

# Ministers and Deep Sea Captains



## The Schools of Tiree

Tiree & Coll Gaelic Partnership, 2011

# Ministers and Deep Sea Captains – The Schools of Tiree

*There is a saying among the people that “if Tyree does not grow trees, it grows ministers and deep sea captains.” That is to say there is an intense desire for education and self-improvement of every kind...We have seen classes in geometry, Latin and navigation, in which the knowledge displayed by bare-footed children out of “black” houses would have shamed the sons of our aristocracy at Eton or Harrow.*

From *Outer Isles*, by Ada Goodrich Freer, EP Dutton 1902.  
She visited Tiree in 1894.



Cover photo: Cornaig School around 1897 (C88)

# **1. Introduction**

Tiree's schools have been at the heart of the community since the 1780s.

The first school was set up on Tiree around 1780 to help islanders read the Bible for themselves. As the population grew, so did the number of schools. This was helped by the competition between the Established Church of Scotland and the new Free Church, and also by investment from the Duke of Argyll. In 1872 the Government took over education and five new schools were built in Ruaig, Scarinish, Balemartine, Heylipol and Cornaigmore. In 1936 the new Cornaigmore secondary school was built, with central heating and flushing toilets, and in the 1970s all the other schools were closed.

## 2. First Parochial schools: 1780-1843

Scotland has long had a reputation (not always deserved) of having the best schools in Europe.

But before the 1780s, as far as we know, there were no schools on Tìrè. There was learning on the island, but most of this was through watching and listening to adults in the township, some of whom would have been away in the army or at sea, copying people at work or listening to the evening fireside *cèilidhs*. Most islanders were monoglot Gaelic speakers. Relatively few, apart from the ministers and the factor, would have been able to read and write fluently.

At the time of the Reformation, Calvinists believed strongly that teaching people to read the Bible for themselves was of supreme importance. In 1696 an Act of the Scottish Parliament established the principle that would set up a Church of Scotland Parochial school in every parish in Scotland, paid for by the Church and local landowners. These schools would be open to all regardless of how rich or poor you were (*The Scottish Educational System 1840 - 1940*, WW Knox, SCRAN website).

It took some time for this to be put into effect on Tìrè. But by at least the 1780s there was one Parochial school on Tìrè in Cornaigmore at *An Taigh Shearmoin*, with a Mr Buchanan installed as school master.

In 1783 the Scottish Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) – which delivered Bible teaching in Gaelic - set up a second school in Kenovay. There is a spot in this township, behind the house now called Rosdhu, still called *Tobar an Sgoileir* (the well of the scholar).

At first these schools struggled to attract pupils. The Old Statistical Account of 1792 reported on Tìrè,

*Whatever these islanders may be behind their neighbours, anywhere on the mainland, is wholly owing to their great disadvantages as to education. I hope the period is now arrived when the cloud shall be dispelled..... The people had not a taste for education, and there were complaints against the teachers... These two schools generally had not ten scholars each* (OSA p 415).

This was at a time when the population of Tìrè was 2,416, with 663 of these being children under 10 (OSA, p 403).

Because of the poor attendance, the Duke of Argyll instructed his factor on Tìrè in 1788 that the SSPCK school be moved to Scarinish,

*As the tenants of Kenovay have not given that countenance and encouragement to the schoolmaster which he had right to expect, I desire that you will prepare a house for him at Scarinish with a garden and croft of land, and remove him to that place and make the tenants in that quarter cut and lead home his peats for him yearly* (Argyll Estate Instructions 1771-1805, Scottish History Society, 1964, ed. Eric Cregeen, p10-11, no. 4).

The secretary of the SSPCK, Mr Kemp, visited Tiree and wrote to the Duke with his recommendations for both schools. The Duke instructed in 1791, *I agree to and approve of what Mr. Kemp has proposed in regard to the schools and recommend the execution of his plan to you, only I do not at present see sufficient reason for altering the situation of the charity [SSPCK] school from Scarinish to Kirkapol (Instructions p 21, number 9, 1791).*

But by the next year the Duke had changed his mind and decided that the SSPCK school should be moved to Kirkapol after all (*Instructions* p25).

Originally there had been a charge for pupils but when funds were found to allow free tuition the number of pupils increased to 60-80 (OSA p 415).

One Tiree child who benefited from the new educational opportunities was John MacLean from Caolas, *Iain mac Ailein, Bàrd Thighearna Cholla*. He was born in 1787 and, according to the Rev Hector Cameron “received a fair education in Gaelic and English.” MacLean travelled around the Highlands collecting poetry in 1815 when he was 28, and went on to become, as Cameron said, “the ablest, as well as the most productive, of the Tiree bards,” emigrating to Canada in 1831 (*Na Baird Thirisdeach*, ed. Hector Cameron, 1932, p 38).

Although it had taken legislation and eighty years for the estate to invest in education on the island, the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke took the provision of schooling on Tiree seriously, presumably partly driven by the belief that educated tenants would make more money for him.

