

## Transhumance place-names in Perthshire

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### ABSTRACT

*In Perthshire, the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 6-inch maps record upland settlements, occupied in the summer months, which once played an important role in a transhumance economy. Only some of the name-elements used for these settlements were derived from specialist words directly connected with transhumance: shiel, airigh, ruighe, and bothan. The distribution pattern of each of these words is described and discussed within their cultural, historical and economic contexts, as is that of the remaining group of settlements which were named usually after topographical features. Upland pastures with no recorded settlements, the names of which imply links with transhumance and with pastoral farming, are also considered; the paper suggests how this ground may have been used by pre-Improvement agricultural communities in the Central Highlands.*

### INTRODUCTION

The movement of livestock and people away from the farm to a distant summer pasture is a seasonal activity known as transhumance, and until the beginning of the 19th century this was a distinctive feature of agricultural practice in many parts of Britain. The specific words used to denote these summer places often became incorporated in place-names, eg 'shiel', 'airigh' and 'ruighe' in Scotland; 'erg', 'shiel' and 'saetr' in north-west England; and 'hafod' in Wales.

Recent studies of transhumance customs in England and Wales have revealed the close relationship of this agricultural practice to the naming of local settlements. In England the studies have focused on the Scandinavian and Irish transhumance terms used before the 11th century that became incorporated in the local place-names of the north-west upland and mountainous regions (Fellows-Jensen 1978, 18–25; 1985, 65–82; Higham 1978, 347–55; Whyte 1985, 103–17). In Wales the transhumance tradition in Merioneth, Caernarvon and Denbighshire from medieval to early modern times has been studied using settlement and field-names recorded on early 19th-century tithe maps (Davies 1973, 13–27; 1977, 49–72; 1979, 17–46; 1980, 1–41). In Scotland however, despite frequent cursory references, the specialized terms used in many parts of the country to describe transhumance have yet to be fully discussed in local and wider regional case studies. This paper uses place-name evidence to identify the specialized terms used in Perthshire, then proceeds to describe their geographical patterns, and finally attempts to evaluate their significance against the background of a reasonably well-documented transhumance economy.

Perthshire straddled the Highland Line, a fundamental geographical boundary dividing the Highland and Lowland zones of Scotland. The county also formed a major cultural divide between

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the Gael and the Lowland Scot which was perhaps most apparent in terms of their language differences. Until the end of the 18th century the majority of the inhabitants north of the Highland Line were Gaelic-speaking while the folk in the Lowland districts in the south and east of the country were English-speaking. However, Wither's study of the Gaelic language in Perthshire between 1698 and 1879 (1983, 125–42) shows quite clearly that the language frontier was not sharply defined: there existed a grey transitional zone, roughly corresponding with the parishes of the Highland border, where the exact boundary between Gaelic Perthshire and non-Gaelic Perthshire was difficult to map. Within this zone both Gaelic and English were spoken, though not necessarily by everyone, and each language was identifiable with specific purposes: Gaelic was widely used in the home and in church, while English was used in business and administration. Gaelic disappeared from peripheral parishes such as Kilmadock and Fowlis Wester in the 1760s, and by the turn of the next century it was also fast disappearing from the Perthshire heartland. As a result of the problems of pinpointing the shifting geographical boundaries of Gaelic in the 18th and 19th centuries, the geological fault-line is used to show the Highland boundary on the maps in this paper. This was also, approximately, the southern boundary of Gaelic before the 17th century: it cuts through Caputh parish where Gaelic survived into the early 1600s although farther south, in the upland parish of Abernyte in the Sidlaws, there were also pockets of Gaelic speakers (Withers 1983, 128).

Perthshire Gaelic is one of the purest forms of the language. The geographical position of Perthshire in the heart of Scotland safeguarded the language from the corrupting influences of the Norse and helped to preserve a dialect rich in words of Early Irish origin (Stewart 1974, 1–2). By the mid-11th century most of the Scottish mainland was Gaelic-speaking (Nicolaisen 1976, 12); by that time Gaelic may have been established in parts of Perthshire for two centuries or more. The Irish Gaelic people of Dalriada had pushed eastwards into southern Pictland as warlords and Columban missionaries, and eventually came into contact and conflict with the Pictish kingdom of Fortriu. This kingdom's power-base was centred in the Lowlands on Forteviot, Abernethy, Perth and Scone, but its influence also extended westwards into Upper Strathearn as far as Dundurn at the east end of Loch Earn. Traditionally viewed as the capital of Fortriu, Dundurn has been reinterpreted as an important strategic frontier post guarding the main west/east route from Dalriada to Pictland (Alcock 1977, 1; Alcock *et al* 1989, 195). Pictish influence in Upper Strathearn faced serious challenge with the Scots' siege of Dundurn in AD 683; under the Scots, Dundurn developed from a frontier post into a secure royal stronghold before the end of the ninth century (Alcock *et al* 1989, 192, 194). Gaelic inevitably made inroads into this part of the country between the seventh and ninth centuries. The northern and eastern parts of Perthshire may also have been Gaelicized to a large degree a century before the dynastic union of the Picts and Scots because by AD 739 the present-day districts of Atholl and Gowrie were collectively known as Athfoithle or 'New Ireland' (Thomson 1976, 3). The Gaelic presence in Perthshire, therefore, is of considerable antiquity, reinforced by the existence of 'sliabh' hill names around Balquhidder and Loch Tay, and farther north in Rannoch and Atholl (OS Sheets 12, 28, 32, 35, 48, 80 and 92: NN 8476, 6665, NO 0361, NN 5256, 7952, 5829, 5926).<sup>1</sup> Nicolaisen (1976, 45) identified this ancient place-name element with the early spread of Irish Gaelic settlement from Dalriada in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries.

#### SOURCE MATERIAL AND OVERVIEW

Although documentary sources of evidence have been extensively used to research the shieling tradition in Perthshire, they offer little insight into what actual terms were used to denote

transhumance. This is principally because of the social status of the English language which, from the 16th century onwards, was used for legal and estate papers: these documents refer to shiel and shieling but not to the corresponding Gaelic terms which were used by ordinary folk until the transhumance tradition was abandoned. However, the earliest Ordnance Survey maps, together with the place-name books compiled by the surveyors, provide a rich source of information on the extent and distribution of transhumance activity and its linguistic contribution to the naming of local settlements.

