A geography of language: Gaelic-speaking in Perthshire, 1698–1879

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ABSTRACT. To be anything more than a narrative of distributional shifts, the geographical study of languages and their change over space and time should investigate the social processes underlying language usage as well as the spatial extent of language areas. Studies of the changing geography of the Celtic languages within Great Britain have provided much insight into the nature and patterns of language shift over space and time and the social processes acting to change the extent of languages. The paper focusses upon the Gaelic language in the Scottish county of Perthshire for the period 1698 to 1879 and examines in detail the relationships between the spatial decline of the Gaelic-speaking area and the social processes of language change. Through analysis of several sources, the retreat of Gaelic Perthshire in that period is examined by parish and within particular parishes. The social and spatial decline of Gaelic is seen to be the result of educational policy, lack of Gaelic-speaking clergy and other related factors and was apparent in the varying use of Gaelic or English for particular social purposes by certain sections of the population. It is argued in conclusion that a 'geography of language' should seek to explain spatial patterns of language in terms of social usage and the changing patterns of usage over time, and should not concentrate upon one to the exclusion of the other.

INTRODUCTION

The geographical study of languages and their change over space and time has focussed largely upon the representation of language areas of any given period or date—the 'geography of languages'[1]—or upon the variation over space of constituent elements of language—'linguistic geography' or 'dialect geography'.[2] More recently the term 'geolinguistics' has been advanced, the most fundamental task of which, it has been argued, is 'the analysis of the distribution patterns and spatial structure of languages in contact'.[3] To be anything more than a narrative of change, studies of language shift should seek to explain these distributional patterns—how and why they vary over time and space—and should not be content merely to describe them.[4] As has elsewhere been noted, the geographical study of languages would be limited indeed if the distributions could not be explained in historical and sociological terms.[5] Attempts at explanation must in large part focus upon the social processes of language usage and the way that such processes act to alter the extent of a language area over space and time. This is not to deny that an identification of the former extent of language areas—'historical geolinguistics'—is not an important part of understanding a geography of language, but rather to observe that such representations will at best provide only partial explanation unless they are related to the underlying social processes of language change.

Several studies upon the changing geography of the Celtic languages in the British Isles have outlined the relationships between spatial decline and social usage of language. For Cornish[6], Manx[7], Irish Gaelic[8], Scottish Gaelic[9], and Welsh[10], a number of authors have recorded the changing extent of Celtic speech-areas over time and have shown how educational policies, urbanization, migration, agrarian change, and overt political and cultural hostility on the part of English-speakers have affected the position of the Celtic languages. This paper seeks

to add to these and other studies by examining the geography of Scottish Gaelic in one county during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The emphasis rests upon an examination of the changing geography of the spoken language, but as noted above, an understanding of 'when' and 'where' Gaelic was spoken in Perthshire must examine also the 'how' and 'why' behind this geographical picture. To this end, the paper has two main aims: first, to reconstruct the past geographical extent of the Gaelic-speaking area in Perthshire for the period before the Census records, and secondly to show how the changing position of Gaelic Perthshire over time was the result of a variety of social processes.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF GAELIC IN SCOTLAND

Analyses of the geographical extent of the Gaelic language have largely focussed on the evidence provided by the Census. In 1971 some 88 000 persons in Scotland spoke Gaelic, the vast

TABLE I
Gaelic-speaking population by county, 1881–1971 *

	1881†	*1891*‡	*1901*	*1911*	*1921*	*1931*	*1951*	*1961*	*1971*
SCOTLAND	6·76	6·84	5·57	4·56	3·47	2·97	1·98	1·64	1·78
Counties:									
Aberdeen	0·25	0·59	0·48	0·38	0·30	0·26	0·26	0·21	0·65
Angus	0·24	0·57	0·50	0·42	0·29	0·27	0·18	0·19	0·56
Argyll	65·25	60·88	54·35	47·06	34·56	33·17	21·69	17·20	13·72
Ayr	0·33	0·89	0·73	0·58	0·50	0·41	0·33	0·30	0·59
Banff	0·58	1·08	0·88	0·66	0·48	0·31	0·31	0·29	0·73
Berwick	0·09	0·29	0·26	0·34	0·24	0·26	0·24	0·21	0·57
Bute	22·70	20·34	15·71	12·02	4·57	5·17	2·28	1·64	1·90
Caithness	9·48	11·96	9·16	5·62	3·76	2·59	1·25	0·90	1·55
Clackmannan	0·04	0·82	0·57	0·77	0·51	0·48	0·28	0·31	0·57
Dumfries	0·02	0·29	0·26	0·33	0·23	0·28	0·22	0·17	0·51
Dunbarton	2·02	4·13	2·96	2·46	1·44	1·34	0·89	0·77	1·04
East Lothian	0·83	1·50	1·29	1·19	0·59	0·45	0·38	0·33	0·52
Fife	0·08	0·42	0·42	0·55	0·33	0·29	0·21	0·23	0·56
Inverness	75·99	73·24	64·85	59·07	50·91	43·97	30·57	25·91	22·02
Kincardine	0·05	0·35	0·27	0·30	0·29	0·30	0·25	0·32	0·70
Kinross	0·16	0·96	0·85	0·61	0·85	0·76	0·61	0·46	0·73
Kirkcudbright	0·03	0·19	0·27	0·33	0·28	0·28	0·29	0·26	0·54
Lanark	1·28	2·40	2·19	1·86	1·29	1·19	0·90	0·22	0·57
Midlothian	0·60	1·57	1·28	1·05	0·70	0·63	0·45	0·21	0·53
Moray	2·63	5·64	4·48	2·98	2·08	1·38	0·59	0·53	0·88
Nairn	20·32	27·07	15·29	10·54	6·47	5·19	1·69	1·79	1·64
Orkney	0·12	0·31	0·26	0·31	0·27	0·27	0·21	0·25	0·55
Peebles	0·02	0·57	0·51	0·69	0·38	0·44	0·36	0·39	0·91
Perth	12·10	11·95	9·94	7·70	5·25	4·21	1·90	1·53	1·68
Renfrew	2·15	3·17	2·30	1·90	1·31	1·12	0·67	0·59	0·81
Ross and Cromarty	76·57	76·92	71·76	64·01	60·20	57·29	46·05	41·31	35·12
Roxburgh	0·05	0·35	0·29	0·32	0·24	0·22	0·21	0·21	0·39
Selkirk	0·05	0·29	0·26	0·30	0·20	0·24	0·24	0·27	0·72
Shetland	0·04	0·25	0·21	0·17	0·44	0·15	0·11	0·10	0·42
Stirling	0·49	1·60	1·55	1·17	0·82	0·67	0·41	0·38	0·71
Sutherland	80·40	77·10	71·75	61·75	52·25	44·05	25·26	18·83	14·51
West Lothian	0·12	1·02	0·97	0·74	0·23	0·23	0·17	0·22	0·55
Wigtown	0·08	0·20	0·29	0·31	0·35	0·36	0·22	0·32	0·55

* Percentages based on the population aged three and over.
† The 1881 Census asked to what extent Gaelic was spoken 'habitually'.
‡ The 1891 Census was the first to differentiate between 'Gaelic-only' and 'Gaelic-and-English' speakers.