By 1795, however, the Cornaig school master, Buchanan, had fallen foul of the estate. *As it appears that Buchanan is now of no use as schoolmaster you should get rid of him as soon as possible and correspond with Mr. Kemp and Mr. Ferrier [James Ferrier, the Duke’s agent in Edinburgh, Instructions p. X] about a successor to him, and let the necessary accommodations be provided in time for his successor. Buchanan may be allowed something to carry him to Perthshire, his native country (Instructions p 40).*

It took six years to move the reluctant teacher. The Duke wrote in exasperation in 1801, *Get Buchanan and his son out of the island as soon as possible. I shall pay the old man £10 yearly during his life providing he goes away peaceably. The son I will have nothing to do with. Another schoolmaster to be looked for, and one of the natives to be preferred, if qualified (Instructions p 57).*

The factor was able to report later that year, *Buchanan the schoolmaster was removed at last Whitsunday, enjoying his allowance of £10 for life according to your Grace’s instructions. His son is dead (Instructions p 62-3).*

However, by 1801 both school houses were falling down. The factor wrote, *As there is no house a man of any sort of merit cannot be expected to settle in the island as schoolmaster... The Society [SSPCK] schoolmaster was compelled to leave, as he had no proper accommodation of a house, garden and croft requisite for keeping a family, which in the east end of the island is an immense loss to the children (Instructions p 62-3).*

Two years later the Kirkapol schoolhouse was temporarily repaired and a new teacher, McLaurin, hired (*Instructions* p 81).

This school may have been on the site of the present Lodge Hotel.

*The Lodge, originally built for a school, had then become the gamekeeper's house, was now added to and enlarged, and became a mansion, or a villa, or a palace, according to the ideas of those who watched its walls breaking the outlines of the Bay of Gott ( Lady Victoria Campbell, Frances Balfour, Hodder and Stoughton, p 293).*

In 1804 the Duke built a new schoolhouse and school at Kirkapol (part of today's Lodge Farm) and another at Heylipol. The houses came with crofts, *having two cow's grass and a horse's grass each (Instructions p 81-3).*

*There was formerly but one parochial school in Tiree; but this being found quite insufficient, another was established about the year 1804 (New Statistical Account, 1845, p 220).*

More schooling on Tiree was provided by peripatetic Gaelic Schools. These were established after 1810-11, when the Edinburgh Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools was created through the leadership of the Rev. Christopher Anderson, a Baptist minister. The best known Gaelic schoolmaster in Tiree was Duncan MacLucas or MacDougall, brother of Mrs Mary MacDonald, Ross of Mull, who composed '*Leanabh an Aigh*'. The EGSS taught pupils to read the Gaelic Bible, and many of its teachers were evangelical men with preaching talents. Duncan was one such, and he became the founder of Tiree Baptist Church. (*Island Harvest: A History of Tiree Baptist Church 1838-1988*, Professor Donald Meek.)'

Despite all these efforts by the estate, in 1834 it was estimated that, while a fifth of the population of Holland and a sixth of the population of Prussia were at school, only one fourteenth of the population of Glasgow were being educated (*The Scottish Educational System 1840 -1940* WW Knox). Children in Scotland were still being sent out to work rather to school.

### 3. Tiree church schools multiply: 1843-1872

By 1845 the population of Tiree had swollen to 4,453. Of these 1,875 were children under 15. As the population rose, the number of schools on Tiree increased to nine. In 1845 there were:

- Two Parochial schools in Heylipol and Kirkapol supported by the estate (with 164 pupils)
- One Church of Scotland school at Balevullin (60 pupils)
- One SSPCK school, “*in which nothing but the reading of Gaelic Scriptures is taught,*” (68 pupils)
- Five unendowed or private schools, of whom it was reported “*they might almost as well be suppressed, the teachers being inexperienced country lads, some of them very indifferently qualified*” (205 pupils) (New Statistical Account, 1845, p 220).

Roughly a quarter of Tiree children were at school. At roughly the same time (1857), there were less than half of 5-10 year olds in Glasgow in education (*The Scottish Educational System 1840 -1940* WW Knox).

The Duke of Argyll supported more than just the Parochial schools. In an undated document (but around 1860) the estate was listed as funding the Parochial School in Heylipol (£22), the General Assembly school in Balevullin (£4 “*in lieu of accommodation*”), the SSPCK school in Greenhill (£10) and the Female Industrial School in Cornaig (£15) (Inveraray Castle Bundle 1539, An Iodhlann 1999.167.2).

*It would be wrong not to mention that the Noble proprietor, father to the present Duke of Argyll, with the liberality becoming his rank and character, allowed to each of the teachers the maximum salary, together with the accommodation of house and lands* (It would be wrong not to mention that the NSA was written by Rev N MacLean, the minister of Tiree, who was heavily dependent on the goodwill of the Duke for his living - NSA, p 220).

The Disruption of 1843 saw the Free Church splitting away from the established Church of Scotland. In an effort to expand the new church’s influence, four schools were set up on Tiree.

In 1863 John Ramsay, MP for Falkirk Burghs, reported on the state of Tíree schools to the Royal Commission on Education in Scotland chaired by the 8th Duke of Argyll.

Place	Supported by	Teacher	Boys	Girls	Total
Caolas	Free Church Ladies Society	Archibald Colquhoun	9	14	23
Kirkapol	Parish School	Malcolm Livingston	10	11	21
Balemartine	Free Church Ladies Society	Mr Sutherland	31	25	56
Heylipol	Parish School	Mr Donald McLean	21	13	34
Greenhill	SSPCK	AM Donald	12	15	27
Balevulin	General Assembly	P McDonald	13	14	27
Croish	Free Church Ladies Society	M McAskill	38	22	60
Hynish	Free Church Ladies Society	M McLeod	16	8	<u>24</u>
					<u>272</u>

(An Iodhlann 1999.167.4)

Ramsay gave mixed reports of these schools.

