Armstrong 1825). These are probably from English fodder, i.e. food for cattle, horses, sheep, or other domestic animals, especially coarse fodder such as hay. There is also *fosrach*, grazing of cattle when tethered, hand feeding of cattle (Dwelly 1920, 452).

### **Enclosures and Buildings**

'*Poinde*' in Scots law is to take forceful legal possession i.e. to impound or distrain. *Punndair* is one who confines straying cattle, and *punndaireachd* is a confining of strayed cattle (MacLeod and Dewar 1920, 460; Dwelly 1920, 740).

*Faisgeadh*, according to Armstrong (1825), is a penfold, Dwelly (1920, 418) has *fascadh* as protection, shelter, refuge, fold, that is the pen-folding of cattle. *Fasc*, in Early Irish Law, was a notice or information, especially a notice that distrained cattle were in a pound, by extension it became the term for a pound for cattle (DIL F, 44).

*Eachdrach* is a poindfold (Armstrong 1825), Dwelly (1920, 377) has *eachdaran* for a "pen for confining straying cattle or sheep, 'pin-fold'."

*Fang* is a 'poindfold', or distraining place for livestock, a place for catching cattle, a pen; *fang* or *fangach* is to drive into a fold or pen, and *fangachadh* is therefore driving into a fold, penning cattle (Armstrong 1825).

*Caimir* is a fold or a stockade where flocks were safeguarded, as a sanctuary (Carmichael 1928, 242). This would be from *caim*, which is a loop or circle, "an imaginary circle described with the hand round himself by a person in fear, danger, or distress (Carmichael 1928, 240). *Cliath* is also a stockade, DIL (C, 239) lists it as a woven fence or palisade. "In olden times *cliath* included a strong stockade, constructed of wood or wattle, to safeguard *meanbh chrodh*, small cattle, and sheep,

from the ravages of wild animals. When *caol*, ‘oziers’, were unattainable and the enclosure was built of stones, it was called *cro* ‘pen’ (Carmichael 1928, 253).

*Buaile* can mean a fold for sheep or for black cattle; a stall; a dairy (Armstrong 1825), MacBain (1896, 49) has it as a fold or pen. *Buailidh*, is a dairy or milk house, also a stall or fold, *steach do 'n bhailidh*, into the milking-house, also *buailteach* is a dairy house (Armstrong 1825). It is also used for booth or huts for sheilings, as an adjective, it means rich in cattle folds (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 57). *Búaile*, according to DIL (B, 223-224), is a cow-house or byre, also a yard enclosure or paddock; *na búailedh* ‘of the milking yard’. *Búailteachas* (from *búaile*) is a summer pasture or grazing for cattle (DIL B, 225).

*Bàbhun* is an enclosure; a fold where cattle are milked (Dwelly 1920, 56). MacBain (1896, 21) has “bulwark, enclosure for cattle – Middle Irish ‘*bódhún*’ (Annals of Loch Cé, 1199); from *bó* and *dùn*.” Armstrong (1825) has *boghun* “(perhaps from *bo-dhùn*), an enclosure for cattle, intended as a security against cattelifters.”

*Innis* is an island, a sheltered valley protected by a wood, a field to graze cattle in, also pasture, a resting-place for cattle, a headland, haugh, riverside meadow. In Islay it is a ‘choice place’. In Ross and Sutherland it applies to a low-lying sheltered place where cows are gathered to be milked, and where they lie out at night - *Innis nam bó laoigh 's nam fiadh*, ‘a resting-place for milk-cows and deer’ (Dwelly 1920, 542-43). DIL (I, 269) has *inis* for ‘Island’ and *indes*, *inis* and *innes* as a byre or a milking enclosure (DIL I, 226).

*Cuidh*, according to Dwelly (1920, 289), is an enclosure, cattle-fold or pen, in Barra, and an enclosed field in Eigg. “It is a trench, hollow artificially formed as a sheltered place to milk cows in on the grazing ground, and save the trouble of driving

them to and from the byre. This word enters largely into place names – Uist.”

Similarly *cuithe* is a cattle-fold or enclosure (Dwelly 1920, 296-297). DIL (C, 608) lists *cuithe* as a pit, pitfall or trap for animals.

*Tigh-bainne* is a dairy, literally the dairy-house (Armstrong 1825), I think this refers to the place where dairy produce and utensils are kept as opposed to a milking place.<sup>14</sup>

*Seachduan* is a fold, according to Armstrong, *seach* means without or dry, which implies a ‘dry-lot’ which is a pen for cattle that does not have food or water or both, and is meant to be a temporary ‘holding-pen’ (personal experience).

*Beò-fhàl* is an enclosure (Armstrong 1825), from *beò* (live animal) and *fàl* which, according to Dwelly (1920, 408), is a ‘pen-fold for strayed cattle or sheep’, Armstrong (1825) has *fàl* as any type of enclosure including a circle. *Fàl*, according to DIL (F, 35), is a fence, hedge or enclosure.

*Pàirc* is a park (from English), an enclosed field, an enclosure or a field (Armstrong 1825). Enclosures were not necessarily the same in any given area, in the Highlands area where enclosures came very late, an enclosed field, whether for arable or pasture was a rarity, an enclosure could vary in size from a stall to a field and most arable fields were un-enclosed.<sup>15</sup>

*Dlùth* is an enclosure or fence (Dwelly 1920, 344). DIL (D, 170) has *dlùthe* as closeness, density or compactness; *Ni dichet scuithe ar a dluithe* ‘The small cattle cannot pass through (the fence) for its closeness.

*Bàich*, from *bà-theach*, literally ‘cow-house’ is a cattle house according to Armstrong (1825). *Bàthaich* is a ‘corruption of *bà-theach*’ a ‘cow-house’ (Armstrong 1825). MacBain (1896, 27) gives it from *bó* and *tigh*. It is the barn or ‘byre’. *Bothan*

<sup>14</sup> See *One Hundred Years in the Highlands*, Osgood MacKenzie.

<sup>15</sup> For further information on enclosures see *Scotland As it Was and As it Is*, Duke of Argyll.

is a hut, cottage, tent, booth or bower. *Rinne bothain d'a spreidh*, 'he made booths for his cattle' (Armstrong 1825). *Bothán* (from *both*) is a little hut or cabin *a bothy* 'her sheiling' (DIL B, 149-150). The unlikely entry of *both-thigh* by Armstrong for an ox-stall, or a cow house, is made more presentable by Dwelly (1920, 111) as *bó-thaigh* who then instructs us to 'see *bàthaich*'.

The parts of the 'byre' listed by Dwelly (1920, 79) are; *balla* – wall, *amar* – trough, *post deiridh* – hind post, *maide mullaich* – top rail, *clach amail* – curbstone, *bùird tharsuinn* – travis boards, *bacan* – stake, *inne (carcair, gruip)* – gutter, *urlar* – paved floor (literally new floor), *buall (buist)* – stall and *prasach* – manger. Other names for parts of the barn include *imeach* – floor under the cow (Wentworth 1996, 21), *buabhall*, and *buaigneal* – a cow stall (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 56-57), also *bualaidh* (Dwelly 1920, 136). *Buathal*, according to Dwelly (1920, 137), is a stall in a byre or stable.

*Lios*, according to Armstrong (1825), is an enclosure or stalls for cattle, possibly from Early Irish *les* 'the space about a dwelling-house or houses enclosed by a bank or rampart' (DIL L, 115). *Lias* is a hut for calves or lambs (Armstrong 1825). *Lías*, according to DIL (L, 147), is a pen or fold *lias* .i. *cro bhios ag láoghaibh no ag úanaibh*, it could be 'also of shelter for cattle of all kinds'.

*Prasach* is a manger or a stall (Armstrong 1825). *Stall*, according to MacLennan (1995 [1925], 320), is "the step in the floor down to the level of the byre in the very old thatched houses." *Speach* according to Carmichael (1928, 362), is a flat stone in a byre door or a certain stone in a byre drain. *Speach na bathcah (bàthaich)*, 'the doorstep of the byre'.

*Stèic* is a cow's stake or stall (MacLennan, 1995 [1925], 321). *Stiall* is a post to which a cow is tied in a stable, the first term appears to be from English, however



*stíall* is found in Early Irish for a strip, panel, slat or border i.e. *sdíall* .i. *clár* (DIL S, 387).

*Bó-lann* is a cow-house, byre or fold according to Armstrong (1825), and an ox stall according to the Highland Society Dictionary (1818, 131).

*Amhas* is a stall for cattle (Dwelly 1920, 29); Armstrong (1825) has it as *abhus*. *Angar* is also a stall for cattle (Armstrong 1825).

*Crò* is a fold for sheep, a cattle-house, stall or stable – also a crop (Armstrong 1825). Dwelly (1920, 274) has it as a circle, sheep-cot, pen or fold, wattled fold, also stall and stable. See MacBain for etymology.

*Maindreach* is a hut, booth or fold (Armstrong 1825). *Mainnir* is a fold for cattle, sheep or goats on the hillside – a pen (Armstrong 1825). *Mainder*, *maindrecha*, according to DIL (M, 37), is an enclosure for cattle, a pen, a fold, also a ‘lawful pound’ (*mainder dlichteach*).

*Caor-lann* is a sheep field (Armstrong 1825). A *cotan* was a “small pen for lambs where they were kept while their dams were being milked. A pen for lambs (also for calves, Neil Sinclair, Castlebay, Barra)” (McDonald 1991 [1899], 82).

*Mànrach* is a fold, a pen or cattlehouse and *rocan* is a little fold (Armstrong 1825). *Urc* is an enclosure or fold (Armstrong 1825).

*Aitreabh*, (perhaps from *àite* – place and *treabh/threabh* – farmed village<sup>16</sup>), is an abode, dwelling, building or steading, also written *aitreamh* (Armstrong 1825). The key here is ‘steading’ which means a farmstead (Allan 2000, 1374). DIL (A, 477-478) has *attrab* for a dwelling, habitation or house.

*Bonntachadh math* is a good farmstead according to Carmichael (1971, 17).

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<sup>16</sup> See Dwelly for *treabh*

*Caislich* is a verb to shake, stir or rouse, but also means to ‘bed’ cattle, and *easradh* is a term for the bedding for cattle i.e. ferns (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 67 & 144). *Esrad* (from *es(s)air* ‘strewing litter for cattle’) is listed in DIL (E, 202) as strewing (with rushes etc.) bedding, littering, litter for cattle.

*Fàradh* is litter spread in the bottom of a boat for footing for cattle to be ferried (McDonald 1991 [1899], 119).

Armstrong (1825) lists the following terms as obsolete, though when and where they became obsolete is questionable. A *cata* for a sheep-cote; *bàidheal* for a cow-stall; *co’bhail* for enclosure; *crocharsach* for a sheepfold; and *banrach* is an obsolete word for a fold for sheep, a pen or cattle-house.

### **Cattle calls and Names**

The following terms are calls to cattle by herdsmen, which evolved into a name for calves. *Pruidh* is a call to cattle in Perth, north Argyll and Mull, a call to a cow or calf in Wester Ross and to a calf in Arran. *Pruidh-dhé* is a call to a cow in Badenoch and north Argyll. *Pruidh-dhé bheag* is a call to a calf in north Argyll, *pruidh-é* a call to a calf in Perth and Sutherland and a call to a cow near at hand in Argyll. *Pruidh-seo* is a call to a calf in Mull, *pruigean* a call to a cow or calf in Wester Ross (Dwelly 1920, 739). *Ciamar a tha na pruigeánan an diugh?* ‘How are the calves today?’ *Seall na pruigean a’ ruith*, look at the calves running. *Am Pruigeán Ruadh* ‘the Red Calf’ is a man’s nickname’ (Wentworth 1996, 22).

Another interjection to cattle by those who tend them is *tairis!* (or *teiris*) ‘stand still!’ It is spoken by a dairymaid to calm the cow, it is from Early Irish *do-airissedar* ‘stands, stays, remains (DIL D, 189-190. *Teiris* is also used to tame or quiet an animal, as of unruly cattle, said to quell cattle when they fight (Armstrong 1825).

*Tàmhaidh*, according to Forbes (1905, 18), is ‘a cow that stands gentle’. This is possibly from Early Irish *támach* meaning languid or sluggish (DIL T, 65).

*Catachad* and *catadh* mean a taming, soothing or domesticating of animals (Armstrong 1825). *Cetaigid* (from *cet* ‘agreed’) means permits or allows in Early Irish (DIL C, 154).

### **Instruments**

According to Reverend J. MacRury of Snizort, one of Dwelly’s informants (1920, 143), a *bùthach* is an instrument to prevent calves from sucking. Dwelly (1920, 274) has a *cròcach* as a spiked instrument to keep calves from sucking. *Glomhar* is a gag for beasts to prevent sucking, from Early Irish ‘*glomhar*’ meaning a bridle (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 185). *Crodhan* is a ‘‘piece of wood fixed in or tied to the mouth of a calf like a bit and round the back of the head, to prevent it sucking its mother when following’’ (Forbes 1905, 74). It is possible that these would have been used specifically on the trek to the sheilings, noting Forbes entry ‘when following’. At most other times the calves were kept from their mothers by herding or enclosures.<sup>17</sup>

The *buarach* or cow’s fetters were a very important part of the dairymaid’s equipment. They were shackles used on the hind legs of cows to keep them still while being milked (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 58). (See Chapter 15 ‘Folklore’). Armstrong (1825) gives what may be a misprint from *buarach* as *luarach*.

The pin, which held the fetter together, is a *lunnaid* in Wester Ross (Dwelly 1920, 610). *Spearrach* is given by Armstrong (1825) to mean a kind of fetter for cattle. *Spésrach*, according to DIL (S, 355), is a muzzle or gag.

*Bràidean* is a calf’s collar (Armstrong 1825), and *bràigh* (*bràighdean*) is a collar(s) for cattle. *Bràigdech* (from *brágu* ‘captive’), according to DIL (B, 153-154)

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<sup>17</sup> *One Hundred Years in the Highlands*, Osgood MacKenzie

is horse-collar or halter. “*Dail* is kind of wooden collar for cattle. Stall-halter for a cow” (Dwelly 1920, 307). *Sugan* is a rope of straw or hay, a straw collar for cattle (Armstrong 1825). *Súgán* is found in DIL (S, 410) with this quote: *dá gcreasaibh cruadhshúgán*, ‘by their belts of hard straw rope’. (See Chapter 14 ‘Physical Characteristics and Animal Diseases’) for a ‘medicinal’ use for the *sugan*.

An *àrach* is a tie, bond or collar on a beast, specifically a stall-tie for a cow; it can also mean a milkman among other things (Dwelly 1920, 43). *Árach* is found in DIL (A, 373) for the act of binding or tying, also a bond or fetter. Dwelly’s use of ‘milkman’ is of interest, as it would not appear to denote ‘milker’. Women did most of the milking even when milk was commercialised though men took over management and distribution (Robertson 1994, 65-66). A milkman was a term used for a deliverer or seller of milk (Allan 2000, 880).

*Nasg* is a tieband, a wooden collar for a cow, formerly made of plaited or twisted birch or other twigs (Dwelly 1920, 686) and *neasg* – a tie or a stall (Armstrong 1825). DIL (N, 15) has *nasc* as a fastening, tie, spancel or ring (an agricultural implement). The last item is well known for leading bulls by the nose, one of the few humane ways of keeping a bull under control.

*Smeadhag* is a cow’s halter or a short neck-rope (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 306).

A *féisd* is a tether for cattle in Lewis, to keep them from the corn (Dwelly 1920, 427).

*Lorg-iomain* is a goad, a stick to drive cattle with (Armstrong 1825), literally a stick to urge cattle slowly. According to DIL (L, 208), *lorg* is a staff or stick and *immáin* (DIL I, 118) is the act of driving.

*Seòl-bhat* is a goad, a staff for driving cattle (Armstrong 1825) – *seòl* is guidance and *bat* is a stick, baton or cudgel (Dwelly 1920, 808 & 73). According to DIL (S, 183), *seól* is a course and *bata* (DIL B, 44) is a Romance loanword for stick or staff. As seen in the following poem according to the staff the herdsman or boy carried, “so it fared with the cows he herded.”

*Bata daraich, dàiridh crodh,      (dàir air a' chrodh)*  
*Bata beithe, beiridh crodh*  
*Bata calltain, callair chrodh      (calltar)*  
*Bata caorrainn, caoil air chrodh (caon, caonter)*

An oaken staff, heat in cattle      (breeding)  
 A birch staff, calving of cattle  
 A hazel staff, loss of cattle  
 A staff of mountain ash, starvation of cattle (Carmichael  
 1971, 12).

*Sgioballan* is a brush for sweeping cattle (Armstrong 1825); this was probably used more for getting rid of flying pests than cleaning. It is possibly from Early Irish *scipaid* ‘sweeps away’ (DIL S, 95).

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Gaelic terms for those who care for animals and the specific care provided are descriptive and informative. They give us an idea of herd and animal management and an insight into specific duties of the people involved and of the places used. Particularly important are terms about distraint and township herding, which indicate that definite rules were in effect governing destruction caused by animals. Terms regarding areas for milking also shed light on local practices that varied from place to place and were pertinent to local life styles.

## Chapter 13

### Cultivated Land and its Produce

This chapter will look at terms which have to do with plowing and harvesting grain, as well as processes used in storing and preparing it for consumption by both humans and animals. Some terms, which mean ploughed land as well as pasture, have already been examined in Chapter 11 'Pasture' and will only be briefly mentioned here. Land held by the tenantry is included in this chapter as it is difficult to describe land use while disregarding land ownership. The Western Islands and Highlands of Scotland contain very diverse growing conditions, from Island and coastal plains to high mountains. The farmers of the area had to prioritise their land use in order to gain the most from it. This is an important chapter as my thesis is based on the hypothesis that little grain was consumed as a staple part of the diet for humans in the form of bread in the Central and Western Highlands before the 1800s. Many of the terms included here relate to production and storage of animal feed and the preparation of grain for brewing.



The above photo shows old traces of run-rig farming (*màgan ma seach*) on a hill in Troternish, Isle of Skye.

## Farmland

*Baile-geamhraidh* is an infield, ground that is always ploughed (Armstrong 1825), literally a winter-town. *Geamhraich* is to winter, or feed during winter, i.e. furnish provender to livestock (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 177). If any arable was available to the people it would be located at the *baile-geamhraidh*; this land was usually either held in common or sectioned off and allotted out to each family. If the land was very disparate in quality, lots would be drawn every year or certain number of years so that each cultivator had a chance at the better as well as the poorer parts, this was known as the system of ‘run-rig’.<sup>18</sup>

*Achadh* is the most common word for field in Gaelic, meaning both a field for growing grain and a place to pasture livestock. It is used extensively in place-names.<sup>19</sup> *Ached* is an earlier form than *achad* for field in Old Irish, see LEIA s.v. *achad* also *ached* in early place-names.

*Toimhseach* is a farm (Armstrong 1825). *Toimsech* is ‘spacious’ according to DIL (T, 222), *tomsech trebaid* ‘spacious abode’.

*Croit* is a little ‘farm’, ‘patch of arable ground’ or croft and *croitear* is a crofter (Armstrong 1825). These terms came into general use as a result of holdings allowed tenants during the Clearances.

*Goirtean* is a little field, a little farm, a small patch of arable ground or a little cornfield (Armstrong 1825). *Gart*, according to Dwelly (1920, 479), is standing corn, also first shoots of sown corn. *Gort* (also *gart*), according to DIL (G, 139), is a field of arable or pasture land.

*Fearann* is a farm, land, ground, country or earth, e.g. *deagh fhearann*, is a ‘good farm’. Armstrong (1825) has this: “*Fearann* seems to be *fear-fhonn*, i.e. the

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<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of this see T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830*. London 1998, pp 113-114.

ground or land assigned to one man for cultivation; in process of time, it came to signify land in general.” But the word *ferann* has nothing to do with *fer*. The root is *\*wer* ‘to turn’ (Kelly, personal communication July 2003). DIL (F, 87), as mentioned previously, lists *ferann* as land, domain or territory.

In the north, *màg* is an arable field, according to Dwelly (1920, 622), a field that can be ploughed i.e. arable land. In the west it is a very broad ridge of land. *Chuir mi a’ mhàg liath ort*, ‘I have finished my rig before you’, is given by Dwelly (1920, 622) for Sutherland. *Màg* is a rig (of arable ground); *ceann-mhàg* is a head-rig (Dwelly 1920, 179). *Màgan ma seach* is a run-rig, *bhiodh màgan ma seach iad geadhainn a seo roimhe*, ‘people previously had the ground in run-rig here’ (Wentworth 1996, 134 & 137).

Carmichael (1928, 280) has *earrlait* as rich soil, ground manured one year and productive the next, also a productive animal.

*Comachadh* is common ground, the produce of crops available to all the crofters of the townland. “Generally a crop exposed and liable to damage” (Carmichael 1971, 47).

*Raon* is a field, *raon corc* a field of oats (Wentworth 1996, 54). Other sources indicate *raon* as a field of grass, cf. Dwelly has it as a field, plain, mossy plain, upland field and *raonach* as plain country, Armstrong has *raonach* as meadowy, having fields or greens. Regional variations of dialect, and of spelling and subtle semantic shifts for many words are apparent throughout the *Gaidhealteachd*.

*Acair* is a measure of land; according to Dwelly (1920, 4), it can also mean a small stack of corn on a field. (See Chapter 11 ‘Pasture’).

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<sup>19</sup> See *Place Names of Ross & Cromarty* by W. J. Watson cf. pp 19-21.



*Sean-talamh* is fallow-land (Armstrong 1825), literally old earth, ploughed land which is lying idle, usually for one to two growing seasons (Allan 2000, 499).

### **Tilling**

*Treabh* means to till, plough or cultivate, *treabhachail* is agricultural or arable land, *treabhachas* is agriculture, husbandry and a specimen of plowing, *treabhachd* is agriculture and husbandry, *treabhadh* is ploughing, tilling, tillage, agriculture, husbandry. *Talamh treabhaidh* is plough land, arable land. *Treabhaiche* is a ploughman or tiller of ground, a husbandman, and *treabhaireachd* is husbandry; *treabhair* is a ploughman, a tiller, home-stall or homestead (Armstrong 1825). All from Early Irish *trebaid* ‘cultivates, tills, plows’ (DIL 1948, 282).

*Àiteach* is agriculture; *ag àiteach* is cultivation, e.g. *ag àiteach an fhearainn*, ‘cultivating the land’ (Dwelly 1920, 23).

*Àir* means to plough, till or cultivate (Armstrong 1825). *Ar*, according to DIL (A, 370), is the act of ploughing, tilling cultivating and husbandry, it is shown in early texts with the genitive singular *air*. *Bha na daimh ag àr*, ‘the oxen were ploughing’ (Dwelly 1920, 43), and *àr-dhamh* is the plough ox (Armstrong 1825). *Modh-dhamh* is an obsolete term for a plough-ox (Armstrong 1825). *Saoth(air)-dhamh* is a labouring ox according to Forbes (1905, 16).

*Imeachtraidh* are plough bullocks (Forbes 1905, 12). *Immechtraid* (from *immechtar* ‘outside, end’) is the outer ox (of oxen yoked in plowing) (DIL I, 140).

### **Leases**

*Gabhail* can mean a barn (Armstrong 1825) or a farm, *gabhalaichean móra*, large farms (McDonald 1991 [1899], 133). *Gabhail* is also the portion of work performed by cattle at one yoking, also lease, feu, tenure or farm (Dwelly 1920, 467). *Gabhail-fearainn* is a farm or a lease (Armstrong 1825). A feu is “a perpetual lease for a fixed

rent, or land held under such a lease, Middle English (Scots) from early French *fé*, *fief*” (Allan 2000, 511). *Gabhaltach* is the lessee, or the person to whom a lease is given; in Scotland, called the tacksman. *Gabhaltas* (from *gabh*, take) is captured or conquered land, land rented from a proprietor, land in tack or divided among a tribe (Armstrong 1825). In Early Irish *gabáltas* is a farm or holding, also land-tenure or stewardship (DIL G, 4).

*Màlair* is the holding of a farmer, a renter or cottager, *màladair* is a tenant, one who pays rent, or a farmer of the customs, all from *màl* ‘rent, tribute, tax’ (Armstrong 1825).

The expression *tha sinn ag obair air lethchois* reflects the practice of ‘steelbow’ tenure (*lethchas*), when one party supplies the land and the seed and the other the labour of manuring and cultivating, and they share the produce (McDonald 1991 [1899], 162). The possessor, generally impoverished or without facilities for working the land, often furnished the land and seed corn, and the tenant cultivated it, the produce being divided equally between them (Dwelly 1920, 585). Literally it means ‘half foot’ implying one of two parts (MacDonald 1958, vol. 3 162).

*Mòrlanachd* is statute work done by tenants for their landlords (Armstrong 1825). According to Professor Donald Meek, the word is from English ‘boardland’, signifying the land that supplied food for the master’s board.

### **Ploughman**

*Àr-ear* is an agriculturist, a ploughman according to Armstrong (1825), also *àrair(e)* from the same, a ploughman, tiller or peasant (MacLeod & Dewar 1920, 32). Dwelly (1920, 46) has *ar-ear* [*sic*] – better *àradair*. He lists *àradair* as an agriculturist, ploughman or tiller of the ground (Dwelly 1920, 43).

*Saoithreachadh* is tillage and *saoithriche* is a tiller of the ground (Armstrong 1825) from *saothraich*, labour, toil, till ground (Dwelly 1920, 791). *Saethar*, according to DIL (S, 14), is work, labour or toil.

*Brughaiche* is a farmer according to Armstrong (1825). DIL (B, 210) lists *bruig* for land, cultivated land or a holding and *brugach* ‘rich in lands (?)’. Dwelly (1920, 131) has *brughaidh* as an obsolete word for farmer, while Armstrong (1825) lists *bruidhe* as an obsolete word for farm, also *bruighe*.

*Feine* is an obsolete word for a ploughman or farmer (Armstrong 1825).

### **Farm parts**

*Gàrradh* is the township dyke, *chuir mi 'n crodh a-mach air a' ghàrradh*, ‘I’ve put the cows outside the township dyke’ (Wentworth 1996, 116). This is *garrda* (from Old Norse ‘*garðr*’) meaning an enclosure, court, garden or yard (DIL G, 47). The first of May seems to be the date on which most of the cattle were required to be put outside the head dyke. This was to allow for any planting to take place within the infield, and to save the new crops and winter pasture from destruction.

*Gead* is rig as in run-rig; *Meall na Gide Gairbhe* ‘the hill of the rough rig’ is above Poolewe (Wentworth 1996, 134). *Geadagach* means abounding in small spots of arable land or ridges (Dwelly 1920, 481).

*Innseagan* are small plots of arable land, as in hilly ground or in woods (Armstrong 1825). DIL (I, 280) lists *innsech* (? *indes* ‘marshy’) ‘containing many milking enclosures?’ But Professor Kelly suggests that it is better regarded as *innseag* ‘little island’ (of good land) (personal communication July 2003).

### **Grain and fodder**

*Coirc* is oats; *aran coirce* is oat bread (Armstrong 1825). *Corca*, also *coirce* is oats in Early Irish (DIL C, 477). *Searbhan* is an obsolete word for oats (Armstrong 1825).

DIL (S, 188) lists *serbán* in Early Irish for oats. *Eòrna* is barley, and *bonnach arán-eòrna* is a barley scone or bannock. *Eórna* is given for barley in DIL (E, 154). *Seagal* is rye, from Latin *secale* (MacBain 1896, 274). DIL (S, 121-122) gives *secal* for rye.

*Seasgan* is a handful or shock of gleaned corn, a truss of gleaned corn, gleanings of corn, also land that has been gleaned. *Seasgair* is one in comfortable circumstances, one who thrashes corn by the bulk (Armstrong 1825). It comes from Early Irish *sescar*, *sescair* meaning settled, comfortable or at ease (DIL S, 196).

*Arbhar* is corn, corn crop or standing corn (Armstrong 1825). *Arbar* in Early Irish is grain or corn (DIL A, 378).

*Bàrr* is a crop of corn or grass (Armstrong 1825). *Barr* in Early Irish is the ‘produce farm’ i.e. crop or produce (DIL B, 37).

*Gart* means standing corn any standing crop and grass (Armstrong 1825).

*Àrlogh* is a noun meaning carting corn, *féisd an arloigh*, the harvest feast, the harvest home. ‘Carting corn’ thus seems to mean that which is harvested, not the actual carting of it (Armstrong 1825). Dwelly has it as ‘cartage corn’ (Dwelly 1920, 46).

*Connlach* is straw or fodder (Armstrong 1825): *tha connlach againn* ‘we have fodder’ (Dwelly 1920, 250). *Connlach* in Early Irish is stubble or straw (DIL C, 452). There is a difference between hay that is cut from native grass, and straw or fodder that was sown and harvested for animal feed. Hay made from native grass is simply taking advantage of a natural resource, but straw or fodder implies using scarce arable resources for food for animals rather than for humans. *Sìol-chonnlach* is unthreshed straw given as fodder to the livestock (Dwelly 1920, 842), literally straw and seed together; this would be the most beneficial feed for livestock as the seed contains

protein needed for animal nutrition, especially during the winter months when green grass was not available.

*Adag* is a shock of corn, “‘consisting of twelve sheaves, by the Lowlanders called a stook’” (Armstrong 1825).

*Punnan* is a sheaf of corn, a bundle of hay or straw (Armstrong 1825), indicating food for beasts rather than corn for human consumption. DIL (P, 209) lists *pun(n)ann*, *bunnann* as a sheaf.

*Rucan* is a conical heap of corn or hay, also *ruchd* (Armstrong 1825).

*Àirc* is a large chest, a granary (Armstrong 1825). *Árc*, later also *áirc* is a coffer or chest in Early Irish (DIL A, 380).

*Siol-lann* from ‘seed-enclosure’ is also a granary and *siol-chur* from ‘putting seed’ means sowing (Armstrong 1825).

*Ràchd* is a rake for gathering hay (Armstrong 1825), *ràc*, a rake from Middle English rake, *ràsdaal* or *ràsdaail* is a rake or harrow from Early Irish ‘*rastal*’ etc. (MacBain 1896, 257 & 259).

*Tarragh* is conveying of corn to the barn or yard (Armstrong 1825), frequent going to and from a place – *féisd an tarraigh* ‘feast of the in-gathering’ (Dwelly 1920, 935). Possibly from Early Irish *tarraing*, which is drawing, directing, carrying (as water etc.) (DIL T, 84).

*Dlùth* is gathering home the harvest, *àm an dlùthaidh*, harvest time (McDonald 1991 [1899], 101). This is possibly from Early Irish *dlúthaid* (*dlúth* ‘aggregation’) meaning joins or consolidates (DIL D, 169).

*Aimsir*, from *am* – time, means not only weather but ‘the time of’ or ‘season’ as *aimsir an fhogharaidh*, the harvest season (Armstrong 1825).

*Cròdhadh* is a gathering, as cattle into a fold or corn in from the field, *féisd a' chròdhaidh*, the feast of the in-gathering (Armstrong 1825). (See also Chapter 12 'People and Places of Herding').

*Foghar* is harvest, autumn, e.g. *foghar an eòrna*, the barley-harvest etc. In Early Irish *fogamar* is the season of autumn (DIL F, 229).

*Maoineach* from *maoin* – wealth, means, productive or fertile (Armstrong 1825).

*Sabhal* is a granary or barn, while *sabhail* is to store up in a barn (Armstrong 1825). DIL (S, 2) gives *sabal* as of Latin origin 'stabulum' for barn, see LEIA s.v. *saball*.

*Sgiobal* is a barn or granary (Armstrong 1825, Dwelly 1920, 823). DIL (S, 93) has *sciból* as a British loanword for barn or granary.

*Iodhlann* (from *iodh-lann*, *iodh* being an obsolete word for corn, while *lann* is an enclosure) is a corn-yard (Armstrong 1825). Carmichael (1928, 310) also has *iodhlan* as a small strip of land where grain is growing, and "iodhlach and *iodhlachadh* are applied in Skye to all handling of corn, from cutting to stacking." *Iodhlann* is a corn-yard, or stack-yard (Dwelly 1920, 544). Armstrong (1825) also has it as a barn or a granary. *Iodhlann* is mentioned in the song *Ailean Dubh à Lòchaidh* about a raid in 1603 in Easter Ross:

*Sguab thu mo sprèidh bhàrr na mòintich  
Loisg thu m'iodhlann chorca is eòrna,*

You swept my cattle from the moorland,  
You burnt my stackyard of oats and barley (Ó Baoill  
1994, 58-59).

*Abaich* means ripe, mature, at full growth; also ready prepared or expert. *Abachadh* is a ripening, the circumstance of ripening or growing to maturity, used with *ag* it becomes a verbal noun, ripening, *tha 'n t-arbhar ag abachadh*, the corn is ripening

(Armstrong 1825). *Apaig*, according to DIL (A, 362) means ripe or matured (of fruit etc.).

### **Manuring**

*Òcrach* is a midden, *òcrach a' bhàithich*, the byre midden (Wentworth 1996, 102).

Dwelly has the spelling as *òtrach*, listing *òcrachas* as 'the Gairloch spelling'.

*Ot(t)rach*, according to DIL (O, 170) is dung.

*Ath-thodhar* is the second crop after a field has been manured by the folding of cattle or sheep, remanuring (Dwelly 1920, 55). *Ath* means second and *todhar* is dung or manure. *Todhar* is a field manured by a moveable fold (Armstrong 1825). The cattle would be 'tathed' on a field to be used for crops, i.e., they would be penned in moveable hurdles of wattle, allowed to graze and drop manure, and moved periodically so that all of the fields available would receive the benefit of their manure.

*Mathachadh* is manuring, manure, an improving, and *mathaich* is to manure, improve, make good, all from *math* 'good' (Armstrong 1825).

*Leasaich* from *leas* – improvement – is to improve or manure the land, *leasaichte* means improved or manured, also 'renetted', as milk (Armstrong 1825). (See Chapter 6 'Milk and Milk Produce'). *Les* in Early Irish is advantage, good or benefit (DIL L, 113-114).

*Uisgeileadh* is spreading of manure, e.g. *dèan an t-uisgeileadh* or *bi 'g uisgeileadh*. *Tha e thìde dhuinn an t-uisgeileadh a dhèanamh*, it's time for us to spread the manure (Wentworth 1996, 99). The word is spelt *uirsgail* (*air-sgaoil*) by Dwelly (1920, 995) and defined by him as spreading, as of dung or hay; *uirsgailadh*, in Gairloch, is the act of spreading dung. DIL (A, 237) has *airscailliud* as the act of separating or scattering.

*Maolanach* is a stake driven into the ground to support ‘flakes’ (movable hurdles) for keeping cattle in a fold, it is the stake of a wooden fold or pen (Armstrong 1825).

### **Cattle feed**

*Deoch-gheal* is a drink of oatmeal stirred in water, for cattle. *Bhite tor deoch-gheal dhan a’ bhó*, ‘*deoch-gheal* used to be given to the cow’. There was also *prothán*, a drink of oatmeal stirred in warm water, for cattle. *Nì sinn prothán dan a’ chrodh*, ‘we’ll make *prothán* for the cows’. *Feuma sinn am prothán a chuir am bogadh*, ‘we’ll have to let the *prothán* soak’ (Wentworth 1996, 112). *Pronn* is bran, *gheobh mi pocaichean pronn dhan a’ chrodh*, ‘I’ll get sacks of bran for the cows’ (Wentworth 1996, 112).

### **Processing**

*Àth* is a kiln, Armstrong (1825) lists; *àth-aoil*, a lime kiln, *àth-bhrachaidh*, a malt kiln, *àth-chriadh chlach*, a brick-kiln and *àth-chruachaidh*, a drying kiln for corn. *Áith*, according to DIL (A, 252), is a drying kiln (for grain).

*Gràn* is dried corn or grain, *gràn gradan*, parched corn; *gràn* is an old word (Armstrong 1825). *Grànalach* is also grain (Dwelly 1920, 521). *Grán* is listed in DIL (G, 147) for ‘grain’.

