
Raasay and Rona in nineteenth-century Scottish Presbyterianism

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In the early sixteenth century the lands of Raasay were bestowed by Calum Macleod, the ninth chief of Lewis, on his younger son, Calum Garbh, first chief of the MacLeods of Raasay.² The Raasay Macleods were keen supporters of the Stuart claim to the throne of Scotland. When the news came that Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender, had landed in Scotland, the tenth clan chief, Malcolm MacLeod (1692–1761), began making plans to join him. He realised that such an action would involve considerable risks. Should the rising be a failure he could be ruined financially and lose his estates. To avoid this, he transferred his entire estate to his eldest son, John, from his first marriage. The line of clan chiefs then went down the descendants of his first marriage to Mary Mackenzie of Applecross.³

The eighteenth century witnessed a distinct shift in Highland society; the clan chiefs became the land-owners, the proprietors of land, whilst

¹ I acknowledge with gratitude the help given me in researching this paper by Murdo MacLean, Donald Gillies, and Julia Allan in providing essential local information, photographs, and maps, and directing me to relevant literature. I also acknowledge the help given by Kenneth D. MacLeod, the Free Presbyterian Minister of Inverness for reviewing the paper and making a number of very helpful suggestions. This paper, along with the one in Vol. 12 of this *Journal* on ‘Presbyterianism in Lochbroom’, is an extension of research that the writer is currently undertaking with a view to producing (DV) a biography of Donald MacLean (1915–2010) the Free Presbyterian minister of Portree and Glasgow. His father’s family came from Lochbroom and his mother’s family from Raasay and Rona.

² Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Macleods* (Inverness, 1889), pp. 340–390. See also Alexander Nicolson, *History of Skye* (Glasgow, 1930, reprinted Watnish, 2001), the section on the ‘History of Raasay’, pp. 291–305 and Appendices 2 and 3, pp. 316–317.

³ See Norma Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People* (Edinburgh, 2002), pp. 213–219.



Charles Edward Stuart (1720–1788)
– the Young Pretender.

the clansmen were reduced to crofters and cottars.⁴ Around 1836 the last clan chief proprietor, John Macleod (1807–1860), along with his factor Alexander MacKinnon ‘cleared’ the tenants and cottars from the south east of the island to make two large estates or ‘tacks’ in order to keep sheep and make the estates profitable. Some tenants were moved to the north end of the island, others to Rona, whilst some went to Skye or the mainland, and others emigrated.⁵ These moves involved the crofters leaving the relatively fertile east coast of Raasay for the barren north of Raasay and to the even more barren island

of Rona. This was the beginning of a process that would accelerate under the next proprietor. In 1843 John Macleod was declared bankrupt. This was a result of the general mismanagement of the Raasay estate, along with the desire of several generations of the Macleods to live as members of the English upper class. The estate of Raasay and Rona was put into trust and sold for the benefit of Macleod’s creditors whilst he emigrated to Tasmania.⁶ The islands were then sold in 1846 by auction in London for £27,000 (£2.5 million in the money values of 2023). As the temporal affairs of Presbyterianism on Raasay and Rona were intertwined with the ownership of the two islands, this article will first consider the influence of these owners on nineteenth century Presbyterianism.

⁴ Richard Sharpe, *Raasay: A Study in Island History* (London, 1982), pp. 44–45 (cited as Sharpe, *Raasay* 1982).

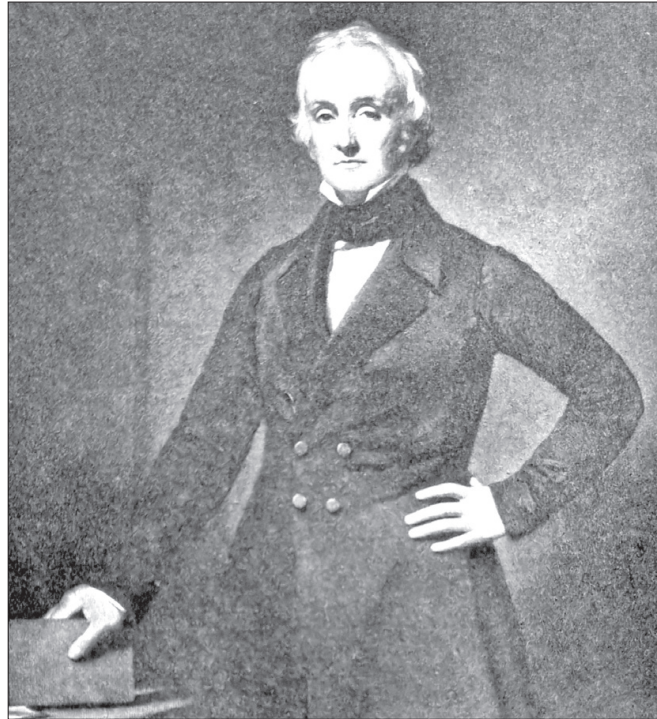
⁵ Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, pp. 89–91; Sharpe, *Raasay* 1982, pp. 45, 61–62; idem, *Raasay: A Study in Island History: Documents and Sources – People and Places* (London, 1978), pp. 192 (cited as Sharpe, *Raasay* 1978).

⁶ Sharpe, *Raasay* 1982, p. 62; Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, pp. 68, 92.

I. Nineteenth-Century Merchant owners of Raasay and Rona

George Rainy

The new owner in 1846, and the first commercial laird, was George Rainy (1790–1863) a Scot who had become very wealthy as a West Indies' merchant. He was the sixth of the seven surviving children of George Rainy (1734–1810) the Church of Scotland minister of Creich in Sutherland. He was a highly intelligent man, educated first at Marischal College, Aberdeen, where he was awarded the 'silver pen' as top student in Greek in his year, then at



Dr Harry Rainy, the brother of George Rainy and the father of Principal Robert Rainy.

the University of Glasgow.⁷ By his eighteenth year the younger George Rainy was in Demerara where his family already had business connections. There he became involved in the Caribbean sugar plantations which were worked by African slaves. Due to his extensive family connections he

⁷ A younger son of the Creich minister was Dr Harry Rainy (1792–1876) who became the professor of Forensic Medicine at the University of Glasgow. Harry Rainy was the father of Principal Robert Rainy of the Free Church College in Edinburgh. Robert Rainy was, therefore, the nephew of the Raasay proprietor and preached in the Raasay Free Church during the time his uncle owned the island. George Rainy was clearly close to his nephew as, prior to his purchasing Raasay and its associated islands, in late 1844 or in early 1845 he went with two of his nephews Robert Rainy and James Brown on an extended four-month tour of the continent, leaving at home his wife who was either pregnant or a new mother. There are references to the Rainy family in Patrick Carnegie Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy* (2 vols., London, 1909), see especially Vol. 1, pp. 1-39; Robert Mackintosh, *Principal Rainy: A Biographical Study* (London, 1907), pp. 1-18. Important sketches of the two brothers, George and Harry Rainy along with one of Robert Rainy are in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* – online edition (cited hereafter as ODNB); for George Rainy's tour to the continent with his two nephews see, Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy*, Vol. 1, pp. 34-38; David Alston, *Slaves and Highlanders* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021), p. 253.

eventually became a full partner in a Scottish-run organisation, Sandbach, Tinne & Co.⁸ Although he had gone to the Dutch colony at a time when investment was focused mainly on the development of new cotton plantations along the coast, it was the transition to sugar production after 1810 that enabled fortunes to be made. The company grew to become one of the most successful West Indian merchant houses with its principal office in Liverpool. The men who ran it were called the ‘Rothschilds of Demerara’ on account of their wealth and influence; they were not only involved in the lucrative sugar plantations themselves but were also financially supporting other plantations that were mortgaged to them. A clerk who had recently arrived in the colony’s capital, Georgetown, described their activity and the Creich minister’s son in these terms:

Many estates were heavily mortgaged to them, their whole business connected to the arrangements to which the mortgagers were strictly tied down. All the sugar must be shipped home in *their* ships, under *their* agency both here and at home, and so much every year; all plantation stores to be bought of *them*; and other pickings, highly profitable to the mortgagee, who got full rates and commissions: considerably more so than planting was to unfortunate mortgagers, who got about as much as would just keep them on their legs. Other produce such as coffee and cotton was subject to like conditions. Here I found the Executive of this formidable establishment, Mr George Rainey, whom Mr Pattinson had told me I would find ‘very keen’: slow-spoken, he had a sharp visage, high thin nose, and a cold quiet calculating grey eye. He and his coadjutor Mr George Buchanan brought enormous gains to the Liverpool House and to McInroy Parker & Co. in Glasgow, though they dealt fairly: their business was money-lending.⁹

Demerara, along with two other Dutch Colonies, was officially ceded to Great Britain in 1814 and become British Guiana. Nineteen years later,

⁸ Around 1790, Rainey’s maternal uncle, George Robertson, had formed a partnership in Demerara, which was then a Dutch colony, with James McInroy, Samuel Sandbach, and Charles Stewart Parker. The Rainey family’s connection to the business was strengthened in 1797 when Charles Stewart Parker married George’s eldest sister, Margaret. The next year Gilbert Rainey (1782–1808), the eldest of the Creich minister’s three sons, went out to Guyana. It may have been his death in 1808, and the necessity of maintaining the family’s interests, that took George to Demerara. He rose to become a partner in the firm and its main representative in Demerara, where he lived for almost thirty years. For a history of the partnership see, Alston, *Slaves and Highlanders*, pp. 192–198.

⁹ C. C. Thornburn, *No Messing: The Story of an Essex man: The Autobiography of John Castlefranc Cheveley, 1795–1870* (2 vols. Chichester, 2012), Vol. 2, p. 124 cited in Alston, *Slaves and Highlanders*, p. 198, where it is incorrectly referenced as from Vol. 1 of Thornburn – the emphasis is in the original.

in August 1833, the British parliament passed the Act for the abolition of slavery throughout the British Colonies. In addition to abolishing slavery, the Act also, with effect from 1st August 1834, compensated those who previously were entitled to the services of slaves. Plantation owners of British Guiana received £4,297,117 in compensation (£447 million in 2023 terms) for the loss of 84,915 slaves. Rainy's firm received £150,452 (£15.6 million in 2023 terms) in compensation; the second largest amount paid to any mercantile beneficiary. George Rainy benefited both as a partner and from a number of small claims outside the partnership. He was the primary claimant of over £50,000 (£5.2 million in 2023 terms) compensation for his ownership of almost 1000 enslaved people. Three years later Rainy returned to Britain in 1837 and within a few days after his arrival in Liverpool, dined with William Ewart Gladstone MP¹⁰ to discuss affairs in Demerara where the Gladstones also had extensive interests.¹¹

This was the merchant and former slave-owner who in 1846 bought the islands of Raasay and Rona. David Alston has observed, 'Wealth derived from slavery led to what has been called a "revolution in land ownership" in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. The most recent study by Iain MacKinnon and Andrew Mackillop demonstrates that between 1726 and 1929 at least a third – and almost certainly much more than a third – of the land in the western Highlands and the islands passed through the hands of those enriched by slavery.'¹² Within a year of Rainy's acquiring the

¹⁰ The Rainys were distantly related to the Gladstones. See the family tree in Simpson, *Life of Principal Rainy*, Vol. 1, p. 5. A previous owner of the writer's copy of the volume has calculated that Robert Rainy was the fourth cousin twice removed of the British Prime Minister.

¹¹ David Alston, ODNB article on George Rainy. Whilst in Demerara he had three illegitimate daughters almost certainly with one or more free women of colour. On Rainy and Guyana, see also David Alston, 'Enslaved Africans, Scots and the Plantations in Guyana', in Thomas M. Devine, *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 99-123; David Alston, 'A Forgotten Diaspora: The Children of Enslaved and "Free Coloured" Women and Highland Scots in Guyana before Emancipation', *Northern Scotland*, Vol. 6 (2015), pp. 49-69. For recent research on Scotland and the Caribbean sugar trade, see Stephen Mullen, *The Glasgow Sugar Aristocracy: Scotland and Caribbean Slavery, 1775-1838* (London University Press, 2022).

¹² Alston, *Slaves and Highlanders*, p. 240. The study that Alston cites by Iain MacKinnon and Andrew Mackillop, *Plantation slavery and landownership in the west Highlands and Islands: legacies and lessons – a Report for Community Land Scotland* (November 2020) is online at <https://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk/2020/11/new-research-reveals-extent-of-historical-links-between-plantation-slavery-and-landownership-in-the-west-highlands-and-islands>. For Scottish involvement in the abolition of slavery, see Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

islands, as a consequence of the failure of the potato crop, and the partial failure of small local fishing, the islanders were plunged into a great deal of suffering and deprivation; some were on the verge of starvation. Bad weather had caused poor crops and by this time the most important crop was the potato. When potato blight hit the area, the population was left starving. The lack of any alternative employment spelt misery for many. Government relief, through the Highland Destitution Relief Board, was given in return for labour, but this was only bare food rations, with no provision for clothing or any other necessities. At first the new owner's response was exemplary. In the years between 1847 and 1851, owing to the difficulty of getting food supplies, Rainy imported several shiploads of meal, selling it at barely cost price. In one five-month period, 1,200 bolls were sold.¹³ As no permanent solution was found, the living conditions for most of the people continued to deteriorate.¹⁴

The Rainy clearances

As a result of the famine George Rainy became convinced that poor relief would not solve the Raasay crofters' problems. The causes of poverty on the island were, in his view, far more intractable. This revised assessment is reflected in his evidence to the 1851 Royal Commission headed by Sir John M'Neill. The commission had been asked to report to the Board of Supervision responsible for the administration of the Poor Law on a possible solution to the problems created by the destitution of the late 1840s. After reviewing the crofters' plight, Rainy's assessment was that since 1845 their two sources of livelihood had failed simultaneously, potatoes and the sale of cattle. He asserted forcefully that whilst the effects of the successive blights of the potato crops had been fully recognised, equal attention had not been given to the enormous depreciation in the price of the small Highland cattle. The small tenants depended more on cattle sales than on their potato crops. In the past, with the proceeds of one, two, or three beasts sold at the cattle fairs, the small tenant was able not only to pay his rent, but to realise a surplus with which he could purchase meal. Rainy concluded that this state of affairs no longer existed. A Highland beast, which five or six years ago would have readily brought £7 to £8 (£1250-£1430 in 2023 values) at the district cattle fairs, would not now sell for £3 (£535 in 2023 values) or less. The Raasay proprietor thought it would be

¹³ A boll was equivalent to 140lbs. Accordingly Rainy distributed 12,000 stone or 76,000 kg of meal.

¹⁴ Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, p. 97. Sharpe, *Raasay 1978*, p. 126.

more correct to say that the small breed of Highland cattle, the rearing of which alone was adapted to the circumstances of crofters, was now virtually valueless at the markets. It was this that was really at the bottom of the greater part of the current distress.¹⁵

Rainy's solution was that a radical change was necessary in the farming techniques that were employed on the island. This would involve a very considerable financial outlay in order to accomplish the necessary draining, trenching, fencing, and manuring, not to mention the cost of cattle or other stock. Equipment would also be required, the cost of which would be at least a year's subsistence earnings of the tenant's family while they waited for the expected returns. He understandably concluded that such a project was beyond the means and the abilities of the Raasay crofters. Though he regarded the islanders, 'as peaceable, orderly and singularly patient in enduring hardship', he viewed them as apathetic and quite willing to be dependent on charity which in turn undermined any disposition to exertion.¹⁶ Before he purchased Raasay, there had been a steady stream of emigration; this he said had now ceased and the crofters 'have a strong impression that they will and must be provided for where they now are,—a delusion which, if not speedily dispelled, may lead to very disastrous consequences.'¹⁷ Though families were not emigrating, the more industrious and enterprising of the young men were moving to the south (of Scotland) for work and often remain and settle there; 'thus at once escaping from the precarious and low mode of living in their native place, and from the necessity of contributing to the support of a numerous and often destitute family, and leaving the dregs of the population to accumulate and struggle at home.'¹⁸ The tenants, Rainy asserted, could not afford larger crofts nor had they the ability to engage in the new techniques; the only solution was to encourage emigration and to lease the estate to those with the ability and the capital to make the land profitable by creating large sheep farms.¹⁹ Rainy began by removing from the island those who were not natives of Raasay. From the late 1830s until he bought the estate the population of Raasay had increased by approximately fifty per cent. By 1847 fully one third of the people living on Raasay and Rona had come

¹⁵ George Rainy's evidence to the M'Neill commission on 5th March 1852 is given in full in Sharpe, *Raasay* 1978, pp. 82-90.

¹⁶ Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, p. 99.

¹⁷ Sharpe, *Raasay* 1978, p. 86.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁹ Rainy's solution to the economics of Raasay was given in his witness statement to the M'Neill Commission. See Sharpe, *Raasay* 1978, pp. 85-88.

onto the islands in the previous decade.²⁰ Many of these now left the island, returning in the main to where they had come from originally. It is most probable that this was achieved by not renewing their tenancies. In the three years from 1848 to 1851 nearly 120 people left the islands.²¹

The removal of non-Raasay people was followed by the most significant scheme of emigration that Raasay was to witness. The emigrants came largely from the south-east of the island and most went to Australia. One of the recommendations of Sir John M'Neill's 1851 report was the advocacy of large-scale emigration rather than charitable relief as the best way to deal with the 'surplus population'. Accordingly, the Highlands and Islands Emigration Society was set up to assist those who wanted to emigrate to Australia but could not afford to do so.²² Although the Society's aim was to try to help the people help themselves, it was against any kind of compulsory emigration. Many believed that emigration to the colonies was not only best for the tenants but also for the estates and for those they were leaving behind. The Society raised money by public subscription. Aid from the Society was in the form of a loan that had to be repaid within one year. Landowners were expected to meet one third of each loan provided by the Society.²³ Those emigrating were required to pay a small deposit and have the necessary clothing. The Raasay people had sunk into such a state of poverty that only two families could raise sufficient money by selling their stock and other effects to raise the necessary capital. Accordingly, Rainy, except for these two families, met the full fare and their expenses to reach

²⁰ Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, p. 90.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

²² Mass emigration was a view which was strongly shared by Sir Charles Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary to Her Majesty's Treasury in London. He saw emergency food relief as a useless palliative and thought that emigration to Australia would provide the needed relief. See T. M. Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland's Global Diaspora, 1750–2010* (London, 2012), pp. 118–119.

²³ The Chairman of the society was Sir Charles Trevelyan and the London Committee included such influential members as Baron Rothschild, Thomas Baring, and W. G. Prescott, the Governor of the Bank of England. Between 1852 and 1857 it supported an exodus of around 5,000 people from the Highlands and Islands to Australia. The Society wound up its operations in 1858. For a comprehensive account of the short-lived society, see T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Islands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 2004), pp. 245–272; David S. MacMillan, 'Sir Charles Trevelyan and the Highland and Island Emigration Society, 1849–1859', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 49:3 (November 1963), pp. 161–188. From the Australian perspective, see Malcolm D. Prentis, *The Scots in Australia: A Study of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, 1788–1900* (Sydney University Press, 1983), pp. 69–74.

Liverpool, the port of embarkation. He also provided them with outfits of clothing taking their cows which they were unable to dispose of as part payment for the clothes and passage money. For those over fifty-five years of age, he paid the full cost of their passage to Australia. When Rainy took over the estate in 1846, there were about 1,100 people living on Raasay and its satellite islands. Between 1852 and 1854 the population of Raasay was reduced to half the level it had been eight years earlier.²⁴

Rainy seems to have regarded the creation of a large sheep farm under a single tenant to have been the most profitable use for the south-east part of the island. Hence that part of Raasay would need to be cleared of its tenants. The emigrations to the colonies had been a significant step in achieving this goal. Richard Sharpe notes, 'The records suggest that nowhere was cleared at a stroke. There were still a few families left in Screapadal, Hallaig, Leac, Fearn, Castle and Manish in 1854 and (James) Ross tells us where they went; to Balachuirn, Umachan and Dry Harbour (on Rona) ..., and to Skye and the mainland. He does not tell us how they went, and this may be significant. But when they went the sheep took over.'²⁵ In order, ostensibly to keep the deer and sheep from wandering to the north of the island, a six-foot high dry-stone wall was built across the island which was known as Rainy's Wall. The crofters' view, however, was that the wall was designed not so much to keep the sheep farmer's animals in as to keep both them and their animals out.²⁶

The evidence given by the crofters to the Deer Forest Commission in 1893 regarding the clearance was quite specific.²⁷ Donald MacRae from Balachuirn asserted, 'The clearances were made by Mr. George Rainy, the proprietor, between 1851 and 1853, when a large number were sent to Australia, who expected that those who remained in the townships would

²⁴ Sharpe, *Raasay* 1978, p. 127; Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, pp. 101-103, 108.

