

Còrnaig Bheag
Cornraigbeg

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The Reverend Archibald Farquharson

1. The Rev. Archibald Farquharson is regarded by many to have been the most influential minister to function in Tìree during the last two hundred years. His father, John, had moved from Braemar to Strathardle, Perthshire and had one daughter and nine sons. Archibald, born in 1801, became a minister in the Independent Church and came to Tìree in 1832 accompanied by his wife **Mary** (nee MacDonald) and his two daughters, **Eliza** and **Belle**. The journey from Oban in a smack proved to be so rough that Mary Farquharson became seriously ill and died some days after their arrival. To help out in this very sad situation, Mary's sister Christian came to Tìree to act as housekeeper to her brother-in-law and nieces.

The Rev. A. Farquharson first preached in the ancient ruined church known as Taigh an t-Searmoin just south of an Airigh, Druimbhuidhe, and having organised the building of the Independent Church in Cornaigmore in the 1830s (now derelict by the main road) he held his services there. Much of the material for the building of this church was taken from Taigh an t-Searmoin. He was also responsible for the building of the Independent Church in Ruaig.

When he first came to Tìree, the Rev. Farquharson lived in a house in the area of Ardbeg, but for most of his incumbency there he lived in the small house (recently renovated) on the shoreline close to Whitehouse. He also had tenancy of a small croft, almost certainly the croft known as 'Croit nam Brùnach.'

He was a piper and a bard and his poetry can be appreciated in the many hymns he composed and set to pipe tunes, many of which were supplied to him by the MacEachern family of Blacksmiths. Eight of these hymns appear in the *Leabhar Laoidh* (Gaelic Hymn Book) compiled and published by the Glasgow Highland Mission in 1899.

He was minister in Tìree for forty-six years and over that period because of his warm-hearted, strong personality, and his powerful, honest, relevant preaching, he gained the respect of the entire community.

When he died in 1878 his remains were to be laid to rest in Glen Lyon, Perthshire. However his last journey was beset by extreme weather. A severe snowstorm in Oban prevented further travel, and Archibald Farquharson was buried in the graveyard of the Old Parish Church there.

His daughter, Eliza, married the Rev. Charles White, Independent minister in Oban. Their son, the late Charles MacGregor White, now well-known as an artist, served his time as a carpenter. He visited many parts of the world by signing on a ship with a Tìree captain, persuading him to pay him off, perhaps in New York, spent some months there and then searching the docks until he found another ship with a Tìree captain willing to sign him on for another trip until the next exotic port. In this way he travelled round the world for some years before studying art in Antwerp and Paris.

Christian MacDonald, sister-in-law of the Rev. Archibald Farquharson, married **Charles MacLean** (*Tearlach Dhòmhnail 'ic Thearlaich*) a wood turner of Druim Bhuidhe, Cornaigmore, and had three children – **Donald** (*Dòmhnall an Tuairneir*) who became the tenant of Whitehouse in 1878, **Archibald** (*Eardsaidh' tuairneir*) and **Mary**.

Charles' brother **Archibald** was for some time the miller in Cornaigmore; his brother **Hugh's** daughter married **Donald MacLean** (*Dòmhnall 'ic Eoghain*) who became tenant of Ardbeg in 1878: **Neil** (*Niall Mòr*) was a boatbuilder who worked in the Ardbeg area.

His sister married **Peter Lamont** who had a croft in upper Cornaigbeg. This couple suffered a tragedy when their young daughter was drowned in their well. They, along with hundreds of others, left Tìree in 1855 and emigrated to Bruce County, Ontario. The emigrant ship, anchored off Hynish Pier took on board her many passengers and sailed directly to Canada. The late Eardsaidh Tuairneir (1850-1942) as a boy of five remembered walking to Hynish with the other children of the neighbourhood to bid the emigrants farewell and to view the huge ship.