*As soon as possible secure the appointment of better teachers for the schools which are comparatively useless at present... the General Assembly teacher at Balevullin has been long in the place and is of little use... There are only three which appeared to me likely to make a good impression. These are the Parish school at Kirkapol and the Free Schools at Balemartine and Croish.*

## Caolas

*It is not usual to open this school on Saturday so that it was empty when I reached it, but as I expressed a wish to examine the scholars a number were soon collected in the neighbourhood, 14 girls and 9 boys. They were mostly young and the appearance was unfavourable as the most advanced did not appear to understand what they read but went by rote...the day previous to my visit the number present was 36....two of the scholars on the roll had only been one day each in school in July. The teacher attends to the religious instructions of his scholars and does so in Gaelic. Like most of the other teachers of this Society, Mr Colquhoun is a student preparing for the ministry, this being the second summer he had taught in this school, having been at college in Glasgow last year and in Edinburgh the year before. He is married to the daughter of a crofter in the district and his wife remains with her parents during his absence in winter (Inveraray Castle Archives Bundle 1539, An Iodhlann 1999.167.3).*

*Na Baird Thirisdeach* has a short biography of Archibald Colquhoun, who was born at Moss. Life as a schoolteacher could be quite peripatetic. After leaving Tíree he kept school at Petty, Inverness-shire. He was a Gaelic teacher and catechist at Eastside, Kilmuir, Skye, then at Waternish, and lastly at Elgoll in the parish of Strath. He died at the age of 59 and was buried at Kilmaree, Skye (*Na Baird Thirisdeach*, p 392). The school site on the Salum-Caolas border is still called *Sgoil Colqhoun*.



## Kirkapol

*The teacher has a fixed salary of £25 but receives a grant of £20 from His Grace the Duke of Argyll and is Registrar of the district. This school meets on Saturday and I found 21 scholars – the day previous there had been 48. The children read fairly and gave intelligent replies to the questions that were put to them. The teacher has a Government certificate, and when the new school house is finished, should be placed under Government inspection. He has taught here since 1857. The Minister of the parish and also Mr Campbell the Chamberlain and Mr McQuarrie have visited the school occasionally. The teacher appeared anxious for the progress of his scholars, and would, I doubt not, exert himself to secure the greatest efficiency of the school. The present school room is on the second floor above the teacher's house about 24 x 15 x 7 ½ feet in the centre of the room, the roof being sloped on the sides but is well-plastered and well lighted. (Inveraray Castle Archives Bundle 1539, An Iodhlann 1999.167.3).*

The field behind Lodge Farm is called *Croit Livingstone* to this day.

## Balemartine

*This schoolroom is a thatched building 36 x 15 feet. The unplastered side walls are fully 8 feet high inside and very well lighted by six windows (six panes in each). The floor over the greater part is boarded and below the fixed desks where it is not closely boarded, flooring deals are placed for each form for the children's feet to rest upon. The school is well supplied with maps and two blackboards, a good fireplace and grate and no appearance of smoke. The classes made a very good appearance and the school as a whole seemed a successful one. This is Mr Sutherland's first season in Tiree. (Inveraray Castle Archives Bundle 1539, An Iodhlann 1999.167.3).*

## Heylipol

*The teacher has been four years at college with a view to enter the ministry, a substitute taking his place during winter with the approtation [sic] of the Duke of Argyll. There was no roll. The classroom is a low thatched building, the side walls only about five feet high, neither floored nor plastered and very badly lighted. The appearance of the classes was as unfavourable as that of the building itself. The advanced class of 5 boys read imperfectly and did not understand the words, nor could they translate them into Gaelic... (Inveraray Castle Archives Bundle 1539, An Iodhlann 1999.167.3).*

## Grianal

*Supported by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. The appearance of this school is somewhat like that of other schools of the same Society which I have seen elsewhere. The children do not understand what they read and read with difficulty. The teacher was well spoken of as to his personal character, but does not appear likely to benefit the locality in which he is placed as an instructor of the young, having been with them for 15 years (Inveraray Castle Archives Bundle 1539, An Iodhlann 1999.167.3).*

## Balevullin

*The teacher is Peter MacDonald of the education Committee of the Established Church. This school is much the same as that at Grianal (Inveraray Castle Archives Bundle 1539, An Iodhlann 1999.167.3).*

The Balevullin schoolmaster's house was built by the estate in 1866 (An Iodhlann 1998.151.1).

James Galbraith followed MacDonald as the teacher in Balevullin around 1874 (An Iodhlann 1998.151.1). The factor put the Macleods off their croft in the township to make way for him and moved them to Carachan, Kilmoluaig, where the family is to this day (Hector MacPhail, Ruaig, personal communication).

## Croish

*The teacher had only taken charge this summer. He seemed an energetic and successful teacher, both the advanced and the lower class having gone well through their lessons when I examined them...If this school should continue to be conducted with equal ability and energy it will do much good (Inveraray Castle Archives Bundle 1539, An Iodhlann 1999.167.3).*

## Hynish

*The teacher has been here only this summer. The classroom is one of the ordinary thatched houses having the floor boarded over half of its area...There were present only 16 boys and 8 girls and as the teacher was previously aware that I intended to visit the school, I fear this limited attendance is an indication of the want of energy on his part...there appeared a want of life or vigour in the classes as a whole, which made me fear they are making little progress. (Inveraray Castle Archives Bundle 1539, An Iodhlann 1999.167.3).*

## Older Cornaig schools

*Whitehouse 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 (Cornaigbeg Township history, Hector MacPhail, An Iodhlann 1998.44.2).*

On the north gable of Whitehouse there is a long window which was the original doorway into the classroom. The outside stone steps were removed to make the kerbs of the stalls in the Whitehouse barns (Archie MacKinnon, Seafeld, Cornaigmore, and Hugh Archie MacCallum, personal communication). Hugh MacCallum, the grandfather of Hugh Archie MacCallum, went to this school. He was born in 1864 (HAMcC, personal communication).

