



Masters of endurance and exertion

Eòlach air fulang is strì

Pronounced: Eeolach ayr foolang is stree

The stretch of the Great Glen Way between here and Inverness overlaps with an old cattle droving route. Many of the routes you can drive or walk today in the Highlands began life as drove roads *ròidean dròbha*.

Cattle droving in the Highlands was at its peak in the 1700s and 1800s. Each year, tens of thousands of tough and hairy cattle were driven south between May and October to be sold at the cattle trysts *cruinneachadh a' chruidh* (markets) of Crieff and Falkirk. Buyers came from as far south as Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and London.

Cattle drovers *dròbhairean cruidh* generally slept outside. They lived on oatmeal porridge *lite*, bannock *bonnaich*

(unleavened bread) and the occasional dram of whisky. They picked their way through the Highlands without maps, selecting the best stances *làraich* (grassy overnight stops) for their cattle on the way. In 1827 the Scottish author, Sir Walter Scott, wrote:

"The Highlanders in particular are masters of this difficult trade of driving... It affords exercise for all their habits of patient endurance and active exertion. They are required to know perfectly the drove roads which lie over the wildest tracts of the country, and to avoid as much as possible the highways which distress the feet of the bullocks."

Did you know...?

In the 1700s, when most Highlanders were forbidden to carry weapons after the Jacobite risings, Highland cattle drovers were allowed to use guns, swords and pistols so that they could defend their cattle against cattle raiders *ruagairean chruidh*.



Map shows drove route south via Muir of Ord and Inverness. Many cattle were gathered in Caithness, Sutherland and Ross and Cromarty. Sold at Muir of Ord, they would then be driven south, covering 16 - 19 kilometres (10 - 12 miles) in an average day.