The croft vacated by Peter Lamont and his family in 1855 is still known as 'Croit Phàraig' (Peter's Croft). It lies on the east side of the road opposite Lachlan Campbell's house and the remains of the old dwelling house can be seen to this day.

In 1878 a number of crofters were ruthlessly thrown off their land and the crofts amalgamated into larger units. At this time Dòmhnall an Tuairneir acquired the tenancy of Whitehouse Farm. Another Donald Maclean, *Dòmhnall 'ic Eoghan*, acquired Ardbeg and Malcolm MacDougall *Calum Dùghallach* moved from Heanish into Cornaigbeg Croft No. 8.

Donald MacLean (*Dòmhnall an Tuairneir*) married **Margaret Anne Farquharson** whose father, Tom, brother of the Rev. Archibald Farquharson, farmed in Ceann na Glinne, Perthshire. This couple raised a large family - Donald, Charles, Tom, Ailig, Archibald, Eliza, Margaret and Chrissie who as the last surviving member of the family died at Newmills in 1989 at the age of 100 years. Most, if not all, of these children were born in the Rev. Farquharson's old manse which was where the family lived when Dòmhnall an Tuairneir first acquired the tenancy of Whitehouse Farm.

Later they moved into the house known as 'Whitehouse' which had been built originally as a school, with the upper floor being the teacher's residence, access to which was an outside stone staircase on the north gable. It remained so until after the Scottish Education Act, 1872, when a County School was built in Cornaigmore and opened in 1876.

Whitehouse was rented out for some time to one who had the shooting rights to Tìree until it became the farmhouse for the MacLean family.

Iomaire Bhuntàta

The small cottage attached to the Old Manse (in an L-shape) was occupied until the turn of the century by Catherine MacKinnon who was born on the battlefield of the Waterloo. This lady, along with a number of others like Dugald MacLean and his daughter Anna who lived in a small cottage approximately 100 yards west-north-west of Whitehouse, was given the right to grow potatoes on Iomaire Bhuntàta (the potato field) on Whitehouse Farm in exchange for labour. This system of food production, by which crofters and farmers would allow people to grow potatoes on farmland in exchange for labour at spring and harvest time or in making straw ropes in the Autumn for tying down hay and corn stacks and roofs of thatched houses, was common in the nineteenth century.

Sale of Cattle

Dòmhnall an Tuairneir, as well as being a farmer was a cattle buyer, shipping the cattle he bought to Oban on smacks and then walking them along the old Drove road to the Falkirk market (Fèill na h-Eaglaise Brice) which was 'a hive of activity, a confusion of cattle-dealers, robbers, thieves, harlots and such like.' On one of his trips to Falkirk, Dòmhnall an Tuairneir lost his dog in the confusion of the market-place. Having searched unsuccessfully, he set off walking to Oban with his companions and

eventually sailed home to Tiree without his dog. However, a week later the missing dog jumped off a smack at Scarinish and made his way home to Cornaigbeg!

In those days, the fact that no cattle sales were held in Tiree or Oban enabled people like the Duke of Argyll's factor or Tom Barr - who had the economic power to buy hundreds of cattle - to have a stranglehold over crofters who perhaps would have no more than six cattle-beasts to sell. They had the island divided between them offering very low prices and not competing or buying in one another's 'territory'. The small-holders had no option but to accept the low prices offered by these buyers who could afford to charter smacks and schooners to take the cattle to the mainland, take them to trysts at Falkirk or Stirling and sell at great profit.

This situation did not improve until the beginning of this century when a cattlebuyer from Stirling by the name of John Trough arrived in Tiree offering fairer prices. The first man to sell to him was Donald MacLean (Dòmhnall 'ic Eoghain), Ardbeg. When Tom Barr arrived offering his usual pittance, he was told by Donald MacLean that unless he matched the prices being paid by John Trough he would not get the cattle. Barr with arrogant scorn said that nobody would pay such prices. In this he was mistaken. Luckily for the Tiree crofters, Trough had the financial clout to pay honest prices and never again were they at the mercy of the unscrupulous to such an extent.

