Scotland and Ireland are close neighbours that share common features in their physical environments and evolutionary history. Both located on the Atlantic periphery of Europe, they share the struggles and opportunities this location confers. This book was published in 1994 when major changes in rural land use were put in place by the European Community, and marks a fruitful exchange of information. The investigations are reported in paired papers by a panel of Scottish and Irish contributors from geographical and ethnographic sciences. Irish and Scottish land is still used predominantly for agriculture, although its use for forestry, recreation and conservation is increasing. This study traces the interaction of various factors that have influenced present-day land use in the two countries, as well as identifying emerging trends that will assume greater economic and social importance in the years ahead.
Alexander Fenton

Professor Emeritus Alexander Fenton CBE (á ) was an ethnologist and author of many books and articles on Scottish country life. He served as Senior Assistant Editor of the Scottish National Dictionary, and was Director of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, of the School of Scottish Studies of the University of Edinburgh, and of the European Ethnological Research Centre, for which he was also a consultant. He was co-editor of Rural Land Use on the Atlantic Periphery of Europe: Scotland and Ireland (1994).

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Apart from this land link with England, Scotland is surrounded by sea. Scotland includes the Hebrides off the west coast, and the Orkney and Shetland Islands off the north coast. It is bounded by the North Sea on the east. Scotland is divided into three regions: the Highlands, which is the most northern and the most underpopulated area with a harsh climate, the Lowlands, which is the most industrial region, with about three quarters of the population, and the Southern Uplands, with hills, which border on England. The Highlands of Scotland are among the oldest mountains in the world. Northern Ireland contains six of the nine counties of the historic province of Ulster and that is why the name 'Ulster' is sometimes used as equivalent to Northern Ireland. Its capital city is Belfast. Despite setbacks from development associated with land and water use, especially pollution, commercial fishing for salmon continues to yield a rich harvest, and angling for coarse fish or trout is found throughout the country. Freshwater aquaculture primarily for salmonids is now well in progress. Angling, however, which has long been a very important element in British recreation and tourism, continues to be dominant. The largest of the British Isles is Great Britain, an island on the northwest coast of Europe between the Atlantic Ocean on the north and the North Sea on the east. It is separated by 35 km from France by the Strait of Dover and the English Channel (France's La Manche), and by 21 km by the North Channel, Irish Sea and St. George's Channel from the island of Ireland. Scotland occupies the northern third of the island of Great Britain, which lies off the north west coast of mainland Europe. It has an extremely varied geography: from fertile plains and lowland areas to barren mountains; from densely populated post-indus. This was based on the large and widely scattered reserves of coal and iron ore found across most of the Central Lowlands, whose use was supported by the development of canals and then of railways. Deep-mined coal and large scale iron and steel works are no longer part of the picture in Scotland, and only a shadow of the once enormous shipbuilding industry that dominated Clydeside remains. Today the economy is dominated by service industries, call centres and, despite some high profile setbacks, the electronics industry.