²⁵ Sharpe, *Raasay* 1978, p. 199. James Ross was an Inverness solicitor and Rainy's factor and gave evidence to the Deer Forest Commission in 1893. Screapadal, Hallaig, Leac, Fearn, Castle, and Manish are all in either south-east or centre of the island, whilst Balachuirn was near the centre of island near the west coast. Umachan is about halfway between Arnish and the northern tip of Raasay. Dry Harbour is on Rona.

²⁶ Roger Hutchinson, *Calum's Road* (Edinburgh, 2006), pp. 18-19.

²⁷ The Report of the earlier Napier Commission of 1883-4 had produced no significant relief for the crofters. They were still confined to poor land and felt they had more right to the better land than deer and rabbits. Agitation, therefore, continued and, with the return of a Liberal government in 1890, another Royal Commission was set up, this time with a much more practical brief. Known as the Deer Forest Commission, its purpose was to investigate the possibility of re-allocating for crofting purposes land used as sporting estates. It gathered information in 1893-4 and reported in 1895.

be much better off. When those were got away, the remaining tenants in the thirteen townships were violently and forcibly cleared out of the country, their houses being pulled down about their heads, their fires put out, and some of the people taken to the steamers half dead. Thereafter these townships were made into a sheep farm.' MacRae's evidence was supported by that given by Norman Gillies from Oskaig who stated, 'On the potato famine the proprietor, Mr. George Rainy, started public works, and for some time gave the people work and a fair wage. When these works ceased, a number of the crofter tenants emigrated to Australia, at the expense of the proprietor. Before this the crofting townships were overcrowded, and a few left each township. Those who remained expected that the condition would thus be improved as all the towns were overcrowded before. But those who remained were afterwards evicted, every one of them by the proprietor about 1853, and the whole of the following townships made into one sheep farm.'²⁸

Ronald MacLennan of Rona, a further witness to the Deer Commission asserted, 'I have seen them knocking the houses over their heads when they were evicting them; and I have seen the time when the mill in Raasay had more to do than it could manage. In one day, I have seen no less than 300 evicted and leaving the island, and I have seen them going to the churchyard in their grief at being separated from their homes, and taking handfuls of the soil and grass that covered the graves of their kindred, as mementoes. It was myself and two other boys who ferried across for MacKenzie, the new tenant, the first lot of sheep that were to occupy the land which was thus cleared; and from that beginning the eviction process was carried on till the whole place was cleared.'²⁹ The biographer of Angus Galbraith, who became the Free Church minister of Raasay in 1867, details in stark terms the events following the emigrations. George Rainy, who he calls an 'alien proprietor' instituted a process which 'converted a Highland estate...from a burdensome luxury into something like a money-

²⁸ Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, p. 107. In order to limit the population, Rainy sought to enact a rule that no-one should marry on the island without his permission. Donald Macleod, a crofter from Kyle-Rona in testimony to the Napier Commission asserted, 'There was one man there who married in spite of him, and because he did so, he put him out of his father's house, and that man went to a bothy, to a sheep cot. Mr Rainy then came and demolished the sheep cot upon him, and extinguished his fire, and neither friend nor anyone else dared give him a night's shelter. He was not allowed entrance into any house.' *Napier Commission Evidence*, Vol. 1, p. 448 at para 7838 (online edition-accessed 12th January 2021). The vast amount of evidence to the commission is in the form of questions to those giving evidence. Their replies are identified in numbered paragraphs.

²⁹ Sharpe, *Raasay* 1978, p. 200.

making concern, viz., the wholesale clearance of the inhabitants and the substitution of sheep. The island may be roughly divided into two parts — the north end, with Rona, rocky and barren, the south fertile. Accordingly, the south end was cleared to a man of its crofters, and they were either made to sign the emigration list, or (be) relegated to the overcrowded north end.³⁰ Rainy leased the land to a new tenant, Royston Mackenzie, for £250 a year (£44,600 in 2023 values) in order to create a large sheep farm. Mackenzie brought his own workers and shepherds to the island to run the enterprise. Both Mackenzie and his wife, Hughina, were from Assynt.³¹ They lived in Suisnish House on the south-west of the island. George Rainy, with an apparently unfeeling heart, seems to have managed his estate based on experience drawn from Demerara. David Alston comments with regard to his clearance of Raasay, ‘This is of particular significance because it is one of the few examples – perhaps the only one – of clearance carried out

³⁰ J. J. Galbraith (ed.), *Sermons of the late Reverend Angus Galbraith, Minister of the Free Church, Raasay afterwards Ferintosh and Lochalsh* (Inverness, 1914), p. 10. The accuracy of the statement that the tenants were ‘made to sign the emigration list’ is not entirely clear. Norma Macleod, after carefully researching the evidence concludes, ‘It is clear that Rainy did as much as he could to assist those who emigrated. He paid for the clothes and shoes distributed, and the cost of the passage to Liverpool where they left this country. Arrears of rent were written off. Some of this expenditure would have been recovered by the sale of stock belonging to these people, but given the low market price of cattle at the time, it is unlikely that much was recovered. There were many visits by the factor and the doctor to the island. These visits too would have been paid for by the proprietor. Essentially, therefore, he met all the costs that the people could not meet themselves. However, it must be said that by going, these emigrants were helping the estate, particularly if there were to be further years of poor harvests. It can be argued ad infinitum as to whether or not these emigrations were by choice or by force. Available evidence suggests that the people made the choice, and that Rainy took no part in it, except to make it clear that he would assist with finance where necessary. The people who received financial assistance from Rainy were almost exclusively Raasay people. Very few, if any, of those who had come onto Raasay in the decade before 1846 when he bought the estate were given financial assistance to emigrate. They were moved out, but they moved back to Skye and to the mainland. Therefore, it does not appear that Rainy, either himself or by instructions to others, forcibly removed anyone from Raasay or Rona with a view to making them emigrate. He, as much as the people, was a victim of economic circumstances, albeit one who was not, himself, going to starve.’ *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, p. 102.

³¹ As Charles Macleod points out, ‘Angus Galbraith may have felt the difficulty of his own position for the depopulated townships on Raasay had been leased as a sheep farm to Royston Mackenzie, an uncle of Mrs. Galbraith.’ Charles Macleod, *South Rona: The Island and its People* (Raasay Heritage Trust, 2016), p. 31. Royston Mackenzie was the brother of Captain Kenneth Mackenzie of Ledbeg. Jemima Mackenzie, the youngest daughter of Captain Mackenzie, was Galbraith’s wife whilst Mary, his eldest daughter, was the wife of John Kennedy of Dingwall. See Galbraith, *Sermons of late Rev. Angus Galbraith*, pp. 13-14; Alexander Auld, *Life of John Kennedy* (London, 1887), p. 64.

by an individual who had himself managed a plantation where, if he did not hold the whip, he certainly instructed the slave driver.³²

The effect on Rona of Rainy's clearance policy

In the nineteenth century, Dry Harbour was the principal township on Rona; it derived its name from the fact that at low tide the anchorage was dry. The main occupations were crofting and fishing. In 1851 there were



Francis Napier, chairman of the Commission of Public Inquiry into the Condition of the Highland Crofters and Cottars – Monument in Ettrick Parish Church.

twelve crofts of seven acres; the total rent for the township was just over £50 (£8,900 in 2023 values). Five years later four crofts accounted for £30 (£5,360 in 2023 values), the rest were very low rented. In the next two decades the total rent of Dry Harbour increased to £80 (£12,000 in 2023 values). There were, however, besides the families that rented crofts, several without any land. At the 1861 census there were sixteen families living at Dry Harbour with a total population of ninety-two people.

We get a glimpse into the stresses of daily life in the township of Dry Harbour twenty years after Rainy's death from the testimony given to the Napier Commission. This was the Royal Commission of public inquiry into the condition of crofters and cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. It was appointed in 1883 by the Liberal government at Westminster

headed by William Gladstone, with Francis Napier, 10th Lord Napier, as its chairman.³³ The Royal Commission had five other members and published

³² Alston, *Slaves and Highlanders*, pp. 250-251.

³³ Francis Napier, 10th Lord Napier and 1st Baron Ettrick (1819–1898), was a diplomat and colonial administrator. He served as the British Minister to the United States from 1857 to 1859, Netherlands from 1859 to 1860, Russia from 1861 to 1864, Prussia from 1864 to 1866 and as the Governor of Madras from 1866 to 1872. He also acted as the Viceroy of India from February to May 1872 following the assassination of the Earl of Mayo in February 1872. His early education was by private tutors after which he went to Trinity College, Cambridge where he mastered foreign languages enabling him to serve as a diplomat. He returned to the United Kingdom in July 1872 and, in his later life, chaired the Napier Commission. There is monument to him in the Ettrick Church where Thomas Boston was

its report, the *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, in 1884. The setting up of the commission was a response to the agitation by crofters and cottars in the Highlands of Scotland. They were concerned about what they regarded as excessively high rents, the lack of security of tenure, and being deprived of the right of access to previously common land.

The agitation took the form of rent strikes and what came to be known as land raids, along with the occupation of land which landlords had given over either to sheep farming or to hunting parks called deer forests. In the early 1880s, persistent agitation began in nearby Skye and threatened to spread throughout the Hebrides and the Highlands. The agitation became so pervasive that it commanded the attention of the central government in London and led Gladstone to appoint the Napier Commission. The Commission took evidence at Torran on Raasay on 22nd May 1883. Those giving evidence included two Free Church elders, Charles Macleod from Arnish and John Gillies from Umachan, both of whom were crofters and fishermen and both of whom would become Free Presbyterian elders on Donald Macfarlane's session. The other men testifying to the Commission included crofters and fishermen from Dry Harbour on Rona, from Torran, Kyle-Rona, Eilean Fladda, Oskaig, Doirre-na-Guille, Rona, Balchuirn, Raasay, North Arnish and Braig, along with John Munro, a missionary working for the West Coast Mission, and James Ross, a solicitor from Inverness and the factor of the Raasay proprietor.³⁴

One of the witnesses from Rona was Roderick Mackay; in response to being asked by Lord Napier to make his statement to the Commission he said: 'we are crowded upon each other, so that we cannot take a living out of it. There are some in our township who remember when there were only seven families in the township, and there are now fifteen families. Should they get the place for nothing, they would not make a living out of it.'³⁵ Even with regard to the seven families that Mackay referred to as living in Dry Harbour, only four were Rona people. The other three appear

the minister from 1707 to 1732. See A. J. Arbuthnot (revised by David Washbrook), 'Francis Napier, tenth Lord Napier of Merchistoun and first Baron Ettrick', *ODNB* online edition.

³⁴ The testimony of these men along with that of the factor gives a fascinating glimpse into life on Raasay and Rona in the mid-nineteenth century. It is contained in *Napier Commission Evidence*, Vol. 1, pp. 438-474. A considerable amount of the crofters' testimony is reprinted in Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, pp. 131-139. The Free Church minister, Angus Galbraith, gave evidence to the commission by letter. The letter is reprinted in Sharpe, *Raasay 1978*, pp. 101-108.

³⁵ *Napier Commission Evidence*, Vol. 1, p. 454 at para 7983.

to have moved to Rona shortly before the 1841 census.³⁶ By the time of the 1881 census the number had again increased from seven to fifteen. Little wonder then that the people were living in poverty. Mackay asserted that only five families could live in reasonable comfort in Dry Harbour.³⁷ This seems to be well based, as only four lived there before the clearance of the people from Raasay.

Commenting on the land, the Rona crofter asserted, 'the ground is so soft that it will not yield crop. We are making ditches in part of our arable land, and while we are making these ditches, we require to have planks under our feet, and if a man misses that plank another one will need to help him out of the bog. The people will never be right there, and they can never be but poor if they will not get another place.'³⁸ He was then asked about the cows on his croft to which he responded, 'I have the two cows that are named upon me, they don't belong to me. They belong to merchants in Portree and Glasgow. It is they who are keeping me in meal.'³⁹ When he stated that he had just nine or ten sheep, he was asked, 'Why he had so few?' His reply was quite simply, 'Poverty, that I cannot procure the stock. I am rearing a family on poverty.'⁴⁰ He then stated that for the last twenty-eight years he had gone to the fishing at Peterhead and Fraserburgh on the east coast. He would have preferred to have enough land at home, so that he did not have to go away to the fishing. Everyone on Rona depended on the fishing for their subsistence. They all 'live by the sea'. They had small boats. Some were destroyed in the storm of 1881. Most of the fish caught they cured, as they were not conveniently placed for market.⁴¹

Edward and Evelyn Wood

After George Rainy's death in 1863 his son, George Haygarth Rainy (1845–1872), became the proprietor. He died less than a decade after his father at the age of twenty-seven. The estate was then bought as an investment, first by George G. Mackay who held it for just two years and substantially raised the tenants' rents. He then sold it for a profit of £7,000 to William James Armitage. He was the proprietor for a mere eighteen months and sold it to

³⁶ Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, p. 137.

³⁷ *Napier Commission Evidence*, Vol. 1, p. 456 at para 8001.

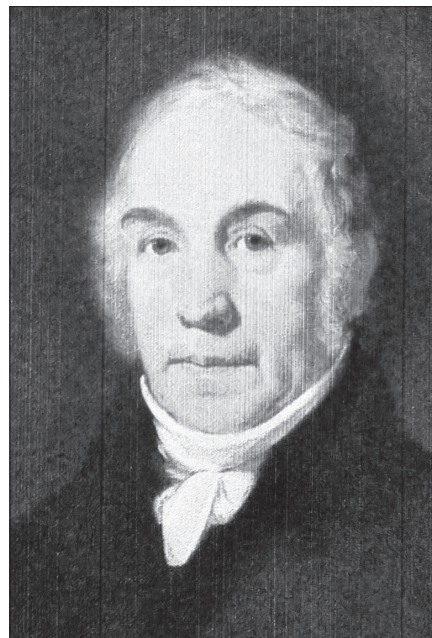
³⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 455 at para 7985.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 455 at para 7991.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 455 at para 7993.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 456 at paras 8019–8027.

Edward Herbert Wood (1847–1886) for £65,000 in 1876 (£6 million in 2023 terms). Armitage made a profit of £3,000. Edward Wood's family originally came from Burslem, one of the six towns that make up Stoke-on-Trent. He was a grandson of the owner of the pottery company, Enoch Wood and Sons. The Wedgwoods were the principal family in Burslem for most of the eighteenth century. When their industrial activity in the town began to decline, other families became more prominent. One of the most important of these pottery-producing families was that led by Enoch Wood, a master potter, who had been apprenticed to Wedgwood. The firm made all the wares that were current in Staffordshire at the time, including black basalts, jasper, and porcelain. Large quantities of blueprinted earthenware were produced, much of which was exported to the United States. Busts modelled by Enoch Wood himself are numerous.⁴² When Wood died in



Enoch Wood (1759–1840), master potter, apprentice to Josiah Wedgwood, and grandfather of the owner of Raasay.

1840, Burslem virtually closed down on the day of his funeral. The hearse was accompanied by seven coaches, and a hundred tradesmen, while an immense crowd assembled in the town to witness the funeral procession. On his death, Enoch Wood had left substantial sums of money to his seven surviving children and grandchildren but he stipulated that the legacies should not be paid until at least five years after his death in order not to harm the business. As soon as the five years were up his children claimed their money which drained the firm of capital and his sons closed the factory with the result that almost a thousand people were thrown out of work.

Enoch Wood had twelve children, four sons and eight daughters. His second youngest son was Edward Wood (1796–1882) who had a son and a daughter by his second wife, Elizabeth Schofield. The son, Edward Herbert Wood, was born at Wolstanton, Newcastle-under-Lyme. He was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford and afterwards read for the bar, but did not pursue the profession. He determined rather to be a country gentleman-

⁴² Wood made busts of both George Whitefield and John Wesley. Photographs of the busts are in Frank Falkner, *The Wood Family of Burslem: A Brief Biography of those of its members who were Sculptors, Modellers and Potters* (London, 1912), Plate XXXV, facing p. 56.

farmer managing his estates. He bought Raasay in 1876 and when his father died in 1882, he succeeded to the family estates in Staffordshire and Warwickshire. The latter estate included an impressive eighteenth-century country house, called Newbold Revel, in the village of Stretton-under-Fosse in Warwickshire. He seems to have divided his time between the mansion at Clachan on Raasay and Newbold Revel, his English residence. Once in Raasay, he was a Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenant of the county of Inverness. In Warwickshire, he was a Commissioner of the Peace and following the death of the Earl of Craven⁴³ he succeeded to the command of that nobleman's sixth troop of Warwickshire Yeomanry. He was well known in the hunting field and for horse racing; he owned several successful steeplechasers. In politics Wood was a staunch conservative and a member of the Carlton Club.⁴⁴ On 8th June 1869 he married Evelyn Ann Valiant (1850–1926), the only daughter of Major General Valiant.⁴⁵

The wealth of the Wood family resulted from them being heirs of Enoch Wood. In 1876, when he was twenty-eight years of age, Edward Wood was sufficiently wealthy to buy Raasay and its associated islands as a sporting estate. Upon acquiring the island, Wood set about converting the south part of Raasay from a sheep farm to an estate for shooting rabbits, pheasants, and deer. In Richard Sharpe's words, Wood 'represented a type of proprietor which was becoming increasingly common: the industrial magnate looking for a sporting estate. What had been cleared for sheep, he gave over very largely to deer, pheasants and particularly rabbits. Whereas in Rainy's time the rabbit killer had been called over to Raasay to perform a necessary service, now rabbits were preserved for the sake of sport. Damage by such game is a repeated grievance of the crofters in the evidence before the 1883 (Napier) Commission.'⁴⁶

⁴³ George Grimston Craven, the 3rd Earl of Craven died on 7th December 1883 at the age of forty-two.

⁴⁴ The Carlton Club is a private members' club in St James's, London. It was the original home of the Conservative Party before the creation of Conservative Central Office. Membership of the club was by nomination and election only. It was founded in 1832, by Tory peers, MPs, and gentlemen, as a place to coordinate party activity after the party's defeat over the First Reform Act. The First Duke of Wellington was a founding member; he opposed the 1832 Reform Act and its extension of the right to vote. It played a major role in the transformation of the Tory party into its modern form as the Conservative Party. The Club lost its role as a central party office with the widening of the franchise after the Reform Act 1867, but it remained the principal venue for key political discussions between Conservative ministers, MPs, and party managers.

⁴⁵ Falkner, *The Wood Family of Burslem*, Genealogical Table facing p. 118.