Shortly after this, Cattle Sales began to be held in Oban and in Tiree itself, and the centuries old connection between the Highlands and Islands and the markets of Stirling and Falkirk faded into the past.

2. The MacEachern Family

In the late eighteenth century, a piping competition which began on a relatively small scale in Falkirk developed into the premier competition in Scotland and in 1783 the winner was a Neil MacLean from Dervaig in Mull. In 1810, the winner was this man's son **Alan - Ailean Dubh Danna** who also won the dancing competition. Alan's sister **Margaret** married **Archibald MacEachern**, a blacksmith who came from mid-Argyll but had worked in Mull and Coll, and this couple came to Tiree and settled in Creag Mhòr, Cornaigbeg. They were the great grandparents of Hugh MacEachern (Eoghan Ghilleasbuig Ghilleasbuig 'ic 'Illeasbuig), the last blacksmith to work in Cornaigbeg, and of Mrs. Janet Wilson (Seònaid Iain a' Ghobhainn) who lives there today.

Margaret and Archibald MacEachern's children were **Archibald, John, Flora, Catherine** and **Isobel**. Archibald stayed on in Cornaigbeg and worked as a blacksmith.

John emigrated to Australia where he had a large blacksmith's business.

Catherine married Charles MacNeil and their son, Archibald, had a smithy on the site of the Coalree, Kenovay before moving to Glasgow.

Flora emigrated to North America. An accomplished poet she is the composer of the beautiful love song 'Òganaich an òr-fhuilt bhuidhe' Na Bàird Thirisdeach pg. 236.

The oldest son, Archibald who stayed on in Cornaigbeg as blacksmith had the following children - **Archibald, John (Iain a' Ghobhainn), Alec, Annie, Peggy, Fileag, Flora** and **Bella**.

Archibald spent eleven years in Harris in the 20's and 30's as a missionary and blacksmith. Part of his work in Harris involved making spearheads for the harpoons used in the whaling trade and one of these can be seen in the Creag Mhòr to this day. He married Catriona MacLean, The Brae, Cornaigbeg, and their children were **Archibald 'Leaban', Hugh (Eoghan a' Ghobhainn)** and **Mary (Màiri Ghobhainn.)**

John (Iain a' Ghobhainn) moved to Glasgow. He married Mary MacLean (Màiri Eachainn) from Kenovay and they had two of a family - **Archibald (Eairdsidh Renfrew)** and **Janet (Seònaid Iain a' Ghobhainn)** who now lives in Creag Mhòr with her daughter, son-in-law and grand-daughter.

Alec died as a young man.

Flora married John Campbell (Iain 'ear Ruaidh) from Garraphàil, Cornaigmore.

Bella married Alexander MacLean (Alasdair Iain) also from Cornaigbeg, whose full patronymic is given in the next paragraph.

MacEachern Pipers

Many members of this family were fine pipers with the late 'Eardsaidh Renfrew' being the most recent;

Bella's son John (Iain Alasdair Iain 'ic Dhòmhnail 'ic Iain Òg 'ic Ailein 'ic Thearlaich 'ic Ailein Diurach) was an accomplished piper. His son Alec still lives in Scarinish.

Flora MacEachern's son, Hugh Campbell, a chemist who lived in Port Glasgow was a piper in the army during the First World War and among other tunes he composed the popular 'Hugh Alexander Low of Tìree' and 'The Smith of Cornaig'. His brother Archibald was a professional footballer who played for Norwich City.