*Ròist* means roast, toast, scorch and parch (Armstrong 1825) these entries would indicate that the word is referring to processes involving grain rather than meat. *Roistean* (Armstrong 1825) is a gridiron or frying-pan, possibly to cook bannocks on. *Róistín* is listed in DIL (R, 94) as a gridiron. *Róstaid*, *róssaid* is seen as a late Romance loanword by DIL (R, 102) for roasts or grills; *arán geal ar na róstad*



‘toasted bread’. The people in the Islands and Highlands often dried the grain by hand. *Gradan* is parched corn.

*Gradan* was corn or meal prepared after the ancient custom of the Gael. A woman sitting down took a handful of corn, and holding it in her left hand by the stalks, she set fire to the ears, which were at once in a flame. In her right hand she held a stick, with which she dextrously beat the grain at the very instant when the husks were quite burnt. By this simple process, which is still followed in remote parts of the Highlands, corn may be cut down, dressed, winnowed, dried, ground and baked within half an hour. In separating the meal from the husks, instead of sieves they made use of a sheep's skin stretched round a hoop, minutely perforated by a small hot iron. The bread, which is thus made, is considered very salubrious, and is extremely pleasant to the palate of a Highlander (Armstrong 1825).

The sheepskin sieve mentioned above is a *guite*, a fan or hand-winnow for corn, made of sheepskin applied to a hoop; somewhat resembling the end of a drum, a *rideal* was also a ‘riddle’ or coarse sieve (Armstrong 1825). Burt has the following to say about the process:

In some of the Western Islands (as well as in part of the Highlands), the people never rub out a greater quantity of oats than what is just necessary for seed against the following year. The rest they reserve in the sheaves, for their food; and, as they have occasion, set fire to some of them, not only to dry the oats, which for the most part, are wet, but to burn off the husk. Then, by winnowing, they separate, as well as they can, the sooty part from the grain; but as this cannot be done effectually, the *Bannack*, or cake they make of it, is very black. Thus they deprive themselves of the use of straw, leaving none to thatch their huts, make their beds, or feed their cattle in the winter season. They seldom burn and grind a greater quantity of these oats than serves for a day, except on a Saturday; when some will prepare a double portion, that they may have nothing to do on the Sunday following. This oatmeal is called *Graydon* Meal (Burt, 269-270).

The Kirkwood manuscript also mentions this act, calling it ‘graddening’. “They (in the Isles especially) have a way of drying their corn before it be threshed; by burning the straw and it together, keeping the corn very dextrously from being wronged with

the fire; then they grind it in querns. This expeditious way of drying corn is frequently used in Kerry, Ireland” (Campbell 1975, 30). *Loisgrean* is burnt corn, corn burnt out of the ear instead of being threshed (Armstrong 1825). *Loisgte* (past participle of *loisg*) means burnt, scorched, scalded, parched, inflamed. *Leann loisgte* is the dregs from which ale is brewed (Dwelly 1920, 597). *Loiscecht*, according to DIL (L, 189), is a parched condition.

*Bleith* means grind, make meal, pulverise; *bleith* is also the verbal noun grinding, making of meal, pulverising. *Bleithte* is the past participle of *bleith*, ground, and *gràn bleithte* is ground corn (Dwelly 1920, 101). DIL (B, 118) lists *bleith* for the act of grinding or milling.

*Brà* (Dwelly 1920, 111-112) is a quern or handmill. *Bró* in Early Irish is a quern, millstone, grindstone, also the act of grinding (DIL B, 194).

*Meil* is to grind, as corn and *meile* is a hand-mill, a pestle also a stick for turning a quern, *meilte* is the past participle of *meil*, ground, grinded, *gràn meilte*, ground grain (Armstrong 1825). *Meile*, in Early Irish, is the abstract from of *meilid* i.e. the act (occupation) of grinding; as a concrete noun it is a handmill or quern (DIL M, 81). *Meilid* (from *melaid*) means, in a general sense, ‘grinds or crushes’ (of grain) (DIL M, 82).

*Min* is meal, any comminuted or pulverised substance (Armstrong 1825). *Men* (*min*) is listed for flour or meal in DIL (M, 98).

*Càithleach* (from *càth*, winnow) is husks of corn, seeds, chaff. *Càth* is seeds, husks of corn or pollards, *càth làgain*, corn seeds, “juice of which the Scots Gael made flummery,” *càth bhruich*, flummery, sowens (Armstrong 1825).

*Carainnean* are the refuse of threshed barley. *Ort(s)* is the refuse of fodder (Wentworth 1996, 114). *Crotainn* is barley hulled by pounding; “also broth, in which barley so hulled, is a principal ingredient” (Armstrong 1825).

*Treasg* is groats or hulled oats, draff, brewers’ grains (Armstrong 1825), also chaff or corn or bran steeped in boiling water for feeding cows etc., ‘mash’ (Dwelly 1920, 968). *Tresc*, according to DIL (T, 299), is thought to be an Old Norse loanword for ‘remains, refuse, leavings’.

*Sgil* is the process of shelling grain that is separate from the husk; also *sgiol* and *sgiolan* are the groats or hulled barley (Armstrong 1825).

Armstrong (1825) gives *muileann bràdh* for a handmill or quern. *Muilend*, according to DIL (M, 184-185), is a mill, usually for grinding corn and worked by a stream.

*Carn*, genitive *cairn* is a word, now obsolete, for a quern or handmill for grinding corn (Armstrong 1825; Dwelly 1920, 169). Quern, according to Allen (2000, 1144), is from Old English *cweorn*. Edmond Burt gives the following description for the quern.

For grinding the oats, they have a machine they call a *quarn*. This is composed of two stones; the undermost is about a foot and a half or two feet diameter. It is round, and five or six inches deep in the hollow, like an earthen pan. Within this they place another stone, pretty equal at the edge to that hollow. This last is flat, like a wooden pot-lid, about three or four inches thick, and in the centre of it is a pretty large round hole, which goes quite through, whereby to convey the oats between the stones. There are also two or three holes in different places, near the extreme part of the surface, that go about half-way through the thickness, which is just deep enough to keep a stick in its place, by which, with the hand, they turn it round and round, till they have finished the operation (Burt, 210-271).

## Other Food

*Pannag*, *bonnach* or *bonnag*, is a barley-scone, called a ‘*bannock*’ in Scots, e.g. *mar is miannaich brù bruichear bonnach*, ‘as the stomach craves, the scone is toasted’ (Armstrong 1825). The *bonnach-iomanach*, is the cowherd’s cake, a special reward for good herding at calving time (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 44).

*Breacag*, *breachdag* is a cake, scone or pancake. *Breacagan neo-ghoirtichte* are unleavened cakes (Armstrong 1825). Other spellings and combinations for *bonnach* according to Carmichael (1928 vol. 2, 226) are *bannag*, *bonnach-boise*, *dearnagan*, *poilean*, or *moilean*.<sup>20</sup> *Bonnach-boise-deàrnagan* was a small ‘bannock’ made in the palm of the hand and baked standing on end near the fire. A peat would be removed so that the *bonnach* was exposed to the great heat from the centre of the fire ‘*ri golag, ri toll*’ (Carmichael 1971, 17). According to Father Allan (McDonald 1991 [1899], 47), a *bonnach boise*, was “‘a bannock hastily made in the hand, and consequently of small dimensions. A hollow or hole was made in the middle of it with the thumb to prevent the interference of fairies or other supernatural creatures with its utility.’”

*Caraiceag* is a sort of pancake, also *caraigeag* (Armstrong 1825).

*Toirtean* is a thin cake (Armstrong 1825). *Tortine(e)* (*tort*) is a loaf or cake according to DIL (T, 262).

*Grainnseag* is a cracknel, a hard brittle cake (Armstrong 1825).

*Brochan* is porridge or pottage (Armstrong 1825), also *brochan bainne*, milk porridge and *brochan liath*, milk gruel (Dwelly 1920, 126). *Brothchán* (from *brothach* ‘boiling’) in Early Irish means broth, pottage, soup or gruel (DIL B, 205). *Lite* is

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<sup>20</sup> For more discussion see *Carmina Gadelica* vol. 2.

porridge, pottage or posset (Armstrong 1825). *Littiu*, also *lichtiu* (later *litte*, *lite*, *leite*) is porridge or gruel in Early Irish (DIL L, 170).

*Greadag* or *greideal* is a griddle or gridiron, a thin plate of iron for firing bannocks. *Greidlean* is a thin wooden instrument for turning scones on a gridiron (Armstrong 1825). *Gretel* is listed as a griddle in DIL (G, 157).

### **Drink**

*Braich* is malt, literally fermented grain. “The Old Gauls, according to Pliny, (*‘Genus farris quod ili vocant bracem’*) prepared a sort of fine grain that they called ‘*brace*’, from which they made beer” (Armstrong 1825). *Àth-bhracha* is a malt-kiln, *muileann-bracha* a malt-mill (Dwelly 1920, 113). *Braich* (also *mraich*), according to DIL (B, 154) is malt i.e. malt liquor.

*Cuirm* was a kind of beer or ale once used by the Gaels in Ireland and Scotland. “It was a powerful intoxicating liquor made of barley, and used at all their banquets; hence *cuirm* in Gaelic and Irish signifies a feast” (Armstrong 1825).

It is clear from our sources that most beer (*cuirm*) was brewed from barley. The malting process brings the value of barley up to that of wheat. Thus the law-text *Bretha Nemed Toísech* assigns the same value to a bushel of malt as it does to a bushel of wheat. A quantity of malt (*mraich*) is included in the annual food-rent that a base client must give to his lord. ... The process of malting is initiated by soaking the grain for twenty-four hours. It then drains for a day and a half, after which it is covered for four and a half days. The text provides no information on the nature of the covering, but the gloss suggests that corn-straw may be used. It is then exposed for a further three days. After this, it is raised into little heaps and kept in this state for five days. It is then subjected to raking and is left in ridges. The whole process has taken fifteen days: it is now ready for kiln-drying. When dry the malt is brought to the lord and tested. The malt is then ground in the lord's mill and tested again, the malt is then allowed to ferment (Kelly 1998, 246-247).

The above citation is information contained in an Irish law text describing the preparation of barley for brewing. I have included it to show that processes required

for brewing use the same equipment and applications as those for turning grain into an edible substance, that is drying and grinding. *Cuirm*, according to DIL (C, 600), is ale or beer and *coirmfleagaigh* is ‘ale-feasting’.

*Flaith*, according to Armstrong (1825), was an obsolete term for ‘kind of strong ale’. *Flaith* “(probably the same word as *laith*, ‘liquor’, the ‘f’ being due to influence of *find* (*fénnid*)) is liquor, especially ale or beer” (DIL F, 161).

...

The terms in this chapter reflect the different uses that grain served in Gaelic Scotland. The arable land was intensively managed to produce as much barley and oats as possible, the grain thus produced was allocated between brewing, livestock fodder, and human consumption in the form of bannocks, broth and porridge.

## Chapter 14

### Physical Characteristics and Animal Diseases



Growler – photo courtesy of owner, Sue Campbell, South Uist

This chapter deals with life cycles, various ages, and conditions of domestic animals. It also addresses animal diseases; their causes and cures as well as traditional knowledge and practices reflected in the Gaelic language. The well being of their animals was of grave concern to members of the *Gaidhealtachd*. Because they did not have access to modern science, people in the Highlands relied on traditional beliefs and practices to help in everyday trials and tribulations attached to rearing animals in a sometimes-hostile environment. In retrospect, often times their actions appear fanciful, but some times, as in the case of the Beltane fires, the procedure carried a beneficial affect.

#### **Mature males**

Because one bull can service several cows and bulls can be dangerous during a cows heat cycle, it was customary in pastoral societies to have one bull for each area. *Tarbh*

is a mature bull; *tarbh tàna* is the parish bull (Armstrong 1825). *Tuaighe* is a farm bull and *tarbhean* is a bull-calf (Forbes 1905, 18).

*Damh* is an ox (Dwelly 1920, 309). According to Wentworth (1996, 33), it is a steer, that is, ‘a young male cattle beast more than one year old and generally castrated’, and a *damh-òg* is a stot, a ‘male calf six months to one year old’. *Damh-nartaidh* is a bullock (castrated male) according to Forbes (1905, 9). *Dam* is listed in DIL (D, 58) as an ox.

A *bralain* is ‘‘an old bull that has lost the hair of his tail through age’’ (Carmichael 1971, 19).

*Aithrean* means a bull, cow or ox (Dwelly 1920, 24), or *aithre* (Armstrong 1825), that is a mature animal of the bovine species.

Contrary to popular thought, the bull is usually not the herd leader – he has other duties to perform. The office usually goes to a dominant cow or ox, and simply means that that animal takes the lead when being driven or making its own way to pasture or water. The mother normally affords protection for the young (personal experience).

*Aileach* is from an obsolete term for stone. The word means a ‘stoned one’, ‘testicled one’, cf. Armstrong (1825) gives ‘stallion’. Stone in this sense means testicle. *Graidheach* is also a stallion (Armstrong 1825), that is an intact male horse above a year old. *Graig*, in Early Irish, is a collective for ‘horses’ cf. *groighedh agus a lairthech* ‘studs and mares’ (DIL G, 145). In the case of horses allowed to roam, the stallion is often the aggressor and beats off any young males who would ‘take over’ the herd. This is also true in some breeds of cattle that are feral, for example the Cadzow herd. The taking over is not for the romanticised idea of ‘great father



protector', but simply for exclusive breeding rights. Here again, the mother usually gives protection to the young.

*Reithe* and *ruta* or *rùda* are terms for a ram (Armstrong 1825).

*Soitheim* means tame, '*s e beathuc soitheimh a th' ann*, 'it's a tame beast'.

*Chan urrainn dhut earbhsainn á tarbh air cho soitheimh 's gum beil e*, 'you can't trust a bull however tame it is' (Wentworth 1996, 169). In keeping with this sentiment is the term *stùic* which describes 'the scowling side-look of a bull or any large animal' (Armstrong 1825).

*Àgadh* is an ox, (Dwelly 1920, 8), probably specifically a mature animal of traction as opposed to simply a castrated male. *Agh*, according to DIL (A, 82), is a bovine animal, cow or ox.

### **Mature females**

Cow is *bó* in Scottish Gaelic, and *bà* is the genitive singular and nominative plural. A prediction said to be from St Columba has it as follows: *an àite gu[th] manaich bithidh geum bà*, 'instead of the voice of a monk, there shall be the lowing of a cow. In all cases *bó* and *bà* refer to the mature female of the bovine species.

*Sgrog*, *sgrogag* is an old cow or ewe (Forbes 1905, 17). *Scrog*, according to DIL (S, 113), is neck or throat. *Rugaid* is an old cow, also a long neck (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 275). One of the signs of age in cattle is that the neck becomes thin and 'stringy' (personal experience). *Sgruit*, probably from *sgrog*, is a lean, hard cow according to Forbes (1905, 17).

*Tungarlagh* means an old cow (Forbes 1905, 18).

*Caora* is the common word for sheep, and *caorachd* is a stock of sheep, sheep or cattle (Armstrong 1825) though I doubt that this would normally be used to specify cattle of the bovine type. MacLennan (1995 [1925], 71) has it as cattle raid, here it

would definitely mean the bovine type, as sheep were seldom taken in a raid according to Highland tradition. An Early Irish word *cáeraigecht* is apparently unconnected to the Modern Irish and Scots Gaelic word *cáora* (*caora*) or *cáorachd* (*caorachd*). According to Professor Kelly (1998 Dublin, 611) it means a mass or wandering group of pastoralists. Katharine Simms (1986, 389) says the etymology is uncertain, but “a legal glossary in the Dublin, Trinity College manuscript H.3.18, derives it from *caor*, a ‘mass’ or ‘mustering.’” *Ciora* is a pet lamb or sheep, a sheep that feeds with cows, a cud-chewer (Forbes 1905, 7).

*Aodh*, according to Armstrong (1825), is an obsolete word for sheep. “Though this word is seldom used separately, it is seen in composition, as in the vocable *aodhair* – meaning a shepherd. (See Chapter 12 ‘People and Places of Herding’).

*Airc* and *aitheach* are obsolete terms for a sow, that is a mature female pig (Armstrong 1825). Though, according to Forbes (1905, 3) *aitheach* is a current word for a sow, boar or cow. Dwelly (1920, 23) also shows it as a current word, but only for a sow or boar.

### **Two-year olds**

*Dà-bhliadhnach* is a two-year-old animal. The following excerpt from *An ‘Sus’ a Shàraich Mi* uses a variation of this term.

*Gam fhaicinn fhìn mar neach le deoch  
A’ siaradh suas air cabhsair,  
'S tu tarsainn air cùl m' amhach bho chd  
Mar dhò-bhliadhnach de ghamhna!*

I'm made to look like someone drunk  
Staggering on a pavement  
While you're round the back of my poor neck  
Like a stirk two years of age! (Black 1999, 268-69)

Dwelly (1920, 345) says that *dò-bhliadhnach* is “an animal of two years of age, said of cattle and sheep in Outer Isles and Argyllshire for *dà-bhliadhnach*”.

*Dartach* (Armstrong 1825) and *dartain* (Dwelly 1920, 312) are terms for a two-year old bull; this is probably a reflection that he is old enough to be used for breeding purposes. *Dartan* is listed in DIL (D, 107) for a two-year-old bull.

### **Yearlings**

*Gabhainn/gamhainn* is a yearling, stirk (heifer), or steer. *Gabhainn* in the sense of steer is also written *gamhuinn*. *Gabhna* means ‘of a yearling’, ‘stirk’, or ‘steer’ and *gabhuinn* is a steer, stirk or young bullock, written more frequently *gamhuinn* (Armstrong 1825). *Gamhainn* can be a year-old calf, a six months old cow (heifer), a stirk or young bullock (Dwelly 1920, 475). In Irish it is ‘*gamhuin*’, a calf, Early Irish ‘*gamuin*’, a year-old calf, from ‘*gam*’ (winter) ‘winter-old’. For root see *geamhradh* (MacBain 1896, 169). *Gabhnach* is a steer, a farrow cow and also a ‘stripper’ (Armstrong 1825). (See Chapter 4 ‘The Milk Cow’).

*Bliadhnach* is a yearling animal (Forbes 1905, 50). *Bliadnaide* (from *bliadain*) is a year-old, of a year or a yearling according to DIL.

*Collach* is a yearling calf (Dwelly 1920, 234), also *cullach* according to Forbes (1905, 8), which can also mean a boar, a male cat, a bat and a stallion. *Cullach* is listed in DIL (C, 613) for boar or stallion.

*Dorcan* is a yearling bull calf (Armstrong 1825), since bull calves are usually killed at birth or castrated; this animal is probably prized as an eventual replacement for the herd bull.

*Othaisg* is a sheep, one-year-old ewe (Dwelly 1920, 713). *Othaisgeach* is ‘abounding’ in hogs or like a sheep or a hog (Armstrong 1825). Hogg is also a term for a young ewe, and I think it is this that Armstrong refers to rather than an adult pig. Allen (2000, 662) has ‘hogg’ as dialect for “‘a young unshorn sheep.’”

## Calves

*Laogh* is the calf of a cow or deer. '*S e laogh fireann (boireann) a th'ann*, 'it's a male (a female) calf' (Wentworth 1996, 22). *Is sleamhain an laogh a dh'imlicheas a mhàthair*, 'smooth is the calf that his mother licks' (Nicolson 1881, 287). *Laoghanach* is 'abounding in little calves', *laogh-bailceach* is a 'fair strong calf', *laogh-gogain* and *laogh-meadair* are terms for a calf brought up by hand (Dwelly 1920, 569). *Laogh-samhraidh* is a 'summer calf' (Wentworth 1996, 58), because these calves were born later than most; they were not expected to thrive as well unless the summer was an exceptionally long one (personal experience). *Laogh* was also used as a term of endearment, showing the affection with which calves were held. In an anonymous poem, the writer speaks to *A Theàrlaich òig, a laoigh mo chéille*, 'O my young Charles, O calf of my senses' (Black 2001, 184-5).

*Aithrine*, according to Forbes (1905, 3 & 17-18), is a term for calf, also *sgal*, *torchos* and *baodhan* (Forbes 1905, 4). Armstrong (1825) lists *aithrine* as obsolete. Armstrong (1825) has *baoghan* to mean a calf, anything jolly. *Baoghan an coius gach bó*, 'each cow followed by its calf' – old song. *Baoghanach* means like a calf, of, or belonging to, a calf according to Dwelly (1920, 67).

*Glonn* is a calf (Armstrong 1825). DIL (G, 109) lists *glond* 'a calf (?)' giving *glonn .i. laeg bó*.

*Aisearan* is a weanling in Argyll (MacBain 1896, 10).

*Aobharrach* is a 'young beast of good or bad promise. *Is math an t-aobharrach an gamhain sin*, 'that stirk promises well' (Dwelly 1920, 38). *Dathas* are small stirks or heifers (Wentworth 1996, 161).

*Suaicein* is a pet calf or lamb (Forbes 1905, 17). A device that keeps a calf from sucking is called a *suicean* (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 326) from the Scots

‘sook’, meaning to suck (MacBain 1896, 317). According to the *Concise Scots Dictionary* (1985, 646) souk, suck or sook (meaning to suckle) also came to mean a petted or over indulged child.

*Bioraidh* means bullock, an obsolete term according to Armstrong (1825), but current and also meaning steer according to Forbes (1905, 5). Actually the terms bullock and steer are interchangeable and mean a male bovine, castrated before reaching sexual maturity.<sup>21</sup>

Seasonal festivals were important to pastoralists because they marked the ages of cattle. “*Oidhche Shamhna, their ear gamhna ris na laoigh. Oidhche ’Éill-Sheaghain* (St. John’s or St. John Baptist’s), *their ear aighean riutha rithisd. Oidhche ’Éill-Brìghde, their ear tribhliadhnaich ri aighean.* On Hallowe’en the calves are called stirks. On St. John’s Eve they are called heifers again. On St. Bridget’s Eve heifers are called three-year olds” (McDonald 1991 [1899], 85-86). *Falbhair*, literally ‘a follower’, is a young calf (Forbes 1905, 10). *Falbhair*, according to MacBain (1896, 146), is the young of any livestock, as calf or foal – from the Scottish and English ‘follower’.

### **Breeding**

*Dàir* is the pairing of cattle, also *dàireadh*. It also means calving in Lewis, i.e. the ‘produce of pairing’. *Bliochd is dàir air an nì*, ‘the cattle teeming with milk and calving’. When a cow is brought to the bull to be bred, they say in the Western Isles, *tha ’n dàir oirre*; in Wester Ross, *tha i fo dhàir*; in Argyll, *tha i air theas*’ (Dwelly 1920, 308). *Dàir* means ‘line’, as a bull; *dàirte* is ‘lined’, that is bred or ‘in calf’, the Latin is more specific ‘*inire vaccam vel ovem*’ (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 118), *tha ’bhó ann a’ laogh*, the cow is in calf (Wentworth 1996, 22).

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<sup>21</sup> *Black’s Veterinary Dictionary* - see ‘castration’, and *The New Penguin English Dictionary* - see ‘bullock’ and ‘steer’.

“*Sdór!* An expression used to incite a bull towards a cow” (Armstrong 1825).

*Dàireach* is rutting, copulating or breeding (Dwelly 1920, 308). *Dàrach* is breeding, *gu bliochdach, dàrach, sruth-bhainneach*, ‘milky, breeding and milk-flowing’ (Dwelly 1920, 312). Also, *tha ’n dàir air a’ bhó*, ‘the cow is bulling’; *dhàir e ’bhó anis*, ‘he’s bulled the cow now’. *Dh’fhaodadh gu do dhàir e i air an oidhche*, ‘perhaps he bulled her at night.’ *Chàr a’ bhó dhàir an diugh*, ‘the cow was bulled today’. Second bulling is when a cow is bulling a week or so after she had already been bred – *tadháir*. *Tha tadháir oirre*, ‘she’s bulling for a second time’ (Wentworth 1996, 19). This means that she did not settle on the first breeding. *Dàradh* is rutting or bulling, *am dàraidh* is the rutting time, *air dàradh* is a cow in want of a bull and *dart* is an obsolete term for ‘bull a cow’, *dartaidh* – shall have bulled (Armstrong 1825).

*Clith*, according to Armstrong (1825), is a desire of copulation in cattle.

*Reitheadh* is ramming or the copulation of sheep, also a mounting of sheep by rams, *a’ reitheadh na spréidhe*, mounting the sheep (Armstrong 1825). *Reithe*, according to DIL (R, 38-39) is a ram and *reithid* i.e. tups (of rams). The *Concise Scots Dictionary* (1985, 740) lists tup or tuip – of a ram, copulate.

### **Birthing**

Calving can be a stressful time for many reasons. The vital importance of a live calf to bring about a fresh supply of milk is coupled with the value of a heifer calf to the pastoralist. The downside is the loss of cow and/or calf in the birthing process or as a result of infection after the birth of the calf. The following terms reflect the awareness of the Gael to the problem at hand.

*Bàdhar* is the after-birth or placenta of a cow at calving (Dwelly 1920, 57).

*Ba’ain* is the matrix of a cow according to the Highland Society’s Gaelic Dictionary (1828, 81) i.e. the placenta. *Bàn*, according to Armstrong (1825), is also a term for the

matrix of a cow. *Ba'ain* is an obsolete term for the cleansing of a cow after calving, that is the expelling of the afterbirth or matrix (placenta) of a cow (MacLeod and Dewar 1901, 46).

*Glanadh* means cleansing according to most sources (from *glan* – to clean or purify). Wentworth specifies it as the afterbirth of a cow. *Glanadh na bà* is literally the ‘cleansing of the cow’. Another entry is *salchar na bà* (Wentworth 1996, 3), which translates as ‘the impurity of the cow’ (from *salach* – unclean, polluted etc.). One would mean the act of cleaning out the afterbirth; the other seems to specify the afterbirth itself. In modern medicine if there is a problem, a ‘clean-out’ shot of ‘stilboestrol’ is used (Black 1992, 455). It is quite possible that certain herbs were known to have the same effect. It is known that certain vegetation will cause animals to abort.

*Teàrnadh* means afterbirth in the Islay area according to MacAlpine, and also in South Uist and Eriskay according to Father Allan (McDonald 1991 [1899], 239). Early Irish *térnam* is the act of escaping or dispelling, also an act of recovering (from illness) (DIL T, 154).

*Glodhach* is the slimy matter coming from a cow before calving (Armstrong 1825). According to MacLennan (1995 [1925], 185), *glomhan* is the substance covering a calf at birth. *Sreathan*, a word used for vellum, also means the filmy skin which covers an unborn calf (Armstrong 1825). *Sreaphainn* is given by MacLennan (1995 [1925], 317) as the membrane which covers a newly born calf. According to DIL (S, 367), *srebann* is a membrane, film or skin.

According to Wentworth (1996, 21- 22 & 80), *imeach* is the byre floor under the cow. *Tha 'laogh air an imeach*, ‘the calf’s been born’, literally ‘the calf is on the

byre floor', was commonly said to express pleasure on the birth of a calf. (See also Chapter 12 'People and Places of Herding').

*Sloc an àirich* is 'the grazier's hollow', a little hollow near the tail of a cow which indicates when she is likely to calve (McDonald 1991 [1899], 222). The hollow is on either side of the tail on the cow's back formed by the 'hooks' – hip joints – and 'pins' – points of the buttocks. The hollow flattens out as the calf moves upward into the birth canal (personal experience).

The irregular verb *beir*, meaning carry, is the word used for being pregnant. The following forms of it give the various tenses. The verbal noun, *breith*, means that she is giving birth i.e. calving. *Rug a' bhó*, the cow has calved. *Rug i 'laogh*, she's calved. *Tha toiseach cur a' laoigh oirre*, she's starting to calve (Wentworth 1996, 22). *Breith*, a verbal noun, is the act of bearing, seizing, carrying away, catching, *a' breith laoigh*, calving (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 49). The following lullaby has an example.

*Brochan buirn, buirn, buirn,  
Brochan buirn gheobh mo leanabh,  
'N uair a bheireas a bhó mhaol,  
Gheobh mo ghaol brochan bainne.*

Porridge of water, water, water,  
Porridge of water shall my child get,  
When the hummel cow shall calve  
My darling shall get porridge of milk (Carmichael 1928, 239).

A poetic description of birthing is given in the following excerpt from the poem *An t-Earrach*, 'Spring' by Ewan MacLachlan.

*Thig éibhneas na bliadhn' an tús  
Mun crìochnaich an t-ùr-mhìos-Màirt –  
Bheir an spréidh an toradh trom  
Le fosgladh am bronn gu làr:  
Brùchdaidh minn is laoigh is uain  
'Nam mìltibh mun cuairt don bhlàr,  
S breac-gheal dreach nan raon 's nan stùc  
Fo choisreadh mheanbh nan lùth-chleas bàth.*



The joy of the year first comes  
 Before the young month of March is out –  
 The stock yield their heavy fruit  
 By opening their wombs to the ground:  
 Kids, calves and lambs burst out  
 In their thousands around the plain,  
 Speckle-white is the hue of the fields and hills  
 Under footwork of infantile frolicking games (Black 2001, 344-45).

*Toradh* is used here to mean the produce of animals though it usually relates to milk products. (See Chapter 6 ‘Milk and Milk Produce’ and Chapter 15 ‘Folklore’). The mention of *minn*, ‘kids’ is unusual, as goats, though known to be a part of the animals kept in the Highlands, were not often categorised with the other animals and were seldom listed at all.

*Poc-uisge* is the water bag of calving cows (Wentworth 1996, 33).

MacLennan (1995 [1925], 239) has *mulad* (‘sadness’) as the labour pains of a cow.

*Géis* means gestation, according to Dwelly (1920, 489), Carmichael (1928, 297) has it as *geis*.

### **Udders or Teats**

*Adhal* is the udder of a cow (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 3), but also a flesh hook, according to Dwelly. (See Chapter 8 ‘Flesh and Other Foods’). Donald Murray, an informant of Dwelly’s (speaking of Lewis), gives *eadhal* as the udder of a heifer before calving (Dwelly 1920, 379). MacLennan’s *adhal* may simply represent a slightly different pronunciation of *eadhal*. The ‘udder of a heifer before calving’ could mean that it was immature and therefore small, or that it was full of milk and distended.

*Arcuinn* is also a cow’s udder according to Dwelly (1920, 44). *Ballan* is a teat or dug, *ballan na bà*, ‘the cow’s teat’; it also means a tub or bucket etc. (MacLennan

1995 [1925], 28). (See Chapter 7 ‘Dairy Implements’). An obsolete term for udder, teat or dug is *boigh* (Armstrong 1825). *Càrr* is an udder, according to Carmichael. *Ùth* is also an udder, *le’n ùthaibh làn*, with their udders distended, also *ùthach* ‘uddered’, relating to an udder, having large udders (Dwelly 1920, 1002).

*Sine* according to Forbes (1905, 104) and Dwelly (1920, 840) means teat, sometimes udder, also dug or nipple. MacBain (1896, 291) gives the following etymology for *sine*: Irish and Early Irish ‘*sine*’, a teat; ‘*triphne*’, three-teated. A three-teated cow is an aberration; one is mentioned as being milked by the Morrígan in the *Táin Bó Cúailgne*. Armstrong (1825) also gives it as *sinne*, *sinneach* – having large udders or teats – and *sinnean* as little dug, teat or udder. *Sithnne* is a teat, pap, nipple or udder, *sithnneach* is having teats or udders, having large teats or udders and *sithnneachan* are teats, paps and udders (Armstrong 1825).

*Faobh-bhleoghainn*, is the stealing of milk out of the udder of a cow or goat (Dwelly 1920, 412), presumably by a calf or lamb rather than a person. *Faobh* means windfall, or unexpected gain (Dwelly 1920, 411), and it is well known by people working with milk animals that the young can become quite adept at ‘stealing’ milk by approaching from the back. The cow or ewe doesn’t pay much attention unless she can smell the youngster and determine that it isn’t hers (personal experience).

*Dreasail* is a term for small teats (Dwelly 1920, 358).

*Deala*, also *deil*, is a nipple or a cow’s udder (Armstrong 1825) and *dela* is teat or dug according to DIL (D, 26).

*Deobhail* is to suck, ‘as the young of human beings or of quadrupeds’ (Armstrong 1825), also written as *deoghail* and *deothail* (Dwelly 1920, 329 & 339). *Deobhaladh* is the sucking of the teat or pap (Armstrong 1825). *Deotháil* means to

suckle, *tha laogh a' deothál na bà*, 'the calf is suckling the cow' (Wentworth 1996, 164-165).

*Cnàmh* also is used for sucking, though its initial meaning is to chew, *tha 'laogh a' cnàmh a' bhó*, 'the calf is sucking the cow'. *An do chnàmh an laogh fhathast i?* 'Has the calf sucked her yet?' (Wentworth 1996, 164-165). *Sioglachadh* is milking or sucking to the last drop in Sleat, otherwise *siogladh* (Dwelly 1920, 842). *Deòthas* is the longing or eagerness of a calf for its mother (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 124). Any suckling infant demonstrates an eagerness to be allowed its mother's breast. But, because a calf is so large compared to other domestic animals except the horse, its desire is very apparent and difficult to deal with, especially when the husbandman is trying to keep the calves from the cows except at milking time.

*Duilioc* is a term meaning the 'want of filial or parental affection', *Tha i cur a laoigh ann an duilioc*, said if a cow is unkind to her calf and kicks it (McDonald 1991 [1899], 108).

*Tearbadh* means separating, weaning (Dwelly 1920, 941). *Terba*, in Early Irish is separating and *terbaid* means 'sets apart' (DIL (T, 150). (See also Chapter 12 'People and Places of Herding'). *Dial*, according to Dwelly (1920, 332), is an obsolete term for weaning.

*Falach* is the 'afterings', or what remains in the udder after a cow has been milked (Highland Society Dictionary 1828, 412). *Stìom*, according to MacLennan (1995 [1925], 322), is the hard substance in a cow's udder after calving. This is the colostrum-rich 'first milk'. If the calf does not suckle within a few hours of birth this substance hardens within the udder and can cause complications (personal experience).

## Castration

Castration was a common procedure in the Highlands. A horse that was gelded was called a *gearran*, from *geàrr* which, according to Dwelly (1920, 485), meant to cut or emasculate an animal i.e. geld. A castrated sheep, known in English as a wether, is *mult* from Early Irish *molt*. There were several terms for a castrated calf, see below.

*Cailleadh* (from *caill* ‘testicle’) is the process or act of castration, also the castration itself; *tiadhan* is a testicle (Armstrong 1825).

*Spodh*, more usually *spoth*, is to geld, cut, castrate or spay (Armstrong 1825). Wentworth (1996, 24) has: *Tha e spoth na’ laogh*, he’s castrating the calves, and: *Chaidh a’ laogh a spoth*, ‘the calf was castrated’. *Spochad* (ultimately from Latin ‘*spado*’) in Early Irish is the act of castrating i.e. emasculating (DIL S, 358).

*Ruig* is a ‘half-castrated’ ram, a ‘ridgeling’ *ruigeachd* is castration, that is the state of being castrated (Armstrong 1825). Ridgeling is a husbandman’s rather than a veterinarian term. It means that either by accident in the castration process or because only one teste was ‘down’ at the time of castration, the surgery by the husbandman was incomplete. It is also applied to wild animals, such as deer, where by accident or birth the animal has only one testicle. The veterinarian lumps this term with ‘cryptorchid’, which means that one or both testicles do not descend into the scrotum at a usual age, and ‘monorchid’ (usually used by dog-breeders) to describe a condition where only one testicle has descended. Medically speaking this is a rare condition of only one testicle being produced at all.<sup>22</sup> Ridgelings exhibit varying breed characteristics not in keeping with either a fully intact male or a fully castrated male, cryptorchids may or may not display these tendencies depending upon the development of each teste whether retained in the abdominal wall or one or the other

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<sup>22</sup> Black's Veterinary Dictionary, pp. 138, 388, 503.

being descended (personal experience). For example, a white-tailed deer, slain by my partner in New Mexico in 1969, was a cryptorchid/ridgeling, he had only one testicle showing and his antlers were misshapen – the only outward signs of abnormality; the other testicle was small and contained within the abdominal wall. In domestic animals, surgical procedures by veterinarians are usually required to do a complete castration on cryptorchids.