*Cornaig Female School 1868 Mary Mitchell, teacher, salary - £3 10s - paid by the Duchess of Argyll as was flannel for the girls at the school - £43 – and desks - £13. (An Iodhlann 1998.151.1).*

This school was supported by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (minutes of the School Board, 1873, An Iodhlann 2001.75.1).

There was a school site to the north of Clachan, Cornaigmore at one time (Hugh Archie MacCallum, Whitehouse, Willie MacPhail, Clachan, and Archie MacKinnon, Cornaigmore, personal communication).

## Heanish

There was a school in the old police station in Heanish (*Heanish 1868 Roofing the schoolhouse*. Factory Act Books (An Iodhlann 1998.151.1). *Maighstir Niall*, a minister, was the schoolmaster there (Donald MacCallum, Scarinish, personal communication).

*“Her uncle Alasdair squeezed out of the window on his first day and never went back”* (Georgina MacKinnon, Heanish, personal communication; *Heanish Township History*, Hector MacPhail, An Iodhlann 1998.44.7).

## Marks out of ten

Alexander Nicolson, from Skye, came to Tiree in 1867 to find out how the island’s schools were working.

	boys	girls
Can read	683 (75%)	574 (58%)
Cannot read	230 (25%)	419 (42%)
Can read English and Gaelic	560	392
Can read Gaelic only	38	97
Can write	575 (41%)	348 (35%)
Cannot write	839 (59%)	635 (65%)

He wrote,

*Not only are the women of the Hebrides generally more industrious than the men but the services of the girls are more universally available within doors as without. And there is less scruple in withholding a girl from school than a boy because learning is not considered so important in her case. (The Schooling of Working Class Girls in Victorian Scotland, Jane McDermid, 2005).*

At this time, in 1859, 89% of Scottish men could sign their names.

The Tiree results that Nicholson recorded were slightly better than those from Skye, but despite Scotland’s much-vaunted educational system, six in ten of those emigrating from Tiree in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century could not write.

## 4. The state steps in: 1872 - 1936

During the 1850s and 60s it became apparent that the educational system in Scotland was near collapse as the churches became unable to educate the swelling population. The Argyll Commission proposed a state-funded system for Scotland, and the Education Act (Scotland) was born in 1872.

### Tiree School Board

The 1872 Act took education out of the hands of the churches and placed it under the control of elected School Boards. Board members were elected every three years by all owners of property over £4 in rateable value (by no means all adults on Tiree, and particularly not many women). Teachers no longer had to swear allegiance to the Church of Scotland.

One of the first meetings of the new Tiree School Board was held in June 1873 in the Temperance (now the Scarinish) Hotel. One of their first tasks was to count the children in their area.

*There were 488 children between the ages of 5 and 13. The numbers on the rolls of the present schools 413 and the actual numbers in attendance 312. The numbers of schools 7... The Board finds that the present schools might be made available for the Educational requirements of the parish, but resolves not to interfere with the Denominational [church] schools so long as these are efficient. It is the opinion of the people of the district, strongly expressed through Donald MacLean, a member of the Board...that a female teacher [in Cornaigbeg] is not suitable for the requirements of the place.*

The remainder of the Board did not agree with this last point, the first sign of the political disagreements that the new, more democratic, system, had exposed. (An Iodhlann 2001.75.1).

John MacFarlane, the schoolmaster in Heylipol, also described the tensions in the new Board. Writing in 1873, he said,

*Very unfortunately for those who have children at school age, our School Board is not a harmonious body, and therefore instead of providing efficient schools with the utmost speed, they are wrangling, disputing, reporting, and protesting amongst themselves as to the sites of the new schools. The east end of the island is the part on which they differ. The majority wants only two schools, one about 1 ½ miles further east and another 1 ½ miles further west than the present Public schools. The minority wants 3 schools, the present Public School and one in each end of the district, but they allege that the side or end schools may be of a lower class or less expensive while they would maintain the Public School in the centre as it is – a better class school to which the older scholars in both ends could go when they got beyond the qualifications of their own master. The inhabitants of both ends object to being only supplied with an inferior school and master, maintaining they have a right to an efficient school seeing they pay the same rates with the rest of the island. The whole affair has been referred to the Education Board Edinburgh.*

The 'establishment' tried to keep control over the education of children.

*The division which this question has made of the Board is ominous. The minority (the minister, the factor and doctor) being those who under the former laws had the management of such affairs. The majority, Messrs Campbell, Hough, McQuarrie; and two natives being those called into management for the first time by the new Act. The minority are all men of cultivated intellect who can always give a reason for their actions which will be intelligible to others. For the majority Mr Campbell, Hough is an intelligent and active minded gentleman who can maintain his own opinion against anyone, while Mr McQuarrie is a man of far-seeing and well-digested plans who generally thinks twice before he commits himself. The two native members are simple minded honest men who I believe are quite conscientious that their votes are for the public good. They all agree that Cornaig or Kilmoluaig ought to be the site for the north end and the 120 or 130 scholars in the district calls aloud to the School Board to get up a school without delay. They propose to add a classroom to my school [Heylipol] of which I stand in great need.*

The Boards were replaced in 1918 by the Argyll Education Authority, and in 1930 education was handed over to Argyll County Council.