Footnote

Ailean Dubh Damnsair from Dervaig spent some time in Tìree to where his sister had moved and taught piping and dancing. In 1842 while playing for the entertainment of the MacLean tacksman in Hynish he was heard playing the tunes 'Bratach Bàn' and 'The Blue Ribbon' by a young eleven year old John MacDonald of Balemartin. This lad went home inspired by the skill of the piper, took hold of a chanter and before the night was over was playing both tunes to perfection. Given that these pieces of music are complicated, this was no small feat. This same John MacDonald, later to be known as 'An Saighdear' joined the army and was eventually Pipe Major of the 72nd Regiment the Seaforth Highlanders.

3. The **MacCallum** family of blacksmiths also had a smithy in Cornaigbeg, the remains of which can still be seen in Hugh MacLeod's garden. The last of this family to work as a blacksmith was **James (Seumas Mòr)** who died in the 1940s. When Seumas Mòr was a teenager in the 1880's he, along with many others of his times was in the habit of calling on (a' dol air cèilidh air) an old lady named Fionnghal (Flora) who lived in a thatched cottage near the shore between Whitehouse and Ardbeg. This 'taigh ceilidh' was a favourite with the young lads and there they would hear the poetry, stories and the rest of the cultural heritage which existed in Tìree at that time.

Fionnghal kept her cottage in pristine condition and in common with other women of the time made lime by gathering sea shells and burning them in an iron pot. When the all the impurities had been burned away, a very strong pure white lime was left, and this she used to paint her doorstep and hearth.

Night after night she found it impossible to keep her hearth clean because of the obnoxious habit pipe-smoking males of the time had of spitting in the fire but very often missing, thereby leaving a rather unsavoury task for the housewife. Finally, in frustration she decided to order a spittoon!

Seumas Mòr, leader of the gang of young rascals, heard about this and the first night that the spittoon was to be set out, he primed his cohorts to spit short of it, past it, to port and to starboard of it, but on no account to spit in it! This was sport, and they were more than happy for oblige! The spitting went on apace, Flora glowering with suppressed anger. Eventually Seumas Mòr said, 'Fhionnaghal, tha 'n t-eagal orm mura tog sibh a 'vase' breagha tha sin as an rathad, tha fear de na cèardan seo a' dol a thilgeil smugaid ann!' (Flora, I am totally convinced that if you don't move that beautiful vase, one of these rascals is sure to spit in it!')

The lady's rage can only be imagined!

Sports, 1886

During the time of the Land League Agitation in 1886 a large contingent of military personnel was shipped out to Tìree to quell the rebellious ‘natives.’ When the trouble was over, a Sports Day was held with both military and local people taking part. The day culminated in a Tug O’ War between the soldiers and the locals, whose winning team consisted of the eight strongest men in Tìree. Four of these were from Cornaigbeg - Lachlan MacLean (Lachainn Eogain), Donald MacDonald (Dòmhnall Iain ’Illeasbaig Bhàin), Alan MacDonald (Ailean Iain ’Illeasbaig Bhàin) and John MacDougall (Iain Chaluim Dhùghalaich). These four men were renowned for their strength and tales are still told of their physical feats.

4. **Lachainn Eoghain** of Creagan Breac (1867 - 1943) learned his trade as a Blacksmith from the MacEacherns. He worked for a time in Glasgow and was also a Church of Scotland missionary in St Kilda for some time from 1901 onwards. At one stage of learning his trade as a young man under the instruction of Archibald MacNeil, he was being taught how to shape red-hot metal on the anvil. His instructor made sarcastic comments that he was not hitting the metal hard enough, and continued to do this until Lachlan, normally a calm young man who was slow to anger finally lost his temper and swung the hammer with such violence that he broke the horn off the anvil. The damaged anvil is still inside the smithy at Creag Mhòr, Cornaigbeg.

5. **Dòmhnall Iain ’Illeasbaig Bhàin** after some time as a merchant seaman settled on the family croft. His brother, Alan, emigrated to Manitoba, Canada.

6. **Iain Chaluim Dhùghalaich**, sixteen at the time of the Tug O’ War, emigrated to New Zealand. He was accidentally drowned in Hawera in 1896.