### **Blood-letting**

There are many stories of blood-letting of living cattle in the Highlands. Some deal with health of the cattle, as blood-letting was once an accepted medical practice even in humans, some are about times of duress and some even speak of ritual. According to an informant of Dwelly's (1920, 100), Alexander Henderson, there is a place in Ardnamurchan where cattle used to be bled on an annual basis. *Tuadh-fhola* is “a fleam, an instrument for bleeding cattle” (Armstrong 1825).

### **Starvation**

Unfortunately starvation was a problem from time to time in the Western Islands and Highlands. Harsh weather conditions could bury feed supplies for the beasts as well as limit growing seasons and reduce available forage. Conditions became very critical at the time of the Clearances due to decreased summer grazing. Feed which was once harboured for winter around the *baile geamhraidh* was used up during the summer months leaving nothing for the animals in winter.

*Faoilteach* (also *Faoilleach* in Lewis), is the first fortnight of February, and is included here because it was the greatest time for loss of cattle due to starvation and cold. (*A' faoilteach fuar*), *nì mis' bàs caora is nì mi caol uan*. ‘(Cold ‘*faoilteach*’), I make sheep die and I make lambs thin’. *'S e faoilleach a' gheamhraidh an ce-la deug as lugha nì 'n crodh a dh'ionaltradh*. ‘The first fortnight of February is the fortnight

in which the cattle graze least of all' (Wentworth 1996, 53). Also known as the 'season of the wolf-ravage' (*Highland Society Dictionary* 1828, 416).

*Blianach* is an animal that died of starvation according to Forbes (1905, 5).

*Caoile* means leanness, dearth; want of fodder for cattle. *Bhàsach an crodh leis a' chaoile*, 'the cattle starved for want of fodder' (MacLennan 1995 [1925], 70).

*Cáel* in Early Irish means thin or slender, also leanness (DIL C, 10-12).

*Crùban* is "a disease, which attacks cows about the latter end of summer and during autumn. It is supposed to be produced by hard grass, scanty pasture, and severe sucking of calves. The cows become lean and weak, with their hind-legs contracted towards the forefeet, as if pulled by a rope" (Armstrong 1825). This would probably be more of a condition resulting from a lack of proper nutrition than an actual disease.

*Aisg* is 'leanness' in cattle. *Tha 'bhó air an aisg*, the cow is but skin and bone; *gu dè tha sin ach an aisg?* 'What is there but the frame?' (Dwelly 1920, 22).

*Loguid* is a lean, starving cow according to MacLeod and Dewar, Forbes, and Dwelly.

*Di-millteach* is a wandering, destructive cow or horse according to Forbes (1905, 9), usually caused by an animal looking for a mate or food.

### **Cattle loss**

*Earchall* is the misfortune caused by loss of cattle. Specifically it is the loss by death of cattle, that is, the sudden and unexpected loss of cattle, rather than loss by theft.

*Earchallach* means subject to loss by death of cattle (Dwelly 1920, 384). In the poem *Aoir nan Luch* 'The Satire of the Mice', Lachlan MacPherson speaks of *Famh agus earchall is dàimh*, 'Mole and lost cattle and kinsfolk' (Black 2001, 218-9).

### Accident

*Pubull* or *pubal* is probably an abscess caused by an injury. *Thàinig pubal mór air a' mhart*, 'a lump on the side of a cow that has been gored by another' (McDonald 1991 [1899, 197]).

### External forces

*Teasach* means heat or fever, or restlessness from heat, cattle running from excessive heat according to Dwelly (1920, 942). Normally cattle don't run because of the heat, but from insects which attack them during a hot dry spell of weather. Running simply causes them to become more heated. *Fuaran* is a well, a spring, a fountain or a pool for cattle to stand in to cool themselves (Armstrong 1825).

### Diseases

A common term for disease or distemper is *galar*, according to Dwelly (1920, 473), *eucail* (Dwelly 1920, 396) is also used as seen in the following proverb. *Chan eil eucáil ann an duine no ann am beathuch nach tig a' follais ann a' mìos Màrt*, 'there's not a disease in man or beast that doesn't show itself in March' (Wentworth 1996, 39). February and March were the most difficult months for pastoralists, as that was the time of least grass on the hill and shortage of hay or fodder for the housed animals. *Airneach* is 'murrain' in cattle according to Armstrong (1825), he also lists *earnach*: " (it) is distemper among cattle, caused, as is supposed, by eating a poisonous herb, and against which a laxative potion, given in time, is an effectual antidote." 'Murrain' is "any of various highly infectious diseases, e.g. red water and anthrax, that affect cattle and other domestic animals. Archaic – a plague, especially one affecting domestic animals or plants. From the Middle English 'moreyne' from early French 'morine' from 'morir' to die, from Latin 'mori' " (Allen 2000, 913). *Bun-dearg* is red swelling, also known as *burn dearg*, red water; *galar dearg*, red disease; *earna*

*dhearg* and *earnach dhearg*, red murrain; *earna dhubh* and *earnach dhubh*, black murrain (Carmichael 1928, 238).

*An eathorna* is the ‘red-water’ (disease of cattle) Wentworth (1996, 132). There are several diseases, which cause a red discoloration of the urine.<sup>23</sup> *Earnach* alone can mean the red-water, red pleura or bloody flux in cattle, all denoting blood in the urine (Carmichael 1928, 280). “The red and the black murrain are two stages of this disease, which is produced by several causes. On the mainland it is generally caused by the cattle eating the young leaves of shrubs and trees, especially the bog myrtle, the alder, and the birch, and by drinking water impregnated with them. In the Isles eating the sundew ‘*drosera rotundifolia*’ causes the disease. Wherever sundew prevails red pleura is common. A place in South Uist is known as *Bogach na fala*, ‘Marsh of blood’ from the prevalence of sundew and its deadly effects” (Carmichael 1928, 238). According to Donald John MacLennan, a retired veterinarian who resides near Broadford in Skye, red-water (blood in the urine) has two causes. The first is seen after calving and is harmless. A tick causes the second case. Cattle who are born and reared in areas of tick infestation tend to be immune from the bite; however, cattle brought in from other areas where there are no ticks become infected (personal communication, June 2002).

According to Armstrong (1825) *builg* is distemper among cattle, proceeding from want of water or from heat. The meaning of distemper here is simply an illness rather than a specific disease, and is more of a condition produced by external forces. In Modern Irish, Dinneen (1996, 107-108) has ‘*boilg*’ as ‘the disease of swelling in cattle’; ‘*bolg*’ is the stomach. It is possible that the *builg* referred to by Armstrong is a

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<sup>23</sup> Black’s Veterinary Dictionary pp. 494-95.



form of bloat, which is occasioned by cattle grazing on sweet grasses such as clover without sufficient water available to them (personal experience).

*Cru-sgaoileadh* means a bloody flux according to Armstrong (1825).

Alexander Carmichael lists *crà* as blood and Dwelly (1920, 815) gives *sgaoileadh* as the ‘act of spreading’, he also has *cru* as an obsolete term for gore (Dwelly 1920, 279). *Crú* is listed in DIL (C, 553) as gore or blood.

*Tairbhean* is colic according to Forbes (1905, 106). *Tairbhein* also means bloody flux in cattle (Dwelly 1920, 926). Flux in its archaic sense means “an abnormal flowing of fluid, especially excrement, from the body” (Allen 2000, 541). Protection for the old wife’s only cow is given by St. Columba in a charm presented by Mr. William Mackenzie to the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness in 1892:

*An Tairbhean*

*An t-eolas a rinn Calum-Cille  
Dh’aona bhò na caillich.  
Cas air muir, cas air tìr,  
Cas eile ‘sa’ churachan.  
Air mhial, air bhalg,  
Air ghalar dearg, air thairbhein  
An taribhean a tha na do bhroinn  
Air an a----- sin thall  
Slàinte dhut a bheathaich!*

The charm made by St Columba  
For the old wife’s only cow.  
One foot on the sea, one foot on land,  
And another foot in the coracle.  
Against worm, against swelling,  
Against red disease (strangury?) and *tairbhean*.  
May the *tairbhean* that’s in your body  
Go to yonder hard stone.  
Health to you, beastie! (TGSI vol 18, 172).

In this particular instance it appears that St Columba had three feet, other versions give him as having one foot in the coracle and one foot on land. According to

Professor Gillies, this is the magical aspect of hagiography and simply shows the ‘otherworldly’ concept of Saints and their miracles (personal communication August 2003).

*Galar-bonn*, according to Carmichael (1928, 298), is a ‘disease’ in the hooves of cattle caused by walking over rough, stony ground and is ‘difficult to cure’. This wouldn’t be a disease in the sense that it is caused by an external condition and is simply a bruising of the soles of the feet. There is a layer of blood vessels under the layer of hard tissue which make up the bottom part of the hoof and when heavy animals such as cattle are subjected to rocky ground, bruising occurs. It is very unusual in sheep and goats due to the ‘cupped’ shape of their hooves and also because they are much lighter in body weight with relation to hoof size. Donald John MacLennan has suggested that after the cattle were housed all winter their hooves would be soft and easily bruised by walking on rocky paths (personal communication, June 2002).

*Galar-lom* is “‘a disease of cattle whereby the skin becomes corrupt and the hair falls off, akin to *faileadh*” (Carmichael 1928, 298). It is unclear here whether Carmichael is referring to cattle as livestock or specifically the cow kind. *Faileadh*, according to Dwelly (1920, 404) is a ‘corrupting’ or ‘putrefying’. Many things can cause hair loss in animals, but the most common causes are poor nutrition and parasites, although there are specific skin diseases and allergies, which also cause hair loss. ‘Psoroptic mange’ or ‘sheep scab’, has always been a bane of sheepmen, it is caused by a mite and is treated by ‘dipping’. It is probably the ailment that the Highlanders were trying to cure by smearing the animals with butter. According to Donald John MacLennan, a huge tub was used to mix up tar, butter and oil for the *smeuradh*. “‘It was a very laborious task”’ (personal communication, June 2002).

*Bragsaidh* is a disease among sheep, which is found to arise from eating withered grass, and from want of water (Armstrong 1825).

*Glupad*, according to Carmichael (1928, 304) is “dropsy in the throat affecting cattle and sheep, due to decay in the liver and kidneys”.

*Tiormachd* is a dryness or state of being dry. It also means a disease in cattle (MacLeod and Dewar 1901, 569). *An tiormachd* is a disease of cattle prevalent in winter (Wentworth 1996, 39). “*Aibeoil* is an illness to which cattle, especially young cattle are liable. A straw rope twisted sunwise and rolled round the body of the animal is used to counteract this illness” (Carmichael 1971, 6).

*Balgan-béiste* was “a small globular growth with an insect inside. This was kept and when a cow swallowed an insect this was put in water and a little of that water was sprinkled upon the cow (Carmichael 1971, 11). Dwelly (1920, 103) gives *bó-bhaith* as an obsolete term for ‘cow slaughter’. DIL (B, 141) lists *bóbath* (from *bó* + *bath* ‘death’) as a murrain. *Bodh-arfach* is another obsolete term for ‘destroying of cows’ (Highland Society Dictionary 1828, 128).

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The Gaelic husbandman had a wealth of information at hand in order to carry out the job of taking care of his animals. The technical skills of breeding and birthing, feeding and surviving as well as the nomenclature with regard to breed characteristics (colour, coat etc.) are inherent in the Gaelic language. The ideology displayed by the terms in this chapter reinforces the idea that the Gael was clearly cognizant of food production relating to animal husbandry. Knowledge of age and condition of animals as well as breeding habits and health were vital to the production of meat and milk in the Highlands. Due to a lack of scientific knowledge with regard to disease, the Gael had to rely on tradition and lore for diagnosis and cure, and though much of what has

come down to us is admittedly fanciful, they did have a knowledge of husbandry practices which, for the most part, proved successful. The next chapter will explore folklore.

## Chapter 15

### Folklore

This chapter will examine terms relating to superstitious beliefs of the Highland people with regard to livestock, their management and dairy produce. The evil eye was perceived to be an agent of jealousy; it did not gain benefit for the bestower, but took away from the object in question. There were many ways to ward it off. Since it was seen as a form of coveting, one of the ways to combat it was to make the object less appealing. For example a beautiful child would be dressed in an unbecoming manner or with an article of clothing worn inside out (MacLagan 1902, 131). The word *aibhseachadh* could take on a specialised meaning, according to Dr. John Shaw, of overpraising or ‘praising up’ with anything but good intentions. It was used when an exceptionally fine animal was admired to excess resulting in the force of the evil eye (*droch shuil*) being brought on the animal (Shaw 1999, 318). For further information regarding the evil eye as a global phenomenon see *The Evil Eye a Casebook*, edited by Alan Dundes. An article by Dundes in this collection entitled ‘Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye: An essay in Indo-European and Semitic Worldview’, is particularly relevant to the beliefs in the Scottish Highlands, specifically pp. 258-259.

Witchcraft on the other hand was believed to take away from one to the advantage of another. Witches were considered ordinary people who had supernatural powers and could change themselves into animals such as the hare, in order to accomplish their ‘dirty work’.

Fairy craft was viewed as being able to take away the entire being (animal or human), while leaving a changeling in its place, most notably milk cows and babies. Fairies were generally known for their pranks and ill-will towards mortals, though some instances of kindness were reported.

## Bealltainn

One of the most important dates in Gaelic Scotland, especially to the pastoralists, was the first of May. *Bealltainn* was a time for the purification of livestock to ward off disease and harm for the entire year. According to DIL (B, 66), *Bel(l)taine* was ‘the month of the Beacon-fire’, ‘time of the beginning of summer.’ Armstrong (1825) defines it as ‘May-day’, ‘Whitsuntide’ and ‘the month of May’. According to Dwelly (1920, 81-82) “On the first of May was held a great Druidical festival in favour of the god Belus. On this day fires were kindled on the mountaintops for the purposes of sacrifice; and between these fires the cattle were driven, to preserve them from contagion till next May-day. On this day it was usual to extinguish all the hearth fires, in order that they should be re-kindled from this purifying flame.” In *Carmina Gadelica*, Carmichael says: “On May Day (*Bealltain*), all the fires of the district were extinguished and ‘*tein éigin*’, the need-fire was produced on the knoll. This fire was divided in two, and people and cattle rushed through for purification and safeguarding against ‘*ealtraigh agus dosgaidh*’, mischance and murrain during the year. The people obtained fires for their homes from this need-fire. The practice of producing the need-fire came down in the Highlands and Islands to the first quarter of this century” [19<sup>th</sup>] (Carmichael 1928, 182). Early Irish meaning for *eltrae* is obscure; the following passage sheds some light on it. *Ár is ed foterá galar agus angcessa forsna clanna, eter eltraí agus milliuda olchena*, ‘For it is this which causes plague and sicknesses to tribes, both \_\_\_ and other destructions’ (*Ériu* 1904, vol 1, pp 218-221). *Dosgann*, according to Dwelly (1920, 3543), is misfortune, loss of cattle, accident or damage, “In Uist applied solely to loss of farm-stock, particularly cattle or horses.” The word order in the translation of *ealtraigh* and *dosgaidh* is possibly reversed and should

actually equate *éaltraigh* with cattle disease and *dosgaidh* with mischance, see under *Dosgaidh* in this chapter.

The following is an account by the minister of Callander in the First *Statistical Account of Scotland* compiled by Sir John Sinclair concerning May Day practices by young people.

In many parts of the Highlands the young folk of the district used to meet on the moors on the first of May. They cut a table in the green sod, of a round figure, by cutting a trench in the ground of sufficient circumference to hold the whole company. They then kindled a fire, and dressed a repast of eggs and milk of the consistency of custard. They kneaded a cake of oatmeal, which was toasted at the embers against a stone. After the custard was eaten they divided the cake into as many portions as there were persons in the company, as much alike as possible in size and shape. They daubed one of the pieces with charcoal till it was black all over, and they were then all put into a bonnet together, and each one, blindfolded, drew out a portion. The bonnet holder was entitled to the last bit, and whoever drew the black bit was the devoted person who was to be sacrificed to Baal, whose favour they meant to implore in rendering the year productive. The devoted person was compelled to leap three times over the flames (Sinclair 1983, 99).

R. C. MacLagan gathered information about superstitions in the Western Highlands and Islands at the beginning of the twentieth century. The following accounts show that many of the people he interviewed maintained a belief in the evil eye and witchcraft and explain how they protected their livestock, especially at Beltane.

In the island of Islay tar was well known as an application against the Evil Eye, but its use seems to have been restricted to Beltane night, May Eve. One of our reciters, a man now of about fifty, when herding cattle as a boy remembers how all the time he was on the farm of C. at a fixed hour on *Oidhche Bhealtuinn* he went to the byre with the farmer and his son. They took with them a small pot of tar and a bit of stick, little larger than an egg-spoon. Our reciter held the dish while the son took hold of the ears of each of the cattle in turn and the old man put a little tar into each ear with the stick. If any words were spoken the boy did not hear them.

Another old man, a man of eighty adds... to the putting it in the ears that it was also put on the noses of the cattle for the purpose of “preventing injuries from the Evil Eye.” Another, a woman of about fifty-five, says her father was regular in the habit of putting tar on the horns of his cows on May Eve to protect the beasts from the Evil Eye. A fourth reciter says he has often seen it put on the horns and ears, and also rowan berries tied to the cows’ tails on the same occasion, and adds that this was usually accompanied with the repeating of some good words to protect the beasts from being hurt with the Evil Eye (MacLagan 1902, 132-133).

Mary Mackellar noted this belief regarding churning and Beltane:

It was considered very unlucky to lend anyone the churn, and a neighbour who would be rude or daring enough to seek the loan of a churn on the first day of any quarter of the year would be regarded with grave suspicion; and there was a special repugnance to lending it on Beltane Day for if the borrower had any evil power, she might take the *toradh*, or substance, out of the butter for the next quarter, and of course, it would be more disastrous if that should be done at the beginning of the milk season (Mackellar 1888).

Another aspect of Beltane rituals involved the Beltane bannock. The following is an account from *A History of Moray and Nairn*.

Beltane, or May Day, was a festival in the district within the memory of men still living. There was no Maypole as in England, but “Beltane bannocks” were an institution. They were thick kneaded cakes of oatmeal, ‘watered’ with a thin batter made of milk and cream, whipped eggs, and a little oatmeal. On May Day about noon the young folks went to the rocks and high ground and rolled them downhill. If one broke, its owner would die before next Beltane. After rolling, the bannocks were solemnly eaten, part being always left on the ground for the ‘cuack’ or cuckoo. A little bit was taken home, too, to be dreamed upon. It was the only ceremonial bannock in which eggs formed an essential constituent (Rampini 1797, 324).

There were many debates over the meaning of the word Beltaine among the folklorists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As above, the Minister of Callander, specifies that the Bel part of the word was from the Egyptian god, Baal. Cuthbert Bede states that *Bealtuinn*, or *Beil-teine*, means “the fire of Belus”. According to



him, “There was a great fire lighted before sunrise on the top of the highest hill, and when the sun rose, the people came to welcome it, and to worship God; and the chief Druid blessed them, and received their offerings, and gave each of them a kindling wherewith to light their fires, and if he was displeased with anyone or they didn’t bring him a sufficient offering, he refused them the kindling; and no one dare give them one under pain of being cursed; and so the poor person had to go without fire till Beil-teine came round again” (Bede 1861, 43).

Donald MacKenzie in *Scotland: The Ancient Kingdom* (1930, 125) says “Beltane (May-Day) ceremonies are not yet wholly extinct, but Beltane has no connection with a god ‘Baal’ or ‘Bel’ the term means ‘white fires’ – white being used in its magical sense”.

Alan Bruford in Daiches’ *A Companion to Scottish Culture* seems to sum up all the aspects of it pretty well.

Bonfires, divination and special bannocks marked Beltane (1 May) and its eve, the beginning of summer, opposite to Hallowe’en: witches were of course supposed to be abroad on Beltane eve... The day’s Gaelic name contains the word *teine*, fire, and it was probably the major fire festival of the Highlands. Originally two fires were lit by friction on wood ‘need-fire’ and cattle were passed between them to be sained or protected from evil before going to the summer sheilings. The beltane bannocks were rolled downhill like Easter eggs and the owner’s future predicted from the way they fell. ‘May dew’ gathered before dawn had magical powers, including giving beauty to the face washed in it (Bruford 1981, 121).

To this day, young women climb Aurther’s Seat in Edinburgh to wash their faces in the morning dew on Beltane morning. Members of the ‘pagan festivals’ also remember Beltane rites on Calton Hill in Edinburgh on Beltane eve.

Beltane was very important in Ireland and features in some of its earliest myths. “When Partholon, the chief of the earliest mythic inhabitants of Ireland, came

over from Spain, he landed on the south-west coast, whereas the Tuatha De Danann landed on the north-east, at the opposite extremity of the island. This was on Monday, May the First, the Feast of Beltene” (Arbois de Jubainville 1903, 89).

Máiri MacNeill has this in *The Festival of Lughnasa* (1962, 69).

There are strong undertones of anxiety in the celebrations of the two summer feasts, Bealtaine (May Day) and St. John’s Eve (Midsummer). However gladly the first of May, *Lá buidhe Bealtaine*, was welcomed, the customs with which it was celebrated were mainly directed towards averting the dangers which threatened the cattle and dairy.

It is interesting to note that the much valued rules of hospitality and generosity which marked Gaelic Scotland and Ireland, even to the present day, are held in abeyance at Beltane. It is the one time of year when food or fire is not given freely to one in need. The following explanation is offered in *Celtic Heritage* (Rees & Rees 1961, 91-92).

Summer’s Eve... has a positive as well as a negative aspect. Fairies can work mischief and witches can bring misfortune by stealing the year’s profit from cattle and from wells, but the dangers of the night are different from the awful imminence of death experienced at Allhallowtide. This world is no longer swamped by the world beyond; one’s luck in the ensuing year may be in the balance, but one is not brought face to face with an unalterable destiny. And effective measures can be taken to ward off evil. One can keep watch to prevent witches from stealing the first milk and from skimming the well on May morn, and other precautions against the dangers of witchcraft can be taken by refusing to give away fire, water and food. Branches of the rowan tree, placed over the doors of house and byre, will keep away witches and fairies alike (Rees & Rees 1961, 91-92).

One of the ways which can be used to help against the wiles of witchcraft is in using the water “which flows between two or three parishes or townlands.” This water has curative qualities and has the power “both to charm away the ‘profit’ of milk and butter on May Eve and to break such a charm” (Rees & Rees 1961, 94).

The following was recorded in *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society* 1849-51, quoted in *The Year in Ireland* by Kevin

Danaher:

Another custom was scrupulously observed after sunset on the eve of Bealtine. Farmers accompanied by their servants and domestics were accustomed to walk around the boundaries of their farms in a sort of procession, carrying implements of husbandry, seeds of corn, *sgaith an tobair* and other requisites, especially the sacred herb, *bean mhin* (vervain), if any person were fortunate enough to possess a sprig of it. ... They then drove all their cows into one place and examined their tails, lest a witch or evilly-disposed person might there conceal a sprig of the rowan tree or some other bewitched token (Danaher 1972, 116-117).

Apparently the rowan tree, like the water mentioned above, could invoke spells as well as protect against them. The following excerpt tells of the more common happenings on Beltane Eve. "There are traditions from many areas to show that the lighting of bonfires on May Eve was common. ... The rural custom survived longest, perhaps in the south east, where in County Waterford and in the southern fringes of Counties Kilkenny and Tipperary there still are memories of the cattle being driven through small fires or between pairs of fires" (Danaher 1972, 96).

### **Teine éigin**

The *teine éigin* mentioned above was not confined to Beltane. The fire at *Samhain* was also considered a need fire and one could be produced in time of distress as in the following. "The *teine éigin* was a forced fire, a fire of necessity produced by friction. It was considered an antidote against the plague, the murrain, and all infectious diseases among cattle" (Armstrong 1825).

Martin Martin gives the following account of it.

All the fires in the parish were extinguished, and eighty-one married men, being thought the necessary number of men for effecting this design, took two great planks of wood, and nine

of them were employed by turns, who by their repeated efforts rubbed one of the planks against the other until the heat thereof produced fire; and from this forced fire each family is supplied with new fire, which is no sooner kindled than a pot full of water is quickly set on it, and afterwards sprinkled upon the people infected with the plague, or upon the cattle that have the murrain. And this they all say they find successful by experience. It was practised in the mainland, opposite to the south of Skye, within these thirty years (Martin 1934 [1703], 174).

One woman [in Norway] remembered from her girlhood how the common herdsman went through the village shouting: “The door must be shut, and the fire put out; they are going to draw fire (*drage ild*) at Hovgaard” (Gregor 1898, 215-216). I have found several common practices (not surprisingly) between Norway and the Highlands with regard to pastoral practices. (See also ‘milk libations’ in this chapter). Gregor continues... “It may be worth recording that within the past 50 or 60 years a similar practice was observed in Glen Esk in the north of Forfarshire: fires were kindled in front of the cattle-houses, and through these the cattle were driven when first taken out to the fields in spring.” Smoke can be helpful in ridding animals of external parasites such as horn and heel flies, which hatch on the animals in the spring. It is possible that the purifying fire actually benefited animals that had been housed all winter by getting rid of accumulated pests.

### **Buarach**

The *buarach* is a cow fetter, or shackles placed on the hind legs of a cow while milking (MacLennan 1979, 58). According to DIL (B, 229), *búarach* is a spancel for cows at milking-time. The *buaraicean*, cow shackles, were made of many different materials: wool lint, cotton lint, heather, nettles, horsehair, rowan branches, reed, or anything that could be twisted into a rope. Due to the openness of the *àirigh* and the lack of byres for the confinement and milking of the cows, the *buarach* must have been used more extensively in the sheilings than in the winter steadings. It figures

largely in the milking songs as a token of love for the favoured cow. Silk was used as the ultimate material to express the highest regard for the most favoured cow. This could be equated to the gifts of a lover to the most beloved. The most revered were the cows that accepted their calves, the ones that produced a number of offspring, and the cows that gave the most milk. To these would be given the fine fetter of silk (Carmichael 1941, 268). Donald Campbell (1862, 274) gives a slightly different picture of the *buarach*. He describes it as “a hair shackle for tying the hind legs of restive or fierce tempered cows while milking”. This certainly is more in line with my experiences with hobbles and milking. The sweet tempered cow did not need hobbles, but the kicking one did; ours were simply two metal sleeves joined by a chain that fitted over the hind legs just above the hock.

There is a Gaelic saying which is the equivalent of ‘being between the Devil and the deep blue sea’. *Eadar a’ bhaobh ’s a’ bhuarach*, ‘twixt the vixen and the cow fetter’. “It was a superstitious fancy that if a man was struck by the *buarach* he would thenceforth be childless” (Nicolson 1951, 171). Since the dairymaid wielded the cow fetter, it might be assumed that she was safe from unwelcome advances, especially in the rather remote setting of the sheilings.

There is a treatise on this subject in *Gille A’ Bhuidseir, The Wizard’s Gillie and Other Tales*. McKay brings forth the idea that the “power of the *buarach* stems from antiquity and the verbal and physical duelling between a mortal man of magic and a Celtic giantess or wizardess. In the duel, the man has to counter satire as well as escape the lashings of the *buarach*. The item in question was made from the ‘fairy-proof’ Rowan tree twigs and the hair from the tail of a stallion. It was well accepted that you could ride a stallion into the fairies and come to no harm from them” (McKay n.d., 136-38).

The cow-fetter was used in many spells and incantations. “*Mar chroisean ’s mar gheasan, ’s mar naoidh buaraichean mnatha-sithe, siubhlaiche, seachranaiche,* ‘by crosses and by spells and by the nine cow-fetters of the busily-roaming, misleading fairy woman’” (McKay n.d., 138). Nine (3 times 3) was apparently a number of great importance.

In the tale *Fear Gheusdo (The Laird of Geusdo)*, the person wielding the *buarach* is the milkmaid. The Laird and his ‘gillie’ are on a trip from Skye to Benbecula when foul weather overtakes them and they seek refuge from the storm in a house peopled by fairies. The two men are unaware of the otherworld status of their hosts. The fairies are sent by the *bodach* (old man) in search of food to feed to their sudden guests, but all of the beasts of the area have been blessed and are therefore protected. The fairies are sent again and this time they return with the guest’s own cow. Since the owner of the cow has journeyed very far to reach this place, and the fairies have only been gone a short time, he realises that he is dealing with the supernatural. “How did you come by this cow?” He asks. “She kicked the milkmaid and spilled the bucket of milk, whereupon the maid hit her with the *buarach* and said: ‘May you never be milked nor herded again, and may it be an evil thing that meets you on your way’ ” (McKay n.d., 138). In this way, the dairymaid lifted the protection and exposed the cow to harm. One of the points that McKay makes is that the *buarach* was used by supernatural powers but was also such a strong ‘weapon’ that it could be used effectively by a mere mortal such as a dairymaid.

There is a story about the magical cow known as the *Glas Gabhnach* and the *buarach*. Towards the end of her life she is accustomed to roaming through the district of Middleton, Co. Cork, in Ireland. She allows herself to be milked only by the first person to find her in the morning and she will fill any vessel no matter the

size. She comes upon a dairymaid milking spancelled cows. The dairymaid puts the fetter on her and proceeds to milk her. The *Glas* has never been fettered before and grows restive. When the maid finishes she unfetters her and gives her a push with the *buarach*. The cow gives a most unearthly low, kicks over the milk and rages from the glen lowing the entire time. She is never seen again. The overturned milk bucket floods the glen and drowns the terrified dairymaid. The glen is called *Gleann-na-bó-buille*, the ‘Glen of the Infuriated Cow’ (Hull 1928, 150). In Scotland she is known as the *Glasghoilean* and the hero Finn is said to be her owner. She has a bed in the Isle of Skye (Folklore 1913 vol. 24, 102).

### **Toradh**

The produce of milk was probably one of the most targeted areas of mischief. The *cuibhreachan* plant is used as a safeguard against spiriting away the *toradh* the ‘substance’ of the milk. “It is placed under the milk-vessels. Any house that has it is safe against the wiles of witches and wizards” (Carmichael 1971, 55). (See also Chapter 7 ‘Milk and Milk Produce’). *Lion* (lint) was used to tie milkwort, butter-wort, dandelion, and marigold stems together to form a circle. This was also put under milk-vessels to protect loss of the *toradh* (Carmichael 1928, 319).

The expression used in Kintyre for the power of taking away produce is *pisreag* (MacLagan 1902, 6). According to Dwelly (1920, 724) this just means sorcery or superstition.

Reverend Norman MacDonald of Glenelg told Calum Maclean the following story: “There were a few wise men in the Highlands who could sometimes counteract the harm done by witches. Aonghas Mor Shadiseader [was] such a man. He was sent for once by [a] man who was having the profit taken from his milk. Angus, drinking tea in the house with others, said that the culprit would pass the house any minute and

the handle would come off the host's cup. This happened seconds later'' (Sound Archives 1957/97/A12).

One of the ways to prevent the *toradh* from being taken was blessing the cow. A man known to have the *Sgoil Dhubh* ('Black Art') once visited the Laird of Balinaby and took the *toradh* from all the cows on his estate but one. The cow in question belonged to an old woman that the man had accused of being a witch. When questioned the woman answered, "Every morning I pray that she may be preserved, and when I go to milk her I bless myself and the cow. That is all I do" (MacLagan 1920, 115).

MacLagan's informants told him that it was especially difficult to distinguish between the evil eye and witchcraft with regard to the loss of *toradh*. When anyone is churning and a visitor enters to whom any suspicion is attached of the power of interfering with the butter, any such power can be taken from her by getting her to help with the churning. The explanation suggested for this is that if people do not want the churning to be successful they will do nothing to help it; if they do help, it is considered as evidence of their desire to bring it to a successful end (MacLagan 1902, 129-30).

"*Mulchag Bhealltainn* was a cheese made on the first of May, and kept in the house till next *Latha Bealltainn*. It was ordinary cheese kept in the house to prevent the *toradh* or produce being bewitched or lost. It was a charm. The *mulchag imbrig* was also a special cheese called the flitting kebbock. It was kept in the house all through the winter and spring, and was not broken till the cattle were led out to the hill pastures in early summer" (McDonald 1991 [1899], 185).



## **Dosgaidh**

*Dosgaidh* is the loss of cattle, '*se 'n dosgaidh a tha trom air*, the loss of cattle is heavy on him. To remove the *dosgaidh* or cattle blight from a person, the carcass of the dead beast should be buried or taken to a boundary stream. Some out of ill will buried the carcass on a neighbour's land. If a cow is lost through illness of any kind it is not right to bring any of the beef raw to anyone. It must be brought boiled, otherwise the *dosgaidh* might be spread (McDonald 1991 [1899], 104). Another belief regarding the burying of something, also reported by Father Allan, was that of the *leabadh laoigh*. Literally the calf's bed, it meant the placenta of a calf. "At one time (as to-day) she-calves were more in request than he-calves. If people wished to have she-calves they buried the *leabadh laoigh* (matrix) at a boundary stream" (McDonald 1991 [1899], 160). This would be the placenta of a heifer calf that had just been born. The practice of burying certain items, as above, is recorded for various purposes throughout the Highlands and Islands, and could be considered a form of 'sympathetic magic'.

Amulets were an important part of the medicine cabinet in the Gaidhealtachd. The following is one of the more common aids in curing animals. *Leug* is a "crystal that was in held in high regard by the Gael. It was thought that water poured upon it became straightway impregnated with peculiar medical virtues, which did not, however extend beyond cattle. These stones were still in preservation, and in repute among the lower orders of Highlanders in the nineteenth century" (Armstrong 1825).

## **Fairies**

Certain items, as seen elsewhere in this thesis, were considered to be protection from the fairies. Many times these items were included in the manufacture of dairy instruments as in this case. *Simid* was a mallet or churn staff. The head of the *simid*

for churning was made of horsehair, preferably the “hair of the tail of an entire horse” (Carmichael 1971, 126). The *simid* was the same as the *loinid* and was made in the manner of a whisk, in order to froth the milk. It was made with the hair from the tail of a stallion; as has been mentioned, the stallion warded off mischief done by fairies.

*Gruagach* is a ‘female spectre of the class of brownies’ (type of fairy), to which the Highland dairy-maids ‘made frequent libations of milk’ (Armstrong 1825). *Grúacach* (from *grúac* ‘hair of the head), according to DIL (G, 166), meant hairy, long-haired or long-maned; also a goblin, a wight or an enchanter. Carmichael (1928, 306) says that the *gruagach* was known all over the Highlands and took great interest in the welfare of the cattle in her area, however, if the daily offering of milk was not made, cattle would break into the fields or the best cow would die. In Norway (as in the Highlands and Islands) the milk-maids sang to the cows, which was one way of making them feel at ease and hopefully getting them to give a lot of milk. Another way was to spill some milk on the floor for the invisible people (Skjelbred 1994, 200).

Dwelly has this to say about another of the spirits that the dairy-maids had to deal with. “The *ùruisg* had the qualities of man and spirit curiously commingled. He had a particular fondness for the products of the dairy, and was a fearful intruder on milk-maids of the Highlands, who made regular libations of milk or cream to charm him off, or to procure his favour. Only those who had the second sight could see him. Every manor house had its *ùruisg*, and in the kitchen, close by the fire, was a seat that was left unoccupied for him” (Dwelly 1920, 1001).

The *loireag* (water-sprite) watched over the weavers and their weaving to wreck havoc if displeased over the songs sung or the way the work was progressing. She must also be soothed with an offering of milk. If she were not given her due she

would suck all of the milk animals dry and put a spell on them so that they could not move (Carmichael 1928, 320).