majority being Gaelic and English bilinguals.[11] Gaelic has long been the language of the four Highland counties of Scotland in particular—Argyll, Inverness, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland—and since 1881 when the Census first asked questions upon the ability of persons to speak Gaelic, the majority of Scotland's Gaelic-speakers have been recorded within those counties. The question of when and exactly how Gaelic retreated from the Lowlands into these upland regions and where it was last spoken by the population of the coastal plains will probably long remain a baffling problem. The extension of feudalism, the role of burghs, loss of cultural status and a political estrangement between the population of the uplands and the lowlands were probably the chief factors behind this early decline.[12] It is now generally accepted that by about 1350, Gaelic had retreated into its highland habitat. From that date, the term 'Highlands' came to denote a linguistic region, synonymous as it had not been before with the *Gaidhealtachd* or Gaelic-speaking area. Not until the late nineteenth century, however, was any attempt made by government to record the numbers speaking Gaelic in Scotland. The Census figures for Scotland from 1881 to 1971 (Table I) show a progressive decline in Gaelic-speaking from 1881 to 1961, with the rise in Gaelic-speaking in the 1960s being wholly Gaelic-and-English bilinguals. Valuable though such figures are to an assessment of Gaelic's more recent history and decline, the evidence provided by the Census tells us virtually nothing about the processes of language change or the national, regional, and parochial patterns of Gaelic-speaking in Scotland before 1881. Fortunately, a number of sources do exist by which to assess the spatial position of Gaelic at earlier periods: for the late seventeenth century[13], and for several dates during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries[14]. In combination with the Census evidence and as a crucial basis to it, these and other sources make it possible to reconstruct the geography of the Gaelic language in Scotland from the 1690s to the present day.[15]

Within the general picture of Gaelic's overall decline, certain parts of Scotland stand out largely through being better documented than others. Such an area is the county of Perthshire. Situated as it is in the heart of Scotland, Perthshire has for centuries straddled the 'Highland Line' or boundary between the Gaelic-speaking and English-speaking parts of Scotland. With mountainous, sparsely-populated and largely Gaelic-speaking parishes to the north and west and predominantly arable, densely-settled, and chiefly English-speaking parishes to the south and east, Perthshire parallels on a smaller scale the geography and linguistic divisions within Scotland as a whole. Examination of the changing spatial extent of Gaelic in Perthshire and the processes determining those changes provides valuable insight not only into the nature of language shift in one county, but also into the past spatial and social position of Gaelic within Scotland as a whole.

THE GAELIC LANGUAGE IN PERTHSHIRE

The decline of Gaelic in Perthshire from 12·10 per cent of the county speaking Gaelic 'habitually' in 1881 to only 1·68 per cent of the county speaking Gaelic by 1971 mirrors the trend within Scotland during the same period (see Table I).

The total population of Perthshire before 1881 can be assessed using the Census figures from 1801 and a variety of other sources allow estimates to be made for the period 1690 to about 1798. Allowing for a certain amount of inaccuracy in these earlier sources, the general picture of population in the period before 1881 was one of increase before 1821 and a gradual decline in the sixty years from 1821 to 1881 (Table II). For the period before 1881, it has not until now proved possible to estimate the numbers speaking Gaelic within the total population, but several of the sources examined below do allow an assessment of the population of Gaelic Perthshire from about 1690 to 1881.

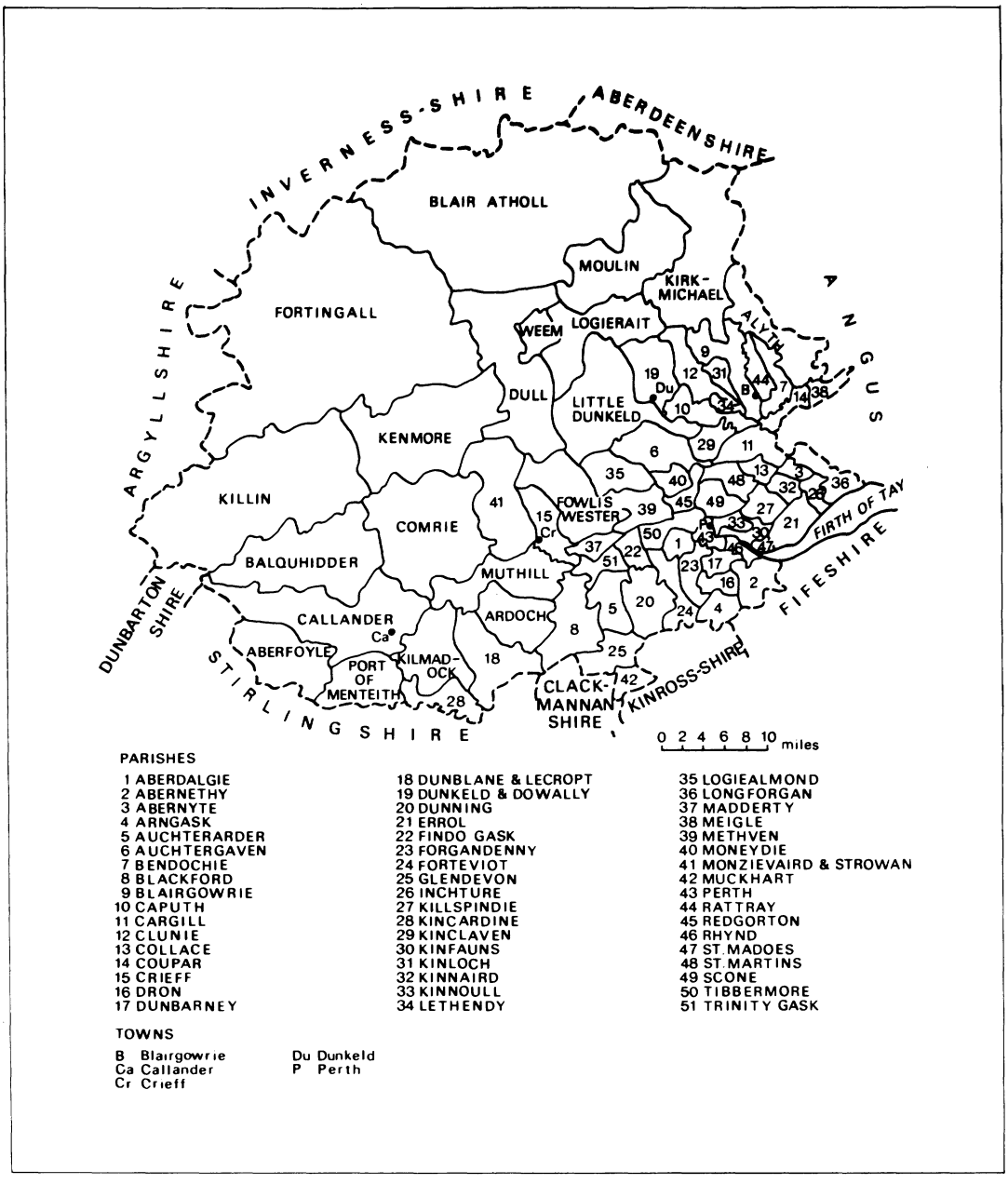

FIGURE 1. The location of parishes in Perthshire

As is the case for Scotland as a whole, evidence upon the position of Gaelic in Perthshire before the seventeenth century is sparse and what does exist must be treated with caution. Those parts of the county south and east of a line from the Clackmannanshire border through Dunkeld to the easterly parish of Alyth were probably largely English-speaking by the thirteenth century.[16] (All places and parishes may be located using Figure 1.) Caputh and Abernyte