7. **First Mayor of Vancouver**

When Vancouver became a city in 1885, the man elected as first mayor was Malcolm MacLean of Cornaigbeg whose grandfather, Alan MacLean, had a croft (Croit Ailein) in the Ardbeg area.

8. **Neil MacLean** (*Niall Mac Dhòmhnail ’ic Thearlaich*) usually known as *Niall Mòr* who lived at Ardbeg was a skilled boat-builder, and by building a boat for the Duke of Argyll was instrumental in the removal from Tìree of the notorious factor John Campbell - am Bàillidh Dubh. This particular boat was seen and admired in Inverary by a friend of the Duke who wanted one exactly the same for himself. Niall Mòr duly finished the boat and had it delivered to the new owner for considerably less money than the original had cost the Duke. Enquiries were made, and it transpired that the corrupt John Campbell had been skimming profits for himself. He was promptly removed from Tìree over to the Ross of Mull.

9. One of the school-teachers who worked in the Cornaig area in the mid-nineteenth century went by the name of **MacLarty**. He had come to Tìree from Kintyre, and in his old age had his two nieces, Stewart by name, to look after him. Both of these girls married locally - one Alexander MacKinnon of Balevullin (Grandfather of Màiri Ann Sheonaidh late of an Caladh, Balevullin) and the other James MacLaren of Cornaigbeg, a boat builder who had built fishing-smacks of up to thirty tons burden in Scarinish before moving to Ardbeg where he plied his trade latterly. James McLaren and his wife were the parents of Ceit Sheumais and have great-grandchildren living in the Greenock area.

10. The Campbell family

Croft No.10, Cornaigbeg is known as **Croit an Dotair**. Lost in the mists of time is the identity of this doctor, but his daughter **Janet** (*Seonaid an Dotair*) married **Lachlan MacDonald** (*Lachainn 'Illeasbaig Bhain*).

Their daughter **Mary** married one **Donald Cameron** of Cnoc a' Mhurain and this couples' son **Lachlan** married **Catherine Cameron** and moved to Croft No. 5, known as Corrairigh - the sheiling of plenty. Their son **Hector** (*Eachainn Lachainn*) occupies the croft today.

The Campbell family, as well as working their crofts, were stonemasons and built many houses on the island. The family is well known for musical ability - Hector and his sons **Lachlan** and **George** are all pipers, and Lachlan's young son **John**, whose patronymic is *Iain Lachainn Eachainn Lachainn Domhnaill Eachainn 'ic Iain 'ic Eoghain 'ic Alasdair* is a talented singer and piper.

Hector Campbell's brother **Donald** (*Dòmhnall Lachainn*) a vet living in England, is also a piper who has three sons, **Graham**, and **Donald** and **Alasdair** who are both pipers. Alasdair Campbell is Press Secretary to the present Leader of the Labour Party Tony Blair.

Cnoc a' Mhurain (Hillock of the Bent Grass)

Muran (bent-grass) was the indigenous material used in Tiree for thatching. After two years it begins to rot and must be replaced thereby requiring much labour in cutting, and carting the material home.

Although no muran grows within a mile of this hillock it is so named because of a little township of thatched houses which existed on this site many years ago. The men would bring cart loads of this bent home and the women would prepare it for thatching i.e make it into sheaves and lay it out in stooks for drying around this hillock.

Master Mariners from Cornaigbeg

John MacDonald	Iain Dhòmhnail Iain 'Illeasbaig Bhàin
John Brown	Iain Chailein Alasdair
John MacLean	Iain Chailein Mac Dhòmhnail
John MacCallum	Iain Beag Iain Alasdair
Charles MacKinnon	Tearlach Mòr
George Campbell	Deòrsa Eachainn Lachainn

Ministers

Malcolm MacDonald	Calum Iain 'Illeasbaig Bhàin
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