*Tarbh-uisge* is a sea-bull or cow (Armstrong 1825). Once some fairy cows came ashore at Nisibost beach in Harris and the people got between them and the water and threw earth so that they could not return to the sea. These cows looked just like Highland cattle but lived under the sea eating seaweed called *meillich* (Campbell 1900, 136). It was maintained that these cattle produced better offspring than the original island cattle. And also, if a sea bull happened to come ashore and mate with the Island cows, the offspring was of better quality. Another landing site for sea cows was Berneray in Uist and at *Creag mhòr mhic Neacail* in Skye. The evening that they landed in Skye a voice was heard from the sea calling them by name. The cows listed were black, brown, brindled and white faced, all descendants of the one hornless red cow (Campbell 1900, 136). It appears that the fairy cows which come into association with people in their everyday lives are the same colours as the people's own cows. The statement was made earlier that they looked just like Highland cows but lived under the sea. The fairy cows in the myths, however, are notably 'white with red ears' or 'hornless and red'.

Many incidents have been told of the fairy impact upon the everyday life of animal husbandry of the Highlands. Most of the tales are about the mischief done by the fairies, but in one exception in Skye a poor person's cow is taken from him through some act of oppression. That night the fairies bring him a replacement in the form of a sea cow, 'remarkable only in having green waterweeds upon it. This cow thrives' (Campbell 1900, 136).

*Earca-iucna* is an obsolete term for white cows with red ears, notched cattle [ears], fairy cattle (Dwelly 1920, 384). I attended the Oban Highland cattle sale

recently and had the good fortune to accompany a friend of mine, Sue Campbell from South Uist, who was in the market for a black bull. She was very thorough and methodical in her inspection of all of the available prospects. She approached one fine young two-year old. In the final part of her examination she rubbed his ears, and turning to me she smiled and said, “He has crop ears.” I felt the tips of the ears and hidden under shaggy hair I felt the rolled edges of the ear. I said “Are you aware of the legend of the fairy cattle?” She said “Yes”. “Is it a detraction?” I asked. “To some,” she replied, “but I don’t mind.”

Forbes (1905, 99) has the following account. “The fairy cows have calves with short ears, as if the upper part were cut off with a knife, and slit in the top – *corc-chluasach*, knife-eared – and said to be the offspring of a water bull.” Carmichael (1928, 160) gives *crà-chluasach* as crimson-eared and *corc-chluasach* as purple-eared, usually describing cattle with red ears supposedly descended from fairy cows. According to DIL (C, 477) *corc* means purple. “Some of these cattle have one or both ears scalloped, and are hence called *torc-chluasach*, notch-eared. Probably these red-eared cattle are descended from the old Caledonian white cattle, whose ears were red. The Caledonian cattle are also called *earc iuchna*, notched cattle” (Carmichael 1928, 160). DIL (I, 332) has *iuchna* cf. *na n-erc n-iuchnae* ‘of the pale-red cows’. *Earc* is a heifer, cow or beast of the cow kind and *earc iuc* is a notched cow (Carmichael 1928, 280). The hunter asked the fairy woman, “what is it that makes the calves notch-eared?” “Because their mother shuns the fairy flax” she replied (Carmichael 1954, 124-25). *Lìon na bean sìth* (fairy woman’s flax) is also called purging flax. It is common throughout Scotland and was used as a cathartic; it also can cause abortion<sup>24</sup> (Darwin 1996, 129-30).

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<sup>24</sup> See also *The Gaelic Names of Plants*, John Cameron pp 9-10.

## Other Practices

Father Allan notes that *Aicheanta* was used as a name for cattle, *tha ainm Aicheanta dianamh feum do bheathaichean*, the name *Aicheanta* (a strange name for a cow) is very effective for cattle (against the Evil Eye) (McDonald 1991 [1899], 21). Perhaps the idea was that the malicious spirit that caused distress would be unable to identify the object if it had an unusual name.

According to Carmichael (1928, 243), *caisean-uchd* is a strip of skin, with the hair intact, taken from a sheep, goat or cow, at Christmas, New Year and other sacred festivals. *Ucht*, in Early Irish, is breast or bosom cf. the breast of an animal (DIL). Dwelly (1920, 153) has *caisean* ‘the dewlap of skin that hangs down from the breast of cows’. “The strip is oval, and no knife must be used in removing it from the flesh. It is carried by the carollers when they visit the houses of the townland, and when lit by the head of the house it is given to each person in turn to smell, going sunwise. The inhaling of the fumes of the burning skin and wool is a talisman to safeguard the family from fairies, witches demons, and other uncanny creatures, during the year.” According to MacAlpine (1903, 61), “the ceremony was performed in Islay at any time, but never for the sake of the fairies.”

The rowan tree and its parts were considered sacred and beneficial to the Gael as seen by above entries. “*Failean caorruinn*, a rowan sucker, or *fleasg caorruinn*, a rowan wand, was placed over the lintels of the barn, byre, stable, sheep-fold, and lamb-cot, as a safeguard against witchcraft and malicious spirits. A twig of rowan was coiled into a circlet and placed beneath the milk ‘*boynes*’ to keep the milk from being spirited away. A fire of rowan was sacred, and therefore the festival cakes were cooked with rowan faggots or other sacred wood” (Carmichael 1928, 246). A ‘*boyne*’ according to the *Concise Scots Dictionary*, is a ‘broad shallow container in which to

skim milk. The broad shallow container is used to allow the cream to rise to the surface and be skimmed off.

Other plants were considered almost as powerful as the rowan. Ivy was considered very sacred and was known as *eidhion*, *iadhain*, *eidh-shlat*, *iadh-shlat*, and *eidhion mu chrann*, though *eidh-shlat* or *iadh-shlat* is better known as honeysuckle, a twining vine in itself. “Ivy is one of the many sacred shrubs of the Celts. It is used as a protective for milk, milk products, flocks, and by lovers as an emblem of fidelity. An old man in Uist said that he used to swim to an islet in a lake in his neighbourhood for ivy, woodbine, and mountain ash. These, sometimes separately and sometimes combined, he twined into a three-ply *cuach*, ring, which he placed over the lintel of his cow-house and under the vessels in his milk-house, to safeguard his cows and his milk from witchcraft, evil eye, and murrain ”(Carmichael 1928, 280). Ivy is “A magical plant that grows wild in most parts of Scotland. A three-ply wreath woven from ivy, honeysuckle and rowan was placed over the lintel of the byre and beneath churns in the milk-house to protect cows and milk from witchcraft, the evil eye and the infectious disease murrain ”(Darwin 1996, 72).

*Laomachan*, ‘little mouldy one’ (literally ‘little curved one’), was a rind of cheese used for divination. The cheese had to be made on one of the four main festivals (which one was uncertain) from the milk of a cow who had eaten *mòthan* – pearlwort. The cheese was used twelve months after it was made. It was used by putting a small hole through the rind, the diviner looked through this and down the smoke-vent of the house and the name of the first person thus seen through the two holes was the name of the future spouse (Carmichael 1971, 94).

An *orra* was an amulet or enchantment, a charm to effect something wonderful; *orra-sheamlachais* was an amulet to make a cow allow the calf of another cow to suck her (MacLennan 1925, 252).

The *snàithle* was a good cure for the evil eye. According to Peter MacCormick in Benbecula it was a piece of thread with 3 knots in it. You are to say 3 Hail Marys while tying each knot. The person making the thread would look out, and the first person they saw, or whose likeness they saw was the culprit. The thread could be tied among the long hair (eg. tail) of the animal for protection. Those who could make thread knew when someone was coming for one because they would not be feeling well (Sound Archives 1968/223/Aza). In North Uist there was a man who did not believe in the *snàithle* but he was sent by his wife for red thread, black thread and blue thread. He wound them together and his wife put them on the cow, half an hour later the cow was fully recovered (Sound Archives 1968/211/B5).

...

Superstition was an integral part of life in Gaelic Scotland even into the twentieth century in some areas. Although it touched every aspect of life it figured most strongly with regard to food production and especially where dairy items and the cow were concerned. The practices of Beltane and the '*teine eigin*' were extremely important, as May first was a very significant time in pastoral life. It was the final closure of winter and the beginning of the easier and more productive time of summer. Instruments such as the *buarach*, made from the hair from the tail of a stallion, or rowan twigs were seen as protection from external forces. Other practices, such as burying dead animals or parts of animals held significance. Everything was geared for the protection of or curing of the animals from outside forces or disease.

## Conclusion

This thesis has shown that people living in the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland had a healthy diet, for lactose absorbers, of meat and milk in the centuries preceding the Clearances. Chapters 1 and 2 have laid the basis for an understanding of a meat and milk dietary regime for people living in a highland pastoral environment.

Chapter 3 gave a brief summary of travelers in the Western Highlands and Islands who were contemporary with people living during the time period covered by this thesis. It also indicated certain political events that disrupted, to some degree, the ability of the people to continue to husband their resources in a customary way.

Chapters 4 to 15 use lexicographical, as well as literary and ethnological evidence, to illuminate a way of life in which animals, not the least of which was the milk cow, were of central importance to pastoralists in the *Gaidhealtachd*.

The esteem with which the milk cow was held seems to exceed the boundaries expected for an animal that simply furnished milk for family use. Songs and poetry were composed and sung about her and to her, she was a valued family member and she was firmly entrenched within the folklore of the area.

Gaelic terms for heifer, in Chapter 5, indicate how important she was in securing the future livelihood of the Gaelic people. The milk cow was the crown but the heifer was the jewel in the crown. Every part of her progression from calf to cow was marked with astute observation and her arrival to maturity was welcomed with blessings.

The produce of the cow and eventually the heifer, as described in Chapter 6, was the sum and substance of diet in Gaelic Scotland. Milk and its products were carefully gathered and processed and jealously guarded from all harm. The implements used to collect, store and make all types of dairy produce, as seen in



Chapter 7, had to be handled with care, not only in their manufacture but also in their cleaning. They too were subject to forces outwith the control of the people and had to be protected in various ways.

Other foods, described in Chapter 8, were available to Highlanders and consisted of meat of many varieties, including venison, salmon, trout and upland game birds, as well as wild greens and finally whatever corn or grain could be provided on small tracts of arable land.

Cattle had a vital place in Highland society, not only to provide milk and meat but also as a measure of value for other aspects of society i.e., fine, dowry, and as chattel. Chapter 9 describes legal concepts that were raised through the medium of cattle. Fosterage, *calps* and man rents were figured in terms of female cattle. Death duties in the form of *bo ursainn*, as shown in Chapter 10, were paid by a new widow, first to a chief but finally to a landlord initially for protection but later as a heavy burden with no recourse.

Chapter 11 describes all types of pasturage that was of great concern to pastoralists. The amount of information available through the Gaelic language, of different types of grazing, presents an overall picture of knowledgeable practitioners of the basic science of animal husbandry.

Enclosures were a thing of the future and did not figure into the world of the Gael during the time under study. Herding was the order of the day and one of the most important jobs relating to animal husbandry. The terms relating to the people and places of herding in Chapter 12 reflect this importance.

Chapter 13 deals with arable land. Land under cultivation in the Western Highlands and Islands was at a premium. Grain was not a large part of the people's diet, though it did account for oatcakes and brose as well as barley in broth, it was

also used for brewing and animal fodder. As seen in Chapter 2, carbohydrates i.e. grain, is one of the food groups which can safely be eliminated from a lactose absorber's meat and milk diet.

Physical characteristics and animal diseases are explored in Chapter 14. Age and physical condition of domestic (and wild) animals slated for food production, whether it be meat or milk, was of great importance to people who 'lived off the land'. Diagnosis, cures and observations of disease were very much a part of the language of the Gael. As were cattle names, calls and terms, which simply gave an overall perspective of the importance of cattle, both big and small.

Folklore, as explained in Chapter 15, was a very important part of the culture of the Western Islands and Highlands of Scotland. It figured particularly importantly with regard to the cow and her produce. Volumes have been written regarding the evil eye, witchcraft and fairy craft with respect to the milk cow and milk produce.

Some questions have been answered; many more have been raised by this thesis, and require to be explored further. Was all of the Gaelic terminology listed in Gaelic to English dictionaries used in the *Gaidhealtachd*? Some of the sources appear to have derived terms from Irish dictionaries and placed them in their own work.

Compilers such as Armstrong use words like 'obsolete' to delimit some of their terms. What does 'obsolete' mean when applied to Gaelic terms, when and to whom and even where does it apply? Many of the same terms mean something completely different in different areas or at different times in the same areas, as patterns of agriculture and husbandry changed.

There is much work still to be done in analysing estate records contained in the National Archives of Scotland. The sound archives in Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh contains a plethora of material, recorded over many years

from the *Gaidhealtachd*. Special Collections at the Main University Library at the University of Edinburgh contains an untapped resource, for the most part, with regard to lifestyle in the *Gaidhealtachd*, including the unpublished papers of Alexander Carmichael compiler of *Carmina Gadelica*.

The present gathering and examination of terms used for agriculture, cattle and husbandry in the Highlands and Islands, is a first step towards understanding a way of life which has changed rapidly and radically since 1800, and hopefully can be used as a springboard in a continuing search for information.

## Glossary

**Abach**, *m.* Entrails of a beast, pluck (Armstrong 1825).

**Abachadh**, **abachaidh**, *m.* A ripening (Armstrong 1825).  
(with *ag*), *pr. part.* of *abaich*. Ripening. (Armstrong 1825).

**Abaich**, *a.* Ripe, mature, at full growth; ready, prepared, expert (Armstrong 1825).

**Abhlan**, **abhlain**, *m.* A wafer, a round cake (Armstrong 1825).

**Abhsporag**, **abhsporaig**, **abhsporagan**, *f.* Paunch; tripe; stomach of a cow (Dwelly 1920, 3). [See also *amhsporag*.]

**Abhus**, **abhuis**, **abhusan**, *m.* Any wild beast; also a stall for cattle (Armstrong 1825).  
[See *amhas*.]

**Achadh**, **achaidh**, *pl.* **achaidhen**, **aidhnean**, & **achanna**, *m.* A field, a plain, a meadow, a cornfield (Armstrong 1825).

**Acair**, **achrach**, *pl.* **acraichean**, *f.* An acre of ground (Armstrong 1825).

**Acair**, *f.* Mow (heap of hay or corn packed in barn).

**Acair fheòir**. Mow of hay.

**Acair chorc**. Mow of oats.

**Acair eòrna**. Mow of barley (Wentworth 1996, 105).

**Adag**, **adaig**, *f.* A shock of corn (Armstrong 1825).

**Àdh**, **àdha**, *m.* A heifer; a hind; but in these two senses it is oftener written *agh*, (Armstrong 1825). *f.* A heifer, a young cow, a hind, a fawn, a two-year-old (Forbes 1905, 3).

**Adhairceach**, *a.* (from *adharc*) Horned; having large horns (Armstrong 1825).

**Adhal**, **adhail**, **adhalean**, *m.* A flesh hook (Armstrong).

**Adhal**, *m.* Udder (of cow) (MacLennan 1979, 3).

†**Adhalrach**, *m.* A nourisher (Dwelly 1920, 7).

**Adharcach**, *a.* Horny; also horned (Armstrong 1825).

**Àgadh**, **àgaidh**, *m.* Ox (Dwelly 1920, 8).

**Agh**, **aighe**, **aghean**, *f.* A heifer, a young cow, a fawn; rarely an ox, bull, or cow. (Armstrong 1825).

†**Ai**, *f.* ... Inheritance of land, possession. Herd. Cow (Dwelly 1920, 9). A herd; a sheep; a cow; also a swan (Armstrong 1825).

**Aibeoil**, **an aibeoil**, *f.* An illness in cattle (Carmichael vol. 6, 6).

**Aicheanta**. Name for a cow (MacDonald 1897, 21).

†**Aidheach**, **aidheich**, *f.* A milk cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Aidhre**, *m. & f.* (*eithre*, ox, bull, cow). Flocks (Forbes 1905, 3).

**Aighe**, *gen. sing.* of *agh*. Of a heifer (Armstrong).

**Aileach**, **aileich**, *m.* a stoned one i.e. 'a stallion' (Armstrong 1825).

**Àilean**, **àilein**, *m.* A meadow, a plain (Armstrong 1825).

**Aimsir**, **aimsire** & **aimsireach**, *pl.* **aimsirean**, *f.* (from *am*). Weather, time, season. (Armstrong 1825).

**Aineist**, **ainneist**, *pl.* Kine, cattle, flocks (Carmichael vol. 6, 6).

**Ainmhidh**, **ainmhidhe**, **ainmhidhean**, *m.* A heifer. (Wentworth 1996, 74). Animal, brute, beast (Armstrong 1825).

**Ainteach**, *m.* Religious abstinence from eating flesh (Armstrong 1825).

**Àir**, *v.* Plough, till, cultivate (Armstrong 1825).

**Àirc**, **àirce**, **àircean**, *f.* An ark; a large chest; a granary (Armstrong 1825).

†**Airc**, **airce**, *f.* ... A sow (Armstrong 1825).

**Àirde**, *f.* ... A rising ground (Armstrong 1825).

**Àireach**, **àireich**, *m.* A grazier; a keeper of cattle; a shepherd; a watchman (Armstrong 1825). Cattleman. Dairyman (Dwelly 1920, 20).

**Àireachas**, **àireachais**, *m.* Pastoral life. Tending cattle. Office of a herdsman. Summer pasture for black cattle. Watchfulness (Dwelly 1920, 20).

**Airghir**, *f.* A cow calf [heifer] (Armstrong 1825).

**Àiridh**, and **àirigh**, *m.* A sheiling, hill pasture; a mountain booth or hut; a shepherd's cottage (Armstrong 1825). Hill pasture, sheiling (MacBain 1896, 9). Sheiling. Hill pasture in summer. *Bothan àirigh*, a sheiling booth, or hut (MacLennan 1979, 8).

**Àiridh**, **àiridhe**, *pl.* **àiridhean**, & **àiridhnean**, *f.* Summer residence for herdsman and cattle. Hill pasture. Level green among hills (Dwelly 1920, 20).

**Airneach, airneich, m.** The murrain in cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Àirneis, f.** ... Cattle (Armstrong 1825). Stock (Dwelly 1920, 21). A herd of cattle, etc. (Forbes 1905, 3).

**Airmheadh, m.** A herd of cattle, etc. (Forbes 1905, 3).

**Aisearan, aisearain, m.** Weanling (*Argyll*), from *ais*? (MacBain 1896, 10).

**Àis, m.** Milk. Milk preparation. Dainty, delicacy, nectar, ambrosia. Wisdom (Dwelly 1920, 22).

**Aisg, aisge, aisgean, f.** ... Leanness in cattle. (Dwelly 1920, 22).

**Àiteach, àiteich, pl. àiteacha & àiteachan, m.** Agriculture. *Ag àiteach, pr. part. of v. àitich.* Cultivation. *Ag àiteach an fhearainn,* cultivating the land (Dwelly 1920, 23).

**Àiteachd, f.** Agriculture (Dwelly 1920, 23).

**Àitear, àiteir, àitearan, m.** Husbandman (Dwelly 1920, 23).

**Aitheach, aitheich, m.** A sow, a boar, also a cow (Forbes 1905, 3). A sow (obsolete) (Armstrong 1825).

**Aithre, aithrean, m. & f.** A bull, cow, ox (Armstrong 1825).

**Aithre, aithreich, m.** Farmer. See *àireach* (Dwelly 1920, 24). A farmer (Armstrong 1825).

†**Aithrine, m.** A calf (Armstrong, 1825). [Dwelly gives this as *f.*]

**Aitreabh, aireibh, aireabhan, m.** An abode, dwelling; a building; a steading. Written also *aitreamh* (Armstrong 1825).

**Aitreabhach, aireabhaich, pl. aireabhaichean, m.** ... Tenant. Farmer (Dwelly 1920, 25).

**Alach, alaich, m.** Young cattle (Dieckhoff 1932, 5).

**Alachas, alachais, m.** Cattle (localism for 'rearing of cattle') (Dieckhoff 1932, 5).

**Amaraich, f.** Scurvy-grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Amh, a.** Raw. *Feoil amh,* raw flesh (Armstrong 1825).

**Amhas, amhais, amhasan, m.** ... Stall for cattle (Dwelly 1920, 29).

**Amhsporag.** The tongue of a cow? Ox tongue (McDonald 1897, 27).

**Àn, àna, àin, àine, pl. ànan, ànann, àinean.** Liver, fish liver, oil, grease, suet, fat, butter (Carmichael vol. 6, )

**An.** Rich, fat (Carmichael vol. 6, 8).

**Anaid, ainid, f.** Heifer cow (Carmichael vol. 6, 8).

**Angar, angair, m.** Stall for cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Annlan, annlain, m.** What the Lowland Scots call kitchen (Armstrong 1825).

**Antlas, antlais, m.** ... A cattle fair (Armstrong 1825).

**Aobharrach, aobharraich, m.** ... Young beast of good or bad promise (Dwelly 1920, 38).

†**Aodh, m.** A sheep. Though this word is seldom used separately, it is seen in composition, as in the vocable *aodhair* (Armstrong 1825).

**Aodhair, m.** Ir. *aodhaire*. A shepherd; pastor; protector (Armstrong 1825). Correct etymology is *óegaire/áugaire* literally ‘sheep-caller’ (personal communication with Professor Fergus Kelly, August 2003).

**Aodhair, aodhaire, aodhairean, m.** A herdsman, shepherd, pastor (MacLeod & Dewar 1920, 28). [See *aoghair*.]

**Aodhaireachd, f.** A shepherd’s office (MacLeod & Dewar, 1920, 28).

**Aoghair, aoghaire, aoghairean, m.** Shepherd, herdsman, pastor. Protector. (Dwelly 1920, 38).

**Aoi, m. & f.** A herd, a flock of sheep, a cow, cattle (Forbes 1905, 3). Flock of sheep. ... Sheep (obsolete) (Dwelly 1920, 38).

†**Aoilbhinn, f.** A small flock (Armstrong 1825).

†**Aoileach, Aoileich, m.** Grazing-stock (Dwelly 1920, 39).

**Aoir, m.** A contraction of *aodhair*. A keeper of cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Aoireannan, (for aoghairean) pl. of aoghair.** Herds or keepers of cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Aolach, aolaich, m.** Dung, manure (Dwelly 1920, 40).

**Ar, m.** Plowing, tillage, agriculture: v. Plough, till, cultivate (Armstrong 1825).

**Àr, pr. part. ag àr, v.** Plough, till, cultivate. (Dwelly 1920, 43).

**Àrach, Àrachaich, m.** Tie, bond, or collar on a beast, stall-tie for a cow. ... Milkman (Dwelly 1920, 43).

**Aradair, m.** (*àr*, plough, + agent suffix). An agriculturist; a ploughman (Armstrong 1825).

**Araire, arairean, m.** A ploughman (MacLeod & Dewar 1920, 32).

**Arbhar, arbhair, m.** Corn, corn crop, standing corn (Armstrong 1825).

**Arcuinn, arcuinne, f.** Cow's udder (Dwelly 1920, 44).

**Àr-dhamh, Àr-dhaimh, m.** A plough ox (Armstrong 1825).

**Ar-ear, ar-ir, m.** A ploughman, a tiller, a peasant (Armstrong 1825).

†**Argair, v.** Keep, herd (Dwelly 1920, 46).

**Arlogh, arloigh, m.** Carting corn (Armstrong 1825).

†**As, ais, m.** Milk, beer, ale (Armstrong 1825).

†**Asach, adj.** (From *as*) Milky, watery; like milk, beer, or ale (Armstrong 1825).

**As-chrodh, m.** Dry cow, or cows (Forbes 1905, 4).

**Ath, m.** A kiln.

*ath-aòil*, a lime kiln;

*ath-bhrachaidh*, a malt kiln;

*ath-chriadh chlach*, a brick-kiln;

*ath-chruachaidh*, a drying kiln, a corn kiln (Armstrong 1825).

**Athach, athaich, m.** ... husbandman (Dwelly 1920, 51).

**Athal, athail, m.** A flesh hook (Armstrong 1825).

**Atharla, arla, arlu, f.** A cow, heifer, heifer of first gestation, of first calf (Carmichael vol. 6, 10).

**Ath-bhliochd, f.** Second milking, after-milking. Second month after calving (Dwelly 1920, 52).

**Ath-chagainn, pr. pt. ag ath-chagnadh, v. n.** Chew again, ruminate. Chew the cud (Armstrong 1825).

**Athghamhnach, f.** A cow two years old, calfless (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Ath-ghamhnach, ath-ghamhnaich, ath-ghamhnaichean, f.** Cow that has been two years without a calf (Dwelly 1920, 53).



**Ath-thodhar, ath-thodhair, m.** Second crop after a field has been manured by the folding of cattle or sheep. Remanuring (Dwelly 1920, 55). [Also *ath-toghar*] (MacLeod & Dewar 1920, 45).]

**Bà, f.** Cow, cows. (Armstrong, 1825).

†**Ba'ain, f.** The cleansing of a cow after calving. Matrix [placenta] of a cow (Dwelly 1920, 56).

**Bàbhun, bàbhun, pl. bàbhun & bàbhunean, m.** ... Enclosure. Fold where cattle are milked (Dwelly 1920, 56). Bulwark, enclosure for cattle (MacBain 1896, 21).

**Bacadh, bacaidh, m.** cow-dung (Armstrong 1825).

**Bàchruidh, colloquial.** Cattle, cows (MacLennan 1979, 25).

**Badag, n.** A brush for rinsing pots, made of heather generally. (A brush made of strong feathers- John MacLean) (MacDonald 1958, 34).

**Bàdhar, Bàdhair, f.** After-birth of a cow at calving, placenta of a cow (Dwelly 1920, 57).

**Balgach.** Belly. A calf with a nice big belly, *laogh balgach*. (Wentworth 1996, 13).

**Balgan-béiste.** A small globular growth with an insect inside (Carmichael vol. 6, 11).

**Bàich, p. bàichean, m. (i.e. bà-theach).** A cowhouse; a cattle house (Armstrong 1825).

†**Bàidheal, bàidheil, m.** A cow-stall (Armstrong 1825).

**Baile-geamhraidh, m.** An infield; ground always ploughed (Armstrong 1825). [Literally winter town.]

**Bailgeann, bailg-fhionn, a. (balg, belly, and fhionn, white).** Spotted, speckled, pie-bald; white-bellied. *Laogh bailgeann*, a white-bellied calf.--Macfar. (Armstrong 1825).

**Bainne, m.** Milk, milky juice (Armstrong 1825).

**Bainne blàth,** warm or fresh milk.

----- **-binntichte,** curdled milk.

----- **-briste,** curdled milk.

----- **-buaile,** fold-milk.

----- **-buidhe,** milk yielded by a cow during first two days after calving.

----- **-cnàmha,** fermentation of fresh and butter-milk, frothed with the *loinid* or frothing-stick.

----- **-gamhnaich,** milk of a farrow cow (one with a year-old calf and still being milked.)

----- **-goirt,** sour milk. Butter-milk –Argyll &c., (better *blàthaich*).

- **-lom**, skimmed milk.
- **-maistridh**, whipped cream or milk, frothed with the *loinid*.
- **-milis**, sweet milk.
- **-muidhe**, butter-milk.
- **-nòis**, beastings.
- **-ùr**, fresh milk (Dwelly 1920, 60).

**Bainne-tiugh**, *m. n. phr.* Thick milk (Wentworth 1996, 102).

**Bainneach**, **bainneiche**, *a.* Milky, lacteal, like milk; milk-producing, abounding in milk. (Armstrong 1825).

**Bainneachas**, *f.* Milkiness (Dwelly 1920, 60).

**Bainneachd**, *f.* Milkiness (Dwelly 1920, 60).

**Bainnear**, *a.* Milky, abounding in milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Bainne-gamhnaich**, *m.* (*Lit.* the yearling's milk—signifying the scanty results yielded by sucking it) (Dwelly 1920, 60).

†**Bainnseach**, **bainnseich**, *m.* A plain, a field; a sheep-walk; a solitary place (Armstrong 1825).

**Bàirich**, *v. n., n.* Low, bellow, roar (Armstrong 1825).

**Bàirich**, *f.* A lowing, a bellow, a roar. (Armstrong 1825).

**Bàiricheadh**, **bàiricheidh**, *m.* A lowing, a bellowing; a continued lowing or bellowing (Armstrong 1825).

**Balaoch**, **balaoich**, *m.* (*i.e. ba-laoch*, a cowherd.) A boy, lad (Armstrong 1825).

**Ballan**, *m.* A teat; a dug; *ballan na bà*, the cow's teat; a tub, a vessel; *ballan binndeachaidh*, a cheese vat (MacLennan 1979, 28).

**Ballan**, **ballain**, *m.* (Ir. *ballán*. Scotch *balde*). A tub; a bucket; a churn; a shell; a covering; a teat or udder.

- bintiche**, a cheese-press;
- bainne**, a milk tub (Armstrong 1825).

**Ballan-binnteachaidh**, *m.* Cheese-vat. Cheese-press.

----- **-blàthaich**, *m.* Butter-milk tub (Dwelly 1920, 63).

**Ballan-buaile**, *n.* The tub slung on a pole in which milkmaids carry home the milk from the fold to the house (Carmichael 1971, 11).

**Bàn**, **bàin**, *m.* The matrix of a cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Bana-bhuachaille, bana-bhuachaillean, f.** Shepherdess. Female who tends sheep or cattle (Dwelly 1920, 64).

**Banachag, banachaig, banachagean, f.** Dairymaid. Milker (Dwelly 1920, 64).

**Banachaigeachd, f.** Business of a dairymaid (Dwelly 1920, 64).

**Banarach, banaraich, f.** A dairy-maid, a milk-maid (Armstrong 1825).

**Banarachas, banarachais, m.** Office of a dairymaid or milkmaid (Dwelly 1920, 65).

**Ban-bhuachail, pl. ban-bhuachaillean, f.** A shepherdess (see also *bana-bhuachail*) (Armstrong 1825).

†**Banrach, banraich, banraichean, m.** A fold for sheep, a pen; a cattle-house. (Armstrong 1825).

**Ban-shorn, ban-shoirn, m.** A kind of girdle or bake-stove (Armstrong 1825).

**Ban-tuathanach, ban-tuathanaich, f.** A female who farms; a farmer's wife (Armstrong 1825).

**Ban-tuathanachas, ban-tuathanachais, m.** Agriculture done under the direction of a female (Armstrong 1825).

**Baodhan, baoghan, m.** A calf (Forbes 1905, 4).

**Baoghan, baoghain, m.** ... A calf, anything jolly. (Armstrong 1825).

**Baoghanach, baoghanaiche, a.** Like a calf, of, or belonging to, a calf (Dwelly 1920, 67).

**Bàrr, m.** A crop, as of corn or grass; also bread, food (Armstrong 1825). Top, uppermost part of anything. ... Cream (Dwelly 1920, 70).

**Barrag, barraig, barragan, f.** Posset; scum, cream (Armstrong 1825).

**Barragach, barragaiche, a.** Creamy, frothy (Dwelly 1920, 70).

**Barraist, f.** The herb called borage; green kail (Armstrong 1825).

**Bata, m.** A staff (Carmichael vol. 6, 12).

**Bàthaich, bàthaichean, m.** Byre, cowhouse.

Parts of a Byre-

- 1 *Balla*, wall
- 2 *Amar*, trough.
- 3 *Post deiridh*, hind-post.
- 4 *Maide mullaich*, top rail.
- 5 *Clach amail*, curbstone.

- 6 *Bùird tharsuinn*, travis boards.  
 7 *Bacan*, stake.  
 8 *Inne, carcair, gruip*, gutter.  
 9 *Urlar*, paved floor.  
 10 *Buall, buist*, stall.  
 11 *Prasach*, manger (Dwelly, 1920 79)

**Bàthar, bàthair**, *m.* Crop (Armstrong 1825).

**Bealtainn, Bealtuinn**, *f.* May-day; Whitsuntide; the month of (Armstrong 1825).

**Beann, beinn**, *f.* ... A horn, a drinking cup (Armstrong 1825).

**Beannach**, *a.* (from *beann*.) Horned (Armstrong 1825).

**Beathach**, *m.* A beast, a cow, animal, living creature (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Beathuch**, *m., gen. beathaich, pl. beathaichean.* Beast (Wentworth 1996, 11 & 33).

†**Beil**, *gen. Beile, f.* A meal of meat, a diet (Armstrong 1825).

†**Beille**, *pl. beilleachan, f.* A kettle, a caldron. (Armstrong 1825).

**Beinn**, [*f.*] May not mean a mountain but simply pasture or grazing (MacDonald 1897, 40).

**Beir**, *v. i. breith, f., v. n.* Calve (Wentworth 1996, 22), i.e. give birth to a calf.

**Beirm**, *m.* Barm, yeast (Armstrong 1825).

**Beitean, beitein**, *m.* The scorched or frost-bitten grass of the hills (Armstrong 1825).

**Beò, beodail, beothir**, [*m.*] Live animals, cattle (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Beo-dhuil.** Animal, living creature (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Beò-fhàl, fhàil.** An enclosure (Armstrong 1825).

†**Beoill**, *f.* Fatness (Armstrong 1825).

**Beothach.** A beast, cow, animal, any living creature (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Beuchdail**, [*v.*] Low loudly (Wentworth 1996, 10-11).

**Beutail**, *f.* Cattle, a cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Biadh-bainne**, *m.* Milk-pudding (e.g. curds and cream) (Wentworth 1996, 102).

**Biadchar**, *a.* Fruitful, substantial; affording substance (Armstrong 1825).

- Biadhtha, biadhthe**, *pr. part.* of **biadh**. Fed, nourished (Armstrong 1825).
- Biathadh a' chrodh** *m.* Cattle-feed (Wentworth 1996, 53).
- Biath** *v. tr., v. n.* **biathadh**. Fatten. (Wentworth 1996, 52).
- Biahtta**, *a.* Fattened. *Laogh biahtta*, a fattened calf, a well-fed calf (Wentworth 1996, 52 & 192).
- Bilistear, bilisteare, bilistearean**, *m.* ... (*Isles*) Rancid butter or tallow (Dwelly 1920, 94).
- Binid**, also **minid** (*Argyll*). Cheese rennet, bag that holds the rennet, stomach (McBain 1896, 32).
- Binid, binnde (& binide) binndean**, *f.* Cheese rennet. Stomach of a calf, lamb, or hare.
- Binideach**, *a.* Like rennet, of, or belonging to, rennet (Dwelly 1920, 94).
- Binndeach**, *a.* Coagulative, curdling. Apt to coagulate (Dwelly 1920, 95).
- Binndeachadh, binndeachaidh**, *m.* Curdling, coagulating. Making cheese. *Ballan binndeachaidh*, a cheese vat (Dwelly 1920, 95). (Also *binnteach, -adh, aidh*, Armstrong).
- Binne-bheathach**, *m.* A horned beast or animal (Forbes 1905, 5).
- Binntean, binntein**, *m.* Rennet (Armstrong 1825).
- Binnteanach**, *a.* Like rennet; of or pertaining to rennet (Armstrong 1825).
- Binntich**, *v.* Curdle or coagulate (Armstrong 1825).
- Binntichte**, *p. part.* of **binntich**. Curdled coagulated. *Bainne binntichte*, curdled milk (Armstrong 1825).
- Biorach**, *a.* Pointed; sharp *f.* a heifer; an instrument to prevent calves from suckling (MacLennan 1979, 38). A heifer, colt, Ir. *biorach*, cow-calf (MacBain 1896, 33).
- Biorach, bioraich, bioraichean**, *f.* Two-year old heifer. Year old horse or colt. Cow-calf, steer, filly. Ox or bullock. ... Instrument to prevent calves from sucking. (*Bùthach* in Uist. ) (Dwelly 1920, 96).
- Biorach, bioraiche**, *f.* A two-year old heifer, a cow, calf, a steer, a year old horse or colt (Forbes 1905, 5).
- †**Bioraidh**, *pl.* **bioraidhean**, *m.* A bullock (Armstrong 1825).
- Bioraidh**, *m.* A bullock, a steer (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Bioran** = *cóig ràitheach gamhna*, ‘a fifteen months’ old stirk (Carmichael vol. 6, 15).

**Biota**, *f.* Churn. Pitcher. Vessel (Dwelly 1920, 97).

**Biride**, *f.* A breeding cow (Armstrong 1825).

†**Bireid**, *f.* A breeding cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Blac**, *m.* Cream (Armstrong 1825).