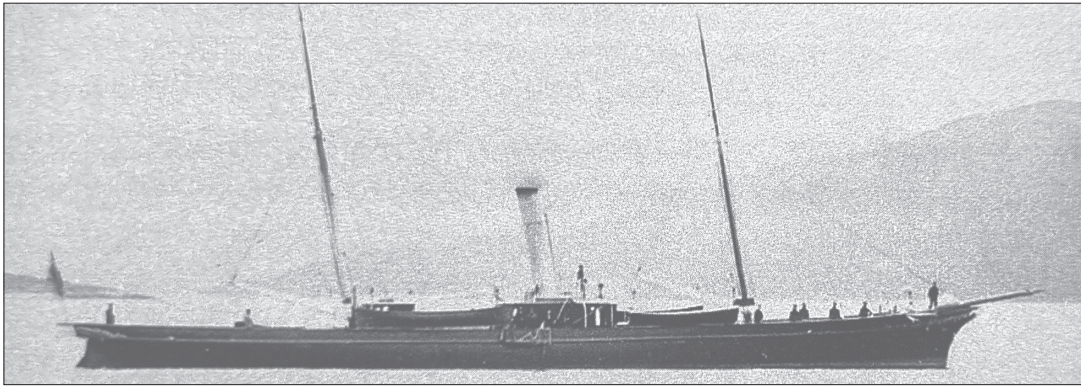
⁴⁶ Sharpe, *Raasay* 1982, p. 70.

Rainy had cleared the best land in Raasay to create a sheep farm; now Edward Wood converted the sheep farm into a sporting estate by the introduction of rabbits. Angus Galbraith, the Free Church minister, in his written submission to the Napier Commission graphically describes the situation:

In my opinion the greatest grievance in this island now is the loss by game. I do not profess to be able to state this fully, nor can it be understood by any who are not eye-witnesses. Mr. Wood's representatives admitted, I believe, before the Commission, that 'he bought Raasay as a sporting estate more than anything else'... I believe the island of Raasay is at present fully stocked with rabbits, although all the sheep and cattle were at once cleared off. This is becoming more apparent every day. The large sheep farm in Mr Wood's own hands formerly carried over 3,000 sheep. Now the stock is about the half of that number, and the reduction is mainly through the want of grass. The losses during the past year have been so great, that now, I understand, it is proposed to send off the remainder of the sheep, rather than leave them here to starve. One thing is plain, the island cannot support a full stock of sheep and a full stock of rabbits. Meanwhile the rabbits have practically cleared the ground for themselves, or will speedily do so, unless they receive a very effectual check. I have been told by the keepers that so many as 14,000 rabbits have been killed in a season. The number that die of starvation and other causes is very great... The crops and grazings of the tenants in the north end of the island are entirely unprotected from the ravages of these vermin, and the loss, as I can testify from observation is very great... The people have been feeling it a sore grievance, that they should have to cultivate the most inferior land, and pay such high rent for it, while the best part of the island was under sheep. But instead of diminishing, it will only increase the grievance manifold, if, as is now supposed, the best land in the island is to be practically, if not wholly, converted into a rabbit warren.⁴⁷

In 1878 Edward Wood bought a schooner, the *Amy*. She was a clinker-built boat of 144 feet, nineteen feet breadth, with a round stern and two masts. Her name was changed to the *Rona*. Wood secured the services of Duncan Matheson to captain the yacht; Matheson was originally from Plockton and had moved to Raasay when George Rainy was the proprietor of the island to be captain of his yacht, the *Falcon*. In the late 1870s very many men at the south end of Raasay became employees of Edward Wood. The population of Raasay in 1881 was around four hundred and fifty; over one hundred of these were in the employment of the Wood family. The

⁴⁷ Cited in Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, p. 132. Galbraith's statement to the Napier Commission is printed in full in Sharpe, *Raasay* 1978, pp. 101-108.



The Rona, Edward Wood's schooner.

Woods doubtless used the yacht for pleasure-sailing round the Hebrides and the West Coast of the Scottish Highlands.⁴⁸ As Wood was a staunch supporter of the Conservative Party, it is unsurprising that the *Glasgow Herald* reported 'his magnificent yacht, the *Rona*, was invariably put at their disposal at election times, and he entered with spirit and enthusiasm into whatever he conceived was calculated to promote their prospects.' In fairness, the newspaper added that, 'at the same time he was generous to opponents, and in illustration of this it may be stated that in December last (1885) he conveyed all his crofter voters to Portree, notwithstanding a moral certainty that they would vote for the crofter candidate.'⁴⁹

Edward Wood died on 7th April 1886 at the age of thirty-eight. He was in Raasay when he became ill and returned to his English home where his condition worsened. He was seen by the eminent physician Sir William Jenner (1815–1898), the serving president of the Royal College of Physicians and from 1862 Physician in Ordinary to Queen Victoria.⁵⁰ He died little more than a week later having serious paralysis of the spine.⁵¹ Following his death, the estate was managed by his wife, Evelyn, until it was sold to William Baird and Company (Ironmasters) of Coatbridge in 1912. It was during the time when Evelyn Wood was the proprietor of the islands that the Free Presbyterian Church was formed in 1893 after the passing of the Free Church Declaratory Act. Edward Wood's yacht, the *Rona*, was sold in July 1887, little more than a year after he died, to James Weston Clayton of London who kept it for just eleven months before selling it to Count Pierre Pastre of Marseilles.

⁴⁸ Macleod, *South Rona: The Island and its People*, p. 77, reproduces three photographs, one of the Woods on board the *Rona*, of the vessel itself, and of the *Rona*'s crew.

⁴⁹ *Glasgow Herald*, 9th April 1886.

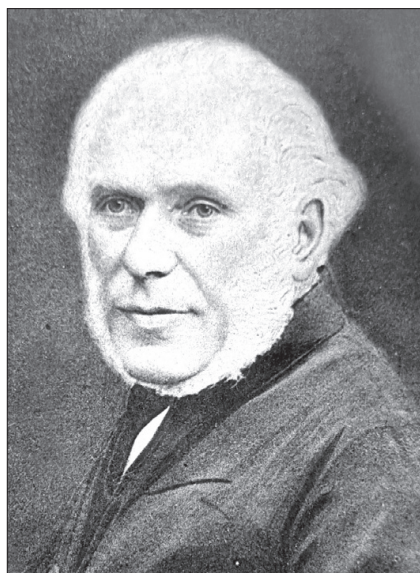
⁵⁰ For biographical details of William Jenner, see ODNB – accessed 4th February 2021.

⁵¹ Biographical details of Wood are from the obituaries in the *Glasgow Herald*, 9th April 1886; *Edinburgh Evening News*, 10th April 1886; *Leamington Spa Courier*, 17th April 1886; *Nuneaton Advertiser*, 10th April 1886; and the *Highland News*, 12th April 1886.

II. Presbyterianism on the Islands

The Church of Scotland

The island of Raasay along with that of Rona was under the supervision of the parish minister of the Portree congregation of the Established Church. There were three Portree parish ministers in the century before prior to the Disruption. These were John Nicolson who was the minister from 1756 to 1799, Alexander Campbell from 1799 to 1811, and Coll MacDonald from 1811 to 1854.⁵² These men were not evangelicals and all three showed little concern for either Raasay or Rona except that they tried to encourage the societies to organise Gaelic schools in some of the townships. This changed as a result of the revival of religion which took place in the nearby island of Skye in 1812 leading to a period of effective gospel preaching.⁵³ The commencement of this revival occurred largely through the labours of Donald Munro, ‘the Blind Catechist’,⁵⁴ and was strengthened a decade later by the settlement of Roderick MacLeod (1795–1868) in Bracadale in 1823.⁵⁵ Doubtless, some from Raasay and Rona would have been among ‘Mr. Roderick’s hearers’ both at Bracadale and later in



Roderick MacLeod of
Bracadale and Snizort.

⁵² For brief accounts of these men, see Donald Mackinnon, *Annals of a Skye Parish (Portree)* (Oban, not dated), pp. 17-22; Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (2nd edn., 8 vols., Edinburgh, 1915–1950), Vol. 7, pp. 173-174.

⁵³ For details of the spiritual awakening in Skye, see Roderick MacCowan, *Men of Skye* (Portree, 1902); Steven Taylor, *The Skye Revivals* (Chichester, 2003); Tom Lennie, *Land of Many Revivals* (Fearn, 2015), pp. 224-227; Roderick Macleod, ‘The Progress of Evangelicalism in the Western Isles’ (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1976); W. J. Couper and others, *Scotland saw His Glory* (Wheaton Illinois, 1995), pp. 225-235; Mackinnon, *Annals of a Skye Parish (Portree)*, pp. 20-22.

⁵⁴ For a biographical account of Munro, see MacCowan, *Men of Skye*, pp. 1-30.

⁵⁵ For biographical details of Macleod, see the thirty-four page ‘Brief Memorials of his Life, Character and Ministry’ appended to M. Mackay, *Sermon preached in the Free Church, Snizort, Skye on the occasion of the decease of the Rev. Roderick Macleod* (Edinburgh, 1869); John S. MacPhail, ‘Roderick Macleod’, in J. Greig, *Disruption Worthies of the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1877), pp. 25-30; Donald Beaton, *Some Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands* (Inverness, 1929), pp. 185-193; Donald Gillies, *The Life and Work of the Very Rev. Roderick Macleod of Snizort, Skye* (no date or place of publication); Roderick Macleod, ‘The Bishop of Skye: Rev. Roderick Macleod (1794–1868), Minister of Bracadale and Snizort’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, Vol. 53 (1985), pp. 174-209.

Snizort. As a consequence of the Skye revival, Alexander Macleod, who had been converted either under the preaching of the Haldane brothers or one of the Haldanes' itinerant preachers,⁵⁶ took an interest in the spiritual condition of the people on Raasay and Rona.⁵⁷ In 1834 he was a missionary with the Highland Missionary Society located at Portree. For several years between 1833 and 1836 he itinerated in Raasay and Rona preaching at different places in the islands. In his diary he recorded after one such preaching tour:

November 7th 1833. – I left home, taking a circuitous tour by the farthest bounds of the parish and Island of Raasay, returning to my own home on the 30th. Although I met with outward difficulties, from coarse weather and bad roads I had to travel, I humbly desire to praise the Lord that I was not prevented from attending to the means of grace, for they very often were refreshing to my own mind. I always catechised and held two diets a day, with very few exceptions, and I may say three diets, for the night family worship would be always very throng, as many of the people followed from farm to farm. And I desire to cherish good hope that the labours of your society will not be spent in vain on these poor benighted islands. Oh! that He would come down like rain on the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth.

January 1st 1834. – Taking a circuitous course round the east side of the Island of Raasay, all diets were throngly attended, and many followed from farm to farm. At Hallaig, on the Lord's Day, though the weather was exceedingly stormy, and the people's passage by sea to the place consequently rough, yet it appeared that no house on the farm could contain the people; we, therefore, retired to a large cave near the seaside, where a numerous congregation were sheltered from the storm. On the 6th, my own mind was in some measure refreshed on this occasion, and I hope it was not altogether unprofitable to others. After the evening diet, which was much crowded, though I felt much wearied, I was revived by interesting private conversation with young professors.⁵⁸

Free Church of Scotland

Doubtless it was due to the instruction of men like the Highland missionary Alexander Macleod that at the Disruption practically all the people of Raasay

⁵⁶ Robert Haldane (1764–1842) and James Alexander Haldane (1768–1851) were at first Independents in Church polity but around 1807–8 adopted a Baptist position. They were very zealous for home missions and sponsored evangelists taking the Gospel to neglected parts of the Highlands. For an account of their lives, see Alexander Haldane, *The Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey and of his brother James Alexander Haldane* (Edinburgh, 1855).

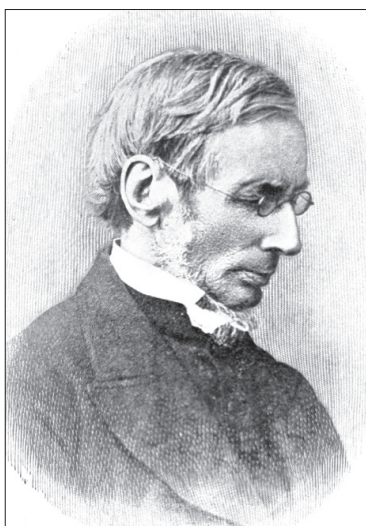
⁵⁷ Alexander Macleod (1790–1836) was distantly related to the lairds of Raasay. He died of fever at the early age of forty-six. For biographical details, see MacCowan, *Men of Skye*, pp. 31–50.

⁵⁸ MacCowan, *Men of Skye*, pp. 38–39.

and the entire population of Rona joined the newly formed Free Church.⁵⁹ They followed with interest the widespread revival in Skye but it was not until 1851 that a minister was settled in the Free Church congregation of Raasay and Rona. After the Disruption for several years the congregation was under the care of probationers and catechists. With Rainy's assistance, the congregation found themselves in a position to maintain an ordained minister. The charge was sanctioned in 1851, and a minister was settled in November of that year.⁶⁰

Unusually for a proprietor, George Rainy was a strong supporter of the Free Church of Scotland, which had been formed just three years before he took over the island. He had subscribed £1,000 to its funds. Roderick MacLeod of Snizort, told a Parliamentary Select Committee in 1847 that everyone on Raasay supported the Free Church. The church at Clachan on Raasay had been built in 1836 for the Established Church of Scotland. As practically everyone on Raasay belonged to the Free Church, Rainy took over

the church on their behalf, and denied access to the Established Church minister.⁶¹



William M'Dougall – first resident minister on Raasay.

William S. M'Dougall

The first Free Church minister of Raasay, and the first resident minister on the island, was William Stewart M'Dougall (1814–1892).⁶² He was born at Strangford, County Down in Northern Ireland on 26th December 1814. His parents were Argyllshire Highlanders. The father held a government situation in Ireland, but having broken health, he retired with his family to his native county, and became tenant of a farm in Kintyre when the future Raasay

⁵⁹ Douglas Ansdell, 'Disruptions and controversies in the Highland Church', in James Kirk (ed.), *The Church in the Highlands* (Scottish Church History Society, 1998), p. 111, states that five-sixths of the entire population of Raasay and Rona seceded from the Church of Scotland to form the island's Free Church congregation.

⁶⁰ William Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1843–1900* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1914), Vol. 2, p. 233.

⁶¹ Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, pp. 95–96.

⁶² For biographical details of William S. M'Dougall see John S. McPhail, *Memorial Sermons of the Rev. W. S. M'Dougall of Fodderty and Contin with a Sketch of his Life* (Edinburgh, 1897), pp. 1–30; Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 225. John S. McPhail, 'William S. M'Dougall, Fodderty', *The Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record*, December 1892, p. 301.

minister was a boy of ten. William attended the Grammar School of Campbeltown, where he received a classical education, and from there he went to Glasgow University. He intended to qualify for the medical profession; but it was the stirring time of the 'Ten Years' Conflict', when like many a youthful mind in Scotland he was led to consider the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ, and committed himself to his service. Whilst studying in Glasgow, and lodging with his friend Duncan Stewart McEachran,⁶³ he became the subject of a saving change; a brief notice in his diary records that on the 9th March 1842 he was brought by the power of the Holy Spirit as a guilty, condemned, heavy-laden soul to the foot of the cross, and was enabled to lift up his eyes to his bleeding Saviour.⁶⁴

In 1846 he entered the New College in Edinburgh, and whilst prosecuting his theological studies, he visited families in the Grassmarket and Cowgate where his heart was drawn out greatly in compassion for the souls of those living in such wretchedness and ignorance. During his theological course he sat under the searching and refreshing ministries of Charles Brown and Alexander Moody Stuart. He found the students' Saturday morning missionary meetings along with John (Rabbi) Duncan's solemn addresses to students very helpful as a means of quickening his spiritual life. He finished his college course in 1850, and was licensed on 12th June of that year by the Presbytery of Skye at Portree. Roderick MacLeod, being Moderator, addressed him impressively on the work of the ministry. Immediately after being licensed, he went to the island of Raasay for six months and then spent the remainder of his eighteen months probationary

⁶³ Duncan Stewart McEachran (1826–1913), like M'Dougall, grew up in the stirring years which led to the Disruption. After training at the University of Glasgow and at New College he was ordained and inducted to the Free Church in Portree in 1849 where, until his translation to Cromarty in 1851, he had oversight of the Raasay congregation. In M'Dougall's journal of the time when he was a probationer he writes, 'I think it remarkable that to-day it is proposed that I should go to teach a school at Portree, in Skye, where my friend D. McEachran is now labouring – a friend brought into Christ's fold at the same time as myself, and while we lodged together.' McPhail, *Memorial Sermons of Rev. W. S. M'Dougall*, p. 9. After seventeen years in Cromarty, he was called and inducted in 1868 to St. Andrews Church, Carlton, then a premier suburb of Melbourne in Australia. In 1885–6, he was moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Victoria. He was said to be as a minister very much in the tradition of Andrew Bonar and Robert Murray M'Cheyne. For biographical information, see Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 226; Mackinnon, *Annals of a Skye Parish (Portree)*, p. 28; Rowland S. Ward, 'Duncan Stewart McEachran', in Brian Dickey (ed.), *The Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (Sydney, 1994), pp. 231–232.

⁶⁴ McPhail, 'William S. M'Dougall, Fodderty', p. 301; idem, *Memorial Sermons of Rev. W. S. M'Dougall*, p. 2.

period in Sleat, Lochcarron, and Kilmuir. M'Dougall believed that the Lord had owned his labours in all these places, either in the conversion of sinners or in feeding the flock of God.

A most harmonious call was given him by the Raasay congregation in October 1851, the proprietor and people joining heartily. He saw it to be his duty to accept this call. He was ordained and inducted on 26th November 1851. The Moderator, who put to him the questions and then addressed him, was Roderick MacLeod. The following Sabbath, M'Dougall wrote in his diary, 'My esteemed father, Mr. Roderick MacLeod, who came to introduce me, preached in Gaelic from the parable of the barren fig tree – a solemn sermon.'⁶⁵ The minister and his wife lived at Raasay House for a few weeks until the manse was ready, in January 1852. M'Dougall preached, not only at the church at Clachan, but also at other places on the island, such as Torran and Castle and on Rona. During his first year in Raasay he went to St Kilda along with Roderick MacLeod. They were appointed to dispense the Lord's Supper there, and had the use of the Free Church schooner, the *Breadalbane*, for the occasion.⁶⁶ His first address at a communion table was in St Kilda, which he regarded as a striking providence. His own heart was much enlarged in speaking to these poor islanders, and there were symptoms of deep and strong feeling among the people, many tears being shed. Whilst in Raasay, M'Dougall married Mary McPhail, the sister of his biographer, John Sinclair McPhail.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ McPhail, *Memorial Sermons of Rev. W. S. M'Dougall*, p. 14.

⁶⁶ The *Breadalbane* was a schooner that was built at the yard of John Barnhill & Co of Greenock immediately after the Disruption to carry ministers from island to island in the Hebrides. It was named after the Marquess of Breadalbane who had donated money for the construction of the yacht; he was one of the few amongst the aristocracy that supported the Free Church. It was a fast-sailing and comfortable vessel that visited St Kilda once a year. The Free Church *Missionary Record* of 1845 describes the use of the vessel in the cause of the Gospel: 'The *Breadalbane* carries the messengers of Christ from island to island, and her blue flag is welcomed in many a creek where hitherto the Gospel has been a strange sound. You can have no idea of the feelings with which these islanders view the good schooner. I will never forget one evening when a party came from a distance, just to get a sight of the ship, and having examined her snug and comfortable cabin, one of them came to me, and with tears in his eyes said, "I now see the Free Church is determined to send us the preaching of the Cross, and to look after our souls."' *Missionary Record*, September 1845, p. 202 cited in Thomas Brown, *Annals of the Disruption* (Edinburgh, 1898), pp. 653-654. Macleod and M'Dougall must have among the last to take the annual visit to St Kilda on the *Breadalbane* as it was sold in 1854.

⁶⁷ John S. McPhail (1824–1911) after studying at Edinburgh University and then at New College, was ordained at Sleat in 1853; translated in 1873 to Kilmuir, Skye; and in 1887 to Benbecula. See Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1843–1900*, Vol. 1, p. 255.