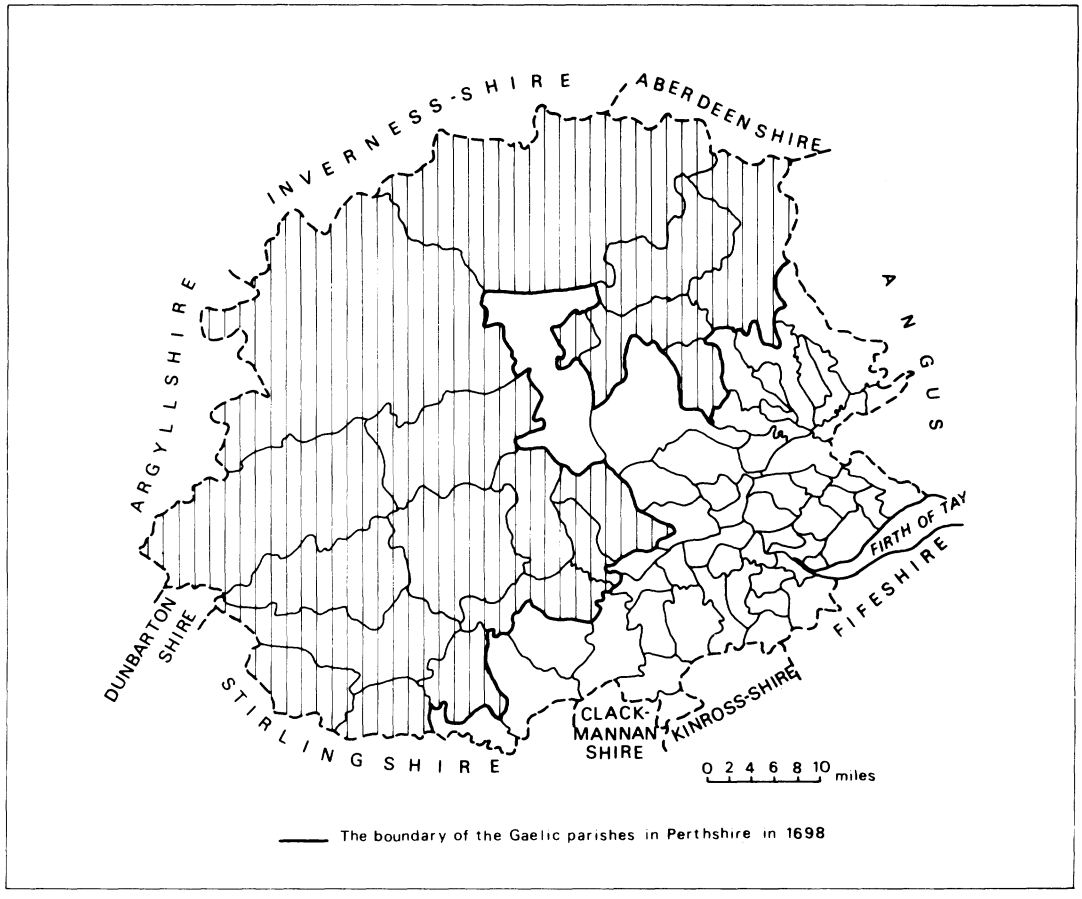

FIGURE 2. The geographical extent of the Gaelic language in Perthshire in 1698 (Gaelic parishes shaded)

parishes were only partly Gaelic by the early 1600s and it has been suggested that by the mid-seventeenth century, Gaelic was common only in the parishes of Blair Atholl, Dull, Dunkeld and Dowally, Fortingall, Kenmore, Kirkmichael, Little Dunkeld, Logierait, Moulin and Weem.[17] Sources dating from the late 1600s provide the earliest detailed representation of the Gaelic-speaking area in Perthshire.

The spatial extent of Gaelic-speaking in Perthshire, 1698–1879

The Gaelic language area in Perthshire in 1698 may be identified from Figure 2. These nineteen parishes were among those enumerated in lists of 'Highland Parishes' drawn up in 1698 to provide guidance for the distribution of scriptural texts in Gaelic.[18] The compiler of these lists, one James Kirkwood, recorded that Gaelic was also known and used by some persons in parishes 'on the Borders of the Highlands' although such parishes were not included within the *Gaidhealtachd* as understood by 1698. It is likely many of these partly Gaelic parishes were situated in Perthshire. The actual numbers speaking Gaelic in Perthshire at that time are difficult to determine. The estimated population of Perthshire in 1691 was about 84 000 (see Table II), but the collection of the hearth tax from which this figure is derived varied throughout Scotland and must be seen as a rough guide to population totals. In Perthshire, the parishes of Blair Atholl and Strowan, Killin, Fortingall, Dull, Moulin, Logierait, Little Dunkeld and

TABLE II
The estimated population of Perthshire, 1691–1881

*1691**	*1755†*	*1790–1798‡*	*1801§*	*1821*	*1841*	*1861*	*1881*
84 000	120 116	133 274	126 336	138 247	137 457	133 500	129 007

*This figure is derived from the 1691 Hearth Tax. This source omits a number of parishes within the Presbytery of Dunkeld and for this reason and for the fact that only between some 60–70 per cent of householders paid the tax, this figure must be presumed an under-estimation. (See Flinn, M. W. (ed.) (1977) *Scottish population history* (Cambridge), pp. 55–57, 198–199.)
†From Alexander Webster's *An account of the number of people in Scotland in the year 1755* in Kyd, J. G. (ed.) (1952) *Scottish population statistics* (Edinburgh), pp. 42–46.
‡From Sinclair, J. (ed.) (1798) *Statistical account of Scotland* (Edinburgh), XX, pp. 620–621.
§*Census of Scotland* (1802), p. 547. All dates and figures in Table II from 1801 on are taken from the Census of Scotland.

Dowally, Kenmore, and Weem—all to one degree or another Gaelic speaking in 1698—were not enumerated in the 1691 hearth tax.[19] The surviving records of the 1693 and 1695 poll taxes for Perthshire are likewise uneven in their coverage. The hearth tax does reveal that more people lived in the low-lying arable parishes to the south and east than in the upland areas of Perthshire where Gaelic was more prevalent (Fig. 2), but such evidence does not make an assessment of either the total population of the Gaelic-speaking population very easy. The suggestion that perhaps 45 per cent of Perthshire's population were Gaelic speakers in the 1690s must be regarded as a very rough estimate.

Kirkwood also noted that men were more able to understand and speak English than women or children and that throughout the Highlands Gaelic was widely preferred as the language of religious administration whilst English was used commonly only in business transactions. These point to the somewhat indefinable nature of the boundary between Gaelic and English parishes, the preference for Gaelic or English in certain social situations, and the varying ability of sections of the population to understand or speak English appear commonly in the analysis of Gaelic's changing geography.