**Blàdhach**, **blàdhaich**, *m.* (Scots, *bladach*.) Buttermilk (Armstrong 1825).

**Blàghach**, **blàghaich**, *m.* Buttermilk. See *blàdhach*, and *blàthach* (Armstrong 1825).

**Blàinteag**. A lullaby, a crooning song sung to soothe children and especially cows when being milked (Carmichael vol. 6, 15).

**Blanag**, **blanaig**, *f.* Fat, tallow. More frequently written *blonag* (Armstrong 1825).

**Blanndaidh**, *a.* Stale (as milk), rotten, addled (MacLennan 1979, 39).

**Blàr**, *a.* White-faced (Armstrong 1825).

**Blàrag**, **blàraig**, *f.* (dim of *blar*.) White-faced cow or mare (Armstrong 1825).

**Blarag**, *f.* A whitefaced cow (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Blàr-fofa**, *m.* Place where cattle used to be bled annually (Dwelly 1920, 100).

**Blàthach**, **blàthaich**, *f.* Buttermilk (Dwelly 1920, 100).

**Blàthaich**, *v. a.* Warm, foment (Armstrong 1825).

**Bleach**, **bleachd**. Kine giving milk (Forbes 1905, 5).

†**Bleachd**, *f.* Milk; kine. Cornish and Welsh *blith*. See *bliochd* (Armstrong 1825).

**Bleachdair**. A soothing, flattering fellow, cow-milker; a metaphoric use of the last word, ‘cow milker’; from *bliochd*, milk, q.v. (MacBain 1896, 35).

**Bleagh**, (*bleaghan*) *v. a.* Milk, draw milk (Dwelly 1920, 100). Also *bligh*, to milk (MacDonald 1958, 44).

**Bleanach**, *f.* A full-faced cow (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Bleath**, *v. a.* Grind, make meal, pulverize. See *bleth* (Armstrong 1825).

**Bleoghainn**, **bleothainn**, *v. a.* Milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Bleoghainn.** Milking. E. Ir. *blegon, inf. to bligim, for mligim* (MacBain 1896, 35).

**Bleoghan,** *vbl. n.* Milking, the act of milking cattle (MacLennan 1979, 40).

**Bleoghann, bleothann, bleothainn,** *n.* A milking (Armstrong 1825).

**Bleoghann,** *f.* Milking. Act of milking. *Cuman bleoghainn,* a milk-pail (Dwelly 1920, 101).

**Bleth,** *n.* also *v.a.* A grinding, making of meal, pulverizing (Armstrong 1825).

**Blethte,** *p. part. of bleth.* Ground. *Gràn blethte,* ground corn (Armstrong 1825).

**Bliadhnach, bliadhnaich,** *m.* A yearling (Armstrong 1825).

**Blianach,** *f.* An animal which had died of starvation (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Bligh,** *v. a.* To milk (MacDonald 1897, 44) (see *bleagh*).

**Bliochd,** *f.* Milk. Milkiness. Produce of cows. Profit arising from selling milk, dairy produce (Armstrong 1825). Skimmed milk, sour milk, milk that has lost any of its original character. Whey when in the curd. Kine giving milk (Dwelly 1920, 101).

**Bliochdach, bliochdaiche,** *a.* Milky, lacteal. Milk-producing, giving plenty of milk (Dwelly 1920, 101).

**Bliochdar, bliochdmhor,** *a.* Milky, teeming with milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Bliochdas, bliochdais,** *m.* Tendency to milk, lactescence (Dwelly 1920, 101).

**Bliochdmhorachd,** *f. ind.* Abundance of milk, milkiness (Dwelly 1920, 102).

**Bo,** *f. bó, g. bó* (instead of *ba, d. boin, p. baan,*) 'a cow'. These forms are known (owing to the vicinity of Glenmoriston, where *bo* is used, as also in Kintail) but not used in Glengarry, except in compound expressions. See *mart* (Dieckhoff 1932, 21).

**Bó, Bóin,** *f. (n. pl. bà.)* A cow.

----**bhainne,** a milk cow.

----**bhreac,** a spotted cow.

----**chas-fhionn,** a white-footed cow.

----**chean-fhionn,** a white-faced cow.

----**dhruim-fhionn,** a white-backed cow.

----**gheamhraidh,** a cow slain for winter food.

----**laóidh,** a cow that has a calf.

----**liath,** a grey cow.

----**mhaol,** a cow without horns.

----**riabhach,** a brindled cow.

----**sheasg,** a barren cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Bó** *f.* Cow.

----- **adhairceach**, a horned cow.

----- **bhailg-fhionn**, white-bellied cow.

----- **bhiadhtha**, 'mart', for killing

----- **ghamhna**, farrow cow.

----- **gheamhraidh**, winter 'mart'.

----- **ghlas**, grey cow.

----- **laoigh**, cow in calf.

----- **liath**, grey cow,--grey with age.

----- **sheasg**, cow not giving milk. Barren cow (Dwelly 1920, 102).

†**Bó-bhaith**, *f.* Cow slaughter (Dwelly 1920, 103).

**Bodag, bodaig, bodagan**, *f.* Rage, anger, short fit of passion. Yearling calf. Heifer (Armstrong 1825).

**Bodagac**, *f.* Heifer that wants bulling (Dwelly 1920, 104).

**Bodagach**, *a.* Apt to fly into a passion. Like a heifer (Armstrong 1825).

†**Bodagachd**, *f.* Rage, anger. Rage for copulation, *furor interinus*; also a heifer that wants bulling (Armstrong 1825).

**Bod-agh**, *f.* A heifer fit for bearing (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Bòdhan**. Belly of a cow (MacDonald 1897, 45).

†**Bodh-arfach**, *m.* Destroying of cows (Dwelly 1920, 105).

**Bó-ghamhna**, *f.* A farrow cow (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Boghun, boghuin**, *m.* (spelling variant of *bo-dhùn*.) An enclosure for cattle, intended as a security against cattle-lifters (Armstrong 1825).

**Boicionn**. A goat skin, skin; *boc-cionn*, 'buck-skin'. (See *Laoighcionn*).

**Boidhean**. Kine (Carmichael 1928, 307).

†**Boigh**, *f.* Teat, dug. Udder (Armstrong 1825).

**Boinneag, boinneig**, *pl.* **boinneagan**, *f.* A cake. (Ir. *boinneog*. Scots, *bannock*.), cakes (Armstrong 1825).

**Boisean**. A wooden paddle used for removing water and milk from butter (*Museum nan Eilean* poster, *Obair a' Bhainne*).

**Boiteal, boiteil**, *m.* A wisp, or bundle of straw or hay. Also *boitean* (Armstrong 1825).

**Bolan, bolain**, *f.* A full-grown cow (Armstrong 1825).



**Bó-làn**, *f.* A full-grown cow (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Bó-lann**, **bó-lainn**, *m.* Cow-house, byre. Fold (Armstrong 1825). Ox stall (Dwelly 1920, 108).

**Bó-laoigh**, *f.* A milk cow, or cow with calf (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Bollag**, *f.* A heifer, a bullock (Forbes 1905, 5).

†**Bomluchd**, *f.* Cow and profit (Dwelly 1920, 109).

**Bonnach**, **bonnaich**, *m.* A barley-scone; by the Scots called a *bannock* (Armstrong 1825).

**Bonnach-boise-deàrnagan**. A small bannock prepared on the palm of the hand (Carmichael vol. 6, 17).

**Bonnach-iomanach**, *m.* Cow-herd's cake (MacLennan 1979, 44).

**Bontachadh**, **bunntachadh**, **bonntaigh**. Farm steading, the whole farm (Carmichael vol. 6, 17).

**Bòrlanachd**, **bòrlanachd**, **mòrlannachd**. So many days of work given by the people to the *tighearna* (Carmichael vol. 6, 17).

†**Boroimh**, *f.* Tribute of cattle (Dwelly 1920, 110).

**Bothan**, **bothain**, *m.* (dim. of *both*.) A hut, cottage, tent, booth, bower (Armstrong 1825).

**Bothan-àiridhe**, *m.* The sheiling (Dwelly 1920, 111).

**Both-thigh**, *m.* An ox-stall; a cow house (Armstrong 1825).

**Bó-ursainn**. The best cow, taken by a proprietor or other (of old) from a newly-made widow (Forbes 1905, 5).

**Brà**, *m.* A quern, a handmill. Also *bradh* (Armstrong 1825).

**Brac**, *a.* Rich, as milk (Dwelly 1920, 112).

**Brachan**, **-ain**, *m.* Anything fermented; leaven; fermented liquor (Armstrong 1825).

**Braidhin**, *f.* A quern (Armstrong 1825).

**Bragaire**, *m.* ... 'Topper'. An animal belonging to either flock or fold on which its owner bestows exceptional attention in order that it may excel all specimens of its class in the neighbourhood. (Dwelly 1920, 113).

**Bragaidh**, *f.* A disease among sheep (Armstrong 1825).

**Braich, bracha**, *f.* Malt, fermented grain. *Àth-bhracha*, a malt-kiln; *muileann-bracha*, a malt-mill (Dwelly 1920, 113).

**Bràidean, bràidein**, *m.* Calf's collar (Armstrong 1825).

**Bràigh and bràighdean**. Collars for cattle (MacDonald 1897, 47).

**Bralain**. Bull, old bull (Carmichael vol. 6, 19).

**Breacag, breachdag, breachdaig**, *pl. breacagan*, *f.* A cake, a scon, a pancake. Cakes (Armstrong 1825).

†**Breachdan, -ain**, *m.* Wheat; fresh meat (Armstrong 1825).

**Breachdan**, *m.* ... Fresh butter (Armstrong 1825). Custard (Dwelly 1920, 119).

**Breac-laogh**. A fawn, a spotted calf (Forbes 1905, 6).

**Breagach, briosgach**. Apt to be startled (Carmichael vol. 6, 20).

**Breith**, *vbl. n., m.* Act of bearing seizing, carrying away, catching; *a' breith laoigh*, calving (MacLennan 1979 49).

**Breun, bréine**, *a.* Stinking, foetid, putrid. *Bainne breun*, soured milk (Dwelly 1920, 122).

**Brisgean, brisgein, brisgeinean**, *m.* A gristle or cartilage; also wild skerret. (Armstrong 1825).

**Brochan, brochain**, *m.* Porridge, pottage (Armstrong 1825). Porridge; *brochan bainne*, milk porridge; *brochan liath*, milk gruel (Dwelly 1920, 126).

**Brogaidh**, *m. & f.* A cow that butts with her horns (Forbes 1905, 6).

**Broinn** *f., pl. broinnean*. Belly. Expressed with *bronnach*, *a. Laogh bronnach*, a big bellied calf, (Wentworth 1996, 13).

**Bronn**, *f.* A quern (Armstrong 1825).

**Brotachadh, brotachaidh**, *m.* Thriving, improvement in condition, becoming fat (generally applied to cattle of any kind) (Dwelly 1920, 129).

**Brothair**, *m.* ... A butcher, a caldron (Armstrong 1825).

**Brothlach, brothlaich**, *m.* A pit made in the ground, in which the ancient Gael dressed their food. A place for dressing meat (Armstrong 1825).

**Brothlán** *m., pl. brothlánan*. The upper stomach in a cow (Wentworth 1996, 162).

**Bruan, bruain, bruanan, m.** ... Shortbread, cake made of butter (Dwelly 1920, 130).

**Brughaiche, m.** ... A farmer (Armstrong 1825).

†**Brughaidh, m.** Farmer, husbandman (Dwelly 1920, 131).

**Bruich, v. a.** Boil, seethe, simmer (Armstrong 1825).

†**Bruidhe, f.** A farm. Also *bruighe* (Armstrong 1825).

**Bua, buabh, f.** A cow (Forbes 1905, 6).

**Buabhall, f.** A cow-stall. Also *bualla* (MacLennan 1979, 56).

**Buachail, m.** A cowherd; a shepherd, a herd (Armstrong 1825).

**Buachail, buachaille, buachaillean, m.** ... Watch or protector of cattle of any kind (Dwelly 1920, 133). A cow-herd, a shepherd, a watch or protector of cattle of any kind (MacLeod & Dewar 1920, 96).

**Buachailleach, a.** Pastoral. Of, or pertaining to, a shepherd or cow-herd (Armstrong 1825).

**Buachailleachd, f.** Herding, watching cattle, occupation of a herdsman (Dwelly 1920, 133).

**Buachaillich, pr. pt. a' buachailleachd, v. a.** Herd, tend, keep cattle (Dwelly 1920, 133).

**Buachar, Buachair, buacharan, m.** Cow's dung; the dung of cattle in general, a dunghill; a stall (Armstrong 1825).

**Buaghair, buaghair, m.** Cow-herd, herd (Dwelly 1920, 134).

**Buaghar, buaghair, m.** A herd; a shepherd; a cow-herd (Armstrong 1825).

**Buaigheal, f.** A cow-stall (MacLennan 1979, 57).

**Buaile, pl. buailtean, f.** A fold for sheep or for black cattle; a stall; a dairy; also cattle herds. Folds (Armstrong 1825). A circle; a fold for black cattle (MacLennan 1979, 57).

**Buaileach, buaileich, pl. buailichean, m.** An ox-stall; a stall; a fold. (Armstrong 1825).

†**Buaileach, a.** Of, or belonging to, a fold (Dwelly 1920, 135).

**Buaileachan, buaileachain, m.** (*buaile*) Milker of cows. Place where cows are milked (Armstrong 1825).

**Buailidh, f.** A dairy or milk house; a stall; a fold (Armstrong 1825).

**Buailteach, m.** Booth, or huts for sheilings. *a.* Rich in cattle-folds (MacLennan 1979, 57).

**Buailteach, buailteich, buailteichean, m.** ... Dairy-house (Armstrong 1825).

**Buailtean, n. pl.** of *buaile*. Sheep-folds; cattle-houses (Armstrong 1825).

**Bualaidh, bualaidhean, f.** Cow-stall (Dwelly 1920, 136).

**Bualachd, f.** Drove of cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Bualtrach, bualtraich, m.** Cow-dung (Armstrong 1825).

**Buar, buair, m.** Cattle; a herd of cattle; oxen (Armstrong 1825).

**Buar, m.** Cattle, E. Ir. *búar*, cattle of the cow kind; from *bó*, cow (MacBain 1896, 50).

**Buarach, f.** Cow's fetters; shackles on the hind legs of a cow while milking (MacLennan 1979, 58).

**Buarach, buaraich, m.** Early feeding of cows. Rising to feed cows (Armstrong 1825).

**Buarachan, buarachain, m.** Cow-herd (Armstrong 1825).

†**Buas, buasach, a.** Abounding in cattle (Dwelly 1920, 137).

**Buathal, buathail, m.** Stall in a byre or stable (Dwelly 1920, 137).

**Bucáid, f., pl. bucáidean.** Pail (Wentworth 1996, 117).

**Buidhean, buidheag.** A kit for carrying milk, a staffless churn, a circular vessel of dressed skin for carrying milk from the *buaile*, fold, in the hill to the dairy at the house (Carmichael 1971, 25).

**Builg, f.** A distemper among cattle, proceeding from want of water or from heat (Armstrong 1825).

**Bùlas, bùlais, m.** Pot-hook (Dwelly 1920, 141).

**Bùth, bùthach, bùthaich, m.** Instrument to prevent calves from sucking — *Uist* (Dwelly 1920, 143).

**Càbag, càbaig, càbagan, f.** Cheese (Dwelly 1920, 144). A cheese; Sc. *cabback*, *kebbock* (MacBain 1896, 53).

**Cabaisd**, *f.* Cabbage. *Càl agus cabaisd*, colewort and cabbage- Old Song (Armstrong 1825).

**Càdhal, càdhail**, *m.* Colewort; kail [kale]; also broth of which colewort or kail is an ingredient (Armstrong 1825).

†**Cailbhearb**, *m.* Cow-herd (Dwelly 1920, 147).

**Caill**, *m.* A testicle (Armstrong 1825).

**Cailleadh, cailleidh**, *m.* (from *caill*.) The process of castration; castration (Armstrong 1825).

**Càin**, *f.* Tribute, tax; rent; a fine (Armstrong 1825).

**Cainichean**. Cotton grass (Carmichael vol. 6, 28).

**Càise**, *f.* Cheese. *Mulachag chàise*, a cheese; *càise cruidh*, cow's-milk cheese (Armstrong 1825).

**Càiseach**, *a.* Abounding in cheese; like cheese; of or belonging to cheese (Armstrong 1825).

**Caisean-uchd, caiseanin-uchd, caiseanan-uchd**, *m.* The breast strip of a sheep (Dwelly 1994 [1920], 153).

**Càisear, càiseir**, *m.* *Càis-fhear*. A cheesemonger (Armstrong 1825).

**Caislich**, *v.* Shake, stir, rouse; 'bed' cattle (MacLennan 1979, 67).

**Caiteag, caiteig**, *f.* A pot. A butter pot (Armstrong 1825).

**Càithleach**, *n.* (from *càth* - winnow.) Husks of corn; seeds; chaff (Armstrong 1825).

**Caithne**. A two-year old heifer (Forbes 1905, 6).

**Càil, càil**, *m.* Kail (kale), colewort; a name for all sorts of cabbage; *Càl cearslach*, cabbage. *Garadh cail*, a kitchen garden (Armstrong 1825).

**Calma**, *a.* Sturdy (Wentworth 1996, 164).

**Calpach, calpaich**, *m.* A duty once paid to a Highland chieftain by his vassals (Armstrong 1825).

**Canaichean**, *m.* Cotton, bog-cotton (Armstrong 1825).

**Caoile**, *f.* Leanness, dearth; want of fodder for cattle (MacLennan 1979, 70).

**Caoineachadh, caoineachaidh, m.** A drying, as of hay; an exposing to the sun's heat for the purpose of drying (Armstrong 1825).

**Caoineachadh, a., pr. part. of caoinich.** Drying. *A caoineachadh na saidh*, drying the hay (Armstrong 1825).

**Caor, caoir or caorach, pl. caoriach, f.** A sheep, sheep (Armstrong 1825).

**Caorachd, f.** A stock of sheep; sheep; cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Caorachd, f.** ... A raid, cattle raid (MacLennan 1979, 70).

**Caor-lann, caor-lainn, m.** Sheepfield (Armstrong 1825).

**Car** (expressed with *gabh*) *m. prep. phr.* On the turn. *Tha 'm bainne a' gabháil car*, the milk is on the turn. (Wentworth 1996, 179 - 180).

**Caraiceag, caraiceig, pl. caraiceagan, f.** A sort of pancake, also *caraigeag* (Armstrong 1825).

**Carainnean, n. pl.** The refuse of threshed barley (Armstrong 1825). [There is no singular form for this word.]

†**Carn, cairn, n.** A quern or handmill for grinding corn (Armstrong 1825).

**Càrr, càirr, m.** ... Udder (Dwelly 1920, 169).

**Carraighin, n.** The thick part of butter-milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Cas-fhionn.** A white-footed cow (Forbes 1905, 6).

**Castaran, m.** A measure for butter = ¼ stone. *Eng.* castor (MacLennan 1979, 74).

†**Cata, catan, m.** A sheep-cote (Armstrong 1825).

**Catachadh, catachaidh, m.** A taming, soothing, domesticating, also *catadh* (Armstrong 1825).

**Càth, n.** Seeds; husks of corn; pollards (Armstrong 1825).

**Càth-bhruich, f.** Flummery; sowens (Armstrong 1825).

**Catran, catrain, m.** The fourth part of a stone of butter, cheese, wool, &c. –*Islay* (Dwelly 1920, 174).

**Cè, cèithe, m.** Cream (Dwelly 1920, 175).

**Cè, cèath, m.** Cream, Middle Irish – *ceó*, milk (MacBain 1896, 67).

**Ceabag, f.** Cheese (Dwelly 1920, 175).

**Ceannamhag**, *f.* Part at end of a field where the horses turn in ploughing. (*Lit.* end-rig)—*Wester Ross* (Dwelly 1920, 178) [See *Fasanadh*].

**Ceannamhagan**, *n. pl.* Scraps of grass adjacent to growing corn – Sutherland (Dwelly 1920, 178) [See *Fasanadh*].

**Ceann-fhionn**, *a.* White-headed, as a cow or sheep. Also a name given to a white-headed or white-faced cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Ceapaire, ceapairean**, *m.* A piece of bread with butter spread on it (Armstrong 1825). Bread covered with butter and cheese (Dwelly 1920, 180).

**Ceapaire-Sàileach**, *m.* (*Lit.* the Kintail piece). Slice of cheese covered with butter of equal thickness (Dwelly 1920, 180-181).

**Ceath, ceatha**, *m.* A quay; cream (Armstrong 1825).

**Ceath**, *v.* Skim, as milk (Armstrong 1825).

†**Ceath**, *f.* Cream (see *cè*) (Dwelly 1920, 184).

†**Ceide**, *f.* A market, a fair; a green; a hillock (Armstrong 1825).

**Ceò**, *m.* Milk (Dwelly 1920, 188).

**Ceud-bhainne**, *m.* First milk of a cow after calving, (*bainne-nòis*,) Scots – *beastings* (Armstrong 1825).

**Ceud-laoigh, ceud-laoighe, ceud-laoighean**, *f.* Cow that has calved once (Dwelly 1920, 189).

**Ceud-mheas**, *m.* First fruit; first-fruit tax (Armstrong 1825).

†**Cia**, *m.* ... Cream (Dwelly 1920, 191).

**Cìob, cìoba**, *f.* Tufted scirpus, deer-grass (Dwelly 1920, 195).

**Ciopair, ciopairean**, *m.* A shepherd; a herd; a keeper (Armstrong 1825).

**Ciora**, *f.* A pet lamb or sheep. A sheep that feeds with cows, a cud-chewer (Forbes 1905, 7).

**Cìr, cìre, cìrean**, *f.* ... Cud (Dwelly 1920, 197)

**Cìs**, *f.* Tax, tribute, impost (Armstrong 1825).

**Cìs-chàin**, *f.* Tribute tax, poll-tax (Armstrong 1825).

**Clapan.** A wooden paddle used for removing water and milk from butter. (*Museum nan Eilean* poster, *Obair a' Bhainne*).

**Clàr-buideil**, *m.* Stave of a cask (MacLennan 1979, 87).

**Cleathar**, *m.* Milk-cow (Dwelly 1920, 207).

**Cleitig, cleitige, cleitigean**, *f.* One cow's grass. Croft. Measure of land, containing 1/8 pennyland (Dwelly 1920, 208).

**Cliabh, cliabhéibh**, *m.* ... Kind of basket or hamper used in the Highlands for carrying burdens, and generally slung on each side of a horse, creel. ... Cheese-chest (Dwelly 1920, 208).

**Cliath**, *f.* Stockade (Dwelly 1994 [1920], 208).

**Clith**, *m.* A desire of copulation in cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Clòbhar**, *m.* Meadow. (Wentworth 1996, 100).

**Cluain**, *f.* A pasture, meadow, green field (Armstrong 1825).

**Cluaineach**, *a.* Meadowy, abounding in meadows (Armstrong 1825).

**Cluainean, cluaineanein**, *m.* (dim. of *cluain*.) A little pasture, little meadow, little lawn; pasture ground (Armstrong 1825).

**Cluasach**, *a.* (from *cluas*.) Having ears or handles; ansated; having large ears. *Meadar cluasach*, an ansated wooden dish (Armstrong 1825).

**Cnagan, cnaganain, cnaganan**, *m.* ... Earthen pipkin. Small earthen drinking cup-*Lewis* (Dwelly 1920, 217).

**Cnag, cnaig, cnagan**, *f.* Pin. Peg. Knob. Thole-pin of a rowing-boat (Dwelly 1920, 216).

**Cnàmh**, *v. n.* Sucking (Wentworth 1996, 164).

**Cnò**, *pl. cnothan* (*cnòmha & cnòmhan*), *f.* Nut. Filbert (Dwelly 1920, 219). [See *cnò-bhainne*.]

**Cnò-bhainne**, *f.* The milk-nut, a wooden vessel used for carrying home the milk from the *buaile*, and made in the form of a nut (Dwelly 1920, 219).

†**Co'bhail, combhail**, *f.* An enclosure (Armstrong 1825).

**Coibhle**, *m. pl. coibhleachan*. Coil (small heap of hay). *Tudán* (*m. pl.*) *tudánan* [small coils]. *Prabag* (*f. pl.*) *prabagan* – very small, smaller than a *tudán* (Wentworth 1996, 29).



**Coibhleadh**, *v. tr.* Coiling (Wentworth 1996, 29).

**Coidhean/coidheain** (*bleoghain*). A vessel for milk (Carmichael 1971, 44).

**Coilt, coilte**, *f.* Heifer (Armstrong 1825).

**Coimheadaiche, coimheadaichan**, *m.* Keeper... Grass-keeper... Township herd - Uist (Dwelly 1920, 225).

**Coimheadaidh**. *Fàd a' choimheadaidh*, (peat of the grass-keeper) (MacDonald 1897, 78 & 182).

**Coindean, coindein**, *m.* Kit, small tub (Dwelly 1920, 226).

**Coirc, coirce**, *m.* Oats. *Aran coirce*, oat bread (Armstrong 1825).

**Coitcheann**, *m.* Common grazing (Dwelly 1920, 233).

**Colag, colaig**, *f.* A young cow (Forbes 1905, 7).

†**Colais**, *f.* Cabbage (Armstrong 1825).

**Colam**, *f.* A young cow (Forbes 1905, 7).

**Colan, colain**, *f.* A young cow (Forbes 1905, 7).

†**Colbhtach, colbhtaich**, *m.* A cow-calf (Armstrong 1825).

**Colbthach, colbthaig**, *m.* A cow calf, a heifer, steer, bullock, colt, a two- or three-year-old cow, a cow that has never calved, a cow (Forbes 1905, 7). [See *colpach*.]

**Colbthach seamlach** or **shamlach**, *m.* An uncalved cow (Forbes 1905, 7). [See *colpach seamlach*.]

**Colgan, colgain**, *m.* A salmon (Armstrong 1825).

**Collach, collaich**, *m.* A fat heifer (Armstrong 1825).

**Collach, collaiche**, *f.* ... Yearling calf (Dwelly 1920, 234).

**Collaid**, *f.* A two-year-old heifer (Armstrong 1825).

**Colog, colag, colaig**, *f.* A collop, steak (Armstrong 1825).

**Colpa**, *m.* A single cow or horse (Armstrong 1825).

**Colpach, colpaich**, *m.* A heifer; cow; steer; colt (Armstrong 1825).

**Colpach, colpindach**, *m.* A heifer, a steer, colt (Forbes 1905, 7).

†**Colpach**, *m.* Duty payable by tenants to landlords—Martin (Dwelly 1920, 235).

**Colpach**, *f.* Heifer. Early Irish *colpthach* (MacLennan 1979, 97).

**Colpach-seamlach**, *m.* Uncalved cow (Dwelly 1920, 235).

**Colpachadh**, *-aidh*, *m.* Equalizing cattle stock (Dwelly 1920, 235).

**Colt**, *colta*, *m.* Meat, victuals (Armstrong 1825).

**Comhnard**, *comhnaird*, *m.* A plain, a field, level ground (Armstrong 1825).

**Connlach**, *connlaich*, *f.* Straw, fodder (Armstrong 1825).

**Corcach**. Short-eared; *bó chorcach*, short-eared cow, *laogh corcach*, short-eared calf (Carmichael vol. 6, 48).

**Còrn** *n. pl.* **cùirn**. Sleeve on churn lid, where churn staff goes into hole in lid, to stop splashing (Wentworth 1996, 27).

**Cosgairt**, *f.* ... dressing food (carcass) (Armstrong 1825).

**Cotan**. A small pen for lambs where they were kept while their dams were being milked. A pen for lambs (also for calves, Neil Sinclair, Castlebay, Barra) (MacDonald 1897, 82).

†**Coth**, *m.* Meat, victuals (Armstrong 1825).

**Cothar**, *m.* Froth (Wentworth 1996, 60).

**Craighte**, *f.* A little farm; a little patch of arable ground; a croft (Armstrong 1825).

**Crannachan**, *m.* A churn; also said to be beaten milk--a Halloween treat-- into which a ring, etc., is put (Forbes 1905, 103).

**Crannachan**, **crannachain**, **crannachanan**, *m.* ... Kind of churn, called also 'bite' [*biota*] in *Lewis* (Dwelly 1920, 261).

**Crannag**, **crannaig**, **crannagan**, *f.* ... Churn (Dwelly 1920, 261).

**Crannag**. Irish 'crannóg', a hamper or basket (MacBain 1896, 93).

**Crannlochan**, **crannlochain**, **crannlochanan**, *m.* Churn, *provincial* (Dwelly, 1920, 262).

**Craoim**, *v. n.* Nibble; crop grass, as cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Craos**, *m.* Mouth of hungry beast (Wentworth 1996, 105).

**Crath**, *v. & n.* Shake. Tremble. Quiver. Churn (Dwelly 1920, 267).

**Crathadh, crathaidh, m.** Churning. *Crath bainne*, churning (Dwelly 1920, 267).

**Crèachan, crèachain, m.** A kind of pudding made of a calf's entrails (Armstrong 1825).

**Creatachan, creatachain, m.** Churning-stick (Armstrong 1825).

**Creiche, f.** Selling cattle (Forbes 1905, 8).

†**Criomairt, criomairte, f.** Second milk, cream (Dwelly 1920, 272).

**Crò, m.** A fold for sheep; cattle-house; stall; stable; a crop (Armstrong 1825). A circle; a fold; Middle Irish *cró*, a fold, pen (for sheep, cattle, pigs, etc.), a hut, a cell (MacLennan 1979, 106).

**Cro, m.** Cattle; cows; blood-money; a dowry, a portion. (Armstrong 1825).

**Crò, cròtha, cròithean (& cròitean,) m.** Circle. Sheep-cot, pen or fold, wattled fold. Stall. Stable (Dwelly 1920, 274).

**Cròbh, cròbha, m.** A hoof (Armstrong 1825).

**Cròbhanach, a.** Having hoofs or claws; like a hoof; having large hoofs (Armstrong 1825).

**Cròcach, m.** Spiked instrument to keep calves from sucking (Dwelly 1920, 274).

†**Crocharsach, crocharsaich, m.** A sheepfold (Armstrong 1825).

**Crodh, m.** Cattle, Irish *crodh*, a dowry, cattle, Middle Irish *crodh*, wealth (cattle) (MacBain 1896, 97).

**Crodh, cruiddh, m.** Cows; black cattle; herds; rarely a portion, a dowry (Armstrong 1825).

**Crodh, m.** Cattle (MacDonald 1897, 85-86).

**Cròdh, v.** Fold; enclose in a fold; hem in together (Armstrong 1825).

**Cròdhadh, chròdhaidh, m.** A gathering into a fold; a gathering in of corn (Armstrong 1825).

**Cròdhadh, m.** Housing of cattle in winter (MacDonald 1897, 259).

**Crodhaich, n.** Something that adulterates the milk -Sutherland (Dwelly 1920, 275).

**Cròdhan, cròdhain, m.** (diminutive of *cròdh*.) A hoof; the hoof of a cow or sheep (Armstrong 1825).

**Crodhan, crodhain, crodhanan, m.** ... A Piece of wood fixed in or tied to the mouth of a calf like a bit and round the back of the head, to prevent it sucking its mother when following (Forbes 1905, 74).

**Crodh-bainne, m.** Milk-cattle (Dwelly 1920, 275).

**Crodh-creic, crodh-creiche** or **crodh seiche** (selling). Selling stock, cattle (Forbes 1905, 8 & 85). [See also *crodh-reic* - Dwelly.]

**Crodh-fhionn, a.** White-hoofed; white-footed (Armstrong 1825).

**Crodh Gàidhealach.** Highland Cattle (Wentworth 1996, 55).

**Crodh-gamhnach, m.** Farrow cattle (giving milk, but not with young) (Dwelly 1920, 275).

**Crodh-reic, m.** Selling stock (Dwelly 1920, 275).

**Crodh-seasg, m.** Barren cattle (Dwelly 1920, 275).

**Crogan, crogain, pl. crogain & croganan, m.** Pitcher, little earthen dish (Dwelly 1920, 275).

**Crogán-ime, m. pl. crogánan-ime.** Small churn made of earthenware crock or glass jar, with wooden top and churn-staff (Wentworth 1996, 26).

**Croic, f.** The skin; a hide; a venison feast (Armstrong 1825).

**Croiceach, a.** Meadowy (Armstrong 1825).

**Croicionn, croicinn, m.** Skin. *Croicionn laoigh*, a calf's skin. *Croicionn tairbh*, a bull's hide (Armstrong 1825).

**Croidheachd, f.** (from *crodh*.) A portion, dowry (Armstrong 1825).

**Croidh-fhionn, a.** White-hoofed (Armstrong 1825).

**Cròilean, cròilein, cròileanan, m.** Little fold, a group (Armstrong 1825).

**Cròileán.** Group, bunch (of cattle) (Wentworth 1996, 20).

**Croit, f.** A croft; a little farm (Armstrong 1825).

**Croitear, croiteir, croitearan, m.** A crofter (Armstrong 1825).

**Crom, a.** Having crooked horns, as a sheep (Armstrong 1825).

**Crotainn, n.** Barley hulled by pounding; also broth, in which barley so hulled is a principal ingredient (Armstrong 1825)

**Crùban, -ain, m.** A disease which attacks cows about the latter end of summer and during autumn.

**Crubh-sithne, m.** A haunch of venison (Armstrong 1825).

**Crugh, crugha, m.** Curds. Written also *gruth* (Armstrong 1825).

**Crup-phutag, crup-phutaig, f.** A blood-pudding (Armstrong 1825).

**Cru-sgaoileadh, cru-sgaoileidh, m.** A bloody flux (Armstrong 1825).

**Cruth-bhainne, crutha-bhainne.** A wooden vessel shaped to the back for carrying home milk from the shieling (Carmichael 1971, 54).

†**Cua, m.** Flesh (Armstrong 1825).

**Cuach, cuaich, f.** A bowl, a cup, a goblet; a drinking cup (Armstrong 1825).

**Cuachag, cuachaige, cuachagan, f.** Little cup (Dwelly 1920, 284).

**Cuachain.** Pail for milking into (Armstrong 1825).

**Cuach-bhleoghainn, pl. cuachan-bleoghainn, f.** Milking-pail or cog (Dwelly 1920, 284).

†**Cua-chromag, cua-chromaig, f.** A flesh-hook (Armstrong 1825).

**Cual, cuail, cuailtean, f.** ... Herds, cattle (Dwelly 1920, 285).

**Cuallach, m.** Cattle, stock cattle (Forbes 1905, 8).

**Cuallach, cuallaich, m.** A keeper of cattle (Armstrong 1825). Herding, tending of cattle. Keeper of cattle (Dwelly 1920, 285).

**Cuallachadh, cuallachaidh, m.** A tending of cattle; herding (Armstrong 1825).

**Cuallachd, f.** The occupation of herding; a number of followers or dependents (Armstrong 1825).

**Cuallach nam bò [sic].** Herding cattle, (Neil Sinclair - Barra; Annie Johnston - Barra) (MacDonald 1897, 89).

**Cuallaich, v.** Tend cattle, herd (Armstrong 1825).

**Cuallaiche, m.** A keeper of cattle (Armstrong 1825).

†**Cua-mhargadh, cua-mhargaidh, m.** A flesh-market; shambles (Armstrong 1825).

**Cuanal, cuanalail, cuanalan, m.** Flocks, cattle, horses, sheep, goats (Dwelly 1994 [1920], 286).

**Cuartaich**, (*fear*.) A farm-servant among the Hebrideans, whose sole business is to preserve the grass and corn of his employer (Armstrong 1825).

**Cugann, cugainn**, *m*. Rich standing milk; milk set for cream (Armstrong 1825).  
Delicacy, kitchen (Dwelly 1920, 287).

**Cuibhreachan**. The *cuibhreachan* plant is used as a safeguard against spiriting away the *toradh*, substance, of the milk (Carmichael 1971, 55).