Money for the new schools came from three sources - a government grant; local Rates of 6-9d in the £1; and fees of one to five shillings per quarter, paid by the pupils. However, in 1889 all fees except those for the two senior years were abolished and in 1891 they were abolished completely. Education in Scotland had become free (*The Scottish Educational System 1840 -1940*, WW Knox).

## Attendance

For the first time, the new Act made schooling compulsory for all children from 5 to 13, although exemption was made for children ten and over who could prove that they were at grade 5 standard.

A Register of Attendance was filled in morning and afternoon, and a member of the School Board had to check that the teacher was being accurate by making unannounced visits. *Examined the Register and found it correctly kept.* Dr Buchanan, Member of the Tiree School Board, Balemartine School Log, November 25<sup>th</sup> 1885.

Funding for the school depended on the numbers of children actually turning up. Time and time again the head teachers in Tiree would complain that children were kept at home, with the effect that money for the school next year was cut.

*Attendance this week has exhibited a remarkable falling off owing perhaps to this being the season of the year at which the natives insert their potatoes (into the ground).* Balemartine School Log, April 29<sup>th</sup> 1885.

*Attendance this last week still very unsatisfactory. The long tract of wet and inclement weather has prevented the crofters from getting their potatoes weeded in time and now every available hand is pressed into service.* Balemartine School Log, June 24<sup>th</sup> 1885.

The weather played a large part in how likely it was that children came to school. *Heavy snowstorm since Saturday – still falling heavily. Scarcely any scholars appeared. I dismissed them till tomorrow.* Balemartine Log Book, December 5<sup>th</sup> 1892.

Illness or rumours of disease commonly kept pupils away, sometimes closing the entire school. This is understandable at a time when there was no effective treatment for these infections.

*Very small attendance today consequent on a rumour that is going about of cholera being on the island.* Balemartine Log Book, July 26<sup>th</sup> 1886.

*School has been shut up for the last 10 weeks owing to the prevalence in the district of measles.* Balemartine Log Book, May 20<sup>th</sup> 1888.

*Another outbreak of scarletina. The Sanitary Inspector has got notice to fumigate and disinfect the Schoolroom. A pump was put up in the playground but was afterwards removed by order of the Sanitary Officer, as it was found that the well was too close to the cesspool.* Balemartine Log Book, March 18<sup>th</sup> 1892.

*Dear Sir, I have been instructed to inform you that [there is] an account of an attack of whooping cough and influenza in the district of Balemartine. The school is closed from today for a period of three weeks.* Letter from the clerk of the School Board to Balemartine School, July 15<sup>th</sup> 1918.

Skin problems, such as ringworm and impetigo, were common and parents were expected to keep their children off school until they were better or the doctor had allowed them back. *In the Higher Grade School two pupils were sent home because of obvious infection with impetigo and ringworm. The fact of the presence of the disease was admitted by the parent in each case.* Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 1<sup>st</sup> 1936.

*The cases of suspected ringworm and impetigo not having yet returned to school were reported to the Local School Medical Officer.* Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 13<sup>th</sup> 1936

Sometimes other matters detained the pupils.

*A marriage on Wednesday (Christmas Day) kept down the attendance somewhat.* Balemartine Log Book, Dec 27<sup>th</sup> 1889.

*The stormy weather of the past few days has brought ashore great quantities of seaweed and the boys and girls are again busy burning kelp.* Balemartine School Log, May 17<sup>th</sup> 1892.

*Had to dismiss school today as the attendance was so small. The reason why half the scholars stayed away seems to be connected in some way with Mr McFarlane's election as Member [MP] for Argyllshire. When the result of the poll came to Tiree last night there were bonfires and rejoicing in the district, and the rumour began to circulate that the school had to get a holiday. Hence only a few scholars put in an appearance today and very reluctantly I gave them a holiday.* Balemartine School Log, July 15<sup>th</sup> 1892.

*After the late stormy weather a great many planks and logs began to float ashore and this kept a good many boys absent for two or three days searching the shore for planks.* Balemartine School Log, December 17<sup>th</sup> 1897.

*A steamer was wrecked last week near Skerryvore lighthouse and most of the children are searching for wreckage.* Balemartine School Log, March 6<sup>th</sup> 1899.

*There are 17 scholars absent today. There is a cattle sale at Heylipol and as there is a holiday given at that school, the Balemartine scholars evidently thought that they were as much entitled to a holiday as the Heylipol scholars.* Balemartine School Log, April 25<sup>th</sup> 1917.

*The school was closed yesterday as it was used for a ship wrecked crew. The lost attendance will be made up by opening on Saturday.* Scarinish School Log, February 10<sup>th</sup> 1942.

Boards appointed Truant or Compulsory Officers to round up non-attendees and parents could be fined up to 10 shillings if it could be shown that they were not encouraging the child to go to school.

*Gave a list of absentees to Compulsory Officer on Saturday. This has had a good effect, as it brought back a good number of absentees.* Balemartine School Log, Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> 1891.