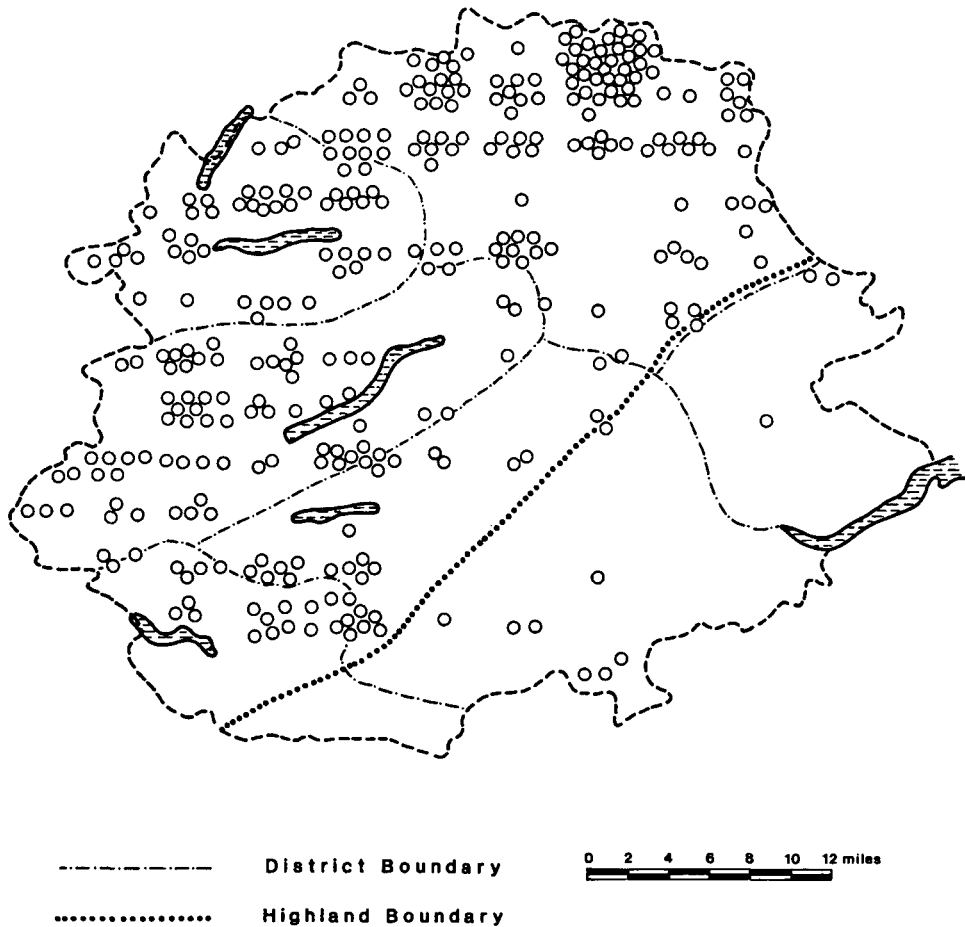
The first complete, if not always accurate,<sup>2</sup> survey of Perthshire was undertaken by the Ordnance Survey between 1859 and 1864 and was published as 1st edition 6-inch to the mile (1: 10560) maps, a total of 138 sheets. The Ordnance Survey also compiled their Original Name Books (SRO RH4/23/Perthshire/Books 1–79/Reels 16–23) to provide the necessary authority for the mapped information, including place-name derivations and spellings. These volumes might have been considered useful in determining correct spelling and usage of transhumance terms where there is ambiguity, but unfortunately not only are some of the books missing for upland Perthshire (the parishes of Balquhider, Blair Atholl, Comrie, Fortingall, Kenmore, Killin, Kirkmichael, Moulin and Weem) but they are also not as comprehensive a record as one might expect. For example, the Monzievaird Name Book (SRO RH4/23/Perthshire/Book 60/Reel 21) makes no reference to the huts at the headwaters of the Barvick Burn although these are depicted on the Ordnance Survey map (OS Sheet 83: NN 8327) for that locality.

The 138 sheets of the 1st edition 6-inch map of Perthshire published by the Ordnance Survey record nearly 300 settlement names linked in some way to transhumance (Table 1) and it is clear that elements of several different words that denote transhumance are included. The small number of un-named transhumance settlements can be explained by the map surveyors' unfamiliarity with the Gaelic language or by simple omission. Gaelic names account for over 90% of those that may relate to transhumance. The Lowland Scots 'shiel' accounts for only 5%, whereas those with Gaelic elements (airigh, ruighe, bothan) make up 46%. However, almost half of the Gaelic place-names (46%) contain no transhumance element, eg settlements such as Allt Coire an Laoigh, the burn of the mountain hollow of the calf (OS sheet 23: NO 0865); Sron a' chlaonaidh, the sloping nose (OS Sheet 26: NN 5064). In this paper these are classified as being within the 'non-generic elements' category. The sites of this group, far beyond the limits of permanent settlement and cultivation, nevertheless suggest that they were used in transhumance.

Table 1  
Place-name elements derived from transhumance terms recorded on OS 1:10560 maps 1859–64

	Number	%
Shiel	17	5
Airigh	37	12
Ruighe	92	30
Bothan	12	4
Non-generic element	141	46
Un-named settlements	11	3

When plotted on a county map of Perthshire (illus 1) the place-name elements reveal a distribution which is also confirmed by the evidence of 17th- and 18th-century estate papers: that the transhumance custom was centred on upland rather than lowland Perthshire, and was particularly strong in Atholl, Rannoch and Breadalbane. This map also shows that the custom was, or had been, widespread in the uplands of south-west Perthshire – an area for which there are few 17th- and 18th-century documentary references to shielings – and to a lesser degree along the



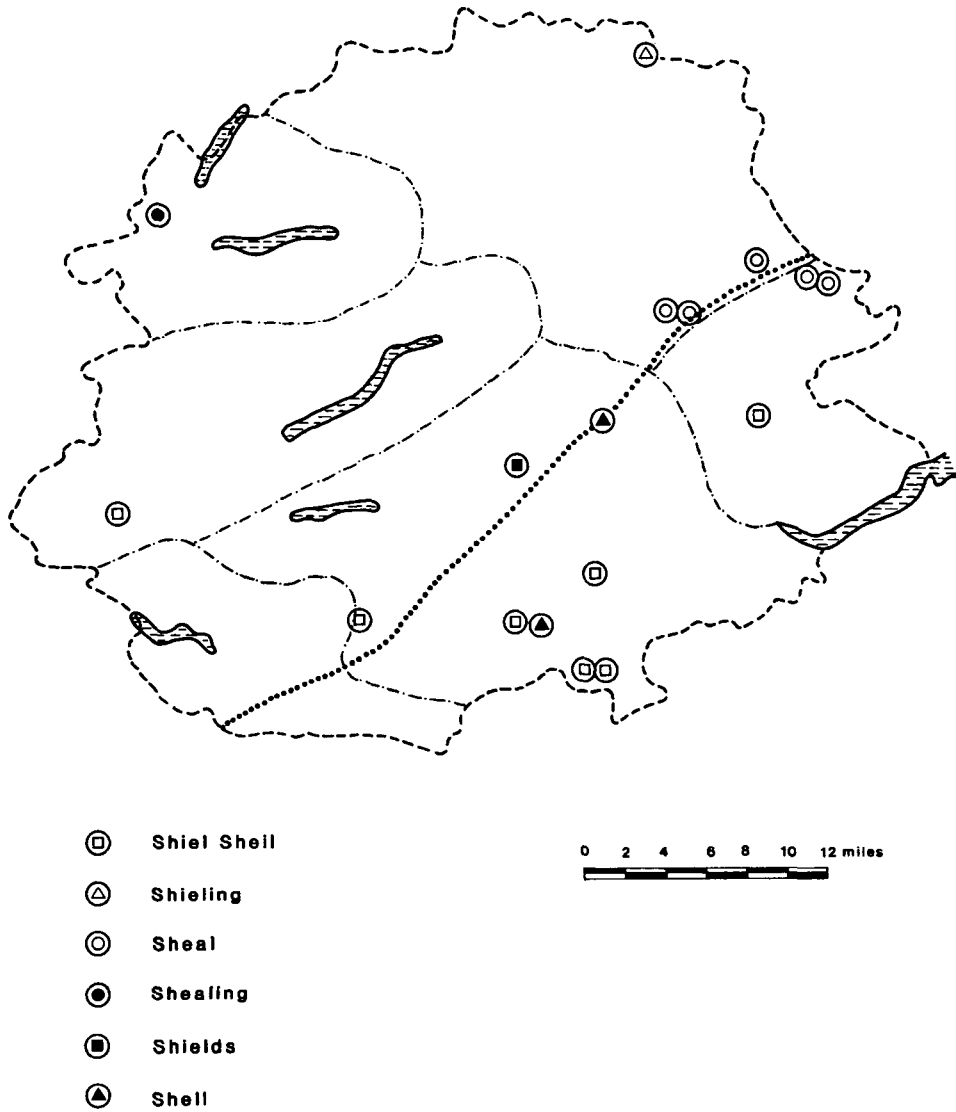
ILLUS 1 The distribution of transhumance place-name evidence in Perthshire

margins of the Highlands. South of the Highland Line, in lower Strath Tay and Strathearn and on the Ochils, the custom had once thrived but it had probably been abandoned in these regions before the 17th century, with growing pressure to establish new farms on the better marginal land. The map distribution illustrates that the transhumance tradition crossed cultural boundaries, though it was more widespread among the Gaels in the upland and mountain country unsuited to cultivation than among the Lowland Scots, and was greatly influenced by the local availability of summer grazings.

## TRANSHUMANCE PLACE-NAME ELEMENTS

### SHIEL

Although the exact origin of this word is uncertain it is generally accepted that it is derived from an Old Norse word (*skale*) or the Middle English words (*shale*, *schele*: OED 1989, 252, 255).



ILLUS 2 The distribution of place-names derived from the Lowland Scots term 'shiel'

At the time of its earliest usage it may have referred to the summer hut or to the surrounding pasture but from the 16th century onwards it was used to describe the living quarters (SND 1971, 190–1). Differences also exist in spelling: 'shiel' being modern English and 'sheal' the more common spelling in pre-19th-century documents.