**Cuidh, cuidhe, cuidhein**, *f*. Enclosure. Cattle-fold, pen—*Barra*. Enclosed field—*Eigg*. This word enters largely into place-names—*Uist* (Dwelly 1920, 289).

**Cuinneag, cuinneig**, *f*. A pail; *cuinneag bhleothainn*, a wooden milk-pail (Armstrong 1825).

**Cuinneag, cuinneige, cuinneagan**, *f*. Small pail. Milk-pail. (*Scots*, stoup.) ... Churn (Dwelly 1920, 293).

**Cuinneag-bhleothainn**, *f*. A milk pail (Forbes 1905, 103).

**Cuirm**, *f*. A kind of beer or ale once used by the Gaelic and Irish Celts (Armstrong 1825).

**Cuithe, cuitheachan**, *f*. ... Cattle-fold or enclosure (Dwelly 1920, 296-297).

**Culaidh**, *m*. Good condition (particularly of cattle) (Wentworth 1996, 31).

**Cùl-caise**, *m*. Rind of a cheese (Dwelly 1920, 298).

**Cùl-cinn**, *m*. Outrun, common grazing ground of a township—*Uist* (Dwelly 1920, 298).

**Cullach**, *m*. A boar, a yearling calf, a fat heifer, male cat, a bat, a stallion (Forbes 1905, 8).

**Cumal, cumail**, *m*. Three cows; the value of three cows (Armstrong 1825).

**Cuman, cumain**, *m*. A pail; a small wooden dish without a handle, *Scotch*, a *cogue*. A skimmer (Armstrong 1825).

**Cuman, cumain**, *m*. Milking-pail. Circular wooden dish without a handle. (*Scots*, *cogue*.) Skimmer (Dwelly 1920, 299).

**Cunadh, cunaidh**, *m*. Stock cattle (Forbes 1905, 8). [See *caomhain*.]

**Curasan, curasain**, *m*. Milk pail. Firkin for butter (Armstrong 1825).

**Currasan, currasain, currasanan**, *m*. Large deep vessel, pail (Dwelly 1920, 303).

**Dabh**, *m.* A cow (Forbes 1905, 8).

**Dabhach**, **dabhaich**, *pl.* **dabhcha** & **dabhaichean**, *f.* ... District of a country, lot, portion of land or farm to carry 60 cows or head of cattle, davoch (Dwelly 1920, 305). [The carrying capacity of a davoch varied according to area, see discussion ].

**Dabhan**, **dabhain**, *m.* Pitcher, bucket (Dwelly 1920, 305).

**Dà-bhliadhna**, **dà-bhliadhnach**, **dà-bhliadhnaich**, *m.* A two year old beast; also, two years of age (Armstrong 1825).

**Da-bhliadhnach**, *m.* A two-year old calf or stirk, cattle (Forbes 1905, 8).

**Dail**, **dalach**, *f.* A dale, a field; a meadow; a plain. *Dail fhearainn*, a level field (Ir. *dail*, Welsh and Cornish, *dol*) (Armstrong 1825).

**Dail**, **daile**, **dailean**, *f.* Kind of wooden collar for cattle. Stall-halter for a cow (Dwelly 1920, 307).

**Daimh-fheoil**, *f.* Beef (Armstrong 1825).

**Dàir**, **dàra**, *f.* Pairing of cattle, also *dàireadh*. Calving (Dwelly 1920, 308).

**Dàir**, *v.* Line, as a bull; *vbl. a. dàirte*, lined, in calf (MacLennan 1979 118).

**Dàireach**, *a.* Rutting, copulating, breeding (Dwelly 1920, 308).

**Dairt**, **dairte**, *f.* Heifer (Armstrong 1825).

**Damh**, **daimh**, *m.* Ox (Dwelly 1920, 309).

**Damh**, *pl.* **daimh**, *m.* Steer (Wentworth 1996, 33).

**Damhach**, *a.* (from *damh*.) Full of oxen or harts (Armstrong 1825).

**Damh-lann**, **damh-lainn**, *m.* Ox-stall (Armstrong 1825).

**Damh-nartaidh**, *m.* A bullock (Forbes 1905, 9).

**Damh-òg**, *pl.* **daimh òga**, *m.* Stot. Male calf 6 months to 1 year old (Wentworth 1996, 33).

**Damh-ursainn**. (*Lit.*), 'door-post ox' - the best or only ox a widow had - due and taken, of old by proprietor or other at death of husband (Forbes 1905, 9).

**Dàrach**, *a.* (See *dàireach*.) breeding (Dwelly 1920, 312).

**Dàradh**, **dàraidh**, *m.* Rutting; bulling. *Am dàraidh*, rutting time. *Air dàradh*, in want of a bull (as a cow); bulled (Armstrong 1825).

†**Dart**, *v.* Bull a cow. *Preterite* – *Dhart*, bulled; *fut aff.* *Dartaidh* [shall have bulled] (Armstrong 1825).

**Dartach**, **dartaich**, *m.* A two-year old bull (Armstrong 1825).

**Dartaid**, *m.* Heifer (Forbes 1905, 171).

**Dartaidh-Inide**, *m.* Heifer three years old at Shrovetide (Forbes 1905, 171).

**Dartaig**, *f.* Yearling cow (Forbes 1905, 91).

**Dartan**, **dartain**, *m.* Herd, drove (Armstrong). Two-year old bull (Dwelly 1920, 312).

**Dartan-callaigh**, *m.* Herd or drove (Forbes 1905, 9).

**Dathas** *n. phr., pl.* **dathais**, *m.* Small stirk(s) (Wentworth 1996, 161).

**Dèabh**, *pr. pt.* **a' dèabhadh**, *v. & n.* Drain, dry up, shrink. (Dwelly 1920, 314).

**Deala**, **dealan**, *m.* A nipple; a cow's udder (Armstrong 1825).

**Dearbh**, *m.* ...A churn, a milk-pail (Armstrong 1825).

**Dearg-ainmheadh**, *m.* Red cattle (Forbes 1905, 9).

**Deasgann**, **deassgainne**, **deasgainnean**, *f.* Rennet. Yeast (Dwelly 1920, 324).

**Deil**, **deile**, **deilean**, *f.* Cow's udder (Armstrong 1825).

**Deil'-bhainne**, *n.* Milk-dish or cup (Irish *dela*, a cup) (Forbes 1905, 103).

†**Deirbh**, *f.* Churn (Armstrong 1825).

†**Deirginnleadh**, **deirginnleidh**, *m.* Red cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Deobhail**, *v.* Suck, as the young of human beings or of quadrupeds. Written also *deoghail* and *deothail* (Armstrong 1825).

**Deobhaladh**, **deobhalaidh**, *m.* A sucking of the teat or pap (Armstrong 1825).

**Deoch-gheal** *f.* Drink of oatmeal stirred in water, for cattle (Wentworth 1996, 112). See also *Prothan*.

**Deoch-mairt**, *f.* Huge drink (*lit.* cow's drink) (Dwelly 1920, 329).

**Deoghalach**, *a.* A name for a brown cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Deotháil** *v. tr., v. n.* **deothál**. Suckle (Wentworth 1996, 164-165).

**Deòthas**, *m.* Longing or eagerness of a calf for its mother (MacLennan 1979, 124).



†**Dial**, *m.* Weaning (Dwelly 1920, 332).

**Dilse**, *f. duileasg*, a sea plant [much used for the making of soup - personal correspondence].

**Di-millteach**, *m.* A wandering destructive cow or horse (Forbes 1905, 9).

**Diol**, *m.* complement or portion (MacLennan 1979, 127).

**Diosg**, *a.* Barren, dry, applied to a cow that gives no milk (Dwelly 1920, 340).

**Diosgadh**, **diosgaidh**, *m.* State of being barren or dry, not giving milk, as a cow, barrenness, dryness (Dwelly 1920, 340).

**Diosgadh**, *m.* Barrenness; not giving milk, dry. M. Ir. *dioscadh*, a running dry (as well, or cow) (MacLennan 1979, 128).

**Dlochd**, **dlochdan**, *m.* Strainer. Colander (Dwelly 1920, 343).

**Dlochdair**, *v.* Strain, press, squeeze (Dwelly 1920, 343).

**Dlùth**, *v.* Gathering home the harvest, as *cròdh(adh)*. *Àm an dluthaidh* (MacDonald 1897, 101).

**Dlùth**, **dlùith**, *m.* Joining. Enclosure, fence (Dwelly 1920, 344).

**Dòbhlannach**, *m.* Two year old female cattle beast, usually in calf for first time (Wentworth 1996, 33).

**Dò-bhliadhnach**, *m.* Animal of two years of age, said of cattle and sheep in Outer Isles and Argyllshire, for *dà-bhliadhnach* (Dwelly 1920, 345).

**Dorcan**, **durcan**. A yearling bull calf (Armstrong 1825).

**Dosgaidh**. Loss of cattle (MacDonald 1897, 104).

**Dramag**, **dramaige**, **dramagan**, *f.* Foul mixture. ... 'Crowdie' (Dwelly 1920, 357).

**Dreasail**, *n. pl.* Small teats (Armstrong 1825).

**Drioganach**, *a.* Dropping, tardy, slow (MacLennan 1979, 135).

**Drioman-dubh**, *m.* A black, white-backed cow (*druim-fhionn*) (Forbes 1905, 9).

**Drobh**, *m.* A drove of cattle, a number of cattle; a cavalcade (Armstrong 1825).

**Drochta-bainne**, *n.* Milk-tub (Forbes 1905, 103).

**Drolmad-bhainne**, *m.* Milk-pitcher (Forbes 1905, 103).

**Dronnach**, *a.* (from *dronn* - ridge.) A name given to a white-backed cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Dronnag, dronnaig**, *f.* ... A cow having a hunch-back (Armstrong 1825).

**Drùchdan, drùchdain**, *m.* Whey (Armstrong 1825).

**Dubhach**. The root of *Lus nan laogh*, grows in bogs and ponds (MacDonald 1897, 308).

**Dubhag**. A little black cow, etc. (Blackie) (Forbes 1905, 9).

**Duilioc**. Want of filial or parental affection (MacDonald 1897, 108).

**Eachdradh, eachdraidh**, *m.* A poindfold (Armstrong 1825).

**Each Ursainn**. If a man died and left two horses to his widow the proprietor took one from her. This one was called *an t-each ursainn* (best horse, kept nearest door) (MacDonald 1897, 110).

**Éadail**, *a.* Wealth in cattle (MacLennan 1979, 141).

**Eadar-thrath**, *m.* Noon (Armstrong 1825).

**Eadar-thràth, eadar-thràith, eadar-thràithean**, *m.* Interval of time. Noon. Mid-day milking (Dwelly 1920, 379).

**Eadhail, eadhail**, *m.* ... Udder of a heifer before calving (Dwelly 1920, 379).

**Eadradh, eadraidh, eadraidhean**, *m.* Division of time. Morning time of milking, or folding of cows, goats, sheep etc. Noon. Process of milking—*Uist* (Dwelly 1920, 379).

†**Ealbh**, *m.* A herd, a drove (Armstrong 1825).

**Eallach**, *m.* Cattle, gear, a herd, dowry (MacLennan 1979, 142).

**Eallach, eallacha**, *pl.* **eallachan & eallaichean**, *f.* ... Herd. (Dwelly 1920, 381).

**Eallach, eallaidh, eallamh**, *f.* Cattle given as a tocher or dot (Forbes 1905, 9).

**Eallaidh-meith**, *m.* Fat cattle (Forbes 1905, 10).

**Ealbh, ealbha, ealbh**, *m.* A herd or drove of cattle (Forbes 1905, 10).

**Ealt**, *m.* ... A number of quadrupeds, as a drove of cattle etc. (Armstrong 1825).

**Eanghlas, eanglaise**, *f.* Gruel, any weak drink; milk and water (Armstrong 1825).

**Eanraich**, *f.* A kind of fat broth; gravy (Armstrong 1825). Whey thickened with oatmeal (Wentworth 1996, 171).

**Eannraidh**, *n.* A heifer (Sutherland) (Forbes 1905, 10).

**Earc**, *erc*, *f.* A cow, a heifer (Forbes 1905, 10).

†**Earca-iucna**, *pl.* White cows with red ears, notched cattle [ears], fairy cattle (Dwelly 1920, 384).

**Earchall**, **earchaill**, *m.* Misfortune. Loss by death of cattle. Sudden and unexpected loss of cattle (Dwelly 1920, 384).

**Earchallach**, **earchallaiche**, *a.* Subject to loss by death of cattle (Dwelly 1920, 384).

**Earlait**, *f.* Rich soil, productive animals (Dwelly 1994 [1920], 385).

**Earnach**, **earnaich**, *f.* A distemper among cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Eàrnais**, *f.* Used for cattle, furniture, airts or earnest or engagement money (MacDonald 1958, 112) (see *àirneis*).

†**Eascra**, *m.* Cup, drinking vessel (Dwelly 1920, 386).

†**Easgradh**, **easgraidh**, *m.* Cup, drinking vessel (Dwelly 1920, 386).

**Easradh**, *m.* Bedding for cattle; ferns. E. Ir. *esrad*, strewing (MacLennan 1979, 144).

**Easuain**, *v.* Scum, skim (Dwelly 1920, 387).

†**Eatha**, *f.* Cattle; *m.* Corn. (Dwelly 1920, 387).

**Eathorna**, **an eathorna**, *f.* Red-water (disease of cattle) (Wentworth 1996, 132).

**Echtge**, *n.* Cow, cattle (Forbes 1905, 10).

**Erc**, *f.* A cow, any animal of the cow kind (see *earc*) (Forbes 1905, 10).

**Eòrna**, *m.* Barley. *Bonnach arán-eòrna*, barley scone or barley bannock (Wentworth 1996, 10).

**Eucáil**, *f. pl. eucáilean.* Disease (Wentworth 1996, 39).

**Eudail**, *f.* Cattle, a treasure, a darling. Also *feudail*. E. Ir. *étail*, treasure, booty (MacLennan 1979, 147).

†**Eudal**, **eudail**, *m.* Riches, treasure; store; cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Eun-bhrìgh**, *f.* Chicken broth; gravy, soup (Armstrong 1825).

**Fàich, fàiche**, *f.* A field; a plain; a meadow; a green, a forest. *Saoidh na fàiche*, meadow-hay (Armstrong 1825).

**Faircill, faircillean & fairclean**, *m.* Lid of a cask or pot (Dwelly 1920, 406).

**Fàisg**, *f.* Cheese-press (Armstrong 1825).

**Faisge**, *f.* Cheese (Armstrong 1825).

**Faisgeadh, faisgeidh** *n.* A penfold (Armstrong 1825).

**Fàisgean, Fàisgeanan**, *m.* Cheese-press (Armstrong 1825).

**Faisgre**, *f.* Cheese (Armstrong 1825).

**Fàl, fàil**, *f.* A circle, a fold, a penfold; a fence, an enclosure (Armstrong 1825).

**Falach, falaich**, *m.* What remains in a milked cow's udder, afterings (Dwelly 1920, 408).

**Falbhair, falbhan**, *m.* A young calf (*lit.* a follower) (Forbes 1905, 10).

**Falbhair**, *m.* The young of live stock, a follower as a calf or foal; from the Sc. *follower*, a foal, Eng. *follower* (MacBain 1896, 146).

**Fang, fainge**, *f.* A poindfold; a place for catching cattle; a pen (Armstrong 1825).

**Fang**, *v.* Drive into a fold or pen (Armstrong 1825).

**Fangachadh, fangachaidh**, *m.* A driving into a fold; a penning of cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Fangaich**, *v.* Fold; gather into a fold or pen (Armstrong 1825).

**Faoilteach, faoitich**, *m.* The last fortnight of winter and first fortnight of spring (Old Style), proverbial for variableness (Dwelly 1920, 413).

**Faoilteach, faoilleach**, *m.* The first fortnight, it is the first fortnight in February in which the cattle graze least of all. (Wentworth 1996, 53).

**Faobh-bhleoghainn**, *f.* Stealing the milk out of the udder of a cow or goat (Dwelly 1994, 412).

**Fàradh**, *m.* Litter spread in a boat for cattle to be ferried. Litter beneath cattle in a boat (MacDonald 1897, 119).

**Fara-laogh**, *m.* A false calf, (Forbes 1905, 10). Monstrosity (Dwelly 1920, 415).

**Fasach, fasaich**, *m.* Stubble; the grassy headland of a ploughed field (Armstrong 1825).

**Fasanadh, fasanaidh, m.** The old custom of giving an hour's grazing to milk cows on the green patches (*ceannamhagan*) adjacent to the corn prior to their being sent to the hill for the day (Dwelly 1920, 417).

**Fasgadh, fasgaidh, fasgadhaidhean, m.** Protection, shelter screen. Refuge. Fold. Pen-folding of cattle (Dwelly 1920, 418).

**Fàsgadair, m.** A cheese-press. *Fàsgadair càise*, a cheese-press (Armstrong 1825).

**Fàs-lomairt, f.** An expeditious method of cooking victuals in the stomach, once practised by the Gael (Armstrong 1825).

**Féadail, f.** Cattle (Armstrong 1825).

†**Fearanda, m.** A countryman; a boor; a farmer (Armstrong 1825).

**Fearann, fearainn, m.** A farm; land, ground; country; earth; land, in contradistinction to water (Armstrong 1825).

**Fearb, f.** A cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Féilleil or féileil, a.** Beautiful or pretty. It may be used of a nicely painted boat or of a pretty cow. It does not convey the idea of 'marketable', 'good for the market'. '*S e beothach féileil a tha sin*, (that is) a good beast (MacDonald 1897, 123).

**Féilleil, a.** Desirable, much sought-after, valuable. Marketable. *Beathach féilleil*, a marketable beast (Dwelly 1920, 426).

†**Feine, m.** A boor; a ploughman; a farmer (Armstrong 1825).

**Fein-eallach, m.** Cattle given in restitution (Forbes 1905, 10).

**Féisd, f.** Feast, as applied to grass (Dwelly 1920, 427). Tether for cattle, to keep them from the corn—*Lewis* (Dwelly 1920, 427).

**Feoil, feola, f.** Flesh of any kind; *mairt-fheoil*, beef; *muilt-fheoil*, mutton; *circe-fheoil*, chicken; *muic-fheoil*, pork (Armstrong 1825). Meat. *Feòil, rud a bh' agad gho do dhìotha*, meat, which you had for your dinner (Wentworth 1996, 101).

**Feòirn, f.** Grass. From *feòirn*, or perhaps from *fioran*, is derived the agricultural term *feorin*, a species of coarse grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Feòirnean, feòirnein, m.** (dim. of *feòirn*.) A pile of grass; a cock of hay; a blade of grass; a straw (Armstrong 1825).

**Feòladair, m.** (from *feòil*.) A butcher; a slaughterer of cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Feòlmhach, feòlmhaich, m.** Flesh-meat (Armstrong 1825).

**Feòran, feòrain, m.** A green; a mountain-valley; land adjoining a brook (Armstrong 1825).

**Feòrnan, feòrnain, m.** A pile of grass; a cock of hay (Armstrong 1825).

**Feòrnanach, a.** Grassy; abounding in grass; full of haycocks; gathered into cocks, as hay (Armstrong 1825).

**Feudail, feudalach, f.** Cattle, a herd, a cow (Armstrong 1825). Cattle; usual spelling of *eudail* (MacBain 1896, 154). Treasure, dearest object; wealth in cattle; *m'fheudail*, my dear one! (MacLennan 1979, 159).

**Feur, feòir, m.** Grass; herbage; fodder. *Mar ma feur*, as the grass. *Air an fheur*, on the grass; on grass; grazing. *Bhàrr an fheòir*, off the grass; off the pasture; from grazing (Armstrong 1825). Grass. Hay. *Feur tioram*, hay; *cruach fheòir*, hay-rick; *feur gorm*, green grass (Dwelly 1920, 429).

**Feur, v. a.** Feed on grass, graze (Dwelly 1920, 430).

**Feurach, feuraich, m.** (from *feur*.) A hay-loft, hay yard; pasture (Armstrong 1825).

**Feurach, a.** (from *feur*.) Grassy; green; verdant (Armstrong 1825).

**Feurach, feuraiche, a.** Grassy abounding in grass or hay. Verdant. Grazing. *Cnocan buidhe feurach*, a yellow verdant knoll (Dwelly 1920, 430).

**Feurach, m. & pr. pt.** Uist for *feurachadh*. *A' feurach na bà*, grazing the cow (Dwelly 1920, 430).

**Feurachadh, feurachaidh, m.** Feeding on grass, grazing, pasturing. *A' feurach, pr. pt.* of *feuraich*. *A' cur an eich air feurachadh*, putting the horse to pasture (Dwelly 1920 430).

**Feurachair, m.** Fodderer (Dwelly 1920, 430).

**Feuraich, pr. pt. a' feurachadh, v. a.** Feed on grass, graze, pasture (Armstrong 1825).

**Feuraich, m.** Pasture (Dwelly 1920, 430).

**Feuran, feurain, m.** Green, grassy field (Dwelly 1920, 430).

**Feur-caonaichte, m.** Hay (Dwelly 1920, 430).

**Feur-ghartadh, m.** The keeping of his own cattle next to the crops by the crofter whose turn it is to do the herding of the township --Wester Ross (Dwelly 1920, 430).

**Feur-itheach, a.** Graminivorous. *Beathaichean feur-itheach*. Graminivorous beasts (Dwelly 1920, 430).

**Feur-lann, feur-lainn, m.** A hay-loft (Armstrong 1825).

**Feur-lann, feur-lannan, m.** Hay house. Hay-stack-yard (Dwelly 1920, 430).

**Feur-saidhe, m.** Hay. Natural grass, as distinct from rye grass (Dwelly, 1920, 430).

**Feur-tioram, m.** Hay (Dwelly 1920, 430).

**Fiadh, m.** Land, ground. Meat, food, victuals (Armstrong 1825).

†**Finn, a.** White, milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Fiodhan, fiodhain, m.** Cheese-press (Armstrong 1825).

**Fionn, fiun, fuin, f.** A cow, a sow (Forbes 1905, 11).

†**Fionn, f.** A cow. Milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Fionn-chosach, a.** White-footed (Armstrong 1825).

**Fionn-fholaidh, m.** White kine (Forbes 1905, 11).

**Fionn-mhèag, fionn-mhèig, m.** White whey, whey wrung from cheese when pressed in the vat (Dwelly 1920, 437).

**Fionnta, a.** (from *fionn*.) Hairy, rough, shaggy, furred. *Leathar fionnta an daimh òig*, the hairy hide of a young bullock (Armstrong 1825).

**Fior, m.** Milk (Forbes, 1905, 103).

**Fior-agh, m.** Two-year old cow (Forbes 1905, 11).

**Fiughan, fiughain, m.** A cheese-press. Written also *fiodhan* (Armstrong 1825).

†**Flaith, f.** Milk (Dwelly 1920, 441).

†**Flaith, m.** ... strong ale (Dwelly 1920, 441).

**Flèidh, v. a.** Keep; tend, as cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Fleisd, v.** Slay, slaughter, butcher (Armstrong 1825).

**Fleisdear, fleisdeir, m.** A butcher or flesher (Armstrong 1825).

**Fo-chrodh, m.** Inferior, little, mean, small cattle (Forbes 1905, 11).

**Fodair, v. a.** Give food or provender to cattle; fodder (Armstrong 1825).

**Fodar, fodair, m.** Straw; provender (Armstrong 1825).

**Fodradh, fodraidh, m.** Hand-feeding of cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Foghar, foghair, m.** Harvest; autumn (Armstrong 1825).

**Fol, foladh, m.** Cattle, a dowry of cattle (Forbes 1905, 11).

**Fosradh, fosraidh, m.** Grazing of cattle when tethered (Dwelly 1920, 452).

**Fuarag, fuaraig, f.** A beverage of wrought cream, into which oatmeal is put (Armstrong 1825).

**Fuarag, fuaraig, fuaragan, f.** Mixture of meal and water or milk, hasty pudding. (*Scots*, crowdie) (Dwelly 1920, 460).

**Fuaran, fuarain, m.** (from *fuar*.) A well, a spring, a fountain (Armstrong 1825).

**Fùileach.** Sheepskin covering on the mouth of a churn (Carmichael 1971, 76).

**Fuirleach, f.** Parchment or skin to cover a milk-dish (Dwelly 1920, 464).

**Gabhail, f.** ... A Barn (Armstrong 1825). A farm. *Gabhalaichean móra*, large farms (MacDonald 1897, 133).

**Gabhail, gabhalach, gabhalaichean, f. & m.** Portion of work performed by cattle at one yoking. Lease, feu, tenure. Farm (Dwelly 1920, 467).

**Gabhail-fearrainn, f.** A farm; a lease (Armstrong 1825).

**Gabhainn, g. gabhna, contr.** for *gabhainne, m.* A yearling, stirk, steer. *Gabhainn*, in the sense of steer, is also written *gabhuinn/gamhuinn* (Armstrong 1825). See below.

**Gabhaltach, gabhaltaich, m.** A lessee, or the person to whom a lease is given; in Scotland, called tacksman (Armstrong 1825).

**Gabhaltas, gabhaltais, m.** (From *gabh*.) Captured or conquered land; land rented from a proprietor; land in tack; land divided amongst a tribe (Armstrong 1825).

**Gabhla, f.** A cow with calf (Forbes 1905, 11).

**Gabhnach, gabhnaich, (gamhnach, gamhnaich) m.** A steer; a farrow cow. A stripper, an un-bulled cow (Armstrong 1825). A cow with a year-old calf, and still being milked (Forbes 1905, 11).

**Gaid, gaidean, gaidein, m.** (*dim.* of *gad*) Small band of twigs. Small withe (Dwelly 1920, 470).

**Galar, galarair, galaran, m.** Disease, distemper, malady (Dwelly 1994 [1920], 473).

†**Gall, m.** Milk (Armstrong 1825).



**Gamhainn**, *gen. sing. gamhaimhne & gamhamhna, pl. gamhaimhne & gamhgamhna, m.* Year-old calf. six months old cow. Stirk, steer, young bullock. (Dwelly 1994, 475).

**Gamnach**, *f., pl. gamhnaichean.* Farrow cow, in particular a cow that is milked all winter (Wentworth 1996, 52).

**Gamnach agus trì-ghamnach.** One and three year old stripper (MacLennan 1979, 175).

**Gàrradh**, *m.* Township dyke (Wentworth 1996, 116).

**Gart, gairt**, *m.* Standing corn; any standing crop; grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Gead**, *gen. gide, pl. geadan, or geadag, pl. geadagan, f.* Rig (Wentworth 1996, 134).

**Geadagach, geadagaiche**, *a.* Abounding in small spots of arable land or ridges (Dwelly 1920, 481).

**Geal-adhairc**, *m.* An animal with a white horn; a name given to a white-horned cow (Armstrong 1825). [Probably should read, an animal with white horns.]

**Geamhradh, geamhraidh**, *m.* Winter. *Bó (no) mart geamhraidh*, a winter mart; a heifer slain for winter food (Armstrong 1825).

**Geamhraich**, *v.* Winter; feed during winter, furnish provender; *vbl. a. geamhraichte*, wintered (MacLennan 1979, 177).

**Gearr-fhionn**, *m.* Short hair, as that of quadrupeds (Armstrong 1825).

**Gearr-fhionnach**, *a.* Short-haired, as cattle. *Laoigh gearr-fhionnach*, short-haired calves (Armstrong 1825).

**Gearradh, gearraidh, gearraidhean**, *m.* Summer grazing place for cattle—*Lewis* (Dwelly 1920, 486).

**Gearraidh**, *m.* Point or knuckle-end of land, often used in place-names in (Dwelly 1920, 486).

**Gearraidh**, *m.* Home pasture; sheiling. Norse *geroi* (MacLennan 1979, 178).

†**Geart**, *m.* Milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Geat**, *n.* Curds (Forbes 1905, 103).

**Géim**, *v. n.* Low, as a cow; bellow (Armstrong 1825).

**Géimnich**, *f.* Lowing; bellowing (Armstrong 1825).

**Geinn, geinne, geinnean, m.** Wedge. Wooden wedge for fastening cow-fetter (Dwelly 1920, 488).

**Géis, f.** Milk, milk produce. Gestation (Dwelly 1920, 489).

**Geum, géim, m.** A low, bellow; a lowing or bellowing; a roar. *Fann-gheum laogh*, the faint lowing of calves (Armstrong 1825).

**Geum, géim & geuma, geuman, m.** Low, bellow. Lowing of a cow (Dwelly 1920, 490).

**Geumraich or geumnaich, bi geumraich or bi geumnaich v. i.** Low (loudly call) (Wentworth 1996, 94).

**Geur, a.** *Bainne geur*, milk of an acrid taste (Dwelly 1920, 490).

**Geuraich, v.** Sour, [souring]; *am bainne a' geurachadh*, the milk turning sour (MacLennan 1979, 179).

**Gibeann, gibein, m.** A kind of fat pudding made in the Hebrides (Armstrong 1825).

**Glanadh, m.** Afterbirth. *Glanadh na bà*, (*lit.*) cleansing of the cow, (Wentworth 1996, 32).

**Glas-ghort, glas-ghoirt, m.** A green; a green plot of ground; fodder (Armstrong 1825).

**Glas-mhagh, glas-mhaigh, m.** A green field, a green plain (Armstrong 1825).

**Glasrach, glasraich, m.** Uncultivated land. Green plot (Dwelly 1920, 501).

**Glasrach, glasraiche, a.** Abounding in lea, or un-ploughed land. Green. Having green groves or meadows (Dwelly 1920, 501).

**Glasraich, pr. pt. a' glasrachadh, v. a. & n.** Convert into meadows or pastureland (Dwelly 1920, 501).

**Glasraich, f.** Green growth (Wentworth 1996, 68).

**Glas-talamh, glas-talmhainn, m.** (*f.* usually, but *m.* in Poolewe) *pl. glas-talmhuinnean*. Unploughed or pasture land, lea ground (Dwelly 1920, 501).

†**Gleithe, f.** Grazing, feeding (Armstrong 1825).

**Glodhach, glodhaich, m.** The slimy matter coming from a cow before calving (Armstrong 1825).

**Glomhan, m.** Substance covering a calf at birth (MacLennan 1979, 185).

**Glomhar, glomhair, m.** An instrument put into the mouths of calves and lambs to prevent sucking (Armstrong 1825).

**Glomhar, m.** A gag for beasts; to prevent sucking. E. Ir. *glomar*, a bridle. (MacLennan 1979, 185).

**Glonn, m.** ... A calf (Armstrong 1825).

**Gnàithsear, m.** Husbandman. Countryman (Dwelly 1920, 508).

**Gnòsd, f.** A lowing, a bellow. *Ciod a dh'iarradh tu air bó ach a gnòsd?* What could you expect from a cow but a low? (Armstrong 1825).

**Gogan, gogain, goganan, m.** Small wooden dish made of staves and with one handle. Kit. Pail. *Laogh-gogain*, a hand-reared calf (Dwelly 1920, 514).

**Gogan, m.** A wooden milk-pail, also **cogan**; from Sc. *cogue*, *cog*, apparently allied to M. Eng. *cog*, ship (MacBain 1896, 180).

**Goirtean, goirtein, m.** A little field; a little farm; a small patch of arable ground; a little corn-field (Armstrong 1825).

**Gradan, gradain, m.** Parched corn (Armstrong 1825).

**Graidheach, graidhaich, m.** A stallion (Armstrong 1825).

**Gràilleag, f.** Morsel, little bit, as of meat, cheese, &c. –Wester Ross (Dwelly 1920, 520).

**Grainnseag, grainnseig, f.** A cracknel; a hard brittle cake (Armstrong 1825).

**Gramache, f.** A flesh-hook (Armstrong 1825).

**Gràn, gràin, m.** Dried corn; grain. *Gràn gradan*, parched corn [old word] (Armstrong 1825).

**Grànalach, grànalaich, f.** Grain (Armstrong 1825).

**Greàmach, m.** A streaked cow (Forbes 1905, 12).

**Greadag, greadaig, f.** A griddle or gridiron (Armstrong 1825).

**Greideal, greideil and greidealach, f.** A gridiron; a thin plate of iron for firing bannocks (Armstrong 1825).

**Greidlean, greidlein, m.** A thin wooden instrument for turning scones on a gridiron (Armstrong 1825).

**Grìdeoil, a.** Nourishing (Wentworth 1996, 111).

- Griseann**, *a. phr.* Black and White. *A' bhó ghriseann ghlas*, the black and white and grey cow (Wentworth 1996, 15).
- Grisg**, *v.* Roast; fry (Armstrong 1825).
- Grisgean**, **grisgein**, *m.* Roasted meat; boiled meat (Armstrong 1825).
- Gromag**, *f.* ... Mixture of oatmeal and churned cream (Dwelly 1920, 528).
- Gruagach**, **gruagaich**, *m.* and *f.* ... A female spectre of the class of brownies, to which the Highland dairy-maids made frequent libations of milk (Armstrong 1825).
- Gruigh**, see **gruth**, *m.* ... Dish of curds dressed with butter &c (Dwelly 1920, 529).
- Gruitheam**, **gruithem**, *m.* Curd-butter (that is, half butter and half curd finely mixed.) Crowdie. Curd-pie (Dwelly 1920, 529).
- Gruithim**, **grithim**. Curds, worked curds used as kitchen with no butter mixed – though the word is from *gruth* + *im*, no butter is mixed in the curds in Strath Carron, Wester Ross now (Carmichael 1971, 88).
- Gruitin**, *s.* Salt, old or sour butter (Forbes 1905, 103).
- Gruth**, *m.* Curds. *Cho gheal 's an gruth*, as white as curds (Armstrong 1825). Curds, Ir., M. Ir. *gruth*, Sc. *crowdie*, *croods* (MacBain 1896, 186).
- Gruthach**, *a.* (from *gruth*.) Curdled or coagulated; like curds; curdling; curd-producing (Armstrong 1825).
- Guail-fhionn**, *a.* Having white or speckled shoulders, as a cow, a name given to a cow with speckled shoulders (Armstrong 1825).
- Guarag**, **guarag-bleothainn**, *f.* A cow, a milk cow (Forbes 1905, 12).
- Guite**, *f.* A sieve; a fan or hand-winnow for corn, made of sheep skin applied to a hoop, somewhat resembling the end of a drum (Armstrong 1825).
- Gurraban**, *v.* Squatting, as when milking a cow (Mrs. Neil Campbell, Frobost, South Uist) (MacDonald 1958, 310).
- Iall**, *m.* A herd, a drove (Forbes 1905, 12).
- Iar-bhleothann**, **iar-bhleothainn**, *m.* After-milk (Armstrong 1825).
- Iarspealadh**, **iarspealaidh**, **iarspealaidhean**, *m.* After-grass; a second crop of grass (Dwelly 1920, 538).
- Igh**, *m.* Tallow; the fat of any slaughtered quadruped (Armstrong 1825).
- Ìm**, **ime**, *m.* Butter (Dwelly 1920, 540).

**Imdeal**, *m.* A vessel in which the milk is carried home from the shieling (Carmichael 1971, 91).

**Imbhuideal**, *m.* (Pronounced, *imideal*, *m* long.) Wooden keg or pail for carrying home milk and cream on the back from the sheilings (Dwelly 1920, 540).

**Ìmeach**, **imeiche**, *a.* Abounding in butter, butter. Like butter. Producing butter. *Ìmeach càiseach*, abounding in butter and cheese (Dwelly 1920, 540).

**Imeach**, *f.* Floor under cow in byre. *Cho aineolach ris a' bhó air an imeach*, as ignorant as the cow on the byre-floor (proverb) (Wentworth 1996, 21 & 80).

**Imeach**, *v.* Born. *Tha 'laogh air an imeach*, the calf's been born (commonly said to express pleasure on birth of calf) (Wentworth 1996, 22).

**Imeachtraidh**, *s.* Plough bullocks (Forbes 1905, 12).

**Ìm-éiginn**, *m.* Substitute for butter, made with milk and eggs and a little salt stirred together over the fire for a few minutes; custard, omelette (Dwelly 1920, 540).