During his ministry in Raasay, M'Dougall had the satisfaction of seeing a marked change in the religious condition of the people. The public services were well attended; and in visiting the families he found that there was satisfactory progress in knowledge and in the observance of family religion. William M'Dougall's ministry in Raasay clearly received the Lord's seal of approval; several of the first members of Free Presbyterian congregation professed to have been converted under his preaching.⁶⁸ Hughina Mackenzie, the wife of the sheep farmer, Royston Mackenzie, along with George Rainy were strong supporters of the Free Church. Hence, we see the extraordinary situation of the proprietor and sheep farmer assisting the Disruption Free Church, yet at the same time clearing Free Church crofters off the island, to the barren north or to the even more barren island of Rona. Two of the families cleared off the island to Skye were the parents of Nicol Nicolson and Donald Campbell. Nicol Nicolson was one of the godly whose life is briefly recorded in the *Men of Skye* whilst Donald Campbell was a notable Free Church elder who along with Neil Mackinnon took a leading part in forming the Portree Free Presbyterian congregation.⁶⁹ Due to Rainy's clearance policy, the population of Raasay fell between 1841 (five years before Rainy became the owner) and 1861 from 987 to 387.

At best, William M'Dougall's Free Church congregation was but a small one, and when, in 1854, a hundred and twenty-five of his congregation resolved to emigrate to Australia he was very discouraged, and felt that he could not continue his ministry in Raasay. He writes, 'I am to be soon without a congregation, at least at this end of the island. It becomes me to consider what the Lord would have me to do.' In his diary for 4th June 1854 he recorded, 'This is a memorable day in poor Raasay. To-morrow more than 100 of the people leave for Australia. The church was crowded. I preached from Genesis 12: 1-8. There was some stifled sobbing throughout, but not so much expressed feeling as I anticipated. At the close there was a good deal of crying, and some women were unwilling to leave the church. The Lord be my Guide, and if I am to leave this island

⁶⁸ James Macleod, who became an elder in the Raasay congregation, and Julia Munro both professed to have been converted under M'Dougall's preaching. See *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 10, p. 397; Vol. 17, pp. 394-395.

⁶⁹ For Nicolson, see MacCowan, *Men of Skye*, pp. 161-162. The obituary of Donald Campbell was written by Neil Cameron, see *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 30, pp. 386-389. This is reprinted in Neil Cameron, *Ministers and Men of the Free Presbyterian Church* (2nd edn., Glasgow, 2011), pp. 80-83.

show me whither.⁷⁰ When the emigrations were followed shortly by the clearing of the population that was nearest to the church to the north or to Rona, he was so disheartened, that after just four years as the Raasay minister, he left in October 1855 to become the minister of Appin in the Free Church Presbytery of Lorn.⁷¹ After a decade at Appin he was translated to Fodderty and Contin in Ross-shire where he remained until May 1890 when he retired with his family to Portobello. He died on 31st March 1892. In Ross-shire he became a close friend of John Kennedy of Dingwall (1819–1884). Following Kennedy's death in 1884, a day was given over to a series of memorial services in the Dingwall Free Church. Gustavus Aird preached in Gaelic at the morning service. William Nixon of Montrose conducted the afternoon service, and William M'Dougall the evening service.⁷²

Though M'Dougall was close to Kennedy, he did not share the Dingwall minister's view of Dwight L. Moody (1837–1899) and Ira D. Sankey (1840–1908). When the Americans came to the Highlands in the summer of 1874, he invited them to Strathpeffer. The *Inverness Advertiser* 17th July 1874 gives details of Moody's labours in Strathpeffer. Two open-air meetings were held on the grassy terrace behind the pump room – a carriage served as Moody's pulpit. Many Free Church ministers were present besides M'Dougall. Among these were Simeon R. McPhail of Elgin,⁷³ Charles G. Mackay of Maryburgh and John Kelman of Leith. The newspaper records that a congregation assembled of between two and three thousand people including people from Dingwall, Cromarty, and other places on the Black Isle. Moody preached from Romans 3:22, 'Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all them that believe: for there is no difference.' The account goes on to record that a choir from Tain, chiefly of ladies, accompanied Mr Sankey who also sang several hymns and solos.⁷⁴ In the evening another service was held in M'Dougall's Free Church. M'Dougall believed that the meetings at Strathpeffer were 'made a time in which some members

⁷⁰ McPhail, *Memorial Sermons of Rev. W. S. M'Dougall*, p. 19.

⁷¹ Appin is beside Loch Linnhe on the west coast of Scotland between Oban and Fort William.

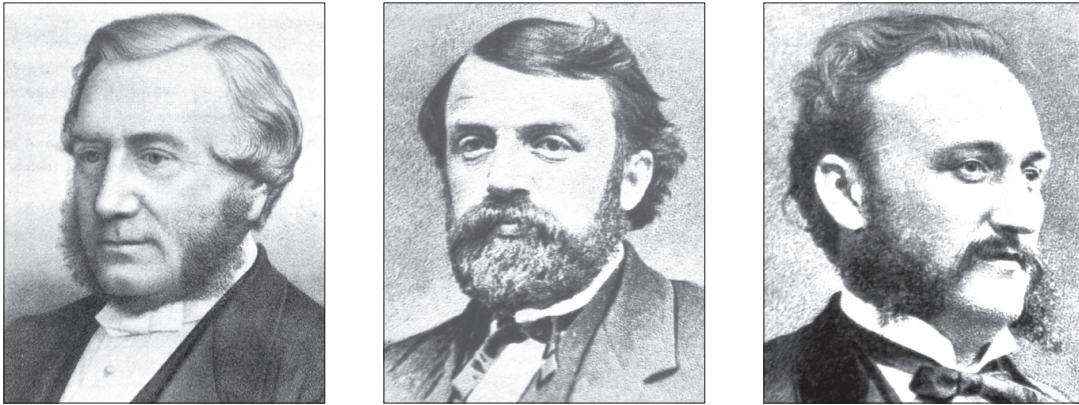
⁷² For accounts of the proceedings and summaries of the sermons, see *In Memoriam: Rev. John Kennedy DD., Dingwall* (Inverness, 1884). The summary of M'Dougall's sermon on Acts 13:36, 'For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep', is on pp. 49–51.

⁷³ Simeon R. McPhail was a further brother-in-law of M'Dougall, being the brother of M'Dougall's biographer.

⁷⁴ *Inverness Advertiser*, 17th July 1874, p. 3.

of his own family, and several others in his congregation, were led to decide for the Lord'.⁷⁵

M'Dougall was conscious that some of his friends did not agree with him in inviting Moody and Sankey to Strathpeffer. It was his view, however, that 'the Holy Ghost seems to be with them, bringing many out of darkness to light, so that I may not oppose, whatever others do.'⁷⁶ Regarding the



Left to right – John Kennedy, Dwight L. Moody, Ira D. Sankey.

Fodderty communion that followed the evangelist's visit, at which John Kennedy was the assisting minister,⁷⁷ M'Dougall says, 'This, to me, was the most notable communion since I came here and especially in respect of new members added to the congregation.' He lists several additions and then goes on, 'The four mentioned first were brought to decide for the Lord Jesus by the instrumentality of the American Evangelists in July last, and oh, if these prove true converts what cause have I to praise the Lord for any little trial endured in connection with these devoted men.'⁷⁸ His biographer adds, 'The trial referred to arose from some of his brethren and office bearers, who rather opposed the evangelists, because they feared that their teaching was unsound and their methods unscriptural.'⁷⁹ This does not, however, appear to have deterred M'Dougall; when Moody returned to Scotland in 1882, he visited Strathpeffer again and preached twice in the Pavilion.⁸⁰

John McPhail gives this testimony regarding the first resident Raasay minister's preaching:

⁷⁵ McPhail, *Memorial Sermons of Rev. W. S. M'Dougall*, p. 23.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁷⁷ On Kennedy's assisting at the Fodderty communion, see Auld, *Life of John Kennedy*, p. 171.

⁷⁸ McPhail, *Memorial Sermons of Rev. W. S. M'Dougall*, p. 23.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Those capable of judging had no difficulty in giving him a place among the foremost of our Highland ministers. He gave himself to the ministry of the word and to prayer. What he delivered in public was carefully prepared and written out, and was the result of much meditation and prayer. His preaching was remarkable, not only for its scripturalness, but for clearness, simplicity, order, tenderness, and unction. Hearers felt that he spoke what he believed, and what had first gone through himself. The godly felt that his lips fed them with the finest of the wheat. ‘The broken and contrite’ were specially drawn to him, for they found in him one to sympathize with them, and who knew from experience what a broken and contrite heart was. His devotional exercises were always striking, whether in the pulpit or in the family. His prayers were pervaded with a heavenly unction; there was such reverence mingled with holy confidence, one was made to feel that he was on holy ground, and that God was very near. It was his habit to spend much time alone with God, and he was much in intercession for all classes of men, and especially for the household of faith in their trials and sorrows in the wilderness.⁸¹

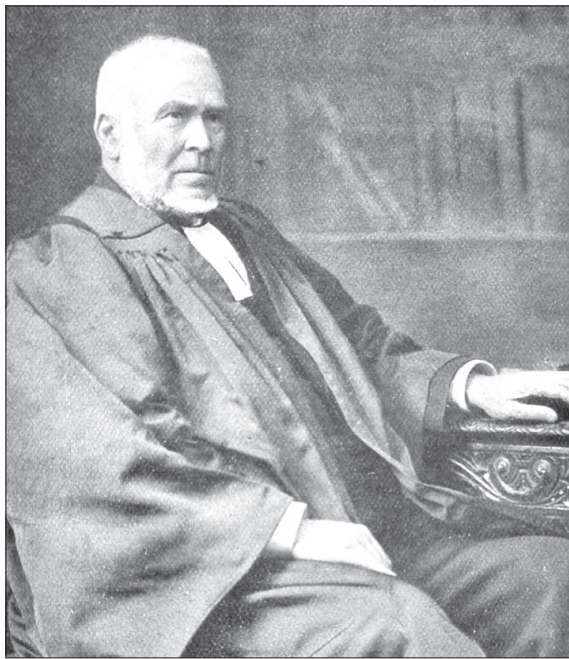
James Kippen

A year after M'Dougall was translated to Appin, the congregation extended a call to the probationer James Kippen (1823–1881)⁸² who was ordained and inducted at Raasay in 1857. Kippen, the son of James and Margaret Kippen, was born at Aberfeldy in 1823. His father is described as being a wright and later a merchant. He graduated M.A. from Edinburgh University in April 1848. He enrolled at New College, Edinburgh in 1847 and completed his ministerial training in 1851. Though he was one year behind M'Dougall, the first two Raasay Free Church ministers were contemporaries at New College for most of their theological training. Both benefitted from the teaching of William Cunningham, James Buchanan, James Bannerman, and John Duncan. We know nothing of his activities between the completion of his studies at New College and his ordination at Raasay six years later. It is most probable, that like M'Dougall, as a probationer in the first decade after the Disruption, he would have been supplying the many newly formed vacant congregations. When he was ordained at Raasay he is described as being from Inveriel, near Kirkcaldy. He was married during his ministry at Raasay to Catherine Boog, the daughter of an Edinburgh merchant.

⁸¹ McPhail, ‘William S. M'Dougall, Fodderty’, p. 301.

⁸² For biographical details of Kippen, see Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 201, and www.ecclegen.com/ministers – accessed 25th April 2023.

Kippen was the Free Church minister at Raasay for ten years until 1867 and very little is known of his pastorate. In 1867 he was translated to Arrochar in the Presbytery of Dumbarton where he ministered until his early death in 1881 at the age of fifty-eight. The minutes of the Presbytery at the time of his death make these observations, 'James Kippen. Called in 1866 from Raasay, to fill as colleague the charge of Arrochar, Mr. Kippen was eminently qualified by natural gifts, high scholarship, and large experience to perform the duties of that peculiar charge. To the resident Gaelic-speaking portion of the congregation he was able with much acceptance, to preach the gospel in their native language, and to his whole congregation – which in the summer months was largely augmented by visitors to the neighbourhood – he was able to present his Master's message with rare felicity and power.'⁸³ Kippen is the Raasay minister of the nineteenth century of which the least is known.



Angus Galbraith.

Angus Galbraith

Following a very short vacancy, in the same year that Kippen left for Arrochar, another probationer was ordained and inducted to the Raasay Free Church. Angus Galbraith (1837–1909) began in 1867 a twenty-three-year ministry in the congregation.⁸⁴ Galbraith was born at Torrisdale in Kintyre in 1837; he was the youngest of the six children of Neil and Janet Galbraith. His father was a shepherd and then a farm manager at Kilberry, almost forty miles to the north

of Torrisdale on the Kintyre peninsula. Galbraith's early education was at the Free Church School in Kilberry. After training to be a school-teacher at the Free Church Normal Training College in Glasgow he was appointed

⁸³ *Minutes of the Free Presbytery of Dumbarton*, 7th December 1881, cited on www.ecclegen.com/ministers – accessed 25th April 2023.

⁸⁴ For biographical details of Galbraith, see Galbraith, *Sermons of late Rev. Angus Galbraith*; Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 163; *Scotsman*, Edinburgh, 27th April 1909, p. 6.

by the Presbytery of Kintyre to take charge of their school in Killean.⁸⁵ It seems that whilst he was teaching at Killean, he came to the knowledge of the truth as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ under the ministry of James Martin MacPherson.⁸⁶ During the intervals in his college course, he



Patrick Fairbairn (left); James Gibson (right).

taught at the Ladies School at Waternish, Skye, where he was able to sit under the ministry of Alexander MacColl who was then the Free Church minister of Duirinish. After following the teaching profession for several years, Galbraith decided to go into the ministry. He entered the University of Glasgow and from 1863 attended the Free Church College in that city where the Principal was Patrick Fairbairn; James Gibson was Professor of Systematic Theology and Church History; and, from 1864, Islay Burns was the Professor of Apologetics, besides assisting Gibson in Systematics.⁸⁷ There Galbraith excelled as a student of Hebrew; at the end of his course he was declared the Cunningham scholar, and left as the first man of his year. In 1867, shortly after he received licence, he was ordained to the charge of Raasay.

⁸⁵ In 1836, the evangelical educational pioneer, David Stow, had established a normal school in Glasgow for training teachers. Following the Disruption of 1843, the Church of Scotland Educational Committee required Stow and his staff to sign their allegiance to the Established Church; this resulted in their resignation and Stow's establishing in 1845 a new teacher training institution in Glasgow – the Free Church Normal Seminary. See William Fraser, *Memoir of the Life of David Stow: Founder of the Training System of Education* (London, 1868); Andrew R. Middleton, 'David Stow – Faith and Learning: "Train up a child in the way he should go"', *Banner of Truth*, Issue 537, June 2008, pp. 8-17.

⁸⁶ Galbraith, *Sermons of late Rev. Angus Galbraith*, p. 5.

⁸⁷ W. M. Macgregor, *Trinity College, Glasgow: Souvenir of the Union, 1856–1929: With an historical sketch of the United Free Church College* (Glasgow, 1930), p. 18.

In Raasay Galbraith laboured unceasingly and successfully for twenty-three years. The Raasay people took to him from the very beginning of his ministry. His personality and his influence, alike as a minister and a counsellor, were a great moral and spiritual force and a power for good. The people of the north of the island walked the twelve miles to church each Sabbath to hear him. The most intelligent of his hearers used to remark, 'That man's preaching seems to stick to one.'⁸⁸ Every third Sabbath he preached in a meeting house that had been erected at Torran, in the north of the island, which was always packed. At Torran, he stayed the weekend with the niece of the famous Lachlan Mackenzie, Lochcarron. In order to intimate



Torran meeting house built by the local people with financial help from Herbert Wood.

that Galbraith was to preach, the people were accustomed to light a fire the previous evening on a high spot, and in fine weather the congregation was swelled by boat loads of people from the neighbouring parish of Applecross, who came across the inner sound. Galbraith catechised the whole congregation once a year, raising the moral tone of the congregation. There was no public house on the island, and crime and the policeman were consequently unknown, while family worship was universal. Galbraith had many seals to his ministry, both in Raasay and in the other places throughout the country where he preached at communions. At the sacramental occasions on Raasay, crowds gathered from the surrounding islands and from the mainland to the Gaelic services, which were held in the open air. The Lord's presence was felt among ministers and people alike, and many were the subjects of saving impressions.

The ministers who usually assisted Angus Galbraith at the Raasay communions were Alexander MacColl, Lochalsh; James Ross, Bracadale;

⁸⁸ Galbraith, *Sermons of late Rev. Angus Galbraith*, p. 12.

William Sinclair, Plockton; John Macrae, Duirinish; William Fraser, Sleat; and Angus Mackay, Glenshiel. Galbraith was one of the most popular of the northern Free Church ministers. His preaching was highly evangelical and his hearers were impressed by the forcible simplicity of his sermons. From his pastorate in Raasay he was able to exercise a great influence not just over the island of Skye but also in the north-west Highlands. He received many calls to new spheres of labour, including Glasgow and Inverness, but these he persistently declined. Ultimately, in 1890, he accepted a call from Ferintosh, and from Ferintosh he was translated to Lochalsh in 1893. Though he opposed the Declaratory Act in 1892 he remained in the Free Church and was one the twenty-seven ministers who remained outside of the union of the majority of the Free Church with the United Presbyterian Church to form the United Free Church in 1900.⁸⁹ He was appointed moderator of the Free Church minority in 1903. He died on 25th April 1909.

In the controversies that sprang up in the Free Church, Galbraith took a prominent part, always on the conservative side. During the Union negotiations which were abandoned in 1872, along with John Kennedy of Dingwall, and Alexander McColl and other prominent ministers of the north, Galbraith laboured diligently in teaching the people about the questions that were at the centre of the controversies. He took up a similar attitude in connection with the Disestablishment Movement. Galbraith regarded the establishment of religion as a great principle, and strongly opposed all the efforts made to separate the Church from the State. In the agitation against the Declaratory Act, which was passed into a standing law of the Free Church in 1892, Galbraith took a prominent part but unlike Donald Macfarlane and Donald Macdonald, he remained in the Free Church and became one of the recognised leaders of the constitutional party. The obituary writer in the *Scotsman* says of him, 'On more than one

⁸⁹ Though it has often been stated in post-1900 Free Church literature that twenty-seven ministers refused to enter the 1900 union, this is based on the widely published framed collection of twenty-six ministers described as the 'Ministers who adhered to the Free Church in 1900'. Copies of the framed collection have been published on a number of occasions; see George N. M. Collins, *Whose Faith Follow* (Edinburgh, 1943), opposite p. 79, and idem, *The Heritage of our Fathers* (Knox Press, Edinburgh, 1976), opposite p. 73 for a larger copy. It was recognised that John Clarke of Lochfyneside was missing to make up the twenty-seven. In recent research, John Keddle has shown that twelve men are missing who were ordained before 1900 and who subsequently threw in their lot with the Free Church, along with two retired ministers, making a total of forty-one. The distinction between the two totals seems to be that the twenty-seven adhered in 1900, whilst the additional fourteen adhered after 1900. See the helpful Appendix 2 in John Keddle, *Preserving a Reformed Heritage* (Kirkhill, 2017), pp. 333-339.

occasion he led the party in the General Assembly. His powers of debate were not, however, as manifest as were his preaching powers. Suffering from shyness, he kept aloof from Assembly debates except when forced into a position of prominence. In the local courts, however – Synods and Presbyteries – his counsel and judgement marked him as a man on whom the people could rely for guidance. Consistently with his opposition to the first Union negotiations and to the Disestablishment movement, he opposed the Union in 1900, because he held that it involved the practical abandonment of the principle of establishment, and because of alterations on the Formula which relaxed certain doctrines of the Confession of Faith. He is remembered as the man who led the opposition in the Assembly of 1900 when the historic Union debate took place. The motion to approve of the Committee's report in favour of union with the United Presbyterian Church was moved by Principal Rainy. Mr. Galbraith took upon himself the responsibility of moving a direct negative. His amendment, which he stated was drawn up by himself, asked the Assembly to decline "to take further steps towards an incorporating union of the two Churches on the basis proposed". The *Scotsman's* obituarist makes this observation: 'In support of his amendment ... an able statement was made by Mr. Galbraith, though he knew he was leading a forlorn hope. The amendment received the support of twenty-nine ministers and laymen, and when the motion for union was declared carried, Mr Galbraith, in the name of his adherents, protested and dissented. Thereafter he was actively engaged in the proceedings that followed the Union, and in 1903, the year before the famous House of Lords judgement in favour of the dissenting minority was issued, he was called to preside over the General Assembly of the remnant Free Church.'⁹⁰

Three Rona missionaries

Though these Free Church ministers did occasionally preach in Rona, it was infrequent, Galbraith is said to have gone to Rona at least once a year.⁹¹ Preaching and pastoral care on Rona from the early 1850s until the 1920 was largely in the hands of three missionary-catechists. The first of these was James Urquhart; he succeeded John Macleod as the teacher at Dry Harbour when Macleod moved to Torran on Raasay.⁹² At some point Urquhart began keeping services on Rona. When he first came as a teacher on the island, he was a thoughtless young man, taken up with

⁹⁰ *Scotsman*, Edinburgh, 27th April 1909, p. 6.