'Shiel', or one of its derivative forms, is found mainly along the margins of the uplands and in localized areas of the Lowland zone (illus 2), eg Shiel Knows Farm in lower Strathearn near Dunning (OS Sheet 108: NN 9915), Shiel Hill Farm on the lower reaches of the River Tay near Stanley (OS Sheet 74: NO 1133) and burn names such as Wester Sheil and Easter Sheil in the

Ochils (OS Sheet 127: NN 9004, 9104). Most of the mapped names are associated with summer pastures which were upgraded into farms; nevertheless, they show that in medieval times Lowland English-speaking folk used to take their livestock to upland grazings on the margins of the Highlands and on the Ochils, and that they also pastured farmstock on less distant moors and mosses before land shortages arose. Place-names in the environs of Shiel Knows illustrate that this area was once moss land (OS Sheet 108: NN 9915) and a more extensive moss with shieling connections may have existed in the nearby parish of Ardoch. Shelforkie Moss, itself a likely shiel place-name, continued to be worked as a moss until the mid-19th century, close to a farm named Shiel Hill (SRO RHP4/23/Perthshire/Book 6/Reel 16, OS Sheet 117: NN 8609, 8511).

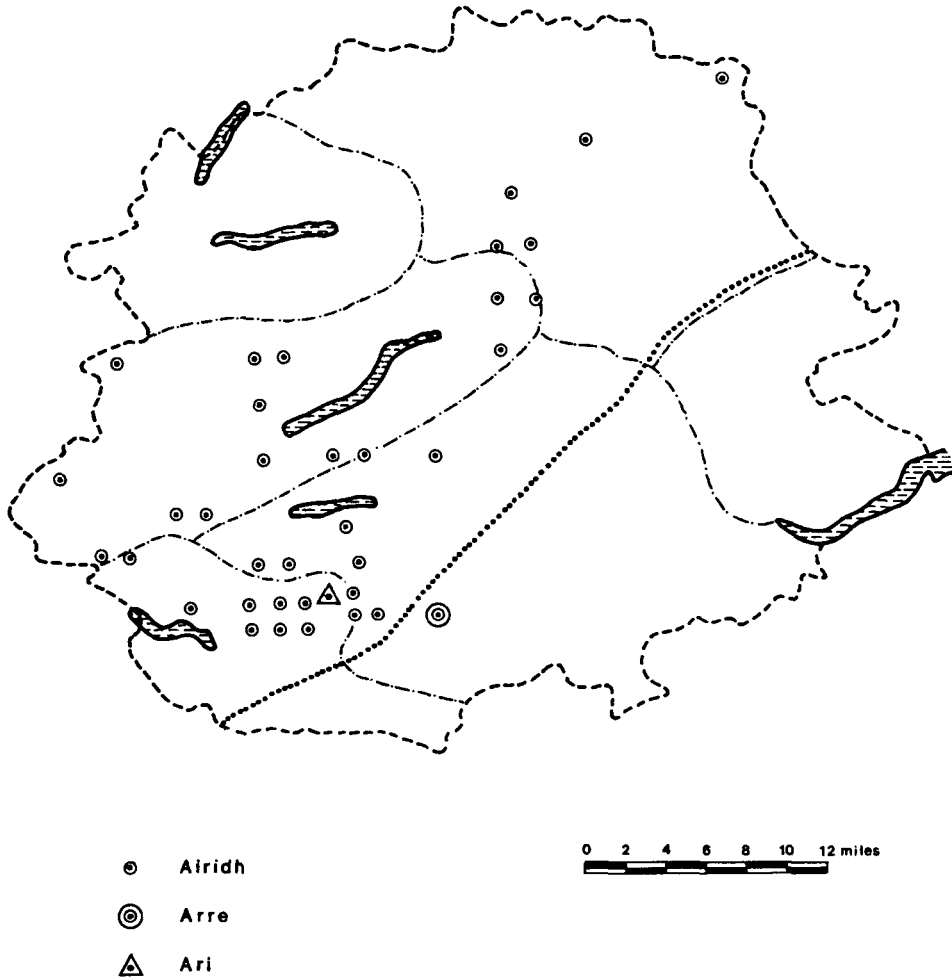
The 'shiel' term may have been used to describe the summer grazing custom as early as the 13th century in the most southerly and easterly parts of the Perthshire lowlands where feudalism and anglicization made early inroads. Within the broader lowland zone south of the Highland Line, where Gaelic survived longer, its use may date only from the 14th or 15th centuries. The appearance of the term in isolated Highland parishes (OS Sheets 7, 25, 90: NO 0882, NN 4162, 3822), where Gaelic remained dominant until the 19th century, is most probably connected with the anglicizing of the names of summer grazings by estate administrators, by lowland English-speaking sheep farmers and shepherds, or even by the sporting English gentlemen who shot over the hills from the early 19th century onwards.

#### AIRIGH

This was the widely accepted spelling throughout Gaelic Scotland, but in Perthshire the form 'airidh' was used. Near to the Highland boundary, however, the term was corrupted by contact with English into 'Arre' (OS Sheet 116: NN 7612) or more likely one of the related words 'Arrie' and 'Ari', which appeared in print in the later 1700s (Bil 1990, 34–5). By the early 19th century, 'airigh' conveyed several meanings in Perthshire Gaelic: a shieling or hill pasture; a mountain hut; a shepherd's cottage; or a 'green grove' (Armstrong 1825, 15). This latter usage was acquired from the green appearance of the grazing pasture, the effect of long-term manuring of small areas of ground around the huts occupied during the summer where the livestock were ingathered at milking time and overnight.

Although etymologists agree that the term dates from a time when few differences existed between Irish and Scots Gaelic, and they accept its close links with pastoral farming, they differ about its exact derivation. The suggested derivations are: from the Irish words 'aire' and 'thigh' meaning a watching house (Armstrong 1825, 15); and from 'araich' meaning to rear (Campbell 1896, 64). Both derivations are plausible in the context of what is known about transhumance. Armstrong's derivation is connected with the duties of the shieling labour force in the 17th and 18th centuries, and probably in earlier times too. Women and men accompanied the livestock to the summer pastures: while the women milked the cattle, made dairy produce and herded the animals near to the huts in times of slack dairy work, the men protected the stock from natural predators and thieves, and generally watched over the cattle. The second derivation, by Campbell, a native of Perthshire, emphasized another of the shieling's functions: the place where young animals were reared during the summer months.

Campbell (1896, 64) also proposed the term to be 'the leading universal name' used to denote shieling in the Scottish Highlands, but for Perthshire this may be an overstatement for only 12% of the transhumance place-names mapped by the Ordnance Survey incorporate the 'airigh' element (Table 1). Indeed a restricted use of the term in Perthshire strengthens a more



ILLUS 3 The distribution of place-names derived from the Gaelic term 'airigh'

cautious assertion that the 'airigh' term was found mostly in the Western Highlands (Gaffney 1959, 22).

The 'airigh' names in Perthshire occur mainly behind the Highland Line in two distinct areas (illus 3). The larger of these two areas lies in the west and occupies Strathgartney, Glenartney, Strathyre, Balquhider, Strathfillan, Glendochart, Glenlochay, Glenlyon and as far eastwards as the watershed hill ground separating Loch Tay and Loch Earn. The smaller area is centred on Upper Strathtay and the Tummel district, although the isolated examples in the Glengirnaig and Glenshee areas of Atholl may also have formed part of that group. 'Airigh' then was firmly implanted as a place-name element in the uplands of south-west Perthshire; in the north and north-west, however, the term was either of minor significance or did not exist at all. Few names in Atholl contain the element and it is wholly absent from Rannoch, a district renowned for the preservation and usage of a pure Gaelic language until the 19th century (Armstrong 1825, 456).