*Two or three defaulters in the matter of attendance were had up before the Board and reprimanded. No one was prosecuted.* Balemartine School Log, July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1886.

Some children moved schools regularly if they had an argument with a teacher or other pupils. One boy in Kilmoluaig was “quite fiery” and would move to from Cornaig to Heylipol School for a few months. “*They were like cattle [moving] with the wind behind them.*” (Archie MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, personal communication).

## School leaving

The school leaving age in 1872 was set at 13 years, and in 1883 it was raised to 14. The Scarinish School Roll records that almost all children left at fourteen - 22 pupils out of 46 leaving the school between 1889 and 1893 left at 14 years old to “work at home”, with 4 girls leaving for “service.”

Exceptions could be made.

*Letter from the School Board to R MacLean, headmaster: The Board have exempted the following pupils attending your school viz Neil Campbell, Balemartine, who is wanted as a herd in the township of Hynish.* Balemartine Log Book, May 30<sup>th</sup> 1916.

*Hector MacLean is off school for the last two weeks. He is employed as a herd and has not been granted an exemption.* Balemartine School Log, May 17<sup>th</sup> 1935.

Donald MacNeill, Barrapol (*Dòmhnall an Tàilleir*), was at Heylipol School in the 1920s. He was 13 and one day at school he forgot to learn some poetry. He was called to the front of the class by the teacher, *Ceit Dhòmhnail Dhòmhnail Ruaidh*, to be strapped. He pulled his hand away and, jumping out the window, ran away. Mr MacBain was the minister at the time and he came to Donald’s house to try to persuade the boy to change to Balemartine School instead. However, Donald had already been offered a job as a herdsboy, or *buachaille*, and left school that day (Donald, personal communication).

## Holidays

Until the 1920s the Old Style calendar was used on Tiree.

*Children have got one week’s holiday – Jan 7<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Old Style.* Balemartine School Log, Jan 16<sup>th</sup> 1888.

*Tonight is Hallowe'en in Tiree.* Balemartine School Log, Nov 11<sup>th</sup> 1892.

Christmas Day was not a holiday. John Simpson, the Balemartine headmaster, makes his feelings about this clear in his entry.

*Today is Christmas elsewhere, but not so in Tiree – at least no one knows or cares anything about it here. We are working away as busily as on any other day.* Balemartine School Log, 1896.

Royal events could be the occasion of a special holiday.

*Visit of School Board Clerk on Monday in connection with Jubilee Treat on Tuesday next [Queen Victoria's Diamond, or 60<sup>th</sup>, anniversary]. Singing lessons given twice, instead of once, for the purposes of teaching children to sing 'God save the Queen.'* Balemartine School Log, 1897.

The school had a week in the autumn to allow the children to help with the potato harvest. A letter to the Ruaig teacher in 1919 ordered,

*Dear Miss Lamont, Provided you can have requisite number of openings assured [the school had to be open 200 days a year], give week commencing 27<sup>th</sup> October as Potato-holiday. School to re-open Monday Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>.*

However, the exact date of the harvest could vary with the weather.

*The Board fixed the holiday for potato lifting from 15<sup>th</sup> October to 29<sup>th</sup> Oct but this date is a week too early for this district so I postponed the holidays until next week at least.* Balemartine School Log, 1917.

## Teaching methods

A good inspection report was then, as it is today, extremely important, with the difference that the school's funding depended on certain conditions being met:

- attendance
- discipline
- number of days open with a Register kept for morning and afternoon sessions. The school had to be open for 400 sessions (200 days) a year
- the number of passes in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic (3 shillings per pupil passing) was the main 'earner' for the school and these subjects were taught with 'great intensity'.
- number of passes in special subjects like Navigation, Latin and Greek
- good facilities and equipment.

This was real payment-by-results (*Education in Argyll 1872-1972*, An Iodhlann 1999.123.2).

Pupils remained at a certain level until they had reached a certain standard – a less able child could leave school at 14 having only progressed into the third or fourth class.

Reading in the early years of the new schools was taught using Letter Cards:

*A is for Angel who praises the Lord*

*B is for Bible, God's most Holy Word*

Arithmetic was taught with an abacus and chanting tables. A typical arithmetical question for primary pupils was,



*Divide £309 10s. 10d. among 2 sappers, 5 artillerymen and 7 marines, giving a sapper twice the share of an artilleryman who gets thrice that of a marine.*

Spelling and Grammar were given great importance. By the age of 12 pupils had to recite 80 lines of poetry by heart.

School Boards also had to provide schools with maps. Geography was taught by memorising lists of bays, rivers and mountains.

*Began Map drawing in Standard 5 today. I drew map of Spain and Portugal on the board, explained its features and the meaning of latitude and longitude. Then the class copied the map on their slates. After further practice on slates I shall cause them to draw their maps on paper.* Balemartine School Log, 19<sup>th</sup> Dec 1893.

Rough work was done on a slate into the 1930s.

*When we went school first of all we were given a slate. A slate for writing on and doing your lessons and that. And we used to take them home at Christmas and Easter and scrub them and clean them up and have them ready for going back. Sometimes we would put ink on them so they would be nice and black and the woodwork would be pure white when we'd finished. There were even slots in the desks where you put your slates.* Hector MacKinnon, who went to school in Cornaig in the 1930s, Seafield, Cornaigmore, AC377.