Reports of 1705 and 1708 enumerate the parishes of Blair Atholl, Comrie, Crieff, Dull, Fortingall, Fowlis Wester, Kenmore, Killin, Kirkmichael, Logierait, Monzievaird and Strowan, Moulin, Muthill, Weem and the greater part of Little Dunkeld parish as chiefly Gaelic by that period.[20] The parishes of Alyth, Bendochy, Blairgowrie, Caputh, Cluny, Kinloch, and Rattray all had small Gaelic-speaking communities within their bounds at the same period, and the town of Dunkeld was half Gaelic and half English in language in 1708.[21] The fact that the parishes of Alyth, Blairgowrie, Caputh, Clunie, Dull, Kinloch, Little Dunkeld, and Rattray were recorded as Gaelic-speaking to one degree or another for 1705–1708 and yet were not included among the 'Highland Parishes' in Perthshire for 1698 (Fig. 2) would suggest that these were the partly Gaelic-speaking parishes on the borders of the Highlands to which Kirkwood had earlier referred. Gaelic was commonly spoken by the majority of the inhabitants in the parishes of Aberfoyle, Balquhidder, Callander, and Port of Menteith in 1724.[22] Detailed evidence upon Port of Menteith parish for 1724–1725 reinforces the suggestion that Gaelic was particularly preferred as the language of religious ordinance, even by those Highlanders able to speak some English. English was only used in place of Gaelic for business purposes and then usually only by the menfolk.[23]

By the mid-1700s, however, English was becoming increasingly common within the *Gaidhealtachd* border parishes, although its use was not apparent among all sections of society equally nor was familiarity with English everywhere equatable with actually speaking that language in place of Gaelic. Of the Estates of Perth in central and south-west Perthshire in 1755

TABLE III

*The English-speaking population in certain Perthshire parishes, 1755–1756**

Parish	*Parish population in 1755*†	*Persons speaking English*	*English-speaking population as a percentage of parish population*
Auchterarder	1194	248	20·8
Balquhidder	1592	134	2·4
Blair Atholl	3257	40	1·2
Callander and Strowan	1750	623	35·6
Cargill	1897	933	49·2
Crieff	1414‡	677	47·9
Dunblane	2727	194	7·1
Fortingall	2859	32	0·8
Kenmore	3067	58	1·9
Killin	1968	55	2·8
Muthill	2902	1427	49·2

*Based upon figures in Wills, V. (ed.) (1973) *Statistics of the Annexed Estates* (Edinburgh).
†Webster (1755) in Kyd, J. G. (ed.) (1952) op. cit.
‡Not including the district of Glenalmond in Crieff parish (Webster (1755) in Kyd, J. G. (ed.) (1952) ibid., p. 43).

it was noted that 'The English language has made very good progress in these lands considering how seldom the school is kept there, but there are many of the tennant's children that cannot speak English, and a few of their wives, but all the tennants can speak English tolerably well except two.'[24] In the more isolated and upland parishes such as Blair Atholl, Fortingall, and Kenmore, English was spoken by only a tiny minority in 1755, whilst in a number of parishes to the south and east English was spoken and understood by nearly half of the population[25] (Table III).

This distinction between Gaelic and English speech-areas within Perthshire by the mid-eighteenth century is reinforced by the evidence of John Walker, whose two-volume *An economical history of the Hebrides and Highlands* published in 1808 was based upon information collected during trips to the Highlands in the 1760s and 1770s.[26] In this work appear lists of the Gaelic-speaking parishes in Scotland for the mid-1700s. To Walker, the Highlands were 'best defined by the boundary of the Gaelic language', and he named those parishes within Scotland in which Gaelic was at that time 'either preached or spoken by the natives'.[27] Precise dating of these lists is difficult although it is likely they were compiled in the wake of Walker's 1764 Report[28] and before his 1769 trip to the Highlands. Using Webster's population figures for Scotland of date 1755[29] and Walker's register of Gaelic parishes for the 1760s, it is possible to derive a rough estimate for the Gaelic-speaking population of Scotland and her counties as a per cent of total population. The estimates that 38 per cent of Perthshire's population were Gaelic-speakers in the mid-eighteenth century (some 45 600 persons), and that 22·8 per cent of Scotland's population were Gaelic-speakers at that period should be treated with some caution first since these figures assume all persons within the listed Gaelic parishes spoke only Gaelic and secondly in view of the time differences between the sources. Within Perthshire the north-and-west (Gaelic) versus south-and-east (English) distinction was clearly marked in the 1760s as it had been earlier (see Fig. 3). The inclusion by Walker of Alyth, Dull, and Little Dunkeld parishes supports the suggestion above that these parishes were at least partly Gaelic in language in 1698 and 1708, though not sufficient for them to warrant receipt of Gaelic scriptural

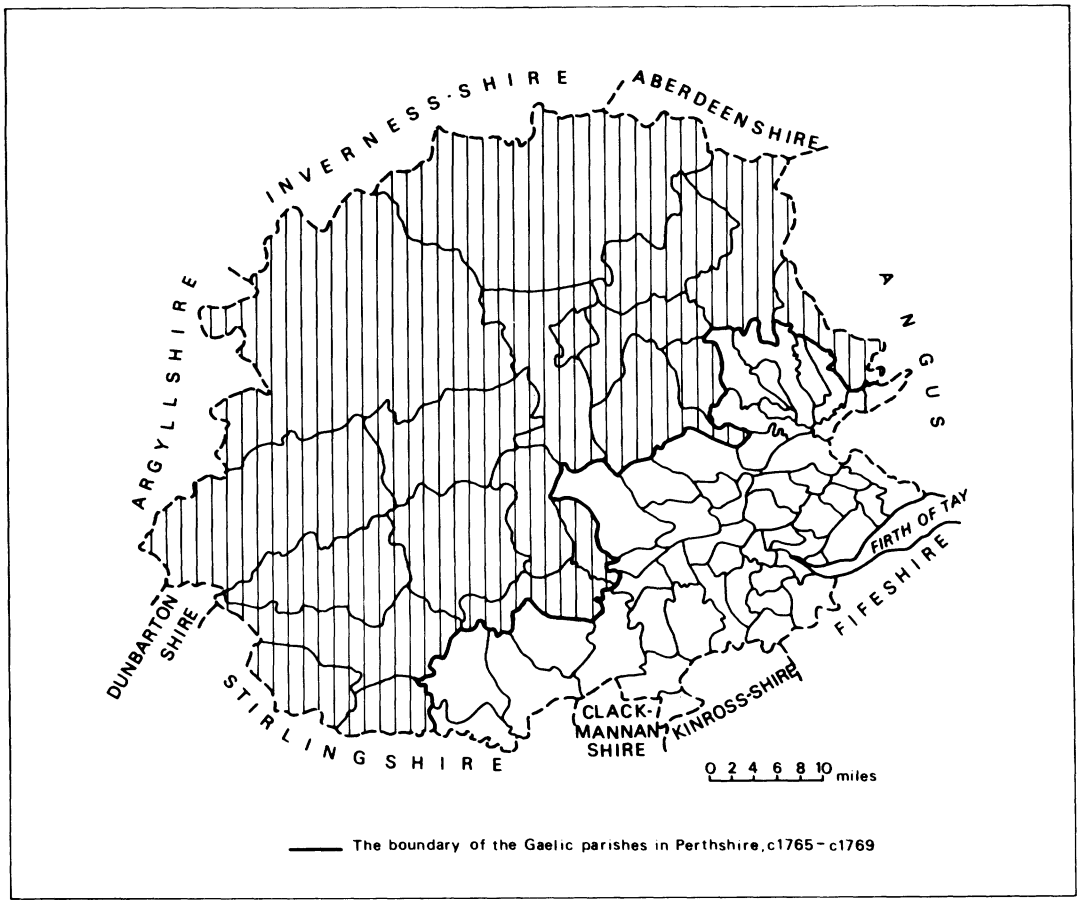

FIGURE 3. The geographical extent of the Gaelic language in Perthshire, *c.* 1765–*c.* 1769

texts at the earlier date. In contrast Gaelic had retreated from Kilmadock and Fowlis Wester parishes by the 1760s (cf. Figs 2 and 3).