## RUIGHE

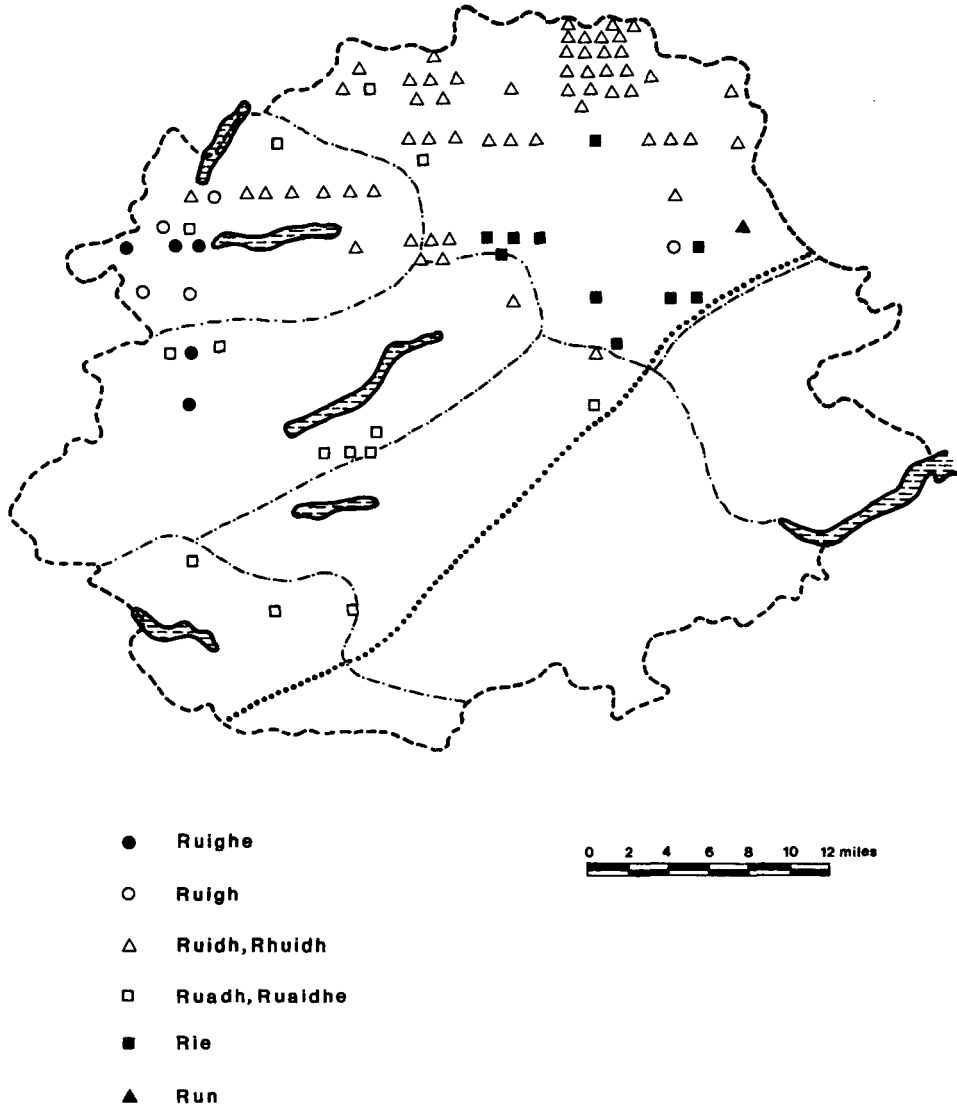
In addition to this generally accepted form, numerous spellings are given on the OS maps of 1859–64: ‘ruigh’, ‘ruidh’, ‘rhuidh’, ‘ruadh’, ‘ruaidhe’ as well as the anglicized forms ‘rie’ and ‘run’. ‘Ruidh’ is the most common spelling in Perthshire and is derived probably from the form ‘ruidhe’ which was itself listed separately in an early 19th-century Gaelic dictionary, with the meaning of a shieling (Armstrong 1825, 475). ‘Ruighe’, in contrast, was used to describe a shepherd’s house; a hut; a hill pasture where cattle were grazed in the summer months, as well as a shieling (Armstrong 1825, 475–6). ‘Ruighe’ also meant literally the human arm, or more precisely the fore-arm, and from this possibly originated the meaning of a spreading lower slope on a hill, which was probably used farther afield in the Gaelic Highlands (An Deo-Ghreine 1907, 99). Thus it is conceivable that the term acquired a specialized secondary meaning, and was used to describe the lower slopes of a shieling or hill pasture.

The Ordnance Survey faced a difficult physical task in the survey of the hill ground; even the collection of information about topographical names, apparently so straightforward, and its subsequent editing, were hampered by problems. Surveyors, unfamiliar with Gaelic and with the pronunciation and spelling of local words, struggled to record accurately the place-names; where the information was transcribed into the Name Books and onto the map, poor handwriting in field-notebooks might give rise to more mistakes. ‘Ruighe’ might be recorded as ‘ruidhe’ or ‘ruidh’. It is relatively easy to trace the original word if it has undergone only the loss of a final letter, but other spelling mistakes can give rise to more serious confusion. In the case of the term ‘ruidh’ the possible substitution of the letter ‘a’ for a letter ‘i’, sometime during the recording of the place-name, would result in the formation of the word ‘ruadh’, used to describe the brown or reddish colour of water in mossy hill ground. Where a shieling settlement is shown beside the ‘ruadh’ name on the maps it is highly likely that ‘ruadh’ is an erroneous transcription of ‘ruidh’ (OS Sheets 10, 18, 81: NN 7178, 6166, 6831).

The lack of systematic investigation of transhumance place-names in Scotland has failed to halt speculation that the ‘ruighe’ element and its related forms were mainly used in the eastern Scottish Highlands (Gaffney 1959, 22). As long ago as the end of the 19th century, ‘ruighe’ elements were considered to be more numerous than ‘airigh’ elements in Perthshire place-names, although no attempt was made to quantify the frequency (Campbell 1896, 64). The analysis of transhumance names recorded on the Ordnance Survey maps in Table 1 shows this to be correct: 30% of the place-names incorporate the ‘ruighe’ element, a figure nearly three times greater than the frequency of ‘airigh’.

Most of the ‘ruighe’ elements occur in Atholl and Rannoch (illus 4) but some are also found in Glenlyon, Strathummel, Strathtay and the hills to the east of Dunkeld. More isolated examples occur farther southwards towards the Highland Line, between Loch Tay and Loch Earn, and along the margins of the uplands of south-west Perthshire. Within this broad geographical picture each spelling recorded on the maps has its own distinctive localized distribution which might bear little or no relationship to local colloquial usage or to the pronunciation of Perthshire Gaelic. ‘Ruighe’ and ‘ruigh’ names concentrate in parts of the north-west including the western end of Loch Rannoch, Glenlyon and Glenlochay. ‘Ruidh’ names are most common in Atholl, although they also turn up on the north side of Loch Rannoch, on Tummelside and in Upper Strathtay. ‘Ruadh’ names are restricted to the western part of the county; most examples are in the south-west, in the environs of Balquhidder, Strathyre, and Callander, and the land between Loch Tay and Loch Earn. The debased forms ‘rie’ and ‘run’, which are most likely to be anglicized corruptions of the Gaelic word, are found mainly along the Highland/Lowland border. The ‘rie’ term, in particular, was frequently used as a prefix element in the names of hill grazings and shielings which became





ILLUS 4 The distribution of place-names derived from the Gaelic term 'ruighe'

permanently settled farms in the 17th and 18th centuries (SRO GD 132/186/725). The 'rie' place-name element occurs mainly in the east, in Strathtay and on the hill land between Dunkeld and Alyth. There is also a solitary example in the lower Garry Valley in Atholl, but the 'rie' element was not as rare in Atholl as the maps imply: several unmapped examples of this name-element are mentioned in 17th- and 18th-century estate records (NLS Ms 1433/28, Atholl Mss Bundle 249).

'Airigh' and 'ruighe' may have been synonyms. Armstrong (1825, 476) emphasized their similarity when he included 'bothan airidh' as a synonym for 'ruighe'. In terms of naming settlements, however, their very distinctive and localized distribution patterns suggest that

distinctions between the two terms may have existed: 'airigh' was confined mainly to south-west Perthshire while 'ruighe' was found mainly in north Perthshire. However, their respective distributions are not mutually exclusive: a certain degree of regional overlap exists. The minor, easterly group of 'airigh' names is inset within the 'ruighe' area and the debatable 'ruadh' names extend into the main 'airigh' areas.