**Imrich**, **imriche**, **imrichean**, *f.* Removal, changing of residence. Flit (Dwelly 1920, 541).

**Inealtair**, *v. a.* Feed cattle; pasture; graze (Armstrong 1825).

**Inealtrach**, *a.* Pasturing, grazing (Armstrong 1825).

**Inealtradh**, **inealtraidh**, *m.* A pasturing or grazing; pasturage (Armstrong 1825).

**Ingealtas**, **ingealtais**, *m.* Pasture ground; ground fit for feeding cattle (Armstrong 1825).

†**Inghilt**, *f.* Feeding, grazing, pasture (Armstrong 1825).

**Ingilt**, *f.* Feeding, grazing. Pasture (Armstrong 1825).

**Inilt**, *f.* ... Pasture. Fodder. Cattle. *Tha 'n crodh air an inilt*, the cattle are on the pasture (Dwelly 1920, 542).

**Inilt**, *v.* Feed cattle. Pasture, graze (Dwelly 1920, 542).

**Inneir**, **innearrach**, *f.* Manure, dung (Armstrong 1825).

**Innis**, **innse**, *pl.* **innsean** & **innseachan**, *f.* Island. Sheltered valley protected by a wood. Field to graze cattle in. Pasture, resting-place for cattle. Choice place—*Islay*. Headland. Haugh, riverside meadow. In *Ross & Suth 'd* applied to a low-lying and sheltered place, where cows are gathered to be milked, and where they lie out at night. *Innis nam bó laoigh 's nam fiadh*, a resting-place for milk-cows and deer (Dwelly 1920, 543).

**Innis**, *pl.* **innseachan**, *f.* An island. A riverside meadow, haugh, inch. Milking place, a resting place. A green spot. O.Ir. *inis*. W. *ynys*. Lat. *insula* (MacLennan 1979, 197).

**Innlinn**, **innlinne**, *f.* Forage, provender, fodder. The third part of the straw left by the tenant who is removing for the one entering a farm, for bedding to the cattle to help manure (Dwelly 1920, 543).

**Innseagan**, *pl.* Small plots of arable land, as in hilly ground, or in woods (Armstrong 1825).

**Iodh**. An obsolete term for corn (Carmichael 1928, 310).

**Iodhlann**, **iodhlannain**, **iodhlannan**, *f.* Corn-yard (Dwelly 1994 [1920], 544).

**Iolaman**, *m.* Piece of skin tied over the mouth of the *imbhuideal* with strong thread (Dwelly 1920, 546).

**Iolann**, **iolannainn**, *m.* (*ioth-lann*.) A corn-yard (Armstrong 1825).

**Iomain**, *f.* A drove of sheep; a drove of black cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Iomain**, *pr. pt.* **ag iomain**, *v.* Urge, drive slowly as cattle (Dwelly 1920, 547).

**Iomain**, **iomaine**, & **iomaineach**, **iomainean**, *f.* Driving, act of driving or urging. Drove of black cattle (Dwelly 1920, 547).

**Iomainiche**, **iomainichean**, *m.* Driver of cattle, drover (Armstrong 1825).

**Ionaireach**. *Beathach mór ionaireach*, applied to a cow that can take her food well. (MacDonald 1897, 154). [Possibly from *ion-* (prefix meaning fitness - Dwelly).]

**Ionaltair**, **ionaltairean**, *f.* (See *ionaltradh*). *pres. part.* **ag ionaltradh**. Pasture, feed, browse, graze, feed in rough ground or in the fields after the removal of the crops. The word implies more of movement on the part of the animal than is required in an enclosed field of good grass. When used of animals in such a field the word means that they are eating, not lying down or standing still (Dwelly 1920, 553).

**Ionaltrach**, *a.* Pasturing, feeding, grazing (Armstrong 1825).

**Ionaltradh**, **ionaltraidh**, *m.* Pasture. Pasturing, feeding, grazing. A wandering, as of cattle on pasture ground (Armstrong 1825).

**Ionnail**, *s.* Cattle (Forbes 1905, 12).

**Iorlann**, *m.* Cellar, buttery, larder (Dwelly 1920, 556).

**Ioslann**, *m.* Pantry, storehouse, buttery (Dwelly 1920, 556).

**Ioth-lann, iothlainn, m.** A corn-yard; a barn; a granary. Written also *iadh-lann* and *iolann* (Armstrong 1825).

†**Lachd, f.** Milk (Armstrong 1825).

†**Lacmhor, lacmhoire, a.** Giving much milk. Abounding in milk. Prolific (Dwelly 1920, 562).

**Laob, m.** A cow (Old Ir.) (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Laith, laithe, f.** Sweet milk (Forbes 1905, 104)

**Làithre, f.** A cow (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Lamban, lambain, m.** Milk curdled by rennet (Dwelly 1920, 565).

**Lambanach, lambanaiche, a.** Abounding in or like curdled milk (Dwelly 1920, 565).

**Làn, s.** Fill. *Bha 'n crodha a' dul suas 'n a' mhonadh 's a' faighinn a' làn*, the cattle were going up to the hill and getting their fill. Expressed with *làn a' chuirp. Fhad 's a gheobh an crodh làn an cuirp*, as long as the cows get their fill (Wentworth 1996, 54).

**Lannair, f.** A cow (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Laogh, m.** A calf of a cow or deer (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Laogh, gen. & pl. laoigh, [laoghan] m.** Calf. *'S e laogh fireann (boireann) a th' ann*, it's a male (a female) calf (Wentworth 1996, 22).

**Laogh, ann a' laogh, prep. phr.** 'In calf'. *Tha 'bhó ann a' laogh* The cow is in calf (Wentworth 1996, 22).

**Laoghanach, laoghanaiche, a.** Abounding in little calves (Dwelly 1994, 569).

**Laogh-bailceach, m.** Fair, strong calf (Dwelly 1920, 569).

**Laogh-balgain, m.** Imitation calf, stuffed calf used to deceive the cow, her own calf's skin being used, *tulchan*-calf (Dwelly 1920, 569).

**Laogh-bailgfionn, m.** White-bellied calf (Dwelly 1920, 569).

**Laogh-bailgionn, m.** A white-bellied calf (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Laogh-fheoil, f.** Veal; *lit.* calf's flesh (Armstrong 1825).

**Laogh-gogain, m.** Calf brought up by hand (Dwelly 1920, 569).

**Laogh-ligheach, m.** A newly-calved cow (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Laogh-meadair**, *m.* Calf brought up by hand (Dwelly 1920, 569).

**Laogh-samhraidh**, *m.* Summer calf (Wentworth 1996, 58).

**Laocionn, lao'cinn, laoghcionn, laoisgean**, *m.* A stuffed in imitation of a real calf (Forbes 1905, 13). *Tulchan*-calf, calf-skin. (Dwelly 1920, 569).

**Leabadh laoigh**. At one time (as to-day) she-calves were more in request than he-calves. If people wished to have she-calves they buried the *leabadh laoigh* (matrix) [placenta of a she-calf I presume] at a boundary stream (MacDonald 1897, 160).

**Leamh-lachd**, *f.* Sweet milk. Insipid milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Leamhnachd**, *f.* Sweet milk; a corruption of *leamh-lachd* (Armstrong 1825).

**Lèan, lèin**, *m.* A meadow, swampy ground (Armstrong 1825).

**Lèanag, lèanaig**, *f.* A little plain or meadow (Armstrong 1825).

**Learg, leirg**, *f.* A sloping green or green slope; a plain field (Armstrong 1825).

**Leargann, leargainn**, *f.* (from *learg*.) A small sloping green field; the side of a green hill; steep pasture ground (Armstrong 1825).

**Leargainneach**, *a.* Having steep pasture ground (Armstrong 1825).

**Leasaich**, *v.* (from *leas*.) Improve; manure (Armstrong 1825).

**Leasaichte**, *p. part.* of *leasaich*. Improved, manured; also, rennetted, as milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Leastar**, *m.* Milk-dish (Forbes 1905, 104).

**Leastar, leastair**, *m.* Cup, vessel (Dwelly 1920, 578).

**Leig, leighidh**, *v.* Permit, allow; milk, as cows (MacLeod and Dewar 1920, 364).

**Leigeil**, *gen.* **Leigealach**, *m.* Permitting, act of permitting, allowing or granting. A milking, act of milking (MacLeod and Dewar 1920, 364).

**Leigte**, *past pt.* of **leig**. Permitted, let out, let off. Milked (MacLeod and Dewar 1920, 364).

**Lethchas**. *Tha sinn ag obair air lethchois*, *i.e.* in agriculture, when one party supplies the land and the seed and the other the labour of manuring and cultivating, and they share the produce (MacDonald 1958, 162). [Dwelly does not give this meaning for this word. See discussion.]

**Lethtrath**, *m.* Half rations. Half allowance. Milking once a day (Dwelly 1920, 586).



**Leug, léig, m.** A crystal (Armstrong 1825).

**Leum, léim, pl. leuma, leuman & leumannan, m.** (*f.* in Badenoch). ... Animal semen (Dwelly 1920, 586).

**Leum, m.** Milk (Forbes 1905, 104).

**Leun, lein, m.** A meadow; a field of luxuriant grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Lian, s.** A meadow. See *lón* (Armstrong 1825).

**Lian, lianach, lianaiche, a.** Of many fields, plains, or meadows (Dwelly 1920, 588).

**Lianachan, lianachain, m.** Little meadow (Dwelly 1920, 588).

**Lianag, lianaig, lianagan, f.** (*dim.* of *lian.*) Small field or meadow (Dwelly 1920, 588).

**Lias, léis, m.** Hut for calves or lambs (Armstrong 1825).

**Liath.** In Uist, light blue. *Tha dath liath air a' bhainne sin* (that milk looks blue). Heard on Canna, also of milk, and of bluebells (MacDonald 1897, 164).

**Liath-bhrochan, m.** Thick gruel made of milk and meal, well boiled with a piece of butter in it (*Gael. Soc. Of Inverness*, xiv, 149).

**Liath-ruisgean, m.** Name given to the months March and April when fodder is scarce (Dwelly 1920, 589).

**Libhearn, libheirn, m.** ... A dowry, cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Licheach, ligheach, f.** A cow (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Ligheach, -ich, f.** Cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Liobhgach, s.** A cow with calf (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Lìon, lìonìn, lìontan, m.** Lint (Dwelly 1920, 591).

**Lios, m.** An enclosure or stalls for cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Lite, f.** Porridge, pottage; posset (Armstrong 1825).

**Lobhgach, lobhgaich, f.** A cow with calf (Armstrong 1825).

**Lochraidh, s.** Cattle (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Loguid, m. & f.** A lean, starving cow (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Loilgeach, lulgach.** A newly-calved cow, a milk cow (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Lòinean, lòinein, m.** A little meadow (Armstrong 1825).

**Loinid, f.** A churn-staff; a wooden instrument for frothing cream [?] (Armstrong 1825).

**Loinid, loinide, loinidean, f.** Churn-staff. Whisk. Instrument like a churn-staff but of smaller size and with a twisted rope of hair round the horizontal part of it, with which milk or whey is frothed, called also ‘*loinid-omhain*’ (Dwelly 1920, 596).

**Loinig, loininn, f.** A lane for cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Loinn, loinne, f.** Good condition, fatness (Dwelly 1920, 596).

**Loireag, loireigh, loireagan, f.** A handsome, rough, or shaggy cow (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Loisgrean, loisgrein, m.** Burnt corn; corn burnt out of the ear instead of being threshed [*gradan* ?] (Armstrong 1825). *Gradan* is the “expeditious mode of drying grain for the quern by burning the straw” (Dwelly 1920, 519).

**Lombair, f.** A field with a meagre crop of grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Lòn, lòin, m.** A meadow (Armstrong 1825).

**Lòn, lòin, m.** A diet; dinner; store; provision, food. The Gael of former times, like other ancient nations, had but one meal or diet a day, the *lòn* (Armstrong 1825).

**Lonainn, f.** A lane or passage for cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Lorg-iomain, f.** A goad; a stick to drive cattle with (Armstrong 1825).

**Luarach, luaraich, f.** Chain. Milking fetter. Fetters (Armstrong 1825).

**Luighein.** A cloven foot (as of a cow) as distinct from *bròg*, a foot not cloven (as of a horse), Canna also (MacDonald 1897, 169).

**Luilgeach, f.** Milk-cow (Armstrong 1825).

†**Luim, luime, f.** Milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Luim, luime, f.** Milk (Ir. *loim*.) (Forbes 1905, 104).

**Luimlinn, f.** Stream of milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Lulagan, m.** A stuffed imitation calf (Forbes 1905, 13). (See *laoighcionn*.)

**Lulaic, f.** Milk of newly-calved cow (Forbes 1905, 104).

†**Lulgach, lulgach, f.** A milk-cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Lulgach, lulgach.** Newly-calved cow (Forbes 1905, 13).

**Lunn, luinn & lunna, pl. lunnan, m.** Churn-staff (Armstrong 1825).

**Lunnaid, f.** Pin of a cow-fetter—*Wester Ross*. (Dwelly 1920, 610).

**Màg, màig, màgan, f.** Paw. Claw. Ludicrous term for the hand. *Gu `n gleidheadh Dia a' mhuirichinn 's a' mhàg-bhleòthainn*, may God keep the children and the milking hand—a Perthshire wish when one gets a drink of milk (Dwelly 1920, 622).

**Màg, màig, màgan, f.** Arable field, field that can be ploughed, arable land--North. Very broad ridge of land--West (Dwelly 1994, 622).

**Màg, pl. màgan, f.** Rig (of arable ground). *Ceannmhag s.* Head-rig, heid-rig, (Wentworth 1996, 134).

**Màgan ma seach, s.** Run-rig (Wentworth 1996, 137).

**Maide a' bhallain, m.** Stick run through the handles of a tub when carrying it (Dwelly 1920, 623).

**Maindreach, maindreich, m.** A hut, booth, fold (Armstrong 1825).

**Mainnir, mainnreach & manrach, pl. mainnirean & mainnrichean, f.** Fold for cattle, sheep or goats on the hill-side, pen (Armstrong 1825).

**Mairt-fheoil, mairt-fheòla, f.** Beef (Armstrong 1825).

**Maistir, f.** A churn (Armstrong 1825).

**Maistreachadh, maistreachaidh, m.** Churning, act of churning, making butter. Mixing. Agitating. The quantity of butter taken off a churn (Dwelly 1920, 626).

**Maistreadh, m.** The process of churning (Armstrong 1825).

**Maistrich, pr. pt. a' maistreachadh, v.** Churn. Mix together. Agitate (Dwelly 1920, 626).

**Maistrichte, past pt. of maistrich.** Churned. Shaken together, mixed (Dwelly 1920, 626).

**Maithreach, f.** A mother cow or sheep (Forbes 1905, 14).

**Màl, màil, m.** Rent, tribute, tax (Armstrong 1825).

**Màladair, m.** (from *màl*.) A tenant, one who pays rent. A farmer of the customs (Armstrong 1825).

**Màlair, m.** A renter, a cottager, holding of a farmer (Armstrong 1825).

**Mànrach, mànraich, m.** A fold, a pen, a cattlehouse (Armstrong 1825).

**Maoineach, a.** (from *maoin*- wealth). Productive, fertile (Armstrong 1825).

**Maoiseach, maoiseich, maoiseichean, maoisleach, maoisleich, maoisleichean, f.** A roe, doe, heifer (Forbes 1905, 14).

**Maol, a.** Hornless, of a cow. *Bó mhaol. Maol, maile, maoileanach* (MacDonald 1897, 174).

**Maolag, maolaigh, f.** (from *maol* - bald). A name given to a cow without horns (Armstrong 1825).

**Maolag, f.** ... a dish for milk (MacLennan 1979, 221).

**Maolanach, maolanaich, m.** A stake driven into the ground to support 'flakes' (movable hurdles) for keeping cattle in a fold; the stake of a wooden fold or pen (Armstrong 1825).

**Marag, maraig, f.** A blood-pudding; a sausage. *Marag dubh*, a blood-pudding hardened in smoke (Armstrong 1825).

**Marbhuas, m.** Many cows (Forbes 1905, 14).

**Marchainn, s.** Stock of cattle (MacDonald 1897, 175).

**Marruinn, s.** Milk, cream, and their products (Dwelly 1920, 634).

**Marruinneach, a.** Productive of cream, milk, &c. *Mart math marruinn*, a good productive cow (Dwelly 1920, 634).

**Mart, mairt, f.** A cow. *Mart-geamhraidh*, a winter mart; a cow killed for winter food (Armstrong 1825). Cow or steer fattened for killing. The common expression was *mart-lamhaig*, or *mart-tuaighe*, (literally a hatchet cow). Milk-cow, Gairloch. *Mart geamhraidh*, a winter 'mart'. (*Mart* in a general sense is applied to cattle of any description.) (Dwelly 1920, 634). Ir. *mart*, a cow, a beef, E. Ir. *mart*, a beef; hence Sc. *mart*, a cow killed for family (winter) use and salted. The idea of *mart* is a cow for killing: *martâ*, from root *mar*, die, of *marbh*? (MacBain 1896, 219). See LEIA s.v. *mart* for correct etymology.

**Mart, pl. mart, m.** Cow (generally used when counting). *Tha trì mart aice*, she has three cows (Wentworth 1996, 32).

**Martach, martaiche, a.** Having many cows. Pertaining to cows (Dwelly 1920, 634).

**Mart-bhainne, f.** A milk cow (Armstrong 1825). [Plural ?]

**Mart-bainne, pl. mairt-bhainne, m.** Milk-cow (Dwelly 1920, 635).

**Mart-fheòil, mart-fheòla, f.** Beef (Armstrong 1825).

**Mathachadh, mathachaidh, m.** A manuring; manure; an improving (Armstrong 1825).

**Mathaich, v.** (from *math.*) Manure; improve; make good (Armstrong 1825).

**Meadar, Measair, m.** Milk-dish, measure (Forbes 1905, 104).

**Meadar, meadair, m.** (from *mead* - measure). A small ansated wooden dish, bicker; churn; milk-pail (Armstrong 1825).

**Meadar, meadair, pl. meadaran & meadraichean, m.** Small pail, or circular wooden vessel. Bicker. Churn. *Meadar-bleoghainn*, a milk pail; *meadar-ime*, a butter pail; *meadar-imideal*, a pail whose mouth is covered with a skin (for any liquid) (Dwelly 1920, 638).

**Meag, meig, and mìg, m.** Whey. *Deoch mhéig*, a drink of whey (Armstrong 1825).

**Meagail, a.** Serous; like whey; full of whey (Armstrong 1825).

**Mealag, f.** Matted roots of grass, of bent (MacLennan 1979, 224). [Used in some places to clean the dairy implements.]

**Meanbh-chrodh, meanbh-chruidh, s.** Small cattle, as sheep and goats (Armstrong 1825).

**Meanbh-chrodh, meamnachair, meanachair.** Small cattle, sheep, or goats (Forbes 1905, 14).

**Meanbh-spreidh, f.** collective. Small cattle, as sheep and goats (Armstrong 1825).

**Meang.** Whey (Carmichael 1928, 327).

**Mear - ri mear, a.** Agitated (of cattle). *Dar a chì thu an crodh ri mear, sin agad soighn air an droch thide*, when you see the cattle agitated, that's a sign of bad weather (Wentworth 1996, 3).

**Measair, pr. pt. a' measradh, v.** Churn. *Measair am bàrr*, churn the cream (Dwelly 1994, 643).

**Measair, measrach, measraichean, f.** Dish, measure (*mias.*) Tub, measure. Milk-dish (Dwelly 1920, 643).

**Measgan, measgain, m.** ... A small dish of butter (Armstrong 1825).

**Measgan, measgain, measganan, m.** Dish used to hold butter, butter-crock (Dwelly 1920, 644).

**Measradh, measraidh, m.** The quantity of cream or butter in the churn at any given time. **A' measradh, pr. pt.** of *measair* (Dwelly 1920, 644).

**Meathusradh, s.** Fatlings (Forbes 1905, 14).

**Meidh-alach or meidh-allach, meitheallach, m.** Fat cattle (Forbes 1905, 14).

**Méil, v.** Grind, as corn (Armstrong 1825).

**Méile, f.** A hand-mill; a pestle; a stick for turning a quern (Armstrong 1825).

†**Meilg, m.** ... Milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Méilte, p. part.** of **méil.** Ground; grinded; *Gràn méilte*, ground grain (Armstrong 1825).

**Meòdar, m.** Luxuriant pasture (Dwelly 1920, 647).

**Meog, gen. meoig and mìge.** Whey. Written also *meag* (Armstrong 1825).

**Meòg, meòig & meig, m.** Whey (Dwelly 1920, 647).

**Meògach, meògaiche, a.** Of whey, like whey, serous (Dwelly 1920, 647).

**Meogah, a.** Like whey; abounding in whey (Armstrong 1825).

**Meogail, a.** (*meog-amhuil.*) Serous; like whey (Armstrong 1825).

**Meug, meig, and mìge, m.** Whey. See *meag* (Armstrong 1825).

**Meugach, a.** Serous; like whey; full of whey (Armstrong 1825).

**Meugail, a.** Serous; like whey (Armstrong 1825).

**Miad, m.** A meadow; a plain. *Miad-fheurach*, having meadow-grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Miadan, miadain, m.** (dim. of *miad.*) A meadow; a plain (Armstrong 1825).

**Miadanach, a.** Meadowy; belonging to a meadow (Armstrong 1825).

**Miadar, miadair, m.** A meadow, a plain (Armstrong 1825).

**Miad-fheur, miad-fheòir, m.** Meadow-grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Miad-fheurach, a.** Grassy; having long grass; like meadow-grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Milcein, meilcein.** Whey (Carmichael 1928, 328).

**Mileach.** Fine grass (MacDonald 1897, 179).

**Milleach**, *m.* Tender, sappy grass (MacLennan 1979, 230).

**Millteach**, **milltich**, *m.* Good grass, tufts of grass, mountain grass. *Barr a' mhilltich*, the top of the grassy tufts. *Gleann a' mhilltich*, the grassy glen (Dwelly 1920, 656).

**Millteach**, **milteach**, *m.* Sweet hill grass, arrow-grass. Also *milneach* (MacLennan 1979, 230).

**Min**, **mine**, *f.* Meal; any comminuted or pulverized substance (Armstrong 1825).

**Min-eallach**, **min-eallaich**, *f.* Small cattle, sheep or goats (Armstrong 1825).

**Min-fheur**, **min-fheòr**, *m.* Soft grass; smooth grass; a meadow (Armstrong 1825).

**Min-lach**, **mìn-laich**, *f.* The finest of grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Miodar**, **miodair**, *m.* A small ansated wooden dish, (see *meadar*); also, pasture ground, a meadow (Armstrong 1825).

**Miodarach**, *a.* Ansated, like a wooden dish; meadowy; having pasture ground (Armstrong 1825).

**Mion-bhallach**, *a.* Small-spotted, speckled. *Laoigh mhion-bhallach*, spotted calves (Armstrong 1825).

**Miosair**. *Miosraichean bainne*, from *miosair*, a large vessel to allow milk to lie in for cream [to rise] (MacDonald 1897, 180).

**Miosgan**, **miosgain**, *m.* A kitt, or small wooden vessel for containing butter (Armstrong 1825). Cheese-vat (Dwelly 1920, 661).

**Miosganach**, **miosganaiche**, *a.* Abounding in butter-kitts; like a butter-kitt; butter-making (Armstrong 1825).

**Mire**, *f.* A mow of hay or corn (Armstrong 1825).

**Mir-mòr**, *s.* A mess composed of chopped collops mixed with marrow and herb-seeds (Armstrong 1825).

**Mislean**, **mislein**, *m.* A wild flower; kind of mountain-grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Misleanach**, *a.* Grassy; abounding in mountain-grass; vegetative. *Glacag misleanach*, a grassy dell (Armstrong 1825).

**Miùg**, **miùig**, *m.* Whey. *Deoch mhiùig*, a drink of whey (Armstrong 1825).

†**Mhodh-dhamh**, **mhodh-dhaimh**, *m.* A plough-ox (Armstrong 1825).

**Moin-fheur, moin-fheoir, m.** Mountain grass; coarse meadow-grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Monadh, monaidh, m.** A hill, mountain, moor; an extensive common (Armstrong 1825).

**Monadh, monaidh, monaidhean, m.** Mountain, moor, range. Heath, heathy expanse, desert. Tolerably level hill-ground. Any hill pasture as distinguished from meadow and arable land (Dwelly 1920, 670). Also, *a' chrìoch eadar monadh Eàrradail agus a' Rubha Dheirg*, the boundary between the Erradale and Redpoint hill-grazing (Wentworth 1996, 18).

**Monanda, a.** Like hill-ground. *Bha 'lota sin na bu mhonanda*, that croft was more like hill-ground (Wentworth 1996, 75).

**Mòran, mòrain, s.** ...Meadow grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Mòr-dhamh, m.** Cattle leader (Forbes 1905, 14).

**Mórearrann.** Technically used by the small tenants in Uist for the Common (i.e. common grazing) (MacDonald 1958, 183).

**Mòrlanachd, f.** Statute work done by tenants to their landlords (Armstrong 1825).

**Mòthan, m.** Bog-violet. Steep grass, earning grass. On cows' milk it acts like rennet (Dwelly 1920, 673).

**Mualach, mualaich, m.** Cow dung (Armstrong 1825).

**Muathal.** Lowing of a cow (MacDonald 1958, 184).

**Muidhe, f.** A churn. *Ri muidhe*, churning. Also *muighe* (Armstrong 1825).

**Muidhe, pl. muidhean & muidheachan, m.** Churn. *Thoir a mhuidhe*, churn (*lit.* bring to churn – *Lochcarron, Gairloch & Torridon*. Paddle-churn—*Lochbroom* (Dwelly 1920, 676).

**Muilleann bràdh, m.** A hand mill or quern (Armstrong 1825).

**Muilleán.** Truss of hay weighing 56 pounds. *Muilleán feur*, an armful of hay (Wentworth 1996, 6).

**Mulachag, mulachaig, mulachagan, f.** A cheese, cheeses. *Mulachagan càise*, cheeses (Armstrong 1825).

**Mulachag, mulachaig, mulachagan, f.** A cheese, the lump, a kebbuck (Dwelly 1920, 680).

**Mulachagach, mulachagaiche, a.** Abounding in cheeses. Shaped like cheeses (Dwelly 1920, 680).



**Mulad**, *m.* Labour pains (cow) (MacLennan 1979, 239).

**Mulchag Bhealltainn**. Cheese made on the first of May, and kept in the house till next *Latha Bealltainn* (MacDonald 1897, 185).

**Mulchag imbrig**. A special cheese called the flitting kebbock (MacDonald 1897, 185). [See *imrich*.]

**Mullan, mullain, m.** ... Kind of milking vessel (Armstrong 1825).

**Muthach, muthaich, m.** A herd; a cowherd (Armstrong 1825).

**Muthach, muthaich, muthaichean, m.** ... Milk contractor (Dwelly 1920, 682).

**Nasg, naisg, nasgan, m.** Tieband, wooden collar for a cow, formerly made of plaited or twisted birch or other twigs (Dwelly 1920, 686).

**Neasg, neisg, m.** ... A tie; a stall (Armstrong 1825).

**Nì, n. pl.** Cattle, neat, nowt. Applied to flocks and herds of all kinds (Dwelly 1920, 698).

**Nì, nith, s.** Cattle, cows, flocks, herds (Forbes 1905, 15).

**Nimhe (neime), s.** Exempt cattle (Forbes 1905, 15), Old Irish *Nemed*.

**Noigean, noigean, noigeanan, m.** Cup. Wooden cup. Noggin (measure of ¼ pint) (Dwelly 1920, 700).

**Noigean, nogen, m.** Scots *noggie*, or wooden dish, with one handle or ear (MacLennan 1979, 247).

**Nòs, Nòis, m.** ... Biestings, or a cow's first milking after calving (Armstrong 1825).

**Nòs, nùis, m.** ... Chyle, beastings. First of anything. *Bainne nùis*, beastly milk—*Argyll* (Dwelly 1920, 700).

**Nòs, m.** A cow's first milk. E. Ir. *nus*; from *nua*, new, and *ass*, milk (MacBain 1896, 238).

**Nòsar, a.** ... Juicy; sappy. *Feur nòsa*, juicy grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Nuallanaich, f.** A lowing. *Nuallanaich spreidh*, the lowing of cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Òcrach, gen. òcraich, pl. òcraichena, m.** Midden. *n. phr.* *Òcrach a'bhàithich*, the byre midden (Wentworth 1996, 102). [Dwelly has the spelling as *òtrach*, listing *òcrach* as 'the Gairloch spelling'].

**Òg-bhó, òg-bhoin, m.** A young cow, a heifer (Armstrong 1825).

**Òg-mhart, òg-mhairt, m.** A young cow, a heifer, young beef (Armstrong 1825).

†**Oluidh, f.** A cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Oluidh, f.** A cow, also a ewe (Forbes 1905, 15).

**Omhan, omhain, m.** Froth of milk or whey, especially the thicker whey pressed out of curds (Dwelly 1920, 709).

**Omhanach, omhanaiche, a.** Frothy, abounding in froth of milk or whey (Dwelly 1920, 709).

**Omhan, othan, m.** Froth of milk or whey. Ir. *uan*, E. Ir. *úan*, froth, foam, W. *ewyn*, Br. *eon* (MacBain 1896, 242).

**Omhan-fuar, m.** Ice-cream. Actually frozen or chilled froth of churned sweet milk (Wentworth 1996, 80).

**Orra, ortha, or, f.** Amulet or enchantment, a charm to effect something wonderful; *orra-sheamlachais*, an amulet to make a cow allow the calf of another cow to suck her (MacLennan 1979, 252).

**Ort(s) s.** Refuse of fodder (Wentworth 1996, 114).

**Othaisg, f.** A hog, a sheep one year old (Armstrong 1825).

**Othaisgeach, a.** Like a sheep or hog, abounding in hogs (Armstrong 1825).

**Othan, othain, m.** The froth of boiled whey or milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Othanach, a.** Frothy; foaming like boiled whey or milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Paic, f.** Piece, lump, as of butter (Dwelly 1920, 716).

**Pàirc, f.** A park; an enclosed field, an enclosure. A field (Armstrong 1825).

**Paiteag, paiteig, f.** Butter; a small lump of butter (Armstrong 1825).

**Pannag, pannaig, f.** A cake, a pancake. Written also *bannag* and *bonnag* (Armstrong 1825).

**Peilicean.** A name for cattle. I was told it meant stout short-backed cows, roundish. *Sin agaibh rud peiliceanach, rud cruinn goirid* (?). I am inclined to think it may mean shaggy. *Peilchdan*, pet name of a cow in S. Uist (MacDonald 1897, 194). [This is probable as Dwelly lists *peallach, -aiche*, as ‘shaggy, having rough or matted hair’.]

**Peula, m.** Milk-pail. W. *paeo*. (MacLennan 1979, 256).

**Pileistreadh**, *m.* Rancidness (Dwelly 1920, 721).

**Piliostar**. What sticks to the side of the vessel when milk has been in it a long time (Uist and Lewis) (Carmichael 1971 vol. 6, 15).

**Pinndich**. Uist for *binndich*, to curdle, to coagulate (MacDonald 1897, 195).

**Plam**, *a.* Curdled (Armstrong 1825).

**Plam**, **plaim**, **plaman**, *m.* Anything curdled or clotted (Dwelly 1920, 725).

**Plamach**, **plamaiche**, *a.* Curdled, thick (Dwelly 1920, 725).

**Plamach**. Thick, of milk (MacDonald 1897, 195).

**Plamrachadh**, **plamrachaidh**, *m.* Warming of milk for curdling (Dwelly 1920, 725).

**Plamraich**, *pr. pt. a' plamrachadh*, *v.* Warm or prepare milk for curdling (Dwelly 1920, 725).

**Pleod**, *v.* Warm slightly, as milk (Dwelly 1920, 726).

**Plumaich**, *v.* Coagulate without yeast, as milk (Dwelly 1920, 729).

**Plumaichte**, *a.* Curdled. *Bainne plumaich*, curdled milk (Dwelly 1920, 729).

**Poc**, *m.* The mumps, also a disease in cattle in Caithness. It means to become like a bag or sack (Dwelly 1920, 729).

**Poc-uisge**, *n.* Water-bag of calving cows (Wentworth 1996, 33).

**Pola**, *n.* Bowl. *Pola bainne*, a bowl of milk (Dwelly 1994, 731).

**Polachan**, *m.* Small clay jar about 15 to 18 inches high used in Lewis for holding cream (Dwelly 1920, 731).

**Ponnan**, *m.* Bunch, cluster, group, herd (Dwelly 1920, 732).

**Ponnanaich**, *v.* Herd (Dwelly 1920, 732).

**Praiseach**, **praiseich**, *f.* Broth; pottage; gruel; a kind of kail (Armstrong 1825).

**Prasach**, **prasaich**, *f.* A manger; a stall (Armstrong 1825).

**Prasgan**, **pragain**, *m.* A flock; a herd (Armstrong 1825).

**Proinn**, *f.* A meal or diet; a dinner (Armstrong 1825).

**Proinneachadh**, **proinneachaidh**, *m.* A dieting, a dining; a diet, dinner (Armstrong 1825).

**Pronn, proinn, m.** A dinner; food (Armstrong 1825).

**Pronn, m.** Bran. *Gheobh mi pocaichean pronn dhan a' chrodh*, I'll get sacks of bran for the cows (Wentworth 1996, 18).

**Prothán, m.** Drink of oatmeal stirred in warm water, for cattle (Wentworth 1996, 112).

**Pruidh!** *int.* Call to cattle--*Perth, N. Argyll, Mull.* Call to a cow or calf--*Wester Ross.* Call to a calf--*Arran* (Dwelly 1920, 739).

**Pruidh-dhé!** *int.* Call to a cow--*Badenoch, & N. Argyll* (Dwelly 1920, 739).

**Pruidh-dhé bheag!** *int.* Call to a calf--*N. Argyll* (Dwelly 1920, 739).

**Pruidh-é!** *int.* Call to a calf--*Perth & Suth'd.* Call to a cow near at hand--*Argyll* (Dwelly 1920, 739).

**Pruidh-seo!** *int.* Call to a calf--*Mull* (Dwelly 1920, 739).

**Pruigean!** *int.* Call to a cow or calf-- *Wester Ross* (Dwelly 1920, 739).

**Pruigeán, pl. pruingean, m.** *Ciamar a tha na pruingean an diugh?* How are the calves today? *Seoll na pruingean a' ruith*, look at the calves running. *Am Pruigeán Ruadh*, the Red Calf, (a man's nickname) (Wentworth 1996, 22).

**Pubull or pubal.** *Thàinig pubal mór air a' mhart*, a lump on the side of a cow that has been gored by another. (MacDonald 1897, 197).

**Puingean, puingein, m.** Roll of butter (Armstrong 1825).

**Punnan, punnain, m.** A sheaf of corn; a bundle of hay or straw (Armstrong 1825).

**Ràchd, m.** A rake for gathering hay (Armstrong 1825).

**Rànaíl, v.** Bawl, cry, also low loudly, of cattle (Wentworth 1996, 10).

**Raoine, f.** A young barren cow (Forbes 1905, 16).

**Raoine, f.** Young cow that has had a calf, or even two, but is barren and has the calf's share of milk on her thighs (Dwelly 1920, 749).

**Raon, raoin, pl. raontan, raonaichean & raointean, f.** A plain, field, green; an upland field or plain (Armstrong 1825). Field. *Raon corc*, a field of oats (Wentworth 1996, 54).