*Really, when I first went to Scarinish School [in the 1930s], it was slates you had, you know the slates with the wooden rim. The amount of money they could save today. Because [you did] everything on your slate, and then all you done was wipe it off and use it again and again. You had a slate pencil [which] was actually made of slate as well. The thing worked perfect, and the teacher used to have a penknife and she used to put lines for us on the slate for when we started writing, you know. No computers in these days!* AC 89 Hugh MacKinnon, Baugh.

Copperplate hand writing was taught with a quill and paper. The pen had to be held in an exact way between the thumb and middle finger. The upper end pointed over the right shoulder and was not lifted off the paper until the whole word was completed. Skilled writers could expect to find office work easily, in the same way good computer skills are useful today.

However, supplies to the island were often difficult to obtain.  
*Find it very difficult to get ink.* Balemartine School Log, Jan 29<sup>th</sup> 1886.

Almost three months later, the same teacher wrote,  
*Got a quantity of ink for school use forwarded from Perth, somewhat spoiled from having been sent in a tin canister.* Balemartine School Log, April 14<sup>th</sup> 1886.

The ministers of the island provided monthly services and came in regularly to test the children.

*Religious Knowledge Exam: The school was examined yesterday in Religious Knowledge. The memory work and the singing were also excellent.* FW Taylor [Tiree's Baptist Minister], Balemartine School Log Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> 1933.

Sometimes there were visiting speakers and tutors.

*Miss Murchie has commenced a series of lectures today on Poultry Rearing.* Balemartine School Log Dec 5<sup>th</sup> 1934.

There were also outside exercise classes.

*Drill [physical education] going on whenever the weather suits.* Balemartine School Log, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1897.

*Have missed four days drill due to wet weather.* Balemartine School Log, July 9<sup>th</sup> 1897.

*There are some good pipers in the island, and we were delighted, at the Hyilipol School, to find that the master had introduced the pipes as a most original accompaniment to the school drill. We were present at a festive occasion, when a bonnie lad, himself a pupil, in full Highland dress, marched at the head of his school with as fine an air as if he were leading his clan to do or die, and they, quite as proud as he, did full credit to his inspiring strains, afterwards, at our special request, ending up with a reel. (Outer Isles, by Ada Goodrich Freer, EP Dutton 1902. She visited Tiree in 1894.)*

## Gaelic

It was estimated in 1845 that three quarters of the families on Tiree contained someone who could speak some English, but Gaelic remained the language of the vast majority of islanders. *Gaelic is the language almost universally used among the lower orders* (New Statistical Account, p 209).

The minister of Tiree, Rev. Neil MacLean, wrote to the Duke of Argyll, also in 1845, about the number of people with English on Tiree.

*There are not probably above 15 families of which all the members speak English.* (An Iodhlann 1998.151.14).

*I have held two examinations this week – only a few did really well...evidently “English” is a weak point in Tiree.* Balemartine School Log, July 4<sup>th</sup> 1890.

Did the schools of Tiree hasten or slow down the decline of the Gaelic language on the island? It is a mixed picture.

An 1863 report on Balemartine School stated,

*The teacher neither translated into Gaelic nor gave any instruction in that language as he thinks it a disadvantage to introduce Gaelic at all in the school...I learned from Mr McQuarrie [later a member of the School Board], who joined me before I had finished the examination of this school, that a number of the pupils are the children of persons employed at the [Skerryvore] lighthouse premises [in Hynish] in the neighbourhood, and this may account for the ease with which the teacher finds he can dispense with the use of Gaelic. He explained, however, that he had been accustomed to do the same in Islay, where he was formerly a teacher in a district where all the parents spoke Gaelic.*

If the teacher was not a Gaelic speaker, only English would be used in the classroom. This member of the School Board evidently thought that the matter should be put right.

*Visited school today and taught the pupils Gaelic, Dugald MacLean, Member of the School Board.* Balemartine School Log, May 15<sup>th</sup> 1894.

Some teachers went further than that and actively discouraged the language. Flora MacKinnon, Balevullin, remembers her own father, Neil MacLean, was strapped for speaking Gaelic in the playground at Cornaigmore in the 1930s.

*I had a few words of English [when I went to school] but the teacher hadn't one word of Gaelic. I didn't like talking English one little bit. At playtime we could talk Gaelic and it was particularly useful when we talked about the teacher and how dreadful she was. I never liked the teacher in Ruaig...I do remember a teacher coming – Bean Ailig Eachainn – who could speak Gaelic and that was wonderful. The world changed – it was as though the sun had come out. She had great Gaelic and she understood children.* Professor Donald Meek, Caolas. AC271.

*Bean Ailig Eachainn* was Mary Macphail, sister of Archie MacKinnon, the Cornaig Janitor.

*The children have a good knowledge of colloquial Gaelic but little is done in the study of the language.* HMI Report Scarinish 1927.

However, in Caolas in the 1860s,  
*The teacher attends to the religious instructions of his scholars and does so in Gaelic* (Inveraray Castle Archives Bundle 1539, An Iodhlann 1999.167.3).

*Nineteen pupils read Gaelic correctly and translate from English to Gaelic freely and correctly.* Balemartine School Log, July 15<sup>th</sup> 1920.

And a number of Gaelic speaking islanders did come back to teach on Tìree.  
*Katie Nisbet (Muir) took over the whole school – seven classes – and we were taught thoroughly... They were a marvellous teaching family, all three sisters. Oh Gosh! They were good, excellent. At the same time we were taught to read, write and spell in Gaelic.* Grace Campbell, Tullymet, AC 25, who went to school in 1927.