Usage of the 'airigh' and 'ruighe' terms may have been influenced by a number of factors. It may simply reflect local preferences but it may also be associated with groups of people, and their movements, which have gone unchronicled in the historical records. People may have moved from the uplands of south-west Perthshire, where the main concentration of 'airigh' names exists, into Strathtay and Atholl and brought the term with them. This postulated movement may have happened in later medieval times, although the early medieval centuries may be a more likely period. From the *Annals of Ulster* (MacAirt & MacNiocaill 1983) and the *Scottish Regnal Lists* (Anderson 1973) it is difficult to discover exactly when and how the Gaelic-speaking people of Dalriada spread across Perthshire in the Dark Ages. Any successful eastward expansion unmistakably relied on establishing settlements and political control in the westernmost parts of Pictland. Parts of Breadalbane and Menteith not only formed the eastern border with Dalriada but also commanded an important centuries-old west/east routeway, based on a series of interlinking Highland glens and valleys. From prehistoric times onwards, peoples from around the Clyde basin and the Atlantic seaboard moved eastwards across Scotland, up Glenfalloch and Glendochart to the head of Glenogle where they turned either southwards into Upper Strathearn and Menteith, or continued east towards Loch Tay and Strathtay (Stewart 1974, 6–7). The early spread of Gaelic settlement into south-west Perthshire would have been strategically advantageous: it would have helped to reinforce peace and security along the eastern border of Dalriada and it would have offered mastery of the important routeways, by which to penetrate the more easterly areas in Atholl and beyond.

In some parts of Gaelic Scotland place-name elements can be used to date approximately the antiquity of transhumance settlements: for example, on north Skye the Gaelicized version of the Norwegian word 'setr', shadder, is useful in identifying places occupied during the summer before the 13th century (MacSween 1959, 80). The idea, however, that 'airigh' and 'ruighe' belonged to different centuries and that an older transhumance term was superseded by a new term cannot be easily applied to Gaelic Perthshire because both 'airigh' and 'ruighe' are words of Early Irish origin (MacLennan 1925, 8, 275). Even if the uplands of south-west Perthshire, where most of the 'airigh' names occur, were Gaelicized before northern and eastern Perthshire, there would be little point in using the argument that 'airigh' was an older transhumance term than 'ruighe' unless substantial, complementary evidence existed.

It is possible that the 'airigh' and 'ruighe' terms were applied to specific types of environmental settings because of the contrasting topography of their regions. The rough, upland landscape of south-west Perthshire was only suited to seasonal hill pasture; the term 'airigh', which dominates in this area, may have been used to describe summer grazing land. In north Perthshire the hills were not only good seasonal pasture but their less rough shapes could be more easily cultivated than the mountains guarding the southern approach to the Highlands. If the 'ruighe' term was reserved to describe the land on mountainsides that could be cultivated, it would help to explain why this element is often found in the environs of hill slopes on which minerals and soil naturally collect. It is only a small step to extend these distinctions in the environmental settings of 'airigh' and 'ruighe' to the idea that each word was used to describe farming activities, since the physical character of the land largely determined what it was used for. 'Airigh' may have referred only to an aspect of livestock husbandry, while 'ruighe' (with its links to the localized

areas of better-quality land) may have implied occasional or long-sustained cultivation as well.

An alternative explanation must be considered. Farming townships often had access to several shielings and their people may have distinguished between the near and far shielings. In Bernera on the Isle of Lewis the 'airigh' term was used to describe the home shieling which usually lay half-way between the village township and the distant 'saetr' or summer shielings (Macaulay 1972, 321, 335). If the Lewis usage of the term applied to Perthshire, farming communities may have owned sufficient summer pastures to develop two sets of shielings, the 'airigh' acting as a half-way house between the farm and the distant shieling, the 'ruighe'. Such interpretation would certainly account for the large, outer distribution of 'ruighe' names beyond the small group of 'airigh' names in north Perthshire, but establishing the exact relationships between members of the 'airigh' and 'ruighe' groups is difficult from the Ordnance Survey maps and the available estate records. The interpretation of 'ruighe' as the distant shieling is weakened by the relative absence of the term in south-west Perthshire, unless it is that a farming settlement in this district was limited to one shieling pasture because the hill ground was not extensive enough to provide more pasture.

Why two Gaelic terms closely associated with transhumance occur in the place-names of upland Perthshire must remain conjecture at present, despite their clearly defined geographical patterns.

#### BOTHAN

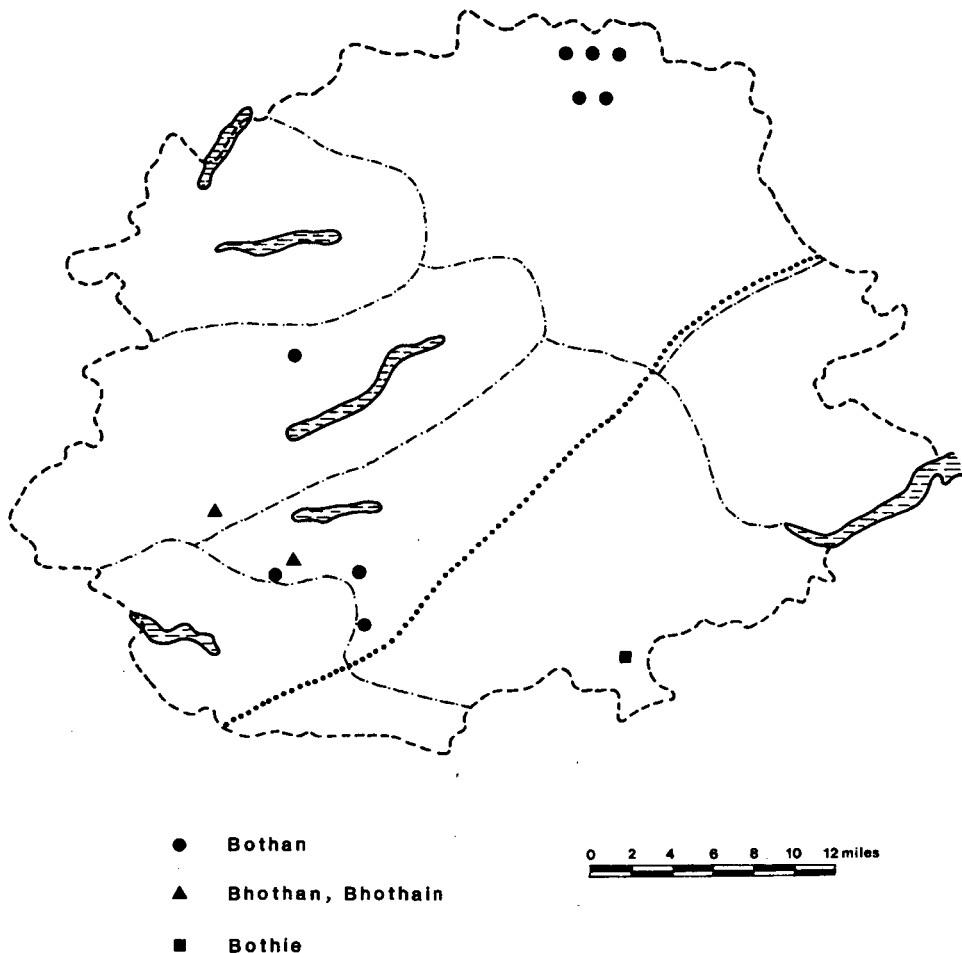
This term, derived from Early Irish (MacLennan 1925, 45), was used up to the early 19th century to describe a variety of simple housing types: a hut, a tent or a cottage (Armstrong 1825, 72). Estate and legal papers in the 17th and 18th centuries refer to huts and bothies, most usually built of turf or stone or a combination of both, to the extent that a 'hut' was perhaps the commonest meaning of the term. Huts were occupied during the short summer stay at the shielings and also at times of peat cutting, hunting, whisky distilling and convalescence when sick people retreated to take the mountain air and drink goats' milk whey (Bil 1989, 159). Thus, unless the bothan names explicitly refer to shielings and grazings there may be an inherent element of doubt about their links with transhumance.