By the early nineteenth century, the decline in the spatial extent of Gaelic was even more apparent. Selkirk (1806) understood the Highlands to be those areas 'in which the Gaelic or Erse is in common use', and he also considered there to be some 4000 to 5000 Gaelic-speaking persons living outside the *Gaidhealtachd* proper.[30] An estimated 18·5 per cent of Scotland's 1801 population of 1 608 420 spoke Gaelic in the early years of the nineteenth century and in Perthshire some 27 per cent (some 34 100 persons) of the total population were Gaelic-speakers. By 1806 Gaelic was no longer in common use in the parishes of Aberfoyle, Alyth, Crieff, Dunkeld and Dowally, Little Dunkeld, Monzievaird and Strowan, Muthill, and Port of Menteith as had been the case forty years earlier (cf. Figs 3 and 4). As the evidence of the *Old statistical account of Scotland* shows, however, the retreat of Gaelic was not as abrupt as a comparison of Figures 3 and 4 would suggest. In Crieff parish, English was widely known and used by 1793, but Gaelic was still spoken by some inhabitants.[31] Such a decline—certainly large-scale but not a complete shift from Gaelic to English—was characteristic of a number of hitherto mainly Gaelic parishes by the end of the eighteenth century and by the early 1800s. In Dunkeld and Dowally parish, Gaelic was likewise still spoken in 1798 'though all the people, at the same time, understand more or less perfectly the English'.[32] In Fowlis Wester, Gaelic was

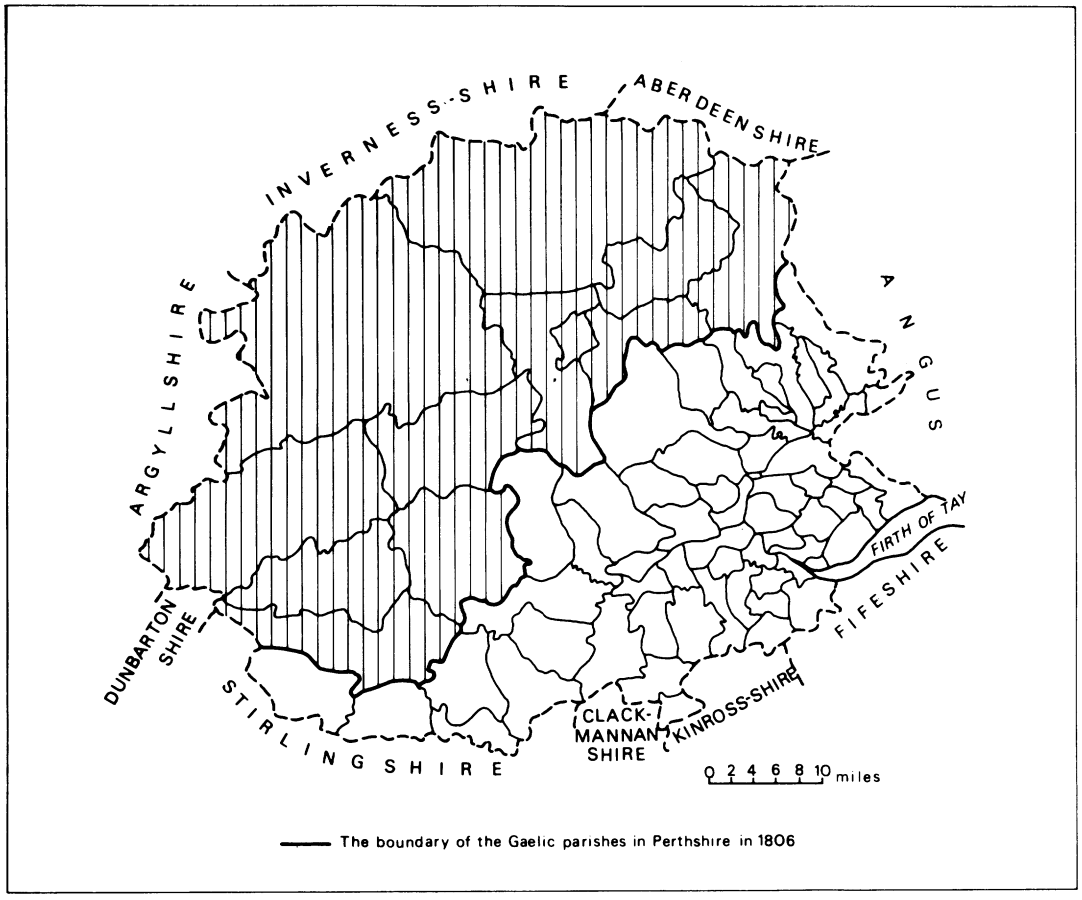

FIGURE 4. The geographical extent of the Gaelic language in Perthshire in 1806

still spoken by some 1795: 'The inhabitants of the northern half of the parish commonly use among themselves the Gaelic tongue; all of them, however, can speak English, which is the only language spoken or understood on the south side of the hill.'[33] Even in Kilmadock in 1798, which together with Fowlis Wester had ceased to be largely Gaelic sometime before the mid-1700s (Fig. 3), that language was still spoken in a corrupt form by some inhabitants despite the fact that English was by then the common language of the great majority of the population.[34]

Just as Gaelic lingered on in these and other parishes within the non-Gaelic-speaking areas as portrayed by Walker (Fig. 3) and Selkirk (Fig. 4), so also the English language was understood and spoken by many persons within 'Gaelic Perthshire'. In the large mountainous parishes of Fortingall and Blair Atholl, Gaelic was still the predominant language by the 1790s[35], but English was by then quite widely known and used, especially by the young people, in the hitherto chiefly Gaelic parishes of Moulin, Logierait, Weem, Kirkmichael, and Killin.[36] By the 1840s this linguistic decline was even more advanced. Aberfoyle parish was almost wholly English-speaking in 1843 despite having been largely Gaelic in 1724, and even as late as 1794 Gaelic had still been chiefly in use there.[37] Of Comrie parish in 1794 it was reported that 'The common language of the people is Gaelic'.[38] By 1838 the situation was very different: 'The English language is generally spoken, and has gained ground greatly within the last forty years. At present, scarcely a fourth part of the congregation attend on the afternoon Gaelic service,