⁹¹ Macleod, *South Rona: The Island and its People*, p. 15.

⁹² See the Appendix for details of the teachers on Rona.

dancing and playing the fiddle at weddings. Though careless about religion he admired a severely lame but eminent Christian at Dry Harbour called John MacIennan, who was locally known as ‘Iain Og’. As a result of his friendship with MacIennan, the fiddle was burned, and reading the Bible and the prayer meetings had more attraction for him than the dance. The change soon became evident, not only in himself but also among the people, and a number were turned from darkness to light.⁹³

In 1861, following his conversion, James Urquhart became a teacher-missionary at Dry Harbour with the Glasgow and West Coast Mission. This Mission operated for almost a century from 1855 to 1950. It sought to bring gospel services and nursing provision to the most far-flung corners of the western Highlands. At its height it had mission stations from Jura to the Isle of Lewis. It was a co-operative effort between the Church of Scotland and the Free Church. The Mission claimed to be unsectarian, and had the sympathy and support of many denominations. The leader of the group of men and ministers who formed the Mission in December 1855 was Thomas Rosie, born in Orkney; he had made his home in Edinburgh and had done missionary work in the east-coast ports of Scotland but was turning his attention to the west. Initially the Mission focussed on the ports from Port Glasgow to Stranraer. After an 1856 survey of the west coast, the Mission began from 1860 to appoint missionaries further west, with men appointed in Tighnabruaich, North Uist, Rona, Barra, Glendale, and other locations.⁹⁴

James Urquhart held this post until his early death at the age of fifty-five in 1874. He was one of the first missionaries employed by the newly formed Mission and commenced his labours as one of their agents on 1st July 1861 on the understanding that he would devote fifteen hours a week to mission work. He was recommended to the mission by Angus Galbraith; his salary was £12 a year.⁹⁵ In 1873, Urquhart’s brother, John, who lived

⁹³ See the account of John MacIennan by James Nicolson, ‘Recollections of Iain Og, Rona’, *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 46 (July 1941), pp. 68-73. James Nicolson was a Free Presbyterian missionary at Braes, Portree. Born in Braes, he taught for some time at Dry Harbour on Rona before he moved to Glasgow, where he was ordained at elder in the St Jude’s congregation under Neil Cameron. He later returned to Skye. See the obituary in *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 48 (June 1943), pp. 32-33.

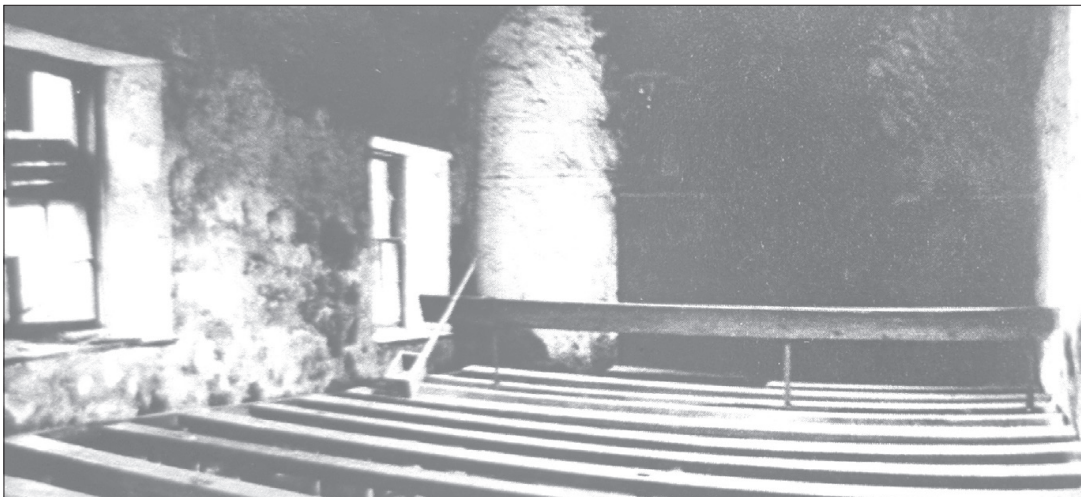
⁹⁴ For a helpful short history, see Norman Campbell, ‘The Glasgow and West Coast Mission’, *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 9 (2019), pp. 196-204; Frank D. Bardgett, *Devoted Service Rendered: The Lay Missionaries of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2002), Appendix 8, pp. 310-326.

⁹⁵ Bardgett, *Devoted Service Rendered*, p. 312.

with him died of consumption at the age of thirty-six. Eighteen months later James Urquhart succumbed to the same disease.⁹⁶ Referring to his passing, James Nicolson comments, ‘No other individual was so much loved by all the people, especially the people of God, as James Urquhart.’⁹⁷



A recent photograph of what was the Schoolhouse and church on Rona.



Interior of the church taken in 1933.

IMAGE COPYRIGHT, DUNDEE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVE

In 1877, John Munro (1814–1884) from Skye succeeded Urquhart as missionary, a post he held until his death. He was born at Kilmuir in Skye; his maternal uncle was the blind catechist Donald Munro, the ‘father of evangelical religion in Skye’. Conversations with his uncle were

⁹⁶ Macleod, *South Rona: The Island and its People*, p. 16.

⁹⁷ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 46, p. 70. Urquhart receives a brief mention in MacCowan, *Men of Skye*, p. 158. James Nicolson who wrote the account of Iain Og was himself a teacher for a period at Dry Harbour. He came to Rona shortly after Urquhart’s death and before the appointment of John Munro. In his account he explains the length of the mid-week prayer meeting after he arrived on Rona in the winter of 1875, ‘It began at noon and it was dark before we got out, so that the people were grumbling.’ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 46, p. 68.

blessed to his conversion. At the age of thirty, he left Skye and went to Glasgow to earn a livelihood. Thirty-three years later, in 1877, at the age of sixty-three he was appointed as a missionary-catechist in Rona by the Glasgow and West Coast mission. At about the time he came to Rona, the proprietor, Edward Wood, provided finance for building both a mission-house together with a new school-house.⁹⁸ Munro gave extensive testimony to the Napier Commission and, as one who had lived in Glasgow for three decades, his assessment of the clearances and of the difficulties of life on Rona and how the issues might be redressed, is most instructive.⁹⁹ In the brief account of his life, Roderick MacCowan says of him, 'He was a God-fearing, honest, and eminently pious man, free from flattery and hypocrisy. He was much loved and appreciated by the Lord's people wherever he went. The insulated and retired locality in which he lived and laboured prevented his personal communication with many of the Lord's people, except on communion occasions, when his company was much sought after.'¹⁰⁰ Munro was a widower when he came to Rona in 1877; two years later he married a forty-two-year-old widow Catherine Nicolson. Following Munro's death in 1884, she moved to Doire na Guaille on Rona to be with her two married sons from her first marriage.¹⁰¹

In the year that Munro died, a third missionary was appointed. This was Alexander Maclellan who laboured on Rona in that capacity from around 1886 until his death in 1920.¹⁰² He was from Kishorn and came to Rona from Applecross with Mary, his wife, and their family.¹⁰³ Like Urquhart and Munro

⁹⁸ Edward Wood provided financial support for building a Free Church meeting house at Torran on Raasay in addition to the one at Rona. James Ross testifying to the Napier commission said the erection of the two meeting houses cost the proprietor almost £412. See *Napier Commission Evidence*, Vol. 1, p. 470 at para 8241. The local people, however, constructed the buildings and regarded them as theirs.

⁹⁹ For Munro's testimony, see *Napier Commission Evidence*, Vol. 1, pp. 461-465 at paras 8116-8191.

¹⁰⁰ MacCowan, *Men of Skye*, pp. 157-158.

¹⁰¹ Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, pp. 145-146. See www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk for their marriage certificate and her death certificate – accessed on 21st January 2021. The name of her first husband was Murdoch M'Leod. There is an interesting obituary of Catherine Munro in *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 26, p. 305 written by Neil Cameron.

¹⁰² For biographical details of Alexander Maclellan (1838–1920) see the obituary written by Neil Cameron in *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 25, pp. 268-271. This is reprinted in Cameron, *Ministers and Men of the Free Presbyterian Church*, pp. 72-75.

¹⁰³ Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, p. 145. The Maclellans would eventually have eight children, four boys and four girls. The sixth child who grew up in Rona and was named after his father became a respected elder in the Free Presbyterian Church. His autobiography and selections from his diaries have been published along with an

he was employed as missionary-catechist by the Glasgow and West Coast Mission. Eye-witness accounts, of both the Sabbath services and the prayer meetings on Rona as they were conducted by Alexander MacLennan, have been preserved. This is his description of the Sabbath services by his son:

There was...a place of worship which could seat a hundred people. I remember seeing it full to the door on Sabbath days in summer when many used to come from Kyle Rona, Fladda and Arnish, and at times from the Applecross coast to listen to the doctrines of the Bible and the Shorter Catechism – ruin by the fall, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, redemption by Jesus Christ: that respectability and morality and being good neighbours would not bring them to heaven, that if death came to them without repentance towards God and faith in the Saviour it would sting and cause pain to be had forever. The singing of the Gaelic psalms used to impress me as I sat on the pulpit steps – the only place available. I can never forget the words with which the missionary generally concluded the service, ‘Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors,’ and the two verses: Proverbs 8:34-36.¹⁰⁴

The account of the mid-week prayer meeting is by Duncan MacSwan who was brought up on Rona. He writes:

Every Thursday, at 12 noon, the late Alexander MacLennan, who was missionary for many years at Rona held his weekly prayer meeting and it was always well attended. Everyone stopped work and went faithfully to this meeting, including the people from Doire na Guaille which is situated about three miles from Acarsaid Thioram (Dry Harbour), and the one family from Acarsaid Mor (Big Harbour). Although life was hard for these people, they still found time to give thanks to their Maker and remain faithful to their beliefs.¹⁰⁵

MacLennan’s labours in Rona were clearly honoured by the Lord he served; one of several testimonies to the effect of his preaching is that of Malcolm Macleod who became a Free Presbyterian missionary-catechist on the island of Fladda located off the north-west coast of Raasay. Donald M. Macdonald (1882–1968), the Free Presbyterian minister of Portree, in

introductory biographical sketch. See Norman Campbell and Robert Dickie (eds.), *He Led Me: Autobiography, diaries and meditations of Alexander MacLennan* (Reformation Press, Stornoway, 2018). An older son of the Rona missionary, Kenneth MacLennan, lost his life in World War I.

¹⁰⁴ *Ross-Shire Journal*, 18th December 1953, cited in Macleod, *South Rona: The Island and its People*, p. 52.

¹⁰⁵ Macleod, *South Rona: The Island and its People*, p. 55.

his obituary of the missionary-catechist writes: ‘He was born in Rona, being the eldest son of a family of five sons and one daughter ... While living in Rona, Malcolm Macleod had the privilege of being one of the congregation of which the late worthy Mr. Alexander MacLennan was missionary, and it was while listening to Mr. MacLennan speaking in public from Jeremiah, xii. 5, “If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan”, that he come under real concern about the state of his soul for an endless eternity.’¹⁰⁶ Under such outstanding missionary-catechists, Rona became an island where real godliness was evident in daily life.

John MacLennan (Iain Og)

When the missionary was away from Dry Harbour, preaching at other places on Rona and Raasay, John MacLennan (Iain Og – in Gaelic ‘Young John’) would often conduct worship in his home. James Nicolson who had come to Dry Harbour as a teacher has given us an account of such a gathering. It was his second Sabbath in Rona and the missionary had gone to take a service at Kyle Rona on Raasay. Nicolson writes:

There was no service in the schoolhouse, but the people with whom I was staying told me that there would be a meeting in the house of Iain Og. All the people of the place gathered to his house. When I arrived, Iain was sitting in an old-fashioned chair, known in the Highlands as a sunnag, and I would take him to be about sixty years of age. He began the meeting by asking one of the name of Neil MacLeod to sing four verses of a psalm, and then asked a venerable old man to pray. After the prayer he struggled to his feet with the aid of two walking sticks, dropping them when he was fairly on his feet. On being given the Bible he read a chapter and asked Neil MacLeod to sing some more verses. He then began to expound a portion of the chapter read, mentioning verses after verse of Scripture accurately showing their bearing on the portions he was expounding, and although the meeting continued for fully two and a half hours no one felt tired. When he finished speaking he engaged in prayer, and if his exposition was remarkable his prayer may be described as wonderful. He gave one the impression that he was unconscious of anyone listening to him but the Invisible One.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 45 (January 1941), p. 287.

¹⁰⁷ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 46 (July 1941), p. 69.

Iain Og had a high regard for his niece, Janet Mackay, and Nicolson records the procedure on Rona when MacIennan was unable to be at the means of grace, ‘When he was not able to go to the service, he would say to it favourite niece by the name of Janet, “Bring me all you can.” On her return home, he would cause her to sit beside him and question her about the service. He would begin by asking her the psalm read and the portion sung, then the chapter, the text, and the heads of the sermon. He would then get her to repeat all that she remembered of what the minister said on the first, second, and third heads, and the conclusion. After he would get from her all that she remembered, he would arrange the sermon and it would keep him going for the whole of that week, and before the close of it he could repeat more of the sermon than any one of those who heard it preached.’¹⁰⁸ James Nicolson says that MacIennan was ‘a man of prayer and spent the most of his time with the Bible and on his knees. After breakfast and worship, he would crawl to the back of a hillock behind his house and spend the most of the day on his knees, except when it was too cold or too wet, and I had it on good authority that the marks of his toes, knees and elbows were to be seen there a long time after he was gone.’¹⁰⁹

When his niece and her husband moved to Oskaig on Raasay, the young couple took with them Iain Og to live with them.¹¹⁰ During his stay with the young married couple at Oskaig, eminent ‘ministers and men’ would come to their home to visit John MacIennan. This was especially the case at the time of the Raasay Free Church communion season. The ministers who visited their home, mentioned by James Nicolson, were John M’Rae of Duirinish and Angus Mackay of Glenshiel along with Angus Galbraith.¹¹¹ Amongst the ‘Men’ who came to Oskaig were two of whom there are biographical sketches in Roderick MacCowan’s *Men of Skye*, the catechist, Walter Mackay, and Neil MacInnes.¹¹² Owing to his physical feebleness, John MacIennan, only went once to the Lord’s Table at a communion in Raasay; this occurred whilst he was living at Oskaig. Nicolson records the occasion: ‘He told his niece that he would like to go

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 70. Janet Mackay (1848–1929) was the maternal grandmother of Donald Maclean, the Free Presbyterian minister of Portree and Glasgow.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 69.

¹¹⁰ Iain Og had lived with his sister and her husband, Mary and John Mackay, until their deaths in 1878. After their daughter married, he went to live with his niece and her husband. See Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, p. 65.

¹¹¹ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 46 (July 1941), p. 71. For brief biographical details of M’Rae and Mackay, see Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 233, 258.

¹¹² MacCowan, *Men of Skye*, pp. 179–182, 186.

to the Lord's Table, so Mr. Stewart, the estate manager, was spoken to and he sent the coachman with a small basket trap to Iain's house. Two men carried him out of the house and came with him in the trap, took him and set him down beside the Table, lifted him afterwards to the Table and again lifted him back to his seat. When the service was over the trap was waiting for him to bring him home again. It was a red-letter day for Iain Og.¹¹³

Charles Macleod, the Rona historian, observes regarding the three missionaries: 'Owing to its insularity, Rona seldom enjoyed the services of a minister; but their missionaries, Urquhart, Munro, and MacLennan, were gifted lay preachers who were much esteemed within and outwith their own congregations. When the services of a minister were required for a baptism, there were times when the parents would take their children to Torran in Raasay when there happened to be a visiting minister preaching there on the Thursday before the annual Raasay Communion.'¹¹⁴

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

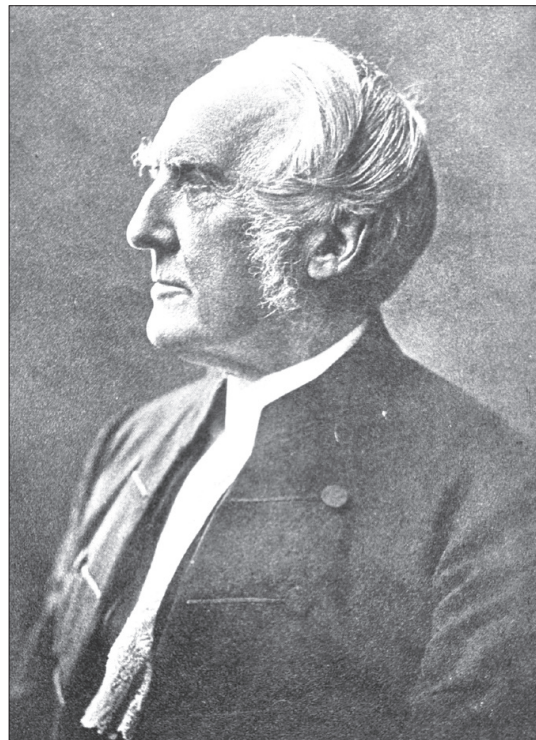
In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, worldwide Presbyterianism was loosening its attachment to Calvinism and to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The United Presbyterian Church passed a Declaratory Act in 1879, the ostensible purpose of which was to declare or explain the meaning of various statements in the Confession. In reality, it contradicted the Confession and diluted the Church's commitment to Calvinism. Presbyterian churches throughout the world soon followed the United Presbyterians' lead.

The Free Church of Scotland set up a committee in 1889 to report on ways of 'providing relief' for those who could not give unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession. Two years later a Declaratory Act was approved by the General Assembly, which became Church law in 1892. By the early 1880s, a powerful party had arisen within its ranks which was determined to relax the Church's commitment to the Westminster Confession of Faith. At the vanguard of the movement was Robert Rainy, the Principal of the Free Church's leading theological seminary, New College in Edinburgh. Rainy, as we noted, was a nephew of George Rainy, who owned the Raasay estate from 1846 until his death in 1863. Angus Galbraith, the Raasay minister, was a popular preacher and kept his people well-informed on events within the Free Church.

¹¹³ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 46 (July 1941), p. 72.

¹¹⁴ Macleod, *South Rona: The Island and its People*, p. 20.

The section of the Free Church who opposed this movement for adjustment of the Church's relationship to the Confession were called the Constitutionalists; Galbraith was a leading member of this group. Initially, their stance was that separation from the Free Church would be a necessity if the Rainy majority in the General Assembly legislated to relax the Church's adherence to its Confession. This view was encapsulated at a meeting of the Constitutionalist party held immediately after the Declaratory Act was approved by the Free Church General Assembly in May 1892.¹¹⁵ William Balfour, who had agreed to act as chairman of the meeting, made a statement to the following effect: 'It has come to this pass now in the Free Church that only two alternatives are left us. (1) We must separate from those who were responsible for passing the Declaratory Act immediately and declare ourselves the Free Church as this Church was settled in 1843; or (2) if we remain in this Church, and, if we continue to fight for the Creed and Constitution of the original Free Church, we shall be kicked out one by one.'¹¹⁶



Principal Robert Rainy.