The tent may have been a more primitive form of shelter than a hut but it was more comfortable than taking shelter among the rocks or building a makeshift overnight shelter out of what was readily available. In transhumance, the use of tents would have enhanced the mobility of pastoral farmers and their families and would have helped them to exploit the summer grazings more efficiently, particularly in very isolated hill districts. The term 'pebyll', preserved in the modern town name Peebles and documented from the early 12th century onwards in charters, shows that Welsh-speaking peoples in early medieval times used tents when they went to upland pastures in the Scottish Borders (Nicolaisen 1976, 172). In upland Perthshire the terms 'buth' and 'bhutha' may have been used for a tent, instead of 'bothan' (OS Sheets 44, 7: NN 4252, NO 0382). Given the transient nature of the tent it is no surprise that 'buth' and 'bhutha' element names left no physical trace of settlement on the ground to be mapped by the Ordnance Survey. There are no clues in the historical records when tents were abandoned in favour of bothy huts by ordinary folk, but in the first half of the 18th century landowners still used tents on hunting forays in the remote hills, away from the shieling settlements. In 1732, while on a summer hunting trip in Glentatnich, Lord George Murray wrote to his wife: 'I want a quarter of an ell of Teiken to mende a part of my tent.' A few years later another gentleman, Graham of Fintry, went to the Atholl high tops near the Aberdeenshire boundary 'with my company, tents and dogs' and 'a shelty carrying a small tent'

(Atholl 1908, III, 388, 394). Both these documented cases relate to an area with 'bhutha' and 'bothan' names and thus either term might have been used to denote a tent.

A cottage is a more substantial type of shelter than a hut or tent. The 'bothan' term, however, may not have acquired this meaning until sheep farming was introduced and shepherds began to stay out on the hills for most of the year (Heron 1793, 197). Another word, 'tighe', usually implying a grander type of house than 'bothan' appears in settlement place-names on the hill grounds (OS Sheets 34, 44, 104: NN 3754, 4350, 5716). Lying beyond the zone of permanent settlement and agriculture, these may be examples of shielings which, in times of population growth, became small permanently occupied upland farms, although the maps do not show any evidence of field systems around these settlements.

Apart from their setting, the evidence of any link between the 'tighe' names and transhumance is extremely tenuous. This is less true of the 'bothan' names, for written records attest the use of bothies by those involved with shieling and grazing. Lauchlan McIntosh, of



ILLUS 5 The distribution of place-names derived from the Gaelic term 'bothan'

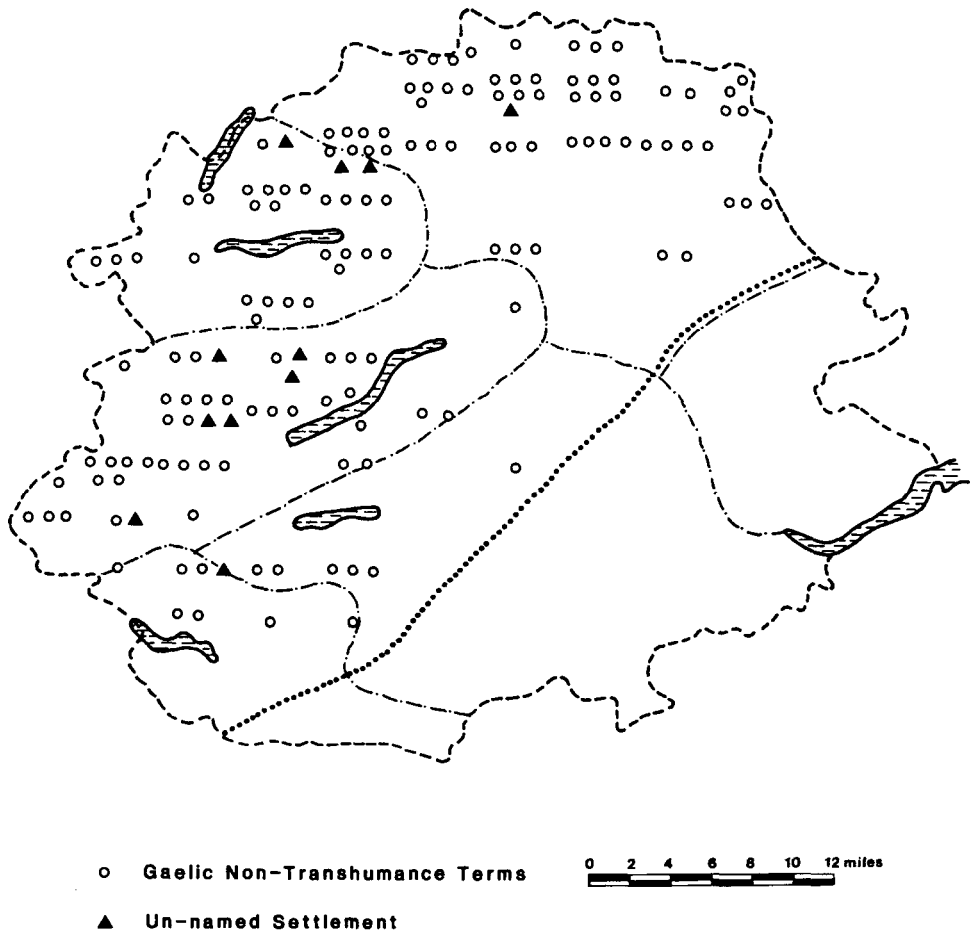
Calbruar in Glengarry, recalled the summer use of eight bothies on the Kirries ground until local families abandoned the shieling custom around the turn of the 19th century; one of these bothies housed a herd until the 1820s (Atholl 1908, IV, 343). From the 1790s onwards, bothies were also built and occupied as part of a landowner's efforts to check activity around strictly kept deer forests; those at Feith Uainie and Lochen (OS sheet 6: NN 9278, 9878) in the Forest of Atholl served this purpose. Within a few years, some (such as Feith Uainie) were upgraded from the stone and turf of the 'ordinary hill bothy' to lime masonry, roofed in slate (Atholl 1908, IV, 198, 217).

Compared with the other transhumance element words discussed in this paper, 'bothan' accounts for only 4% of the transhumance settlement names plotted on the maps (Table 1). Illus 5 shows that two main groupings of the term exist in the Highlands: one small group in Atholl around the headwater of the rivers Tilt and Tarf, and another group around Strathyre, Glenartney and Callander. In the south-west the term appears in areas where 'airigh' place-names prevail yet none of these 'bothan' names specifically refers to shieling activities. In Atholl, however, the term is prefixed to some of the shieling names and in these cases there is little doubt that the buildings were transhumance settlements (OS Sheet 13: NN 9971, 9973). South of the Highland Line the anglicized version 'Bothie' appears in the name 'Bothie Burn' in the Ochils (OS Sheet 127: NN 9501). This may be a relict name from the times when transhumance was widely practised in the more outlying parts of the district but it is just as likely to be associated with the 18th-century farm economy in the Ochils when solitary herds watched black cattle and sheep on the hill grazings while butter and cheese were made at home on the farm (Newte 1791, 256, 258).

#### NON-TRANSHUMANCE GENERIC ELEMENTS

The published literature has helped to create an impression that most place-names of transhumance settlements incorporated either the 'airigh' or 'ruighe' element (Campbell 1896, 64), although they account for only 42% of the relevant settlement names recorded on the Ordnance Survey maps (Table 1). Nearly half of the remaining place-names contain no specialized word element connected with transhumance but their sites, far beyond the limits of permanent settlement and cultivation, show this must have been their purpose. Their names usually describe a corrie, a stream or another landscape feature found on the summer grazing (OS Sheets 23, 19, 26, 27: NO 0865, NN 6767, 5064, 5464, 5664). Illus 6 shows that these names are widely found north of the Highland boundary line.