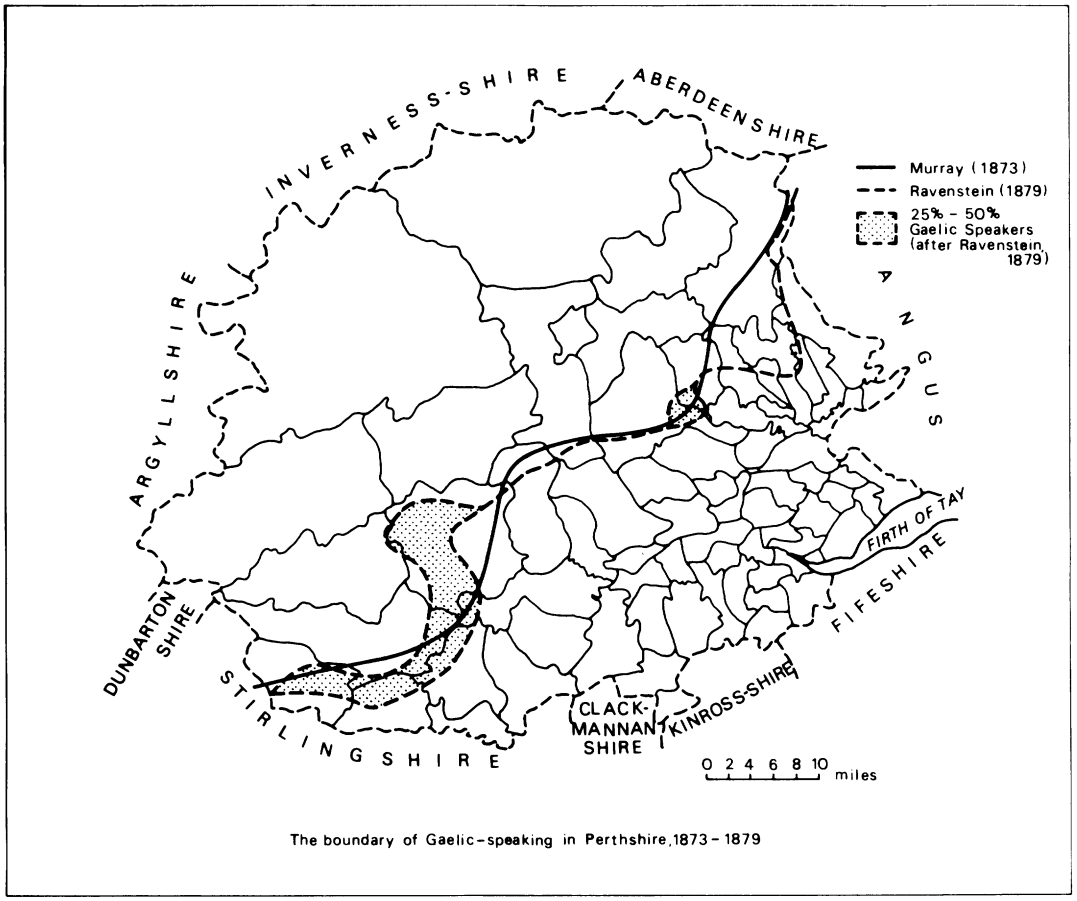

FIGURE 5. The Gaelic–English border in Perthshire in 1873 and 1879 according to J. A. H. Murray and E. G. Ravenstein

whereas forty years ago, the attendance on English was very limited.'[39] In Dull parish by 1842, English was widely understood but not as commonly spoken and Gaelic continued to be widely used as the language of daily communication, but even in Fortingall by that period Gaelic was 'losing ground'.[40] By 1873 the Gaelic–English divide within Perthshire still divided the county into roughly equal areas (Fig. 5), but the distinction was one based upon those areas in which Gaelic was 'still *spoken by any natives,* regardless of the fact, that English may be spoken by the majority of the people'[41] (original emphasis). Murray considered the parishes of Comrie, Callander, and Aberfoyle to lie along 'the frontier line' of Gaelic Perthshire but even within the chiefly Gaelic-speaking parts, English was known and used in daily conversation and in religion.[42] In contrast, a dividing line based upon work published in 1879 delimited areas within Perthshire and Scotland 'in which Gaelic continues the language of the majority'[43], and also distinguished those areas in which 25 to 50 per cent of the population were Gaelic-speakers (Fig. 5). Gaelic speakers were very thinly distributed, chiefly over the north and west of the county: 'they are as one to five to their English speaking countrymen'.[44] Given that the population of Perthshire in 1871 was 127 768 and even allowing for the differences in date between the sources, this would suggest that about 25 553 persons spoke Gaelic in 1879. In fact, Ravenstein suggests the figure to be somewhat lower; 15·9 per cent of the population spoke Gaelic at that date—a total Gaelic population of 20 280—of whom 1020 were Gaelic

monoglots.[45] Ravenstein noted that 'There are few counties in which the highland element . . . appears to lose ground as fast as in Perthshire'.[46] Be that as it may, Gaelic was spoken by some 12 per cent in 1881 and by 1971, nearly a century after Ravenstein was writing, Gaelic was still spoken by some 2070 persons in Perthshire (Table I). These figures and the above evidence on the retreat of Gaelic from certain parishes and throughout parts of 'Gaelic Perthshire' to one degree or another during the period under review are undeniably valuable to the assessment of the spatial retreat of the language.

The processes of language change

As Williams (1980) rightly stressed in his work upon the spatial changes in the geography of Welsh, languages shift their extent in both a spatial and social sense as a result of social attitudes, political actions, and overall 'ecological' changes as one language becomes outmoded within any given social situation and is replaced by another.[47] The case of Gaelic in Scotland is no exception to this general trend. Evidence upon the social and political atmosphere within which Gaelic has existed in the past, and upon those actions that directly affected the spatial extent and usage of the language is perhaps more apparent than for Welsh or the other Celtic languages.

From the late fourteenth century onwards the linguistic division between 'Highlands' and 'Lowlands' was widely recognized. During the middle ages Gaelic also lost its status as the Scottish language and suffered considerable cultural repression. From that period to the late eighteenth century, Gaelic was known as 'Irish' or 'Erse' in reference to its origins. In the eyes of one fifteenth century observer, Gaelic was 'the language of the savages who live in some parts of Scotland and on the islands'[48], and such attitudes were commonly held.[49] To this extent, the decline of Gaelic in Perthshire was part and parcel of the political and cultural antipathy between 'Highlands' and 'Lowlands' within Scotland that began in the late medieval period. Situated in the heart of Scotland with a distinct internal division between an upland habitat of Gaelic speaking and a lowland zone of English, Perthshire was particularly prone to such Highland–Lowland cultural conflict. Not until the early seventeenth century, however, was direct action taken against the language itself.

An Act of the Privy Council of Scotland dated 1616 considered Gaelic to be the prime cause of political unrest and social incivility amongst the Highland population. Schools were to be used to civilize the Highlands and the act decreed that 'the Irische language whilk is one of the chief and principal causes of the continewance of barbaritie and incivilite amongis the inhabitantis of the Ilis and Heylandis may be abolisheit and removeit'.[50] From that date educational policy played a critical role in undermining the extent of Gaelic in Scotland. This is particularly true of the period under review. The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (S.S.P.C.K.), begun in Edinburgh in 1709, was the single most important agent behind the 'education' of the Gaelic-speaking population in Scotland in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their policy needs little additional comment: 'Nothing can be more effectuall for reducing these countries to order, and making them usefull to the Commonwealth than teaching them their duty to God, their King and Countrey and rooting out their Irish language, and this has been the case of the Society so far as they could, ffor all the Schollars are taught in English.'[51] Although S.S.P.C.K. policy underwent some modification during the 1700s, it continued largely unaltered in effect until the early nineteenth century and must thus be considered an important factor behind the decline of Gaelic. Its effect within Perthshire is examined below. Paradoxically another main agent behind Gaelic's retreat arose out of a wish to retain that language as a spiritual medium.

The Scottish Church had, since the mid-1600s, provided schemes for Gaelic-speaking university students to train as clergy for the Highlands. Such plans sought to use Gaelic as a missionary medium by which to foster Presbyterianism rather more than they were concerned to foster the language itself. In fact, the schemes to use Gaelic as a religious language through which to secure political allegiance and familiarity with the English language were largely failures, due to a lack of finance by which to implement such plans and a constant shortage of linguistically-able clergy for the Highlands. The effect was that despite a Highland-wide preference for Gaelic as a spiritual medium and the language of religious administration, that language was never fostered through the very social medium in which it was so deeply treasured. These two mechanisms of language change—outright anti-Gaelic educational policies and lack of support from the one usage in which Gaelic was widely preferred—were important elements behind the decline of that language in Perthshire.