It was not long before the opposition of the Constitutionalists collapsed. They had concluded that the Act was not binding on them – that it was just a relieving Act. It did not force office-bearers to believe the doctrines of the Act. It merely allowed others to have a different view of the Westminster Confession from that which had been held in the past. This weakening occurred with the passing of a Declaratory Act in 1892. In 1890, Galbraith left Raasay, having accepted a call to the Ferintosh congregation in Ross-shire. It had become plain, however, that he agreed

¹¹⁵ Those who opposed the Act asserted that, rather than 'declaring the meaning' of the Westminster Confession of Faith, it contradicted the Confession and so undermined the Free Church's commitment to Calvinism. They further asserted that it allowed office-bearers who embraced the false teaching embodied in the Act to be shielded from discipline.

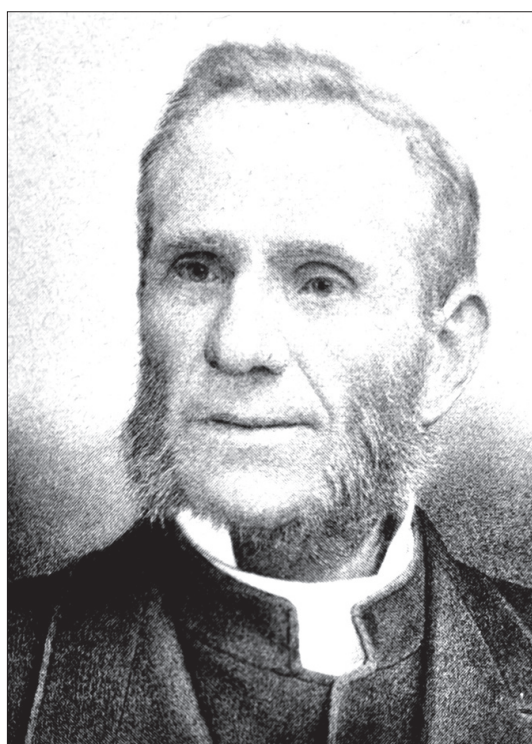
¹¹⁶ Alexander McPherson (ed.), *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (1893–1970)* (Inverness, c.1974), p. 71.

with the majority in the Constitutionalist party who had abandoned their earlier conviction on the necessity of separation in the event of the Free Church's commitment to the Westminster Confession being weakened. They had quite simply changed their minds. The Raasay-Rona congregation, however, had not changed theirs. Just a month before the crucial General Assembly, which was being asked to rescind the Act, Donald Macfarlane, having been previously called by them to be their minister, was inducted to the Raasay as their minister on 27th April 1893. Macfarlane was a known opposer of the legislation.¹¹⁷

Donald Macfarlane

Donald Macfarlane (1834–1926) was born at Vallay in North Uist.¹¹⁸

He was the fourth of the six children of Donald Macfarlane, manager of farms on the estate of Colonel Gordon of Cluny, Aberdeenshire, proprietor of South Uist and Barra. His mother was Elizabeth Macdonald, daughter of Alexander Macdonald, Trotternish, Skye. His early education took place in South Uist. In 1850, he attended a school at Uiskeva, Benbecula, which had been set up through the efforts of the Ladies' Society for the Religious Improvement of the Remote Highlands and Islands. Its



Donald Macfarlane.

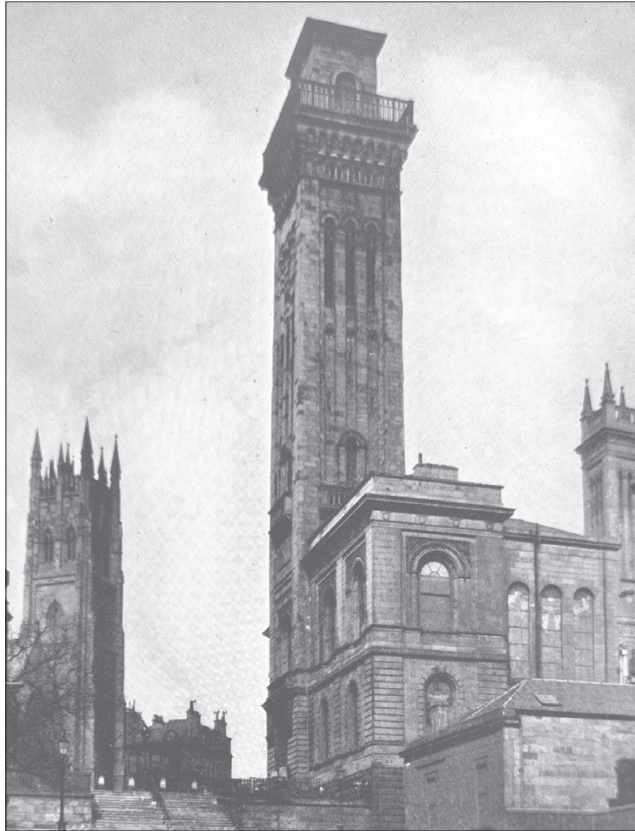
first teacher, who taught Macfarlane, was Donald Macdonald (1825–1901), afterwards the Free Church minister of Shieldaig. Macdonald became his lifelong friend and was the only minister to stand with him in forming

¹¹⁷ Charles Macleod expresses this in personal terms: speaking of Angus Galbraith, he writes, 'He had changed his mind, but his congregation had not changed theirs and when in 1893 the General Assembly refused to rescind the Declaratory Act of 1992 most of the Raasay congregation and the entire Rona congregation separated from the Free Church,' Macleod, *South Rona: The Island and its People*, p. 20.

¹¹⁸ For biographical details of Macfarlane, see Donald Beaton, *Memoir, Diary and Remains of the Rev. Donald Macfarlane, Dingwall* (Inverness, 1929); Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 227; Roy Middleton, 'Donald Macfarlane', ODNB.

the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.¹¹⁹ In October 1856 a change took place which altered the whole course of Macfarlane's life. He was brought under soul concern through the preaching of Alexander MacColl of Duirinish, Skye, and afterwards of Lochalsh.

In order to raise sufficient funds to start a university course, Macfarlane taught for the next seven years in three Hebridean schools. He began his college course at Glasgow University in 1863, and completed his



Trinity College, the Glasgow Free Church College.

divinity course in 1874.¹²⁰

His theology course was at Glasgow Free Church College where the principal was Patrick Fairbairn. The Presbytery of Skye and Uist licensed Macfarlane on 24th June 1874 at Snizort. Whilst a probationer at Dunoon he met John Kennedy of Dingwall who recommended the elders of the congregation of Strathconon, Ross-shire, to call him as their minister. He was ordained and inducted at Strathconon on 20th January 1876. Three years later he was called to Moy, Inverness-shire and

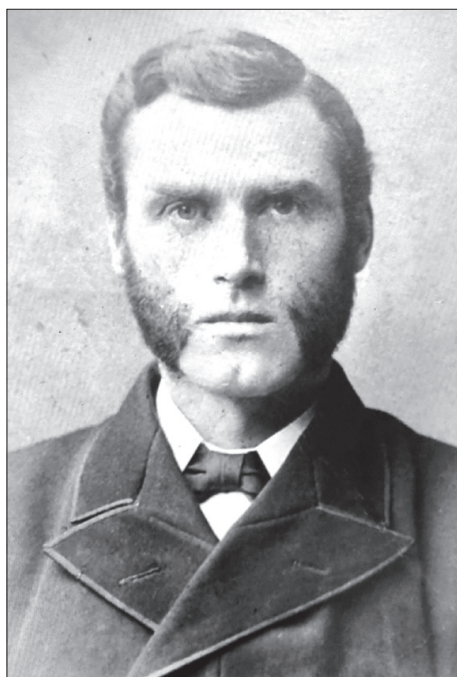
in 1888 he accepted a call to Kilmallie in the Free Church Presbytery of Abertarff. He was associated at this stage with the Constitutional party in the Free Church. In January 1893, Macfarlane's Presbytery of Abertarff engrossed in its records a protest against the General Assembly's action in approving the Declaratory Act. A week later, on 25th January 1893, Macfarlane's own Kirk Session placed a similar protest in its minutes.

¹¹⁹ Following Macdonald's death in 1901, Macfarlane became his biographer. See Donald Macfarlane, *Memoir and Remains of the Rev. Donald Macdonald, Shieldaig, Ross-shire* (Glasgow, 1903).

¹²⁰ Donald Beaton in his *Memoir of Donald Macfarlane* states that 'He began his college course in 1863 and finished his divinity course ten years later (i.e., 1873)' (p. 8). However, the alumni roll in Macgregor, *Trinity College, Glasgow: Souvenir of the Union, 1856-1929*, p. 22 states that Macfarlane was at Trinity College from 1870 to 1874.

Amidst the resulting turmoil Macfarlane was translated from Kilmallie to Raasay. The induction was on 25th April 1893, and he took office under a protest against the Declaratory Act.

A group of Constitutionalist theological students had resolved to separate from the Free Church if the Declaratory Act was not rescinded at the 1893 General Assembly. Neil Cameron, a leader among the student group, was dismayed that Macfarlane had agreed to be translated from his pastorate in Kilmallie to Raasay once the Declaratory Act had been passed. It is probable that Cameron did not realise that Macfarlane had taken office under a protest against the Declaratory Act and clearly stated that he signed the formula without any reference to it.¹²¹ Writing to a fellow student, Cameron voices his concern: 'I cannot understand Mr. Macfarlane for he said to me distinctly that he intended to stand at the Assembly and to declare himself and those who might follow him the Free Church. How can he do so after signing the formula under the present jurisdiction I cannot conceive.'¹²² A month later to the same correspondent he writes: 'The Assembly time is nearly upon us. What is to take place is getting darker. There is a painful silence on the part of those who were expected to do something, but that may not be the worst sign. I am getting very doubtful in my own mind about Mr. Macfarlane. He must feel that it changed his relation to the Act, his having taken induction under it. The Lord alone can lead His poor Church out of this perplexity.'¹²³



*Neil Cameron when a student
for the ministry.*

The formation of a new denomination in Raasay

The 1893 General Assembly of the Free Church was its jubilee. With the exception of the Church of Scotland, every major Presbyterian Church

¹²¹ Beaton, *Memoir, Diary and Remains of the Rev. Donald Macfarlane*, p. 25.

¹²² MS Letter, Neil Cameron to John Macleod, 7th April 1893. Cameron's correspondent was John Macleod (1872–1948). Macleod became a Free Presbyterian minister, firstly in Ullapool and then in Kames, but later joined the Free Church of Scotland and was eventually appointed the principal of the Free Church Theological College.

¹²³ MS Letter, Neil Cameron to John Macleod, 9th May 1893.

in the world had sent a delegate to the gathering which commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Disruption. On Thursday 25th May, the commissioners took up ten overtures for the repeal of the Declaratory Act. In a speech which had the object of persuading the Assembly to pass from the overtures, Robert Rainy stressed the liberty of opinion which the Act now allowed. He said, 'This Act has set forth the Church's understanding of the range of opinion which is open in this Church in its own understanding of what is involved in the acceptance of the Confession of Faith by our ministers and elders.'¹²⁴ The Constitutional motion put forward by their leaders was not to approve the overtures and petitions for the rescinding of the Act, but merely to remit the matter to a committee to report to the 1894 Assembly. Rainy, as usual, carried the Assembly with him, securing a massive majority to pass from the overtures.

At this stage, the newly inducted Raasay minister, an unknown figure in Edinburgh, advanced to the Clerk's table and laid on it a protest. Part of the document stated, 'I, the undersigned minister of the Free Church, in my own name, and in the name of all who may adhere to me, declare that, whatever I may subsequently do, neither my conscience nor my ordination vows allow me to act under what has been made law in this Church.'¹²⁵ By this action at the supreme court of the Declaratory Act Free Church, Macfarlane separated himself, and all who followed him, from a body that he considered had compromised the doctrines of Scripture. The Raasay minister's intention was to preserve entire the constitution of the Disruption Free Church. He was leaving behind him not only Robert Rainy and his followers but also the Constitutional party, who were content with a mere dissent when their overtures failed. Neil Cameron rejoiced at the stand made by Macfarlane and realised that his fears of the previous months, on Macfarlane's account, were completely unjustified.

Donald Beaton, in his biography of Macfarlane, details the responses to the step that the Raasay minister had taken, both by those who agreed with him, and by his former friends in the Constitutionalist party who disagreed:

To many the separation was like deliverance from Egyptian bondage. There was a unity, zeal and warmth among those who left the Declaratory Act Church which makes that time one of the green spots in their memories. The effort to check the movement was not confined to the out-and-out advocates of the new order of things, for among some of the most bitter

¹²⁴ McPherson, *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, p. 76.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

opponents to the Free Presbyterian movement were former friends. This has invariably been so. There are no opponents so envenomed and fierce in their attacks as those who were at one time active and strong supporters. Whether their loud denunciations are a last resort to stifle the voice of a conscience ill at ease, or whether it is a cleverly executed plan to divert the attention of their opponents from the line of their retreat, it may be difficult to say, but the fact remains that quondam friends can be very fierce enemies. This is one of the ironies of religious and ecclesiastical life. One of the chief critics of the new movement was the Rev. Murdo Macaskill, Dingwall.¹²⁶ He characterised the Free Presbyterian movement as ‘the most mischievous movement of modern times, and calculated only to do most serious harm to the cause of truth and godliness in our beloved Highlands.’ After all his rousing and fiery speeches and ignoble retreat in the day of battle, silence, even only as a negative virtue, would have become him. Controversy brings out a man’s strength or reveals his weakness. Men who were never suspected of holding certain opinions contrary to the truth reveal their views in the stress of controversy, and one is amazed at times

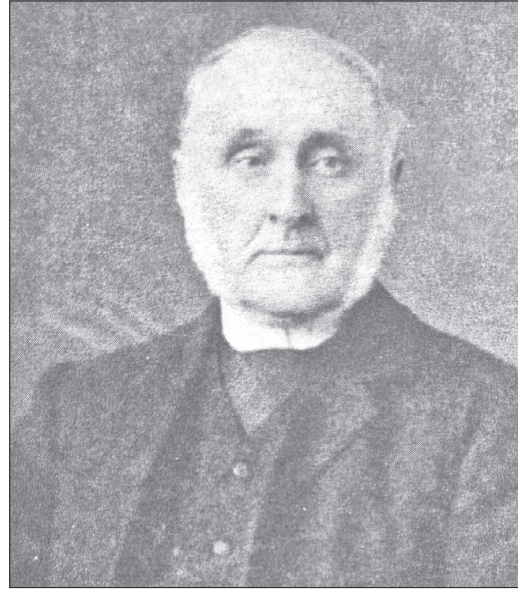
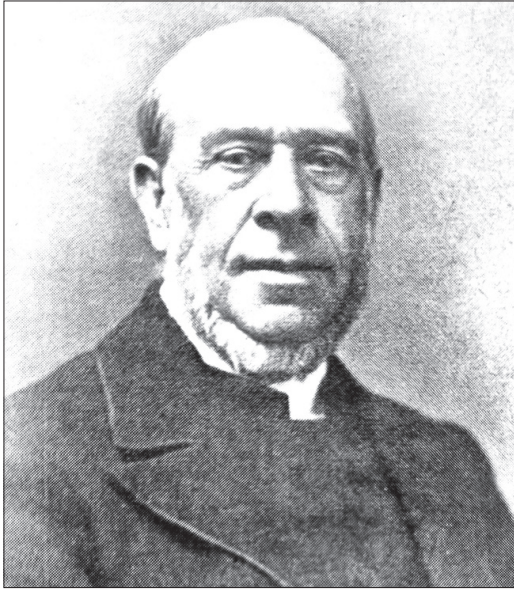


Murdo Mackaskill – John Kennedy’s successor at Dingwall.

¹²⁶ Murdo Macaskill (1838–1903) was the successor to John Kennedy as the minister of the Dingwall congregation of the Free Church of Scotland and at first had taken a prominent role in opposing the Declaratory Act movement. The passing of the Declaratory Act led to a change of outlook in Macaskill; it seems that he decided that ongoing opposition to changes was not the way to proceed. His son, in a biographical piece accompanying a selection of his sermons, says that his father noticed that spiritual blessing continued to be experienced in many places despite the presence of Higher Criticism and changed views of doctrine. This change of outlook is clearly seen in the way which Macaskill contributed to the renewed attempts to unite the Free Church with the United Presbyterians which began in 1896. He accepted an invitation from Principal Rainy to become a member of the Free Church committee that would handle the negotiations. When the union took place in 1900 Macaskill joined the United Free Church. Despite considerable efforts to explain the situation, he was unable to carry all his own congregation with him and a sizeable number of office-bearers and members remained in the Free Church. Many of his former colleagues were disappointed by his decision; they were not, however, surprised, as the signs of his change of heart had been visible for several years. See Murdoch Macaskill, *A Highland Pulpit*, ed. John Macaskill (Inverness, 1907), pp. i–xxxv, esp. p. xx for his change of outlook.

to find that those who were regarded true as steel are only made of clay, and very poor clay at that.¹²⁷

The greater part of the Raasay congregation and the entire Rona congregation separated from the Free Church and supported Donald MacFarlane, who had only become the minister of the congregation



Donald Macdonald of Shieldaig (left) and Alexander Macfarlane, the Raasay school teacher (right), the two men who along with Donald Macfarlane formed the first Presbytery of what became the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

just a month before the General Assembly in April 1893. A separate congregation was formed that became part of a new denomination that would eventually be called the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This formally occurred two months later when Macfarlane, along with Donald MacDonald of Shieldaig, who had also left the Free Church over the failure to rescind the Declaratory Act, and the schoolmaster at Clachan on Raasay met in conference at Raasay and ‘resolved to meet next day, and, in the name of the Head of the Church, form themselves into a separate Presbytery, not owning the jurisdiction of the courts of the presently subsisting Church, calling herself the Free Church of Scotland.’¹²⁸ The following day, Friday, 28th July, the first Presbytery of the Free Church Presbytery of Scotland met and licensed John R. Mackay, who was the first Free Presbyterian ministerial student to be licensed.¹²⁹ At its next

¹²⁷ Beaton, *Memoir, Diary and Remains of the Rev. Donald Macfarlane*, pp. 31-32.

¹²⁸ MS ‘Records of the Free Church Presbytery of Scotland’, p. 2; McPherson, *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, p. 85.

¹²⁹ John Robertson Mackay (1865–1939) studied at St Andrews University and New College, Edinburgh. Three months after his licensing, he was ordained and inducted to the Gairloch

meeting in Portree, on Monday 14th August, the Presbytery adopted the Deed of Separation. Mackay was one of the two witness signatories to the Free Presbyterian Deed of Separation. With this document, the formation of the Church was completed. These were momentous years, both for Macfarlane's congregation and for the islands of Raasay and Rona.