**Raonach, a.** Meadowy; having fields or greens; of a field or green; of an upland plain (Armstrong 1825).

**Rap, rob, rop, m.** Any creature that digs for its food or that draws its food towards it, as cows (Forbes 1905, 16).

**Ràsdal, ràsdail, m.** A rake for hay [Early Irish *rastal* - see MacBain] (Armstrong 1825).

**Reamhar, a.** Fat. *Reamhar am feòil*, fat fleshed (Armstrong 1825).

**Reamhraich, v.** Fatten; make fat (Armstrong 1825).

**Reamhraichte, p.** *part of reamhraich*. Fattened, fed (Armstrong 1825).

**Reathlan, reathlain, m.** A plain, a field, a level field (Armstrong 1825).

**Reidh, m.** A plain; a meadow; level ground (Armstrong 1825).

**Reidhleanach, a.** Smooth or plain, meadowy (Armstrong 1825).

**Réidhne, m.** Well-conditioned heifer (MacLennan 1979, 266).

**Reidhneach, m.** A barren cow - *Suth'd* (Forbes 1905, 16).

**Reidhne-mairt, m.** Cow that does not give milk and is not with calf—*Wester Ross-shire* (Dwelly 1920, 753).

**Reithe, m.** A ram (Armstrong 1825).

**Reitheadh, reitheidh, m.** Ramming; the copulation of the ovile species (Armstrong 1825).

**Reitheadh, a., pr. part. of reithe.** A mounting of sheep, as by rams. *A reitheadh na spreidhe*, mounting the sheep (Armstrong 1825).

**Riamlach, f.** The head of the *loinid*, churn plunger, with the hairs sticking out from the rope (Carmichael 1971, 118).

**Rideal, rideil, m.** A riddle or coarse sieve (Armstrong 1825).

**Righe, m.** Field, bottom of a valley (Dwelly 1920, 760).

**Righe, righean, m.** ... Summer residence for herdsmen and cattle, sheiling (Dwelly 1920, 760).

**Rocan, rocain, m.** ... A little fold (Armstrong 1825).

**Ròist, v.** Roast, toast; scorch, parch (Armstrong 1825).

**Roistean, roistein, m.** A gridiron, a frying-pan (Armstrong 1825).

**Ròl, ròil and ròla, m.** ... A swathe or roll of hay or grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Ròlag, ròlaig**, *f.* (*dim.* of *ròl.*) A little roll; a swathe or roll of hay or grass. *Ròlag fheoir*, a roll or swathe of hay or grass (Armstrong 1825).

**Ròn, ròin**, *m.* The hair of the mane or tail of a horse, or of a cow's-tail. The rim of hair around the wooden instrument by which cream [*sic.*] is commonly worked into froth (Armstrong 1825). A milk-whipper or frother, a wooden instrument with a rim of hair around it (Forbes 1905, 104). *Ròn Ionaid*, a circle of hair round the frothing-stick (Dwelly 1920, 770).

**Rosta**, *p. part.* of *ròist*. Roasted; toasted. *Feòil rosta*, roast meat (Armstrong 1825).

**Rucan, rucain**, *m.* A conical heap of corn or hay (Armstrong 1825).

**Ruchd**, *m.* A conical rick of hay or corn (Armstrong 1825).

**Ruideasach**, *a.* Frisky, playful, gamboling. *Bu ruideasach gamhainn is laogh*, playful were the stirks and calves - Old Song (Armstrong 1825).

**Rugaid**, *f.* An old cow; a long neck (MacLennan 1979, 275).

**Ruidhe**, *n.* Dairy. Sheiling (Dwelly 1920, 776).

**Ruig**, *m.* A half-castrated ram, a ridgeling (Armstrong 1825).

**Ruigeachd**, *f.* Castration; the state of being castrated (Armstrong 1825).

**Ruighe**, *f.* A shepherd's cot; a sheiling or hut built in the midst of hill pasture, where cattle are tended during the summer months; also called *bothan àiridh* (Armstrong 1825). The outstretched part or base of a mountain, sheiling ground, E. Ir. *rige, rigid*, a reach, reaches; from the root *reg*, stretch (MacBain 1896, 268). [See *righe*.]

**Ruighe a' Bhothain**. Sheiling of the Bothy (Cameron 1949, 301).

**Ruiglean, ruiglein**, *m.* A ridgeling, a half-castrated goat (Armstrong 1825).

**Ruith**, *gen.* **ruithe, ruithean**, *f.* Run. Area with slowly flowing or seeping water, often from a small loch, which is greener than the surrounding hill (Wentworth 1996, 137).

**Rùsgach**, *a.* Peeling, fleecing; stripping; also fleecy. *Caoraich rùsgach*, fleecy sheep (Armstrong 1825).

**Rùsgadh, rùsgaidh**, *m.* A peeling, a fleecing; a fleece (Armstrong 1825).

**Rùsgan, rùsgain**, *m.* A little fleece (Armstrong 1825).

**Ruta, rutadh, ruitaidh**, *m.* A ram; also a herd (Armstrong 1825).

**Sabail**, *n.* A granary, a barn. Now written *sabhal* (Armstrong 1825).

- Sàbhail**, *v.* Save, protect, spare. Store up in a barn (Armstrong 1825).
- Sabhal**, **sabhail**, *pl.* **sabhalan** & **saibhlean**, *m.* Barn, granary (Dwelly 1920, 781).
- Saill**, **saille**, *f.* Fatness; fat, grease (Armstrong 1825).
- Sailm-uchd**, *m.* An ointment, of which fresh butter and healing herbs are the principal ingredients (Armstrong 1825).
- Salchar**, *f.* Afterbirth. *Salchar na bà*, afterbirth of cow (Wentworth 1996, 32).
- Samh**. Fat, rich, herd, fold, flock (Carmichael 1928, 347).
- Saod**, **saoid**, *m.* ... A track or journey (Armstrong 1825).
- Saodach**, **saodaiche**, *v.* ... Driving as cattle. *A saodach 'a chruidh*, driving the cattle (Armstrong 1825).
- Saodachadh**, **saodachaidh**, *m.* Act of driving cattle, as to pasture, taking care of, tending (Armstrong 1825).
- Saodaich**, *pr. pt.* **a'saodachadh**, *v.* Drive cattle or flocks to pasture, or to a resting-place for the night (Dwelly 1920, 788).
- Saodaichte**, *past part.* of *saodaich*. Driven to pasture. Tended, taken care of (Dwelly 1920, 788).
- Saoidh**, **saidh**, *f.* Hay. *A gearradh na saidh*, mowing the hay-grass (Armstrong 1825).
- Saoidheadair**, *m.* A hay-cutter; hay maker (Armstrong 1825).
- Saoithreachadh**, **saoithreachaidh**, *m.* ... Tillage (Armstrong 1825).
- Saoithriche**, *m.* ... A tiller of the ground (Armstrong 1825).
- Saoth(air)-dhamh**, *m.* A labouring ox (Forbes 1905, 16).
- Sath**, *m.* Cattle, drove (Forbes 1905, 16).
- Sbrogaill**, *f.* The dewlap of a beast (Armstrong 1825).
- Scàbhal**, **scàbhail**, *m.* A cauldron; a kettle; a baking-trough; a large bowl (Armstrong 1825).
- Scàl**, **scàil**, *m.* A baking trough, large bowl, kettle, cauldron (Armstrong 1825).
- Scalag**, **scalaig**, *m.* A farm-servant (Armstrong 1825).
- Sciobal**, **sciobail**, *m.* A barn, granary (Armstrong 1825).

**Sdór!** An expression used to incite a bull towards a cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Seachbha, seachbho, seachlach, seachlaogach, seagaid, f.** A barren cow or heifer (Forbes 1905, 16).

**Seachduan, seachduain, m.** A fold (Armstrong 1825).

**Seachlach, seachlaich, f.** Cow that has been two years without a calf. Heifer that continues barren when of the age to have a calf (Dwelly 1920, 795).

**Seafaid, n.** A heifer (Forbes 1905, 16).

**Seagall, seagaill, m.** Rye (Armstrong 1825).

**Sealbh, sealbhan, m.** A herd, drove, number of cattle; a tocher or possession of cattle (Forbes 1905, 16).

**Sealbh, seilbh, f.** Property; stock; cattle; a drove or herd of cattle; a field. *Sealbh chaorach*, a stock of sheep; *sealbh chrodh*, a possession or stock of black cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Sealbhan, sealbhain, m.** A drove, a group of animals (Armstrong 1825).

**Sean-talamh, m.** Fallow-land (Armstrong 1825).

**Seamlach, seamlaich, seamlaichean, f.** ... Cow that allows another cow's calf to suck her (Dwelly 1994, 798). A cow that gives or yields her milk without her calf beside her (Forbes 1905, 16). A cow that gives milk without her calf. Sc. *shamloch*, a cow that has not calved for two years (West Lothian) (MacBain 1896, 275).

†**Searbhan, n. pl.** Oats (Armstrong 1825).

†**Searcall, searcaill, m.** Flesh; delicate meat; the best part of flesh-meat (Armstrong 1825).

**Seas, m.** A bench made on a hayrick by cutting off part of the hay (Armstrong 1825).

**Seasaich, n.** Cattle (stand-bye) (Forbes 1905, 17). Herd of barren cattle (Forbes 1905, 85).

**Seasg, a.** Barren; dry; yielding no milk; unprolific. *Crodh seasg*, barren cattle, cattle that yield no milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Seasgach, seasgaiche, m. colloquial.** Cows giving no milk, farrow cattle, barren cattle. Dry cow (Dwelly 1920, 802).

**Seasgachd, f.** Barrenness; a herd of barren cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Seasgaich, f.** A barren cow (Armstrong 1825).



**Seasgair**, *m.* One in comfortable circumstances. One who thrashes corn by the bulk (Armstrong 1825).

**Seasgan, seasgain**, *m.* A handful or shock of gleaned corn; a truss of gleaned corn; gleanings of corn; land that has been gleaned (Armstrong 1825).

**Seasg-bha**, or **bhò, seasaich, seasaid, seasaidh, seagachd, seisgeach, seasglach, seasgrach**, *f.* A barren cow, barren cattle, dry (Forbes 1905, 17).

**Sed**. A cow (as property), a cow with calf (Forbes 1905, 17).

†**Sed**. Standard of cows or cattle by which prices *etc.* were determined, *i.e.* one milk cow. *Sed bò dile*, a standard made up of different kinds of live stock (Dwelly 1920, 803).

†**Segh**, *n.* Milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Seiche**, *n.* Selling cattle (Forbes 1905, 17). Selling cattle (Dwelly 1994, 803). [Dwelly assigns a noun description to this phrase, as it must mean cattle to be sold rather than the act of selling cattle.]

**Seilbh, seilbhe**, *f.* Possession; property; a herd or drove of cattle; farm-stock (Armstrong 1825). Herd of cattle at grass, (not used of a drove in *Wester Ross-shire*.) (Dwelly 1920, 804).

**Seirbhiseach**, *gen & pl. seirbhisich m.* Farm servant (Wentworth 1996, 52).

**Seisreach, seisreadh**, *n.* Milk allowance for six people, a gallon (Forbes 1905, 104).

†**Seod**, *n.* A cow; property (Armstrong 1825).

**Seòd, seòid**, *m.* Jewel. ... Cow as property. Cow with calf (Dwelly 1920, 808).

**Seogal, seogail**, *m.* Rye. See *seagal* (Armstrong 1825).

**Seòl-bhat**, *m.* A goad, a staff for driving cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Sgabag, sgabaig, sgabagan**, *f.* Cow killed for winter provision. Beef (Dwelly 1920, 811). A winter-mart; beef slain for winter-food; beef (Armstrong 1825).

**Sgabag, sgarag**, *f.* A cow salted for provision (Forbes 1905, 17).

**Sgal**, *m.* A calf (Forbes 1905, 17).

**Sgalag, pl. sgalagan**, *m.* Casual term for farm servant (Wentworth 1996, 52).

**Sgann**, *m.* A herd or drove of cattle (Forbes 1905, 17).

**Sgathach, sgathaich, m.** Drink of water and milk in equal proportions and the sour thick milk under the cream that was kept for butter, churned into a froth (Dwelly 1920, 817).

**Sgathach, m.** The thin fluid remaining in the bottom of the dish when the cream is drawn off for churning (Carmichael 1971, 125).

**Sgealan, m.** Mustard, wild. In addition to nettle kale there was a kale made of the *sgealain* (or skellig, Scotch) boiled with milk and butter. They do not use it now since the tea and meal come from the south (MacDonald 1897, 213).

**Sgian-adhairceach, a.** Sharp-horned, as a sheep (Armstrong 1825).

**Sgiathach, sgiathaich, m.** A cow with white streaks on her side (Armstrong 1825).

**Sgil, m.** ... The process of shelling grain (Armstrong 1825).

**Sgil, v.** Shell grain, separate grain from the husk (Armstrong 1825).

**Sgiobal, sgiobail, m.** A barn, a granary (Armstrong 1825).

**Sgioballan, sgioballain, m.** A brush for sweeping cattle with (Armstrong 1825).

**Sgiol, v.** Shell grain; separate corn from the husk (Armstrong 1825).

**Sgiolan, sgiolain, m.** Groats, hulled barley (Armstrong 1825).

**Sgrog, sgrogag, f.** An old cow or ewe (Forbes 1905, 17).

**Sgruit, m.** A lean, hard cow (Forbes 1905, 17).

**Sigheann, sighne, f.** Venison. More frequently written *sitheann* (Armstrong 1825).

**Sile, f.** Milk (*lit.* drop or flow) (Forbes 1905, 104).

**Simid.** Mallet. Churn staff. The head of the *simid* for churning was made of horsehair, preferably the hair of the tail of an entire horse (Carmichael 1971, 126).

[This is a stallion as opposed to a gelding.]

**Sine, sinne, sithne, pl. sinean, sinneachan, f.** Teat, sometimes udder (Forbes 1905, 104).

**Sine, Sinean & sineachan, f.** Teat, dug, nipple. (Dwelly 1920, 840).

**Sine, f.** A teat, Ir., E. Ir. *sine, triphne*, three-teated: root *spen* of Lithuanian, *spenýs*, udder, teat, O. Pruss. *spenis*, teat, Norse *speni*, teat, Du. *speen*, udder, Sc. *spain*, wean (MacBain 1896, 291).

**Sinne, f.** An udder, a teat, pap, dug (Armstrong 1825).

**Sinneach**, *a.* Having large udders or teats (Armstrong 1825).

**Sinnean**, **sinnein**, *m.* (*dim.* of *sinne.*) Little dug, teat or udder (Armstrong 1825).

**Siodail**, *pr. pt. a' sìodal*, *v.* Milk the last drop (Dwelly 1920, 841).

**Sioglachadh**, **sioglachaidh**, *m.* Milking or sucking to the last drop—*Sleat* (Dwelly 1920, 842).

**Siogladh**, **sioglaidh**, *m.* Sucking an udder to the last drop (Dwelly 1920, 842).

**Sioláth**, *v. tr. vn. Sioláth.* Strain, straining. *Tha i sioláth 'bhainne*, she's straining the milk (Wentworth 1996, 163). [The dairymaid is straining the milk through a piece of cloth to remove any dirt.]

**Siol-chonnalach**, **siol-chonnaich**, *m.* Fodder (Armstrong 1825).

**Siol-chur**, **siol-chuir**, *m.* Sowing (Armstrong 1825).

**Siol-lann**, **siol-lainn**, *m.* A granary (Armstrong 1825).

**Sioltach**, **siomlach**, *f.* A cow that yields her milk without her calf beside her (Forbes 1905, 17).

**Sitheann**, **sithinn**, and **sithne**, *f.* Venison (Armstrong 1825).

**Sithne**, *f.* A teat, pap, nipple, udder (Armstrong 1825).

**Sithneach**, *a.* Having teats or udders; having large teats or udders (Armstrong 1825).

**Sithneachan**, *n. pl. of sithne.* Teats, paps, udders (Armstrong 1825).

**Slabhraidh**, **slaibhre**, *f.* Cattle, herds (Forbes 1905, 17).

**Slagan**, **slagain**, *m.* Curdled milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Slamaich**, *v.* Clot, curdle (Armstrong 1825).

**Slamaichte**, *p. part. of slamaich.* Clotted (Armstrong 1825).

**Slaman**, **slamain**, *m.* Coagulated milk not separated from the whey (Armstrong 1825).

**Slamanach**, *a.* Coagulated or curdled, as milk; like coagulated milk; producing curds (Armstrong 1825).

**Slamanach**, **slamanaiche**, *a.* Flabby. Abounding in or like curdled milk. Lentous, mucous, clotty. Producing curds (Dwelly 1920, 850).

Also: **bainne-slamán** *n. phr.* Curds and whey (Wentworth 1996, 35).

**Slamanachd**, *f.* The state of being curdled; coagulation; a tendency to coagulate (Armstrong 1825).

**Slamban, slambain**, *m.* Curdled milk not separated from the cream. Written also *slaman* (Armstrong 1825).

**Slamhach, slamhaich**, *f.* Frothstick, instrument for frothing cream (Wentworth 1996, 35).

**Sloc an àirich.** (The grazier's hollow), a little hollow near the tail of a cow which indicates when cows are likely to calf [calve] (MacDonald 1958, 222).

**Slonnadh, slonnaidh**, *m.* Cattle (Armstrong 1825). Flocks (Dwelly 1920, 855).

**Slonnudh**, *m.* Cattle, flocks (Forbes 1905, 17).

**Smeadhag**, *f.* A cow's halter, short neck-rope (MacLennan 1979, 306).

**Smiotach**, *a.* Crop-eared (Armstrong 1825).

**Sochair.** The food, thing, or product. *Beagan do shochair an t-samhraidh*, a little butter. [Literally a little of the summer product] (From *Duan na Calluig*) (MacDonald 1897, 224).

**Sod, soda**, *m.* Boiled meat; the noise of water when meat is boiling in it (Armstrong 1825).

**Soitheimh**, *a.* Tame. *'S e beathuch (sic.) soitheimh a th' ann*, it's a tame beast. *Chan urrainn dhut earbsainn á tarbh air cho soitheimh 's gum beil e*, you can't trust a bull however tame it is (Wentworth 1996, 169).

**Sopachan**, *m.* Handful of fine heather, tied tightly together and used for scrubbing dishes, particularly milk-dishes (Dwelly 1920, 874).

**Spairteach, spairteiche**, *a.* Thick, as cream (Dwelly 1920, 878).

**Sparra-changail.** A thing standing much in one's way. It was applied to a calf standing in the doorway (MacDonald 1958, 226).

**Speach.** A stone in the byre (Carmichael 1928, 362).

**Sparrach, sparraich**, *m.* A kind of fetter for cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Speil**, *n.* Cattle; flocks; herds (Armstrong 1825).

**Spìonadh, spìonaidh**, *m.* Plucking sheep instead of clipping –Gairloch, (called rooing in Shetland.) (Dwelly 1920, 884).

**Spodh**, *v.* Geld, castrate (Armstrong 1825).

**Spold**, *m.* A piece of meat, a joint of meat. *Spold laoigh*, a loin of veal (Armstrong 1825).

**Spoilinn**, *f.* A small joint of meat (Armstrong 1825).

**Spolla**, *m.* A joint of meat; a fragment. *Spolla laoigh*, a joint of veal (Armstrong 1825).

**Spoth**, *v.* Geld, cut or castrate; spay (Armstrong 1825).

**Spoth**, *v. tr. vn.* Castrate (Wentworth 1996, 24).

**Spréidh**, **spréidhe**, *f. colloquial.* Cattle of any kind. Live-stock (Dwelly 1920, 887). Cattle, a herd; a marriage portion (Armstrong 1825).

**Spréidheach**, *a.* Abounding in cattle, rich in cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Sprogan**, **sproganain**, **sproganan**, *f.* Small tuft of hair under the chin of a deer (Dwelly 1994 [1920], 889).

**Sramh**, **sraimh**, *m.* Milk gushing from the teat of a cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Sramh**, *m.* A jet of milk from the cow's udder, Ir. *sramh* (*srámh*, O'Reilly.); root *ster*, *str*, strew (MacBain 1896, 309).

**Srèad**, **srèada**, **srèadan**, *m.* Herd (Armstrong 1825).

**Sreadach**, *a.* In herds or flocks (Armstrong 1825).

**Sreamag**, *f.* Thin layer (on liquid). *Tha sreamag dhe bàrr air a' bhainne*, there's a thin layer of cream on the milk (Wentworth 1996, 89).

**Sreaphainn**, *f.* Membrane; membrane which covers newly born calf. O.Ir. *srebann*, *srebhand* (MacLennan 1979, 317).

**Sreath**, **sreatha**, **sreathan**, *m.* A herd, troop, flock (Forbes 1905, 17).

**Sreathan**, *m.* Vellum. Filmly skin which covers an unborn calf (Armstrong 1825).

**Sròn-fhionn**, *a.* Having a white nose, as a black sheep (Armstrong 1825).

**Stall**, *m.* The step in the floor down to the level of the byre in the very old thatched houses (MacLennan 1979, 320).

**Stapag**, **stapaig**, **stapagan**, *f.* Mixture of meal and cream, milk or cold water, crowdie (Dwelly 1920, 899).

**Stealladh**, *pr. part. of steall*, *a.* Spouting, squirting, gushing. *A stealladh bainne ann an cuachain*, spouting milk into a pail - Old Song (Armstrong 1825).

**Stèic**, *f.* A cow's stake, or stall (MacLennan 1979, 321).

**Stiall**, *gen. stéill*, *f.* A post to which a cow is tied in a stable (MacLennan 1979, 321).

**Stiallach**, *a.* (from *stiall*- a long streak or stripe of cloth.) Streaked, striped; brindled. *Spreidh stiallach*, streaked cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Stiom**, *f.* Hard substance in cow's udder after calving (MacLennan 1979, 322).

**Stò**, *m.* Pail. *Stò bleoghainn*, milking pail (Dwelly 1920, 903).

**Stòlàn**, *m.* Milking stool (Wentworth 1996, 102).

**Stòp**, **stòip** & **stuiip**, **stòpan**, *m.* Wooden vessel used for bringing home the milk from the sheilings or for carrying water (Dwelly 1920, 904).

**Stuaidh**, *f.* A flock or herd of animals (Armstrong 1825).

**Stùic**, **stùichd**, *f.* The scowling side-look of a bull or any large quadruped (Armstrong 1825).

**Suaicein**, *m.* A pet calf or lamb (Forbes 1905, 17).

**Subas**, **subais**, *m.* A mess of wild berries and milk (Armstrong 1825).

**Sugan**, **sugain**, *m.* A rope of straw or hay, a straw collar for cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Sùgh**, **sùgham**, *m.* Broth (Armstrong 1825).

**Suicean**, *m.* Gag for a calf (to prevent sucking) (MacLennan 1979, 326).

**Sùileag**, **sùileig**, **sùileagan**, *f.* (*dim.* of *sùil*.) Little eye. ... Little circular wooden vessel. Small vessel made of clay containing one Scots pint, and used for keeping milk—*Lewis* (Dwelly 1920, 914).

**Sum**, **suim**, *m.* As much grazing ground as will suffice four sheep (Armstrong 1825).

**Sumaich**, *v.* Give due number, as cattle at pasture from Scots *soum* (MacBain 1897, 318) (MacLennan 1996, 328).

**Tadhal**, **tadhail**, *m.* A flesh-hook (Armstrong 1825).

**Taigeis**, *f.* A haggis, or kind of blood-pudding, much relished by the Scot; and Gael (Armstrong 1825).

**Tàin**, *f.* Cattle, cows, flocks. Land, country (Armstrong 1825).

**Tainte**, *f.* Cattle taken as booty or spoil (Forbes 1905, 18).

**Tairbhein.** ... Bloody flux in cattle (Dwelly 1920, 926).

**Tairbhean, m.** Colic. A bull-calf (Ir. *tairbin, toirbin*) (Forbes 1905, 18).

**Tairis!** *intj.* Stand still! Spoken by dairymaid to calm the cow. Also *stairis*.

**Tán, f.** Cattle, herd of cattle; cattle raid (MacLennan 1979, 333).

**Tàn, tàin, m.** Cattle, a head of black cattle; a flock of sheep; farm stock (Armstrong 1825).

**Tarbh, tairbh, m.** A bull *Mòran tharbh*, many bulls. *Tarbh uisge*, a sea-bull or cow; *tarbh tàna*, a parish bull; *croiconn tàirbh*, a bull's hide (Armstrong 1825).

**Tarbhach, comp. Tarbhaich.** Profitable. *A' latha mharbhar am mart is a' latha theirigeas am mart, and dà latha 's tarbhaich am mart*, the day the cow is killed and the day the cow is used up, the two days the cow is most profitable (proverb) (Wentworth 1996, 127).

**Tarbh-tàna, m.** A parish bull, a bull which is the property of a district (Armstrong 1825).

**Tarragh, tarraig, m.** A conveying of corn to the barn or yard (Armstrong 1825).

**Tarr-fhionn, a.** White-bellied; white-tailed; having white buttocks (Armstrong 1825).

**Tarr-gheal, a.** White-bellied; white-tailed (Armstrong 1825).

**Tasgal, tasgail, m.** Money offered for the discovery of cattle lifted by Highland freebooters (Armstrong 1825).

**Teachd an tìr, m.** Food; maintenance; diet [*lit.* belonging to the land] (Armstrong 1825).

**Teagair, pr. pt. a' teagar, v.** Collect, provide, furnish, supply. Economise, gather milk for butter by stinting the allowance of the family (Dwelly 1920, 938).

**Teairt, f.** Grazing before morning milking (Dwelly 1920, 939).

**Tearbadh, tearbaidh, m.** Separating. Weaning (Dwelly 1920, 941).

**Tearc, m.** A cow (Forbes 1905, 18). [See *earc*.]

**Teàrnadh, m.** The afterbirth (MacDonald 1897, 239).

**Teàrnadh, m.** Used transitively. *Tha 'n crodh 'gan teàrnadh le leathad*, the cattle are being driven downhill (MacDonald 1897, 239).

**Teasach, m.** Heat, fever; restlessness on account of heat, cattle running from excessive heat; warm water in milk (Dwelly 1920, 942).

**Teasd**, *m.* **tràth teasd**. Milking-time (MacLennan 1979, 337).

**Teine Bealltainn**. Every fire in the country was extinguished and a big fire was lit on the top of a hill, and they used to drive the cattle around this fire, to keep away black loss for the year. Everyone afterwards took home fire from this fire again (MacDonald 1897, 240)

**Teine éigin**, *m.* A forced fire, a fire of necessity; a fire produced by friction (Armstrong 1825). Also *tein'-éigin* (Dwelly 1920, 942).

**Teiris**, *v.* and *n.* Tame, quiet, as unruly cattle; said to quell cattle when they fight or are unruly (Armstrong 1825).

**Teirt**, *f.* One of the eight canonical hours; *terce*; *trath teirt*, morning milking time, grazing before morning milking time (MacLennan 1979, 338).

**Teugair**, *v.* Gather milk on short allowance, to make butter (MacLennan 1979, 339).

**Teugradh**, *vbl. n., m.* Act of gathering milk economically; milk or butter so gathered (MacLennan 1979, 339).

**Tiadhan**, **tiadhain**, *m.* Testicle (Armstrong 1825).

**Tiagh**, *n.* Thickened milk. Milk-dish (Forbes 1905, 105).

**Tiarrach**, **tiarraich**, *m.* A paunch, a tripe (Armstrong 1825).

**Tigh-bainne**. Dairy (Armstrong 1825).

**Tigheadas**, **tigheadais**, *m.* Husbandry (Armstrong 1825).

**Tigheas**, **tigheis**, *m.* Husbandry (Armstrong 1825).

**Tiomsach**, **tiomsaiche**, *a.* Collecting, bringing together (Dwelly 1920, 952).

**Tiomsachadh**, **tiomsachaidh**, *m.* Second milking of a cow (Dwelly 1920, 952).

**Tional**, **tionail**, **tionalan**, *m.* Gathering, act of gathering, collecting (Dwelly 1920, 952).

**Tionnsgradh**, **tionnsgraidh**, *m.* A dowry (Armstrong 1825).

**Tiormachd**, *f.* Dryness, state of being dry. ... Disease in cattle (Dwelly 1920, 954). Also: **an tiormachd**, a disease of cattle, prevalent in winter (Wentworth 1996, 39).

**Tiugh**, **tighe**, *a.* Thick. As thick as a calf's ear, *cho tiugh ri chuais laogh* (saying) (Wentworth 1996, 171).



**Tiughachadh, tiughachaidh, m.** A thickening, a condensing, a coagulating (Armstrong 1825).

**Tiughalach, tiughalaich, m.** The thickest part of liquids (Armstrong 1825).

†**Tlàs, m.** Cattle; a fair (Armstrong 1825).

**Tlas, tlus, m.** Cattle (Forbes 1905, 18).

**Tochar, tochair, m.** A dowry or marriage portion (Armstrong 1825).

**Tochradh, tochraidh, m.** A marriage portion or dowry (Armstrong 1825).

**Todhar, todhair, m.** A field manured by a moveable fold (Armstrong 1825).

**Togail, air a thogáil, a.** Skimmed (of milk) (Wentworth 1996, 150).

**Toiceil, a.** Wealthy, substantial. *Toiceil de chrodh 's de chaoriach*, wealthy in cattle and sheep (Armstrong 1825).

**Toimhseach, toimhsich, m.** A farm (Armstrong 1825).

**Toirtean, toirtein, m.** A thin cake (Armstrong 1825).

**Toitean, toitein, m.** A collop, a steak, a bit of flesh roasted on embers (Armstrong 1825).

**Tomhlachd, f.** Thick milk. Curds (Dwelly 1920, 962).

†**Tomhladh, tomhlaidh, m.** The milk of a cow (Armstrong 1825).

**Tor, f.** A bull (Forbes 1905, 18).

**Toradh.** (See *Mulchag Bhealltainn*.) It should be said, as Mr. Hector MacIver pointed out to me, that *toradh* is the product of milk, *i.e.* butter or cheese, rather than the milk itself (MacDonald 1897, 316).

**Torc-chluasach, a.** Notch-eared (Dwelly 1920, 964).

**Torc-chlosach.** (of) cattle. *Aig am bi beàrn as an dà chluais*, naturally (MacDonald 1897, 245).

**Torchos, f.** A calf (Forbes 1905, 18).

**Torchos-bréige, m.** A moon calf (fabulous) (Forbes 1905, 18).

**Tormach, tormachaidh, m.** Increase. Feeding of cows a short time before and after calving (Armstrong 1825).

**Tràthach.** Long sweet meadow grass (MacDonald 1897, 247).

**Treabh**, *v.* Till plough, cultivate (Armstrong 1825).

**Treabhachail**, *a.* Agricultural; arable (Armstrong 1825).

**Treabhachas**, **treabhachais**, *m.* Agriculture, husbandry; a specimen of plowing (Armstrong 1825).

**Treabhachd**, *f.* Agriculture, husbandry (Armstrong 1825).

**Treabhadh**, **treabhaidh**, *m.* Ploughing, tilling; tillage, agriculture, husbandry. *Talamh treabhaidh*, plough land, arable land (Armstrong 1825).

**Treabhaiche**, *m.* A ploughman, or tiller of ground; a husbandman, a peasant (Armstrong 1825).

**Treabhaireachd**, *f.* Husbandry (Armstrong 1825).

**Treabhair**, *m.* A ploughman, a tiller, a home-stall, a homestead (Armstrong 1825).

**Treasg**, **treisg**, *m.* Groats, or hulled oats; draff; brewers' grains (Armstrong 1825).

**Treasg**, *m.* Chaff, corn or bran steeped in boiling water for feeding cows, &c, 'mash' (Dwelly 1920, 968).

**Treathghamnach**, **Treathghamhnaich**, *f.* Cow that has a calf in two years—*Islay* (Dwelly 1920, 968).

**Treath-ghamnach**, *f.* A cow that calved three years ago and has milk; *seachlach*, calved two years ago; *gamhnach*, calved last year (MacLennan 1979, 348).

**Treòdas** or **treabhadas**. Livelihood, husbandry (MacDonald 1958, 248).

**Treud**, *m.* A drove, flock, herd; a procession, a line of cattle or birds. E. Ir. *trét*, a herd (MacLennan 1979, 349).

**Treudach**, *a.* Gregarious; in herds or flocks; of or belonging to, a flock or herd (Armstrong 1825).

**Treudaiche**, *m.* A keeper of cattle, a shepherd. A cowherd, a swineherd (Armstrong 1825).

**Triall**. Procession (Carmichael 1928, 372).

**Tri-ghamnach**, *f.* Cow that has been three years without calving—*Lewis* (Dwelly 1920, 971).

**Tuadh**, **tuaidh**, *f.* An axe or hatchet [see below] (Armstrong 1825).

**Tuadh-fhola**, *f.* A fleam, an instrument for bleeding cattle (Armstrong 1825).

**Tuaighe**, *m.* A farm bull (Forbes 1905, 18).

**Tuath**, **tuatha**, *f. colloquial.* Tenantry, peasantry, laity, country people, husbandmen, aggregate number of any land proprietors, farmers or tenant. *An tuath, an tuath-cheathairn*, the tenantry; *is treasa tuath na tighearna*, tenantry are stronger than laird (Dwelly 1920, 978).

**Tuathach**, **tuathaiche**, *a.* Having many tenants. Of, or belonging to, the tenantry (Dwelly 1920, 978).

**Tuathach**, **tuathaich**, *m.* North Highlander. Rarely, lord, proprietor (Dwelly 1920, 978).

**Tuathanach**, **tuathanaich**, *a.* Farmer, rustic, peasant, husbandman, agriculturist, layman (Dwelly 1920, 978).

**Tuathanachail**, **tuathanachaile**, *a.* Agricultural (Dwelly 1920, 978).

**Tuathanachas**, **tuathanachais**, *m.* Farming, agriculture, husbandry (Dwelly 1920, 978).

**Tuathanachd**, *f.* Agriculture, husbandry. Condition of a farmer or peasant (Armstrong 1825).

**Tuathánas**. *gen. & pl. tuathánais*, *m.* Farm. *Tha tuathánas math aige*, he has a good farm (Wentworth 1996, 52).

**Tulachan**, **tulagan**, **tulchan**, **tulachain**, **tulachanan**, *m.* An imitation calf presented to a cow to cause her to yield milk (Forbes 1905, 18).

**Tulachan**, **tulachain**, **tulachanan**, *m. (dim. of tulach.)* ... Calf-skin stuffed, and presented to the cow, as if living to induce her to give her milk (Dwelly 1994, 982).

**Tungarlagh**, *n.* An old cow (Forbes 1905, 18).

**Uachdar**, **uachdair**, **uachdaran**, *m.* Top, surface. Or upper part of anything. Cream (Armstrong 1825).

**Uachdarach**, **uachdaraiche**, *a.* Uppermost, highest, creamy, producing cream (Armstrong 1825).

**Uisgeileadh**, also **uirsgéileadh**, *m.* Spread manure (Wentworth 1996, 99).

**Uirsgeil**, *n.* (air-sgaoil) Spreading, as of dung or hay (Dwelly 1920, 995).

**Uirsgeuladh**, *m.* Act of spreading dung-Gairloch (Dwelly 1920, 995).

**Uairneach**, *m.* A barren heifer of age to have a calf (MacLennan 1979, 357).

**Uanan, uanain, uanan, m.** (*dim. of uan.*) ... Milk coming from a cow for several times after calving (Dwelly 1920, 988).

**Urar-achd-na-bà, f.** Fat of the cow. Milk, cream, butter. Neat foot oil (Dwelly 1920, 998).

**Urc, m.** An enclosure; a fold (Armstrong 1825).

**Urchall, urchallach, urchallaich, f.** Heifer 1 1/2 years old (Armstrong 1825).

**Ùruisg, ùruisgean, m.** The *ùruisg* had the qualities of man and spirit curiously commingled. He had a particular fondness for the products of the dairy, and was a fearful intruder on milk-maids, who made regular libations of milk or cream to charm him off, or to procure his favour. He could be seen only by those who had the second sight. Every manor-house had its *ùruisg*, and in the kitchen, close by the fire, was a seat which was left unoccupied for him (Dwelly 1920, 1001).

**Ùth, ùtha, pl. ùthan & ùthannann, m.** Udder. *Le 'n ùthaibh làn.* With their udders distended (Dwelly 1920, 1002).

**Ùthach, ùthaiche, a.** Uddered, relating to an udder. Having large udders (Armstrong 1825).

**Utrod, utroid, m.** A cattle-road (Armstrong 1825).

**Utrodach, a.** Having a road for cattle; of, or belonging to a cattle road (Armstrong 1825).

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