By 1719 several S.S.P.C.K. schools were operating in Perthshire and by 1723 a report upon the activities of the schools in Comrie parish noted that all the scholars (182 in three schools) could speak English as a result of attending S.S.P.C.K. schools.[52] In the parishes fringing the upland core of Gaelic-speaking in the mid-eighteenth century (see Fig. 3), Gaelic was 'much decaying' as a result of the activities of S.S.P.C.K. schools.[53] The number of scholars attending S.S.P.C.K. schools was never high in any one year—about 2 per cent of the parish population—but over time fairly large numbers of people attended these schools. The young attended far more than did those aged over twenty or so, although some adults and even the elderly did attend on occasion. Males attended in far greater proportion than females as was the case throughout the Highlands. As one contemporary observer recorded, 'The great Difference between the Children of the two Sexes, is very remarkable; but same is the Case over all the Highlands. Wherever there is access to a school, the Boys are carefully put to it; but the Parents consider Learning of any kind as of little Moment to the Girls, on which Account, great Numbers of them never go to any School.'[54] By the end of the eighteenth century, Perthshire had thirty-three S.S.P.C.K. schools within its bounds and although this figure had dropped by 1825 as the parent institution became poorer, the county was well-served by such schools in the 1800s as it had been earlier. The evident age and sex-bias within S.S.P.C.K. schools is important and is examined below. Moreover, Perthshire was long characterized by a lack of Gaelic-speaking clergy. As early as 1705, several parishes were protesting in the presbyterial authorities over the lack of clergy.[55] As late as 1836 by which time Dunkeld and Dowally parish was largely English-speaking, Gaelic was still preferred as the language of religious devotions by the parish population yet that parish had long been without a Gaelic-speaking minister able to provide Gaelic church services.[56] In parts of Perthshire the use of both Gaelic and English in church services characterized a transition status within parishes as Gaelic declined from a position of former dominance and was replaced by English.[57] The widespread lack of Gaelic texts, either sacred or secular, did little to provide a literary base to the spoken language. In Perthshire, the Irish Gaelic Bible had been distributed in several parishes towards the end of the seventeenth century (Fig. 2). The employment of that work, the New Testament of 1767, and the Scottish Gaelic Bible from 1802 did provide some support for Gaelic's use as the preferred language of religion, but the general illiteracy of the Gaelic-speaking populations, the use of English language texts in schools and the shortage of Gaelic books meant that spoken Gaelic was not supported through the printed word in that language.

Although it is unlikely that the shift from Gaelic to English along the language border and within the Gaelic-speaking parishes as defined from 1698 to 1879 followed any rigidly-defined pattern, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the underlying social processes of language change did act to undermine the extent of the spoken language in a more or less regular

and consistent way. Kirkwood's observations from the 1690s that English was used for business in place of Gaelic, which was at that time widely used in all other spheres of daily life, suggest that some sort of language stratification by use was apparent within Gaelic Scotland. Certainly, this differential language usage was apparent by the late eighteenth century. In Balquhidder, Crieff, Killin, Kilmadock, and Moulin, English was widely used as the language of commerce by the 1790s, whilst Gaelic was retained as the medium of daily conversation and as the language of the hearth and home. Such differential use of languages also occurred in the nineteenth century, and by the 1840s, at which period English was more prevalent throughout Perthshire than earlier, Gaelic was still widely preferred as the language of daily communication and as the church language chiefly in the parishes in the north and west. Of Dull parish in 1838, it was recorded that 'almost all the people can speak and understand the English language, still the generality of them have a decided predilection for the Gaelic. This appears from the fact that it is the ordinary medium of their daily intercourse, but it nowhere appears so evident as during the public worship in church on the Sabbath.'[58] To the south and east, however, in parishes such as Crieff, the shift from Gaelic to English was one stage further advanced by the mid-nineteenth century. In Crieff by 1838 'the great majority of them are capable of deriving benefit from Sabbath ministrations in English'.[59] Evidence upon Killin parish in 1843 perhaps best summarizes the differential preference for and usage of languages underlying the spatial retreat of Gaelic: 'Though nearly the whole population can understand and speak more or less of the English, Gaelic is still and will long be the language of devotion and of the affections of the people'.[60] The affiliation to the use of Gaelic in one social situation—in church, in daily communication, in the home—should probably best be seen as the 'overlaying' of one language upon another as those areas and persons at one time chiefly Gaelic moved toward the status of being more and more English in language. It is the very complexity of this shifting stratification of language between 'Gaelic' Perthshire and 'English' Perthshire and the variations in the shift over time, from parish to parish, and from person to person that makes the mapping of the frontiers of language in Perthshire so difficult.[61]

It is likely that this stratification of language was also age-specific to varying degrees. Even in Blair Atholl, there were few 'under-thirty years of age who cannot read and write and speak the English language' by 1838[62], and the evidence on male dominance within S.S.P.C.K. schools would suggest that increasing familiarity with English and its increased use as a spoken language during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was more common amongst males than females and more common amongst the young than the older generations. Population movement—both the incoming of non-Gaelic-speakers into Perthshire and the temporary migration of Perthshire Gaelic-speakers to the Lowlands—was also partly age- and sex-related and certainly had important consequences for the social use and spatial extent of Gaelic-speaking. To one nineteenth-century observer, the development of the railways, visitations by tourists and sportsmen, and the settlement in Perthshire of Lowland-born farmers had all greatly undermined Gaelic,[63] and Murray (1873) observed 'It is curious to observe the nature of the change going on along the border line: the Gaelic people are gradually going to the principal towns in their neighbourhood, while Lowlanders who have been successful in business in the towns, or farmers from the south, go to occupy farms or residences within the Gaelic area.'[64] Also important in terms of the changing patterns of language was internal migration of Gaelic-speakers within Perthshire and the practice, widespread throughout Highland Scotland as well as Perthshire, of temporary migration to the Lowlands in search of employment.

Evidence upon Port of Menteith parish in the early 1700s certainly shows that parish to be largely Gaelic-speaking (although English was known and used by some), but many of the Gaelic-speakers in that parish were natives of other parishes in the county. To this extent,

Gaelic was being reinforced by Gaelic-speaking migrants from within Perthshire rather than being maintained by native Gaelic-speakers.[65] It is difficult to know how prevalent was such linguistic reinforcement from other parishes in Perthshire or other parts of the *Gaidhealtachd.* Internal migration within Scotland and particularly from Highlands to Lowlands was quite common at the end of the seventeenth century as a result of famine,[66] and it may be that the inclusion of Alyth, Little Dunkeld, and Dull parishes as Gaelic-speaking by Walker in contrast to their non-registration as Gaelic in 1698 was the result of these parishes adopting Gaelic-speakers from elsewhere in the intervening period in addition to the small, native Gaelic communities recorded there in the early 1700s (see above). In Crieff parish with its village as a focus for employment, the presence of migrant Highlanders from other parts of Perthshire by 1793 considerably strengthened the otherwise weakening status of Gaelic.[67] In Kincardine parish, over one hundred families from Balquhidder, Callander, and Kenmore settled on land drained from Kincardine Moss during the late 1700s and thus reinforced Gaelic there,[68] and small groups of Highland families likewise settled and reintroduced or fostered Gaelic in the parishes of Auchtergaven, Caputh, Kilmadock, Perth, and Redgorton during the nineteenth century.[69] The 1851 Census figures reveal that about 7 per cent of the population of Perthshire were immigrants, many from the far North and parts of Argyll.[70] In the period 1851 to 1881, about 9 per cent of the county population emigrated, many parishes from the northern and western parts suffering particularly. Some Highlanders were attracted to the cotton factories at Deanston and Stanley near Perth,[71] or to industries farther south. Many moved to Perth where a Gaelic chapel had been established in 1788 and where, by 1837, 400 Gaelic-speakers attended services in that language.[72] In part, these population movements meant that Gaelic was, in places, strengthened by the immigration of Gaelic speakers from elsewhere or that it was spoken anew in several low-lying parishes—the labour force at Deanston was chiefly Highland in origin[73]—but on the whole, Gaelic's reinforcement from elsewhere in the Gaelic Highlands was not sufficient to maintain that language in view of the emigration of native speakers, the adoption of English within Perthshire, and the in-movement of English speakers.