The Raasay school teacher who, along with the two ministers, had formed the first Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church was Alexander Macfarlane (1842–1930). He taught at the school at Clachan for almost forty years from 1871 to 1910. He was born of God-fearing parents at Laxay, in the parish of Lochs, Lewis, his father being a Gaelic catechist. He was baptized by the eminent 'Disruption Worthy of the Highlands,' Robert Finlayson. Like his father before him, he knew some of the great Highland Gospel ministers. He often heard Roderick Macleod, Snizort and had a close relationship to Alexander MacColl, latterly of Lochalsh. MacColl was a



John R. Mackay, the first student licensed by the Free Presbyterian Church.

congregation. After seven years in Gairloch, he was translated to the Inverness Free Presbyterian congregation in 1900. He was a tutor of the Free Presbyterian ministerial students between 1897 and 1918. Mackay was one of three ministers who left the Free Presbyterian Church and joined the Free Church in 1918 following an unsuccessful attempt by him to unite the two Churches. For details, see McPherson, *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, pp. 121–131; Duncan R. MacSween (ed.), *One Hundred Years of Witness* (Glasgow, 1993), pp. 64–71. The case for union was detailed in an extensive pamphlet by Mackay, *The Free Church and the Free Presbyterian Church: The Question of their Union Discussed* (Inverness, 1918). A response to Mackay was penned by Neil Cameron of St Jude's, Glasgow and Alexander Mackay, Oban under the pen name – Lovers of Truth, *A Reply to Rev. J. R. Mackay's Pamphlet on Union with the Free Church* (Glasgow, 1918). In the Free Church, Mackay was appointed in 1919 as Professor of New Testament Exegesis in its College in Edinburgh, a position that he held until his resignation on health grounds in 1935. For biographical details, see James L. Macleod, 'John Robertson Mackay' in Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993), p. 520; *Free Church Monthly Record*, August 1939, pp. 209–211. This is an obituary of Mackay written by Principal John Macleod which is followed by memories of some of his students. For Mackay's contribution to the College, see Donald Macleod, 'The Free Church College, 1900–1970' in David F. Wright and Gary D. Babcock (eds.), *Diversity to Disruption* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1996), pp. 226–228.

cousin of his wife's father. After training at Moray House Training College in Edinburgh, he became a schoolteacher first in Portree, then at Braes, and finally in Raasay in 1871. He was clearly a very capable teacher with a concern for his pupils: one of them has recorded that he gave him a half-penny for learning and reciting Psalm 119.¹³⁰ Macfarlane became a Free Church elder when Angus Galbraith was the minister in Raasay. In the first Presbytery meetings following the formation of the Free Presbyterian Church, the Raasay schoolmaster was the clerk of the Presbytery. The minutes of the historic meeting are in his handwriting.¹³¹

The role of the Skye and Raasay elders in the formation of the Free Presbyterian Church

The early Free Presbyterian movement was very largely comprised of God-fearing people in the Scottish Highlands who were committed to the defence of the Bible, Calvinism, and the Westminster Confession in the face of what they regarded as ruinous theological declension. They were convinced that separation from the Free Church was a necessity if the Declaratory Act was not rescinded at the 1893 General Assembly. The 'Men' of Skye and Raasay were to play a significant part in the movement that led to the setting up of a new Church. Before the formation of the Free Presbyterian Church in July 1893, the Skye and Raasay Free Church elders organised three crucial meetings that were major contributory factors to its formation.

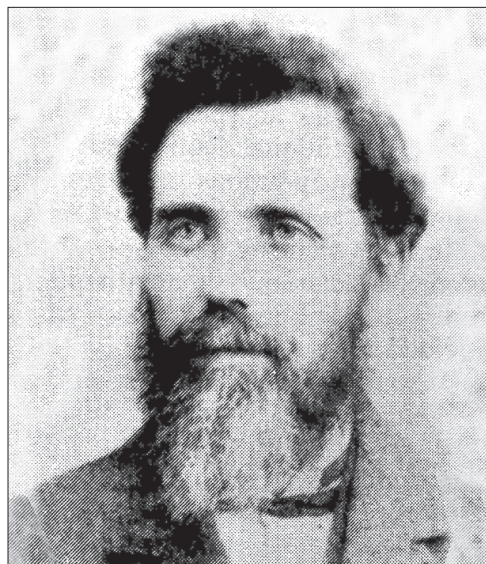
The first of these took place after ministerial opposition to the Declaratory Act had collapsed at a conference in Inverness on 28th February 1893. It was a private evening meeting held on Monday 20th March in the Portree Hotel in Skye to 'consider what steps it would be advisable to take in the prevention of the mischievous errors which have arisen in the church.' The chairman was Skye elder, Neil Mackinnon.¹³² Reflecting on

¹³⁰ Rebecca S. Mackay, *Every Nook and Cranny: Place names in Raasay and Rona, Part 3* (Raasay Heritage Trust, 2015), p. 7.

¹³¹ For biographical details of Alexander Macfarlane, see *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 36 (December 1931), pp. 340-343; also information in the life of his son by John Tallach, *I Shall Arise: The Life and Ministry of Donald A. Macfarlane* (Aberdeen, 1984), pp. 7-10.

¹³² Neil Mackinnon was, according to the local historian Charles Macleod, 'a native of Braes (Isle of Skye), and had a prosperous merchant's business in Portree. Possessed of a cool, fearless disposition he could handle the most perplexing situations without a trace of excitement. This made him a formidable opponent in public debate.' See Charles Macleod, 'Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland: Portree Congregation 1893-1960', unpublished paper in the author's possession, 2000, p. 2. Mackinnon was an outstanding Free Presbyterian elder. See his obituary by Ewen Macqueen in *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 25 (March 1921), pp. 329-335.

the collapse of ministerial opposition, Mackinnon pressed on those present the necessity of standing firm for the principles on which the Church was founded originally; he went on to assert, 'the Constitutional ministers were evidently afraid to leave their manses and lead the people out of the (Free) Church which has so manifestly backslided from the truth.' He added, 'They were greatly to be blamed for the way they acted at the Inverness Conference in not allowing elders who had come from distant parts to take part in the proceedings. Unless the Declaratory Act is thrown out at next Assembly, they are determined to do what the elders in Skye did when they left the Church before the Disruption.' The elders and adherents at the meeting unanimously adopted two resolutions: first, 'To separate themselves from the church unless the Declaratory Act is abolished at the next General Assembly'; and secondly, 'That a conference of laymen be held in Inverness as soon as possible to take matters into their consideration.'¹³³



Neil Mackinnon, a leading Skye elder.

The second meeting, again organised by the Skye elders, took place, not at Inverness as originally envisaged, but at Achnasheen. A notice was placed in the *Northern Chronicle* of 17th May 1893 by three Skye elders. The notice read, 'Meeting of Free Church elders and laymen. In accordance with the finding of our previous meeting at Portree, we the undersigned, desire to meet at Achnasheen on Tuesday the 23rd May at 12 noon with Free Church elders and laymen opposed to the Declaratory Act of 1892, and who are determined whatever betides, to vindicate the truth and maintain the distinctive principles of the Church of 1843. We invite students that hold out. Neil Mackinnon, elder; Duncan Campbell, elder; Peter Macleod, elder; Portree.'¹³⁴ On 23rd May the elders from the east met those from

¹³³ Reports of the meeting are in *Northern Chronicle*, 29th March 1893, p. 6; *Inverness Courier*, 31st March 1893, p. 6.

¹³⁴ For biographical accounts of the latter two eminent elders who joined with Mackinnon, see *Free Presbyterian Magazine*: for Peter Macleod, Vol. 15 (January 1911), pp. 345-353 and for Duncan Campbell, Vol. 30 (February 1926), pp. 386-389. The former is an outstanding biographical sketch written by Alexander Macrae and was reprinted as a booklet; the latter, by Neil Cameron, was reprinted in Cameron, *Ministers and Men of the Free Presbyterian Church*, pp. 80-83.

Skye and the west halfway along the railway line between Stromeferry and Inverness at Achnasheen in the schoolhouse. They gathered at the exact time that the Free Church General Assembly was meeting in Edinburgh. Neil Mackinnon, Portree, was again the chairman and in his opening remarks he said: 'They, in the Island of Skye, had been for a long time waiting under promises from their leaders that they were going to stand firm to the truth at some future time. Last year their leaders asked them to remain in the Church until they could have time to prepare for a disruption. There were those in the Church with whom they were bound in spirit, and of whom they anticipated that they would make a stand. They now realised that they were not fulfilling their promises.' He went on to say, 'that they in Skye had fully made up their minds to separate from the Free Church carrying with them the old doctrines and principles of the Free Church as held in 1843.'

In a rallying call to the meeting, Neil Cameron, then a ministerial student, greatly impressed the elders, stating, 'they must forsake all the connections and ties of this life to follow the truth of God.' He went on to consider the objection that to leave the Free Church would involve handing over the buildings to those who would propagate error. He answered this by saying: 'Should the law of this nation deprive those, who firmly stand to principles and truth, of the property, it would not go, as some declared, to disseminate erroneous doctrines, for what could the walls of the Established Church in the west teach to people who never darkened her doors, but left these walls for spiders to weave their webs in the corners [of] the roof? It would prove the same again especially in the Highlands of Scotland.' The meeting carried five resolutions, the last of which stated, 'This meeting of Free Church office-bearers and adherents resolve to separate themselves from the Church, to which they are called, under Claim of Right and Protest, unless the Declaratory Act is abolished by this Assembly.'¹³⁵

The third meeting was organised by the three Skye elders who had called for the conference at Achnasheen. It was held on 7th June in the church at Flashadder in Skye. The Flashadder district had been for some time the rallying ground of the disaffected laity in the neighbouring parishes.¹³⁶ The chairman was Peter Macleod and in his opening remarks he set the tone for

¹³⁵ For reports of the Achnasheen meeting, see *Northern Chronicle*, 24th May 1893, p. 4; *Inverness Courier*, 26th May 1893, p. 6. One of the speakers, John Macdonald, Gairloch, who later became a Free Presbyterian elder, said that if the Declaratory Act became law, 'I would prefer to worship upon the hillsides than to remain in the Free Church.'

¹³⁶ Though documentary evidence is lacking, it cannot be without significance that Donald Macfarlane was willing to accept a call in 1893 within the bounds of the Presbytery where Neil Mackinnon and his colleagues were some of the leading elders.

the meeting, 'We are determined, whatever betide us, to abide by the Word of God and separate ourselves from a party, who is, in our opinion dishonouring some of the most distinctive truths contained in Scripture.' He reminded his audience of what Donald Macfarlane had told them on the Monday of the Flashadder communion in 1892 and how his remarks on that occasion had now been fulfilled. The other main speakers were Neil Mackinnon and Duncan Campbell. Mackinnon, in a speech of 'great eloquence', was scathing in his condemnation of the Constitutional leadership which, he said, had deserted the people; he contrasted their lack of leadership with that of Luther who, when told to desist from going to Mainz, said, 'I will go to Mainz though the devils were as many as there are tiles on the house.' He concluded by outlining the plans of the Skye elders; they would collect the sustentation fund as usual but not send it to Edinburgh. It would be used for the preaching of the Gospel by the party to whom they belonged. Duncan Campbell, in what the *Northern Chronicle* calls 'a vigorous speech', further explained their plans: 'When the movement will have developed a little further, we are proposing getting one of the students who adhere to Mr. Macfarlane's testimony to preach to us, and our sustentation and other contributions which we may get will go for the upkeep of the party we belong to. We must stand firm in the faith which has been delivered to us, and God who is as mighty to save by a few or by many, will crown our efforts with success.'¹³⁷

The next major event, which took place just two days after the meeting in Flashadder, was the Raasay Free Church communion season. It was Donald Macfarlane's first communion since his translation in April. A vast congregation was present – the largest ever seen in the memory of the oldest islander. 'Not only did the whole population of the island turn out, but they were considerably augmented by sympathising friends from Skye and the mainland.' Those assisting Macfarlane were William Fraser, the minister of Sleat, and, to quote a press report, 'Mr. Neil Cameron, divinity student, Glasgow, whose ministrations were very much appreciated by the whole body of the people.'¹³⁸

At the close of the Monday service, in the open air, Macfarlane made a statement explaining the position he had taken with respect to the Declaratory Act at the General Assembly just over a fortnight earlier. He said, 'they were leaving the Free Church – the so-called

¹³⁷ *Northern Chronicle*, 14th June 1893, p. 6.

¹³⁸ Neil Cameron, 'Free Presbyterian Church Newspaper Cuttings', p. 5. This is from a small collection of newspaper cuttings gathered by Cameron, a copy of which is in the possession of the author.

Free Church – but that they were taking their stand on the principles of 1843.¹³⁹ He then went on to describe, in detail, the declension after declension of the Free Church, especially in connection with the attempt at union with the United Presbyterians, the introduction of uninspired hymns, instrumental music, and now the greatest declension of all, the addition of a Declaratory Act to the standards of the Church. After he had finished, he asked the people to indicate by standing if they agreed with his action in adhering ‘to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God and the Confession of Faith in all its doctrines as hitherto held by the Free Church.’ A newspaper report details the response: ‘The whole body of the people, men, women and children, numbering 2,000, responded to this appeal with a spontaneity that was amazing. The sight was one which those present will never forget. The vast congregation indicated by look and gesture, yea – some of them were moved to tears, as they expressed their approval of their minister’s action.’¹⁴⁰ Cameron regarded Macfarlane’s discourse to this large gathering at Raasay as one of the ablest lectures he ever heard.¹⁴¹ The Free Presbyterian Church was formed a month later in Raasay which resulted in the new movement being derogatorily spoken of in some circles as the ‘Raasayites’.¹⁴²

As the Free Presbyterian movement extended, the call on Macfarlane’s services increased to such an extent that he was seldom in his own congregation. The Raasay people, however, did not complain – they renounced their own claims and rights for the general good of the cause. In his absence, the congregation was supplied by the faithful band of six elders, Alexander Macfarlane; Alexander MacIennan, the Rona missionary; Charles Macleod; John Gillies; Donald Gillies; and Donald McIntosh.

Refusal of sites in Raasay for a Free Presbyterian church and manse

The five years from June 1894 until October 1899 were difficult for both Donald Macfarlane and the congregation due to the intransigence of Evelyn Wood,

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 5

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 5; Beaton, *Memoir, Diary and Remains of the Rev. Donald Macfarlane*, pp. 28-29. Isabella Murchison, a woman of eminent piety who was present at this historic Raasay communion, was asked what she thought of the position taken up by Mr. Macfarlane’s congregation. ‘I think,’ she said, ‘that they have done what was right, and what was their duty. If I were a man, I would be away to the hills to cut divots in order to build a house for Mr. Macfarlane.’ She said this, realising he would be evicted by the Free Church from his manse. See *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 15 (September 1910), p. 199.

¹⁴¹ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 31 (February 1927), p. 365.

¹⁴² Cameron, ‘Free Presbyterian Church Newspaper Cuttings’, p. 5.

the owner of the island following her husband's death. Initially, Evelyn Wood refused to grant a site for either a church or a manse. The Skye Presbytery began proceedings against Macfarlane in August 1893 to remove him from



Evelyn Wood, proprietor of Raasay and Rona in 1893, taken at a house party at Raasay House after her husband's death. Next to her is one of the guests.

both church and manse. He was evicted by an order of the Civil Court from both church and manse at the end of May 1894. Accordingly, for the first year after the separation, the Raasay congregation still worshipped in the Free Church building and Macfarlane continued to live in the Free Church manse.¹⁴³ For the next five years from June 1894 Macfarlane lived in a rented house in Broadford on Skye and crossed to Raasay by boat every weekend and stayed until Monday morning in the house of the schoolmaster and Free Presbyterian elder, Alexander Macfarlane.¹⁴⁴ Donald Macfarlane has an entry in his diary referring to those times. He writes:

We were applying to Mrs. Wood all the time for sites to build a church and manse, but for five years she blankly refused unless we took sites in the north end of the island, where we did not need a church. At last a petition, signed by all the people, was sent to her, and then she granted sites at Holoman, but on certain conditions, which would seem to make it impossible for the poor

people to comply with. One of these conditions was that they would give up claiming any right to the meeting house at Torran, on the north end, which they themselves built, with some help from the late Mr Wood, who, it

¹⁴³ MS letter from Donald Macfarlane to James S. Sinclair dated 30th November 1904 (copy in the author's possession). This clarifies the following reference in the minutes of the Presbytery on 7th June 1894, 'The Presbytery were reminded that Rev. D. Macfarlane has also been deprived, along with his congregation at Raasay, of church and manse, and the Presbytery take this opportunity of recommending this case also very strongly to the sympathy of liberal Christian friends everywhere.' MS 'Minutes of the Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, June 1893 to June 1896' (cited afterwards as 'MS FP Presbytery Minutes') p. 47.

¹⁴⁴ Donald Macfarlane expressed his appreciation to the schoolmaster and his wife for their kindness to him over such a protracted period both in his obituary of Mrs Alexander Macfarlane in *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 15 (March 1911), pp. 436-437 and in his Diary cited in Beaton, *Memoir, Diary and Remains of the Rev. Donald Macfarlane*, p. 37.

was said, handed over the building to them as their own property. Another condition was that they would require to have all the money necessary to meet the cost of building before they would be allowed to start, and that the church would require to be built first [before the manse]. This seemed to some to put an end to their hope of ever having church or manse though they got sites. Indeed, some who were not favourable to us said: 'There is no harm in giving them sites on these terms; they shall never be able to build.' But they did not know the mind of Him who says, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts.' We got all the money required, and both edifices were completed towards the end of August 1899. We came to live in the manse in November following, and found ourselves supplied with houses better than those out of which we were evicted. We praised the Lord for His goodness to us, and saw that none ever loses, even in temporal things, by following the path of duty. Not only the Lord made up the loss of houses, but the salary of the ministers was as good as when they were in the Church they left.¹⁴⁵

In the extant Free Presbyterian historical literature, along with the Minutes of the Presbytery (when Presbytery meetings were held in Raasay, before there were sufficient Presbyteries to form a Synod) and in obituaries of the men and women who attended public worship, there is no mention of where the congregation met in Raasay after June 1894 or where the Presbytery met when it held meetings in Raasay in July 1893. The writer assumed that both would have met in the public school at which Alexander Macfarlane taught. After consulting several people with local knowledge, I was informed that whilst it was quite probable the Presbytery would have met in the Schoolhouse, it was far too small to house the Raasay congregation.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Donald Macfarlane's Diary cited in, Beaton, *Memoir, Diary and Remains of the Rev. Donald Macfarlane*, p. 37. A further six requirements were set down by Evelyn Wood in addition to the financial requirement of meeting the full cost of both church and manse before beginning to build. They were as follows, '1. A wall be erected around the land not less than four feet high. 2. The church be erected first. 3. The buildings to be of stone and lime and slated. 4. No workshop, Manufactory, Distillery, Brewery, or any other work which might be considered objectionable, be erected. 5. Not to vend or allow to be vended any beer, wine or spirit liquors on the land without her permission. 6. Provided, also, that any claim to ownership of the Mission House at Torran be abandoned.' These requirements are detailed by Basil Reckitt in the chapter 'Holman' in *Songs, poems, stories and prose emanating from the rich treasure of history and traditions of Raasay, Fladda and Eilean Tighe* (Raasay Heritage Trust, 2001), p. 53. Reckitt was the owner of Holman House (the old Free Presbyterian Manse) when the book was published. The Deed of Gift of the land was dated 8th December 1898; it thus appears that the church and manse from design to final construction took less than ten months.

¹⁴⁶ Following the recent discovery of the MS letter from Donald Macfarlane to James S. Sinclair, dated 30th November 1904, in which Macfarlane states they retained the Free Church buildings in Raasay until May 1894, it seems plain the first Presbytery meetings of the Free Presbyterian Church in July 1893 met either in the Raasay Free Church or in the



Raasay Free Church and manse.



The first Raasay Free Presbyterian church and manse.

(Photograph taken by Norrie Gillies in Norma Macleod, *Raasay the Island and its People*)

A Free Presbyterian lady who grew up in Raasay, whose family had a fund of local knowledge, informed me that the congregation met in the open air from June 1894 until the church was opened at Holoman on 27th October 1899.¹⁴⁷ When the writer asked whether this was just at communion seasons

Free Church manse. Norman MacLean, the Church of Scotland minister at St Cuthbert's Edinburgh from 1915–1937, was the Established Church minister at Waternish in Skye from 1892–1897 and in the second volume of his three-volume autobiography he asserts that Macfarlane 'preached to his flock in the school'. Norman MacLean, *Set Free* (London, 1949), p. 205. From local knowledge supplied to the author the accuracy of this must be questioned.