The context in which these names should be viewed is provided by some of the other source-material. In the 18th century Scottish agriculture received a bad press from the Improving writers. Farming in the Highlands was seen in contemptuous and unflattering terms as simple, primitive and backward. Estate papers can help to reveal the bias of the Improving writers and to redress the unfair and misleading pictures of pre-Improvement farming and the rural economy in general. Regulations for the grazing of shielings and hill pastures along the south side of Loch Rannoch on the Strowan Estate in 1771 are available, and from these it is possible to piece together a picture of summer stock movements among a number of pastoral communities (SRO E788/20/1). However, these regulations may reflect more the impositions of the landowner than the customary traditions of the ordinary folk and this cannot be ignored in the evaluation of the evidence. The Rannoch grazings were not used indiscriminately: they were deliberately managed in a carefully controlled and systematic fashion (Bil 1990, 182). Every year from April onwards hill grazings were pastured: each grazing usually lasted for about a month, and this gave rise to a sophisticated overall pattern of timing and phased usage. The exploitation of the pastures was further carefully planned by dividing up the livestock into the young and yeld animals, and the milch stock which



ILLUS 6 The distribution of transhumance settlements with place-names derived from Gaelic terms not specific to transhumance, and of unnamed transhumance settlements

were the mainstay of the summer dairying activities. The young and yeld animals left the township earlier in the year and were taken to the isolated grazings, though from August onwards less close attention was paid to where and when they grazed. The dairy stock, in contrast, moved to the summer pastures usually from around May onwards; their grazings were changed at regular intervals until the end of August, by which time they had returned to the lower ground close to the farming townships. Herds looked after the young and yeld stock on the remote hills. The dairy animals required daily supervision and milking, and so dairymaids were always present; until the transhumance custom began to disappear, there were entire communities in the hills. Groups of huts for living and dairying purposes were essential on all the grazings visited by milch stock throughout the summer months; substantially fewer huts were necessary for the herds in charge of the young and yeld animals. The small size of the shieling settlements seems to suggest that the sites mapped by the Ordnance Survey date from after the time that groups of families stopped going to the shielings (Bil 1989, 164). Farmers generally kept the subsistence and young stock

apart on separate pastures but it was common for all stock to join up for at least one stage in the summer. Thus to view pastoral husbandry in simple, primitive terms as the Improving writers wished their readers to do, is perhaps to underestimate seriously the nature of pastoral farming in the Central Highlands in the 18th century, and probably earlier too.

In Rannoch the farming townships had rights to pasture as many as four shielings and hill grazings. This district, however, may have had more extensive hill grazings than many other areas in the Highlands. Nevertheless, the Rannoch pasturing arrangements are very informative. They suggest that the summer movement of dairy livestock and people was not confined to hill settlements with the specialized name-elements already discussed. If this is the case then transhumance words must not always be expected where there are remoter grazings associated with settlements. This reinforces the Ordnance Survey evidence (Table 1) that most of the settlements under consideration had no specialist word incorporated in their name. For example, if some of the 'ruighe' names anglicized by estate administrators in Rannoch into 'rie' and 'ri' spellings are considered, it is evident that there are usually two or three non-generic element names for every 'ruighe' name, and in some instances there are no 'ruighe' name grazings (Bil 1990, 182).

This is a slightly higher ratio than is suggested by the appropriate figures in Table 1, and is probably influenced by the greater availability of hill pastures in Rannoch. The same body of evidence also emphasizes the location of the 'ruighe' names on the lower hill slopes or the ground used early on in the summer season, and seems to corroborate this definition of the term, referred to above. In addition, 'Cronaherrie', a possible anglicization of 'Cro na-h-Airidh' shows that 'airigh' names indeed may have been used in Rannoch but had disappeared from folk memory and from place-names by the early 1860s when the district was surveyed.

Why the majority of settlement names in the Highland areas lack a specialized transhumance word is difficult to answer. The 'airigh' and 'ruighe' names may represent the oldest and longest occupied sites while the non-generic element names may date to more recent times when the shieling pastures and commercial hill grazings were divided into smaller units. By the 1600s, as the economy of Lowland Scotland grew to depend on the adjoining Highland zone for its supplies of dairy products, extensive pastures in the Breadalbane hills were subdivided to make a more efficient and intensive use of seasonal pasture (Bil 1989, 165). Many of these place-names in the non-generic category may have originated then or, later, with the rearing of drove-cattle for the English markets.

The transhumance settlements that did not have a name linked to their function, accounting for 3% of the mapped settlements (Table 1), perhaps represent even more recent additions to the settlement pattern, in that they may not have been established long enough to be named by local inhabitants. It is also possible, however, that their names became forgotten or lost when neighbourhoods were abandoned or cleared, and no one was left behind to preserve the place-names in folk tradition. The absence of names may also be the result of simple oversights by the Ordnance Survey.

## HILL NAMES

The study of transhumance place-names has focused on grazing areas with summer huts, although those 'airigh' and 'ruighe' names with no associated mapped settlements have been included because this absence does not necessarily deny a connection with transhumance, especially if the custom had been abandoned years before the land was surveyed.<sup>3</sup> The missing 'airigh' and 'ruighe' settlements, which occur on low and outlying ground alike, may be relatively

old sites where the huts had collapsed and were no longer easily recognizable or were not thought to be worthy of depiction on the maps when the ground was surveyed in the mid-19th century. The OS surveyors followed strict instructions as to what should be depicted; vestigial remains were not normally recorded unless there was reason to believe that depiction would serve a purpose. Traces of settlements may have existed on the ground but it is unlikely that their omission is simply related to a strict adherence to the rules; some shieling settlements incorporating ‘airigh’ and ‘ruighe’ name-elements are labelled as being in ruins (OS sheets 20, 27, 77, 91, 102: NN 7969, 7970, 5563, 3229, 4625, 3816). It is also possible that some of these grazings never had huts and were herded from a settlement on another summer pasture.

In addition to the summer settlement names, the Ordnance Survey maps contain the names of nearly 3000 hills, many of which may have served as grazings. Elements of around 180 of these hill-names are explicitly connected with aspects of pastoral farming: their names refer to livestock, eg Leachdann Feith Seasgachain, the slope of the bog of the barren cows (OS Sheet 5: NN 9181); to pasture, eg Fiarach, the grassy place (OS Sheet 90: NN 3426); or to herding, eg Buachaille bhreige, the false herd (OS Sheet 104: NN 5418), and Coire an Eachdarra, the hollow of the poindfold of the strayed cattle (OS Sheet 81: NN 7132). Each of these hill-names with no mapped trace of settlement may have operated less like a conventional dairying place, visited by whole families in the summer months, and more like a hill-grazing.

Table 2  
Livestock name-elements in hill-names

	Cattle	Horse	Goat	Sheep	Pigs	Poultry
North Perthshire Highlands (OS sheets 1–33)	11	5	11	2	5	1
Central Perthshire Highlands (OS sheets 34–77)	17	11	23	4	2	–
South Perthshire Highlands & Ochils (OS sheets 78–138)	18	12	22	9	2	–

The place-name information related to the livestock sent to pasture the hills may help to show the extent to which the grazing areas without recorded summer huts were more akin to hill grazing than a genuinely transhumant situation. Over four-fifths of the hill-names refer to cattle, horse, goat, sheep and pigs (Table 2). There is a solitary reference to poultry – Carn Geoidh, the Goose’s cairn (OS Sheet 14: NO 1076) – but it is difficult to imagine the summering of geese at about 900 m above sea-level. Cattle feature prominently in hill-grazing names throughout the county but the hill-names relating to the remainder of the livestock suggest regional differences in stocking patterns. Goat-keeping was widespread, except in Atholl where the relative absence of rough, rocky ground may have inhibited its introduction. The Atholl district, traditionally famed for horse-rearing, annually sold around 500 horses at the Perth markets at the beginning of the 18th century (Bil 1990, 166), yet the place-names suggest that horse-rearing was equally if not more important in other parts of the Perthshire uplands. Pigs may have been more common in Atholl and north-east Perthshire, where they were used to break in wasteland for cultivation purposes and also, probably, to consume whey products from dairy manufacture. Sheep were widely kept in the southern Perthshire uplands and in the Ochils.

The hill-names may reflect the sophisticated pasturing arrangements known to have been devised by pastoral communities. On these hill grazings the stock was segregated by type (Table 3). Cattle, for example, were grazed separately from the horses and sheep, both of which closely cropped the pastures and left no grass for the cattle. The livestock was also subdivided by age into mature and immature animals. Hill grazings were set aside for bulls, bullocks, cows not in calf,



and young cattle. Many of these cattle however, may not have belonged to local transhumant communities; they were more likely to have been owned by strangers who hired summer grass from landowners. Initially, landowners organized commercial grazings and took in summer cattle from a number of small farmers, but by the early 18th century this practice coexisted with letting entire grazings to substantial tacksmen and merchants (Bil 1990, 218).