Particularly widespread as an indication of language shift was the introduction of English words and phrases into Gaelic through contact with English-speakers and through temporary migration to the Lowlands. This borrowing of English into Gaelic and the associated switching from one language to another for different social purposes or even within any given social situation had the dual effect of weakening the 'intensity' of Gaelic and allowing greater familiarity with English. In Comrie parish by 1794, Gaelic was no longer spoken in its purity by the young as a result of their going to the low country to learn English,[74] and in Callander by 1798, Gaelic was 'much corrupted' as a result of this population movement.[75] In Kirkmichael by the same period, English and Gaelic were said to mutually corrupt one another as was the case in Logierait.[76] This ebb and flow between Gaelic and English and the intermixing of the two languages was to varying extents common throughout Perthshire. One observer, writing in 1794, noted of the central Highlands as a whole that not only was Gaelic being corrupted, but that the English being spoken in its place was heavily laden with 'the Lowland accent, the tone and many of the provincialisms of the Lowlands'.[77] It is also likely that this language interference was to a greater or lesser degree age-specific (and perhaps sex-specific) with the older generations not only using Gaelic more commonly for all social purposes, but also speaking a form of Gaelic less marked by English words or idiom. For example, in Fortingall in 1800 Gaelic was widely spoken and commonly understood, but by the late 1830s it was declining not simply geographically as a result of the various social processes, but was losing purity with many Gaelic phrases and idioms unrecognized by the younger generations.[78] Part of an account upon Moulin parish in 1839 represents perhaps the best example of this age-related variation in 'correctness' of the spoken

Gaelic: 'The older people of the parish speak it with classical correctness, whereas the rising generation intermixes it with many Anglicisms.'[79]

CONCLUSIONS

Whilst an identification of the past extent of a language area is certainly part of any geography of language, undue emphasis upon the spatial structure of language distributions to the exclusion of the underlying social patterns of usage and social processes of language shift provides only part explanation to an understanding of language change. Certainly language is a spatial phenomenon, but its spatial variations can only be explained through an examination of the social processes operating upon and within that language.

The varying boundary between 'Gaelic Perthshire' and 'non-Gaelic Perthshire' during the period 1698 to 1879 (see Figs 2 to 5) should not be considered as rigid divisions. The area over which Gaelic held sway certainly shrank but the division between the Gaelic-speaking and English-speaking areas was more the result of different criteria of definition than a reflection of discrete but changing linguistic regions. As one observer wrote in 1824, 'the term Highlands is now scarcely even a geographical distinction: the shade by which it unites with the Lowlands is evanescent and undefinable; and, every year the colours blend more.'[80] Nothwithstanding the lack of a precise Gaelic–English divide within Perthshire, the above evidence is invaluable to an assessment of the changing geography of both Gaelic and English in that county. Moreover, certain locations were long recognized as the gateway to the Highlands. For Larkin travelling through Perthshire in 1819, the stream at Blairgowrie marked the Highland–Lowland boundary,[81] and for other writers the stream in Burnside village near Dunkeld was understood as the border between Highland and Lowland Perthshire.[82] Shifts in the spatial extent of Gaelic were thus neither sudden nor wholesale and often memories of Gaelic and even the language itself lingered on in certain places long after the language had retreated to the north and west. Even in the south-westerly parish of Kilmadock, for example, a few old people still spoke Gaelic in 1879 with the children 'knowing nothing of it',[83] despite the fact that the parish had been reckoned 'non-Gaelic' by the mid-1760s (see Fig. 3). The numerical decline of Gaelic in Perthshire in the period 1698 to 1879 may be seen from Table IV. These figures should be related to Figures 2 to 5 above.

As important to record are the underlying processes of language change. On the broadest level Perthshire was, to varying degrees throughout the period under review, a bilingual area, and to a lesser extent, is still so today. The term 'bilingual' conceals a variety of language patterns. The decline in the extent of Gaelic in Perthshire was in part the result of those anti-Gaelic educational policies, lack of Gaelic-speaking clergy and cultural attitudes towards Gaelic operating throughout Gaelic Scotland in the past. Demographic changes, particularly the loss of

TABLE IV

The estimated Gaelic-speaking population of Perthshire, 1698–1879

	*1698**	*1765†*	*1806‡*	*1879§*
Estimated total numbers	37 800	45 600	34 100	20 280
As a percentage of the county population	45%	38%	27%	15·9%

*Using the estimated population total of 84 000 for Perthshire in 1691.
†Using Webster's population figures for Perthshire in 1755 (Kyd, J.G . (ed.) (1952) op. cit.) and Walker, J. (1808) op. cit.
‡Using the 1801 Census figures for Perthshire and Douglas, T. (Fifth Earl of Selkirk) (1806) op. cit.
§Ravenstein, E. G. (1879) p. 635

Gaelic-speakers through emigration and the immigration into Perthshire of English-speakers, also weakened the status of Gaelic (see Murray (1873) above). More particularly, the spatial shift of the Gaelic-speaking area—within Perthshire as also for Scotland—was the result of a number of social variations in the extent to which Gaelic or English was used. It is likely these variations exhibited a number of stages within the overall decline of Gaelic. In 1698 and for much of the 1700s, Gaelic was widely used as the language of daily conversation, but by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, English was increasingly understood and used as the medium of everyday life. It is probable that English had been used in place of Gaelic for business purposes and in trading for some time before 1698 and continued to be so used after that date, whereas the widespread preference for Gaelic as a religious language did not begin to wane until the 1790s and then only in the southerly and easterly parishes. By the 1840s Gaelic's decline from this preferred position as the devotional language was apparent throughout Perthshire although it was not everywhere equally felt. Bearing in mind the variation from parish to parish within Perthshire, the variations in language usage amongst certain sections of the population, and the fact that at no time within the period 1798 to 1879 was 'Gaelic Perthshire' wholly Gaelic in language, it is likely that the shift from Gaelic to English was first apparent in the use of English for business and trade with the Lowlands, and was then furthered through the schools and contact with English-speakers to the south. Over time, English gradually replaced Gaelic as the language of everyday communication. The next stage in this overall shift was Gaelic's demise as a church language and the existence of Gaelic and English church services. The last stage was the replacement of Gaelic by English as the commonly-spoken language within the home and as the language of the heart. Within this general pattern, Gaelic became less and less the language of the younger generations, particularly the males, who learned and used English as a result of schooling and temporary migration to the Lowlands. The Gaelic language itself reflected this age-related and sex-related contact with English as older people spoke a more 'pure' Gaelic in contrast to that Gaelic spoken by the young.

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