¹⁴⁷ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 4 (February 1900), p. 396. Alexander Macrae, who had been inducted to the Portree congregation the previous day, preached at the opening of the church building. It was said to have seating for 210 but was capable of

or all the year round, he was informed that it was all the year round. Her reply regarding the location on the outdoor gatherings was as follows: ‘They worshipped below where the FP manse is now. The minister was where the School Park houses are now, preaching from a wooden box or portable pulpit (it was called the minister’s box). I don’t know what the communion tables were constructed from. They were in the flat area where the road passes the houses. The congregation sat on the slope which is now covered with gorse.’¹⁴⁸

Though at first it seems rather surprising that this stirring information of the Raasay congregation meeting in the open-air for over five years has not been detailed previously, it is less so when one appreciates the determination of both Macfarlane and the Raasay and Skye elders and their role in the formation of the new denomination. It does, however, reveal the commitment of the Raasay office-bearers and congregation to the witness of the Free Presbyterian Church. After two years’ meeting outside, and Macfarlane travelling from Broadford each week, the congregation issued a circular that was reprinted in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* in which the congregation seem to dismiss their own inconvenience and concentrate on that of their sixty-two-year-old minister. The circular begins: ‘This congregation, comprising some five-sixths of the entire population of Raasay and Rona, although about the first to have disrupted in 1893, have hitherto failed in securing a suitable site for either church or manse. This hardship has been especially felt in the matter of a manse, inasmuch as it has entailed upon the pastor, Rev. D. Macfarlane, for the last two years, the necessity of renting, at his own expense, a house at Broadford, Isle of Skye, and only with much additional expense and fatigue has he been able during that time to supply services at Raasay.’¹⁴⁹

holding 250. On Macrae’s induction at Portree, see *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 4 (December 1899), p. 319.

¹⁴⁸ Email to the writer, 19th April 2023, from Murdo MacLean forwarding information he had received from Julia Allan who is the daughter of Malcolm Macleod of Arnish. When the writer passed on this information to James R. Tallach, the Free Presbyterian minister of Stornoway, who had previously been the Free Presbyterian minister of Raasay from 1983 to 2009, he recalled being told that after the new Raasay church building was opened in July 1929, if at communions the congregation was too large to be contained in the building, the junior minister would conduct worship to the overflow at the spot identified by Mrs Allan (telephone conversation with the writer 21st April 2023).

¹⁴⁹ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 1 (June 1896), p. 78. Macfarlane was the Raasay minister from 1893 until 1903 when he accepted a call to the Dingwall congregation where he ministered until his death in 1926, at the age of ninety-two.



A recent photograph of the place where the Raasay congregation met between 1894 and 1899. The roof of the current Free Presbyterian Church, opened in 1929, can be seen at the top of the photograph.

Glasgow and West Coast Mission and the Free Presbyterian Missionaries

The Rona missionary, Alexander MacLennan, who took a leading part in this movement to preserve a firm testimony to Westminster Calvinism, was one of the group of elders and adherents which met at Achnasheen on 23rd May 1893 at the same time as the Free Church General Assembly was meeting in Edinburgh. As we have noted, five resolutions were carried, the last of which detailed their ‘resolve to separate themselves from the Church...unless the Declaratory Act is abolished by this Assembly.’¹⁵⁰ In the press reports of the meeting, the first name mentioned after that of Neil Mackinnon, the chairman of the meeting, was that of Alexander MacLennan.¹⁵¹

The first time that Neil Cameron met the Rona missionary was at the communion held in Raasay in June of 1893. At that communion, an assisting minister tried to persuade MacLennan not to follow his minister in separating from the Free Church. Cameron records MacLennan’s reply. He asked the minister, ‘If cholera were to come to the island, and that all who took it died of it, and that the people were fleeing out of it, would he himself consider him a wise man should he take his advice to remain in the island in such circumstances?’ The minister answered that he would

¹⁵⁰ *Northern Chronicle*, 24th May 1893, p. 5.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5; *Inverness Courier*, 26th May 1893, p. 6.

not consider him wise should he take his advice in such a case. ‘Well,’ said Alexander, ‘I tell you that I consider this Declaratory Act more dangerous to the souls of men, than cholera would be to their bodies.’ Cameron then adds, ‘This put an end to the conversation.’¹⁵²

MacLennan’s stand for Westminster Calvinism and the witness of the Free Presbyterian Church cost him his position as a missionary with the Glasgow and West Coast Mission. The *Northern Chronicle*, reporting on ‘The Secession Movement’ in June 1894, carried the following information: ‘It appears that Mr. MacLennan, missionary at Rona, and Mr. Mackenzie, missionary at Gairloch have both received notice from the West Coast Mission that their services are to be dispensed with. Such proceedings on the part of this Mission is, adds a correspondent, causing great surprise, as it professes to be neutral; but it is believed that those persecuting these men for leaving the Free Church have demanded their dismissal. One of the complaints against Mr. MacLennan, Rona, is that he is making a division in the congregation: but there is only one solitary person in Rona who has not joined Mr. Macfarlane, and he is not a native.’¹⁵³

The accuracy of this is reflected in a minute of 7th June 1894 of the Free Church Presbytery of Scotland.¹⁵⁴ The minute reads as follows: ‘Mr. Alexander MacLennan, Rona, and Mr. John Mackenzie, Gairloch, who had for some time been employed by the West Coast Mission, and who on account of their joining this Presbytery have got notice that their services will not be asked by the West Coast Mission on the expiry of three months, are received as missionaries by this Presbytery, their salaries to commence from the date at which their services to the West Coast Mission cease. Mr. John MacDonald, Gairloch, was appointed missionary at Stein, Skye.’¹⁵⁵ Four

¹⁵² *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 25 (January 1921), p. 268.

¹⁵³ *Northern Chronicle*, 13th June 1894, p. 7.

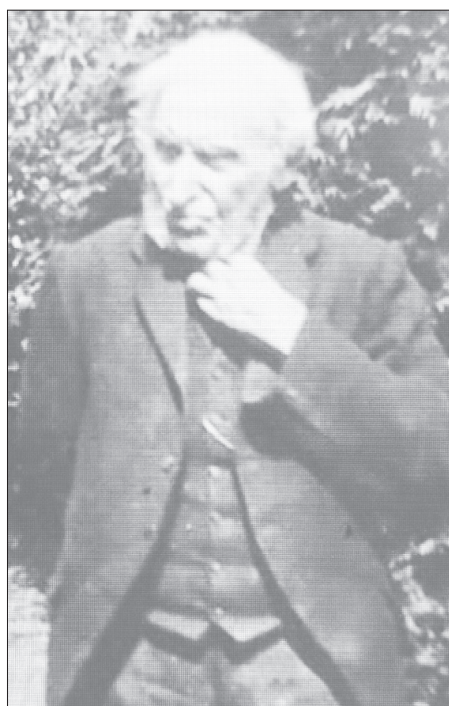
¹⁵⁴ This was the original name adopted by the Presbytery. The name of the Presbytery was changed on 31st August 1894 at a meeting at Lochcarron when John R. MacKay, the Presbytery Clerk reported that ‘no objection had been sent in to the name, “The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland”; that name being the name generally approved of at the Conference held in Inverness on the 3rd day of July, 1894, with this caveat that the Presbytery should not proceed finally to fix the name until opportunity had been given to any within the bounds of our Church to state disapproval if they wished to do so, by intimating the same to the Clerk of Presbytery. In these circumstances, [they] felt justified in coming to the conclusion that this is the name whereby the Church should henceforth be known, and in resolving as they hereby resolve that this Church shall in future be called “The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.” And they resolve at the same time that the Presbytery shall be called the Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.’ MS FP Presbytery Minutes, pp. 55-56.

¹⁵⁵ MS FP Presbytery Minutes, 7th June 1894, p. 48.

months later, the Presbytery Clerk was 'asked to make enquiries as to the salaries and circumstances of Messrs. William MacKenzie, Applecross, John Mackenzie, Gairloch, Alexander MacLennan, Rona, and Ewen Mackenzie, Harris.'¹⁵⁶ Then in December 'the Treasurer was advised to pay at once Mr. Alex MacLennan, Rona, £13/6/8 for four months.'¹⁵⁷

After a quarter of a century of service in the Free Presbyterian Church, both Neil Mackinnon, the Skye elder, and MacLennan died within seven weeks of each other in 1920. In Neil Cameron's obituary of MacLennan in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, he refers to both of them in these terms, 'The Free Presbyterian Church lost a goodly number of her outstanding godly men this year. This has been true both of the North and South. We deeply feel our loss, and mourn over it. At the same time, we would desire to act like David, when he said: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." In the North two, who were conspicuous among the men, were removed to their everlasting rest, viz., Mr. Neil MacKinnon, Portree, and Mr. Alexander MacLennan, Rona. These two men were strong pillars to our Church in Skye, and throughout the length and breadth of the land. They were powerful in word and deed before the Lord and all the people. They were true men, in whom the utmost confidence could be placed when a day of trial came. This continued to be their character from first to last.'¹⁵⁸

Neil Cameron had a high regard for MacLennan as a missionary; he says of him: 'He was endowed with mental ability of a high order. There are few men who could use language to the same effect that he was capable of. His expressions were always admirably adapted to convey to others the exact meaning of his thoughts, so that none could misunderstand what he meant. He made good use of illustrations in his public addresses,



John Macdonald, Gairloch.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 30th October 1894, p. 65.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 73. At a Presbytery meeting at Portree on 12th February 1895 it was resolved that 'for the present the highest salary of our lay missionaries should not exceed £40 per annum'. Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁵⁸ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 25 (January 1921), p. 268.

whereby he fixed, what he meant an audience to grasp, indelibly on their memories.¹⁵⁹ An abiding memory of his son, Alexander, was his admonition to be always ready for the coming of the Lord either at death or the Judgment Day. The son wrote in his diary on 26th April 1969 these words, ‘I was up at John’s (his brother) this evening. We read Luke 20 and 21 which are solemn indeed, ending with the admonition to be always ready for the coming of the Lord at death and the Judgment Day. Indeed, the above were the last words my father read before I left home prior to the outbreak of World War One. He seemed to have an intimation that the judgments were coming. A man told me that father preached a solemn sermon in Rona from Jeremiah, in which he took the portion “Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field” before the Great War of 1914 broke out. The last words I heard him read were: “What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.” Mark 13:37.’¹⁶⁰

The Free Church on Raasay after 1893

The June 1896 edition of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* carried a letter from the Moderator and Clerk of the Presbytery making an appeal for money to build a manse in Portree for Donald Macfarlane due to Evelyn Wood’s intransigence in granting a site for a church building and a manse on Raasay. The appeal begins with an indication of the relative strengths of the Free Presbyterian and Free Church on Raasay three years after the division of 1893. As quoted above, it states, ‘This congregation, comprising some five-sixths of the entire population of Raasay and Rona.’¹⁶¹ This assessment is confirmed by Charles Macleod when he asserts ‘most of the Raasay congregation and the entire Rona congregation separated from the Free Church.’¹⁶² William Ewing in *The Annals of the Free Church* details the strength of the congregation in 1855 as 215 and its size at 1900 as 20.¹⁶³ From these statistics it is clear that the Free Church congregation was severely depleted; none the less within two years they had called John Macdonald (1860–1947) to be their minister. Born in Applecross, Macdonald studied at the University of Glasgow and like Macfarlane went

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., Vol. 25 (January 1921), p. 269.

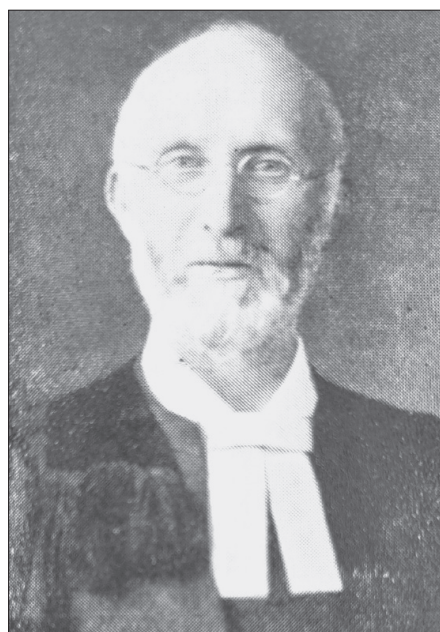
¹⁶⁰ Cited in the introductory biographical sketch of Alexander MacLennan (1889–1972) by Norman Campbell in Campbell and Dickie, *He Led Me: Autobiography, diaries and meditations of Alex MacLennan*, p. 16.

¹⁶¹ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 1 (June 1896), p. 78.

¹⁶² Macleod, *South Rona: The Island and its People*, p. 20.

¹⁶³ Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 233.

on to complete his ministerial training at the Free Church College in Glasgow. He was ordained and inducted to the Acharacle congregation, Ardnamurchan, in 1891 and was translated to Raasay in 1895. Macdonald accepted the call to Raasay even though he also had received a call to Glenmoriston, Inverness-shire. The new Free Church minister of Raasay was one of the twenty-seven ministers who formed the minority who stood outside of the 1900 union of the Free Church with the United Presbyterian Church and formed the 1900 Free Church. He was translated to Rosskeen in 1908 where he remained until 1946; he died on 22nd April 1947. He was Moderator of the Free Church General Assembly in 1915.



John Macdonald, Free Church minister of Raasay, 1895–1908

The commitment of the Raasay people at the turn of the century to the old paths of the Reformed Faith and of historic Scottish Presbyterianism is seen in that neither the Church of Scotland nor the United Free Church had a presence or a congregation in either Raasay or Rona. The islands at the end of the nineteenth century, if the analysis of the Free Presbyterian Presbytery is correct, were eighty-three percent Free Presbyterian and seventeen percent Free Church.

Appendix

Education on Rona

Prior to the work of the three Rona missionaries, the schoolteacher played a significant role in Presbyterianism on the island. It is unclear whether the Gaelic Society teachers that came to Rona in the early part of the nineteenth century, besides teaching the people to read the Bible, also engaged in preaching to them. The Society had been set up in 1811 and one of the stipulations of the organisation was that ‘the teachers to be employed by the Society shall neither be Preachers nor Public Exhorters, stated or occasional, of any denomination whatever.’ However, as Steven Taylor points out, ‘this was a rule that was to be bent, broken and caused great problems from the very outset.’¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Taylor, *The Skye Revivals*, p. 38.

Regular basic schooling does not appear to have started on Rona until the middle of the nineteenth century. Before that time there had been a number of temporary Gaelic schools. Some of these schools lasted for a few years before being discontinued when the teacher moved elsewhere. The main purpose of the schools was to teach the people to read the Gaelic Bible. There were often long intervals when no teachers were available. The establishment of a school in Rona was first suggested to the Gaelic Schools Society by James MacLeod, the laird of Raasay, as early as 1813. It was intended that this school should open in November 1815.¹⁶⁵ The first schoolmaster designated for Rona was Angus Macdonald. However, instead of going to Rona he was directed to Raasay. He did not come to Rona until 1818, when he had thirty-eight pupils ranging in age from five to thirty-two.¹⁶⁶ This school closed in 1821. The Church of Scotland minister in Portree, Coll MacDonald, wrote to the Gaelic Schools Society seeking to prevent this, highlighting the extent of the population of Rona and their need of a school. The Rona people themselves petitioned the Society; it was to no effect; the school moved to Castle on Raasay.¹⁶⁷

Possibly due to the Gaelic Schools Society teacher leaving, an SSPCK teacher, N. Gillies, was placed on Rona in 1823, but it is not known for how long.¹⁶⁸ In 1826, five years after Macdonald left, the Gaelic Schools Society sent another teacher to Rona, Murdoch MacMillan. His stay was to be very short; the following year he moved to Eyre in Raasay.¹⁶⁹ The next school in Rona was taught by John MacDougall; this school lasted four years from 1832 to 1836. When the school opened in November 1832, fifty-five of the island's population of one hundred and fourteen attended, of whom forty were able to read the Bible within two years.¹⁷⁰ In April 1843, indicative of the Rona people's desire for education and to be able to read the Bible, they again petitioned the Society for a teacher, and a school opened later in the year taught by John MacLean; again the school was short-lived and lasted just two years until 1845.

John MacLeod, a teacher from Assynt, moved to Dry Harbour sometime between 1848 and 1851. Prior to that, he had been in Malacleit,

¹⁶⁵ *The Third Annual Report of the Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools* (Edinburgh, 1814), p. 32. These reports are cited hereafter as GSS (Number of Report) (Year), page.

¹⁶⁶ GSS, 8th Report (1818), p. 46.

¹⁶⁷ The letter and petition are printed in GSS, 11th Report (1821), pp. 36-38, cited in Sharpe, *Raasay 1978*, p. 237.

¹⁶⁸ Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, pp. 83-84.

¹⁶⁹ GSS, 16th Report (1826), p. 53, cited in Sharpe, *Raasay 1978*, p. 237.

¹⁷⁰ GSS, 24th Report (1834), pp. 30-31, cited in Sharpe, *Raasay 1978*, p. 237.

North Uist. Around 1855 he moved to Torran, on Raasay. Shortly after MacLeod left, James Urquhart, also from Assynt, came to Dry Harbour and became the first Rona missionary connected with the Glasgow and West Coast Mission in 1861. He remained there until his death in 1874.¹⁷¹ The accuracy of the words of John Munro, the Rona missionary who succeeded Urquhart, to the Napier Commission is clearly seen from this account regarding education on the island; he asserted, 'There was not a regular school at Rona; there was a schoolmaster coming now and again.'¹⁷²

In 1866 the government established the Argyll Commission, under the Whig grandee, George Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, to look into the schooling system in Scotland. The Commission found that of the 500,000 children in need of education, 200,000 were receiving it under adequate conditions, 200,000 in schools without any inspection, and 90,000 were receiving no education at all. Argyll's findings resulted in the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 which made primary education universal and mandatory in Scotland. It mandated the exclusive use of English as the medium of education in Scotland, in effect banning Gaelic as a medium of education. Under the Act, approximately a thousand regional school boards were established to set up schools where none had existed. All children aged from 5 to 13 years were to attend.

The effect of this on Rona was that on 1st December 1878, the new Public School opened, in a building provided by Edward Herbert Wood, the Raasay proprietor, with Miss Elizabeth Small Muir from Edinburgh as the teacher. She had no Gaelic and we may assume the children had little English, but despite this handicap, she continued for nine years. Interpretation must have been a strain for both teacher and pupils, and, if the teacher did not master the Gaelic language, at least her pupils learned English. Her neighbour, John Munro the missionary, had spent many years in Glasgow and would have been a fluent English speaker, so he may have helped her with the language problem. Her courage and tenacity were remarkable, but as Charles Macleod observes, 'we cannot admire the judgment of those who sent her there in such circumstances. Still, it does not appear that she was unhappy there.'¹⁷³ Though the school was welcomed, and whilst it was appreciated the medium of instruction

¹⁷¹ Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and Its People*, p. 109. The wives of both John MacLeod and James Urquhart were from Lochbroom. See Macleod, *South Rona: The Island and its People*, p. 72.

¹⁷² *Napier Commission Evidence*, Vol. 1, p. 463 at para 8147.

¹⁷³ Macleod, *South Rona: The Island and its People*, p. 17.

would be English, the Rona people regarded it as quite unsatisfactory that the teacher was not able to speak to the children in Gaelic. Accordingly, when the Dry Harbour crofter-fisherman, Roderick Mackay, testified to the Napier Commission in 1883 he was asked if the school at Dry Harbour was convenient for all the children of the island. He responded by saying that it was too far away from those who were on the south end of the island; they had to travel two miles and there was no road. He added, that though they attended regularly, they were unable to do so in bad weather. He was then asked, 'Have you had any schoolmaster who could speak Gaelic since the new Act came into operation?', to which he replied 'No.' He was then asked, 'Do you consider that any disadvantage to the children?' to which he replied, 'Yes, a schoolmaster who could speak Gaelic would be able to bring on the children the better.'¹⁷⁴ The teachers' ignorance of Gaelic in teaching English was the subject of a general comment in the Napier Commission's Report.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ *Napier Commission Evidence*, Vol. 1, pp. 456-457 at paras 8035-8036.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, pp. 77-81.