Table 3  
Types and ages of livestock associated with hill-names

Cattle	Horse	Goat	Sheep
ADULT			
Tarbh (bull) 6	Eachraidh (stud) 2 Each (horse) 19 Eachan (little horse) 3	Bhoc, boc, bhuic (billy) 9 Eirionnach (billy) 2	Caora (sheep) 4 Mhuilt, wether (wedder) 4
Bha, Cow 6 Seasgach 2 (barren cow)	Capull, Capel (mare) 3	Gaibhre, Goibhre, Goat 9 Gobhar (nanny) 20	
YOUNG			
Damh (bullock) 6 Gamhainn (stirk) 3 Ghamhuinn (yearling) 1 Colpach, Quey (heifer) 2 Laoigh (calf) 18 Bioraich (cow calf) 2	Loth 1 (filly, foal, colt)	Minnseag (yearling nanny) 3 Mheann, Mheine, Meann, Minnein (kid) 13	Uan, Lamb 7

Table 4  
Summer grazings with and without settlements (percentages in brackets)

Altitude (ft)	0–499	500–999	1000–1499	1500–1999	2000–2499	2500–2999	3000+
A	5(3.4)	18(12.4)	86(59.3)	29(20.1)	7(4.8)	–	–
B	–	27(19.1)	76(53.9)	30(21.3)	7(5)	1(0.7)	–
C	–	11(8.1)	39(28.9)	34(25.2)	29(21.5)	16(11.9)	6(4.4)

A = Shiel, Airigh, Ruighe & Bothan words & settlements  
B = Non-generic element words with associated settlements  
C = Hill-grazing names with no associated settlements<sup>4</sup>

Summer grazing was widely practised on marginal agricultural land in Perthshire and farther afield in the Highlands. Table 4 shows that grazings with summer huts were found mainly below 2000 feet (611 m), in particular on ground in the altitude band 1000–1499 ft (305–458 m). Hill grazings with no recorded settlements also existed on this lower ground but they were more numerous on land above 2000 ft (611 m), and even occurred on land over 3000 ft (916 m). It is very clear that most of the grazing areas with no known huts were distant, isolated hill grazings. Perhaps the lower hill grazings visited by most of the pigs and sheep were watched from some of the neighbouring summer settlements but this was less likely to happen on the higher grazings pastured by fattening cattle, horses and goats.

In a pastoral society, where livestock represented wealth and status, and in times of

political instability when theft and lawlessness were widespread, it is difficult to imagine that farmstock was left unattended on the hills. The cattle received varying amounts of attention: the dairy animals received more than the yeld animals. While the rest of the livestock may not have received the same degree of care they must not have been totally neglected. The remote hill grazings were probably not under constant surveillance by herds but periodic visits would have been essential to check up on the animals and on these occasions, in isolated areas, a shelter might be occupied overnight. The apparent absence from the maps of huts on the distant hill grazings may be because the surveyors did not think that they merited depiction. However, it is possible, in view of what is known about pastoral husbandry management, that hill grazings indeed existed without any huts. Generally the milch animals were taken to the summer pastures for a 6–12 week stay and the yeld animals for up to six months, but there were animals which were left out on the hills for longer periods, often with little human contact. Towards the end of the 17th century, Sir Robert Sibbald, in a topographical account of Perthshire, wrote that Glenartney had ‘a great many deer and roe and wild horse and cows’ (NLS Ms 15.1.1). ‘Wild horse’ was a term used to describe semi-feral domesticated horses which remained on the hills throughout the year with minimal supervision. During harsh winter conditions the horses were likely to make their own way down from the hills to the more sheltered grounds around the farms (Bil 1990, 178). Goats were also left largely to their own devices on the hills. In the early 1800s people still remembered how goats in Glenalmond were never herded and that in the previous century they had gone to the hills in summer and winter (Atholl Mss: bundle 836). Undoubtedly the dairy goats, with their need of regular milking, must have been kept separately on lower pastures, closer to the shieling settlements. This type of farming practice where stock remained on the hill grazings would help to account for the numerous references to horses and goats on the isolated hill grazings that have no recorded evidence of huts.

Exploitation of distant remote pastures is usually viewed as a relatively late economic development which became of growing importance as commercial influences infiltrated the Highlands. Nevertheless, the outlying pastures with no huts were integral elements of a pre-Improvement agricultural framework, and their usage dates from before the second half of the 18th century, when horse-rearing and goat-keeping disappeared in favour of sheep farming. Even the grazings with names associated with sheep may not be of late 18th-century origin for sheep played a role in pre-Improvement farming: they were used to pay farm and grazing rents in the 17th century. It may be difficult to identify exact chronological contexts for those grazing areas with summer huts and those with no known huts but both were most certainly in use by the 18th century.

## CONCLUSION

A major shortcoming of the place-name evidence is that it offers us no information about when in the summer season particular places were used. The lower pastures were probably used earlier than the more outlying and isolated pastures, and had the prospect of a revisit before the end of the summer. Historical records indeed show that pastoral farmers divided up their pastures into spring, summer, autumn and winter grass, and erected seasonally occupied buildings on them. ‘The spring shealling’ built on the shieling of Craigvad in Glenlyon was occupied until 10 June, and its purpose was probably very similar to the spring dwelling or ‘Tigh Earraich’ used in Lewis until the second half of this century (Bil 1990, 148). In spite of this shortcoming, the study of place-names helps to further our understanding of transhumance, especially for those areas where

written records are missing. It not only shows that transhumance was once practised in upland and lowland Perthshire but also that a number of terms were used: 'shiel', 'airigh', 'ruighe' and 'bothan'.

Although the Ordnance Survey maps are likely to underestimate the full strength and distribution of the custom in Perthshire, they show that certain words were more commonly used than others in some districts. 'Shiel' names are a major element in the transhumance place-names of the southern edge of the Highlands; in the upland interior, 'airigh' names are most common in the south-west, and 'ruighe' names in the north. 'Bothan' also occurs in small isolated groupings but the majority of the place-names contain no element of any transhumance term. These non-generic element names are of special interest because it could mean that the traditional transhumance words such as 'airigh' and 'ruighe' were less common terms in the language of the ordinary folk of Gaelic Perthshire, and perhaps in the Highlands in general, than scholars have hitherto imagined.

## APPENDIX

Place-names mentioned in the text: taken from Ordnance Survey 1st edition 6-inch maps, 1859–64, sheets 1–138.

Sheet 5: Leachdann Feith Seasgachain; 6: Bothan Feith Uaine, Bothan a' Lochain; 7: Altonodhar Shieling, Carn a Bhutha; 10: Caochan Ruadh; 12: Sliabh na Cloiche Moire; 13: Bothan Ruidh Sron nan Deas, Bothan Ruidh Chuillein; 14: Carn Geoidh; 18: Sithean Ruadh; 19: Leathad Easain; 20: Ruidh Ban, Ruidh Dubh; 23: Allt Coire an Laoigh; 25: Clach an Fhuarain Shealing; 26: Sron a' chlaonaidh; 27: Beinn Bhoideach, Meall Garbh, Ruidh Caochan an t-Seilich; 28: Sleibh; 32: Sliabh Buidhe; 34: Tighe na Cruaiche; 35: An Sliabh; 44: Lub nam Buth, Lub an Tigh Leanna; 48: Sliabh Fada; 74: Shiel Hill; 77: Airidh Mor; 80: Allt nan Sliabh; 81: Bruach Ruadh, Allt na Creige Ruaidhe, Coire an Eachdarra; 90: Shiel Burn, Fiarach; 91: Airidh an t-Suie; 92: Sliabh na Meinne; 102: Airidh Gaothach; 104: Tigh Bhruce, Buachaille Bhreige; 108: Whitemoss Burn, Shiel Knows; 116: Arrevore Burn; 117: Shelforkie Moss, Shiel Hill; 127: Easter Shiel Burn, Wester Shiel Burn, Bothie Burn.

## NOTES

- 1 Throughout this paper, the location of a place-name printed on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 6-inch map is followed by the number of the sheet on which it appeared, together with a modern National Grid Reference, eg Sheet 108, NN 9915.
- 2 Analysis of cartographic information depends on the accuracy with which that information was originally recorded. It is generally accepted that the remote and less accessible upland regions were less accurately surveyed than the lowlands. Of necessity, the surveyors recorded fewer measurements and were forced to interpolate more.
- 3 Fifteen 'airigh' names and 31 'ruighe' names have no mapped settlements.
- 4 Only 135 of the 180 hill-names can be easily identified with specific altitudes.

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