Even up to the start of the Second World War most children on Tìree going to school for the first time could speak virtually no English.  
*When we went to school, each and every one of us spoke only Gaelic. There might have been one or two that spoke English – maybe the minister's son and the policeman's son. [Kate Nisbet] spent the first week teaching us nothing more elegant than 'Good morning Miss Nisbet.' In these days she rang a bell and we went into the class and sat down and she arrived two or three minutes later and we jumped to attention and shouted, 'Good morning Miss Nisbet!' She told me afterwards that she thought we were never going to say it. We were so steeped in the Gaelic!* Angus Munn, Heanish, AC71.

Dolly Cameron, a fondly-remembered teacher in Heylipol and Cornaig, told the story of trying to teach one little girl some English. “*Sròn*, your nose”, Dolly said, pointing to her own nose. “*Do shròn fhèin!*” [your own nose!], replied the little girl.

Mary Cameron, Balephuill, remembers her parents consciously trying to speak more English to her before she went to school.

Mr MacDougall, headmaster of Cornaig School for many years and a driving force of *An Comunn Gàidhealach* on Tìree, tried to encourage the use of Gaelic in the playground. For a while, Wednesday was ‘Gaelic Day’ and you had to speak it around the school. If he met you

in the corridor he would say, “*Ciamar a tha sibh an-diugh?*” If you didn’t reply in Gaelic – and there were quite a few children from the mainland at that time who couldn’t speak Gaelic – he would be cross (John Fletcher, Balemartine, personal communication).

*On boat days (Wednesdays and Fridays) you must speak Gaelic. Any other day you can speak English.* Angus MacKechnie, AC389..

*H: About 1935-6 they had a wee badge made. Some of them the centre was kind of gold and the outside white and Comunn na h-Oigridh written on it. And this man would come and question if you had any Gaelic, and would give you this badge. And then if you were doing quite well and give him an account of the Gaelic, you had to sign a thing, ‘Bi mise nam dheagh Ghàidheal’ – I’ll be a good Gael - and then you got one with blue enamel in the middle. And then they had another one, it was like a heather mixture, a purple colour, and you then signed, ‘Bi mise nam shàr Ghàidheal’ - I will be an excellent Gael. But I was quite interested and it gave us something to think about.*

*A: His name was Mr MacIver.*

*H: He used to come in June, just before the school closed and give us puirt-a-bheul and different tunes and that. He would come here for about a month.*

*A: He had the big book, the Modulator, do, ray mi. When he reached up he would be singing himself. His top set of teeth were false and when he opened his mouth [for the high notes] his top teeth would fall onto the top of the other ones. They were quite coarse, false teeth then.*

*H: ‘Bodach an Do’ [the old man of the note ‘do’] we used to call him. He had a kilt on. He used to take us out onto the machair and give us sports, all in Gaelic, exercises.*

*A: Suas air na corra-biod [up on your toes]!” I remember that well. Everybody liked him. Hector and Archie MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, AC377.*

*Mr MacIver, Music teacher from An Comunn Gaidhealach, is giving two music lessons a week in the school. Balemartine School Log, Nov 13<sup>th</sup> 1936.*

## Pupil teachers

Some of the teaching after 1872 was done by Pupil Teachers who were being trained ‘on the job.’

*Commenced teaching Euclid to Kate Wilson, Pupil Teacher of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Year. She has been learning algebra for some time. Balemartine School Log, Dec 18<sup>th</sup> 1896.*

*Pupil Teachers examined on ‘Saxon period and Heptarchy’ (a written exam). Balemartine School Log, March 29<sup>th</sup> 1897.*

*Katie Wilson, PT, absent today unwell. Gave the other two PTs the usual fortnightly examination in History and Geography. The following were [some] of the questions:*

- 1. What was the Partition of Assandun arranged by Canute and Edmund Ironside?*
- 2. What do you know of Ethelred’s widow Emma, the ‘Flower of Normandy’?*

*Balemartine School Log, Dec 10<sup>th</sup> 1897.*

*Got notice today that John MacKechnie and Christina MacArthur (formerly pupil teachers in this school) have both been successful in passing the Queen’s Scholarship. Balemartine School Log, April 5<sup>th</sup> 1897.*

There was a huge school building programme on Tiree after the 1872 Act. Five new schools went up in Ruaig, Scarinish, Balemartine, Heylipol and Cornaigmore. Built of dressed stone and roofed in slate, with teachers' houses attached, they stood out on the island as state-of-the-art, modern buildings. They all had wells and hand pumps, dry toilets, coal fires and were lit by paraffin lamps.



Cornaig School in 1910 (U77)

## Ruaig Public School – *Sgoil Ruaig*

Duncan Gunn was a well-known teacher in Ruaig about 1895 (Alasdair Sinclair, Brock, personal communication). When Donald MacIntyre's father from Gott was at Ruaig School, Gunn took the children down to the shore at Salum and taught them how to swim. Later in life his father would strip off when he was out fishing and swim around the boat. However, John MacDonald from Scarinish, almost drowned at the shore one playtime and the children were not allowed near the sea during school hours after that. Consequently Donald himself cannot swim at all (Donald, personal communication).

Ruaig School burnt down in 1919, it was said locally "after the painters were in." *The school buildings were destroyed by fire on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec. Since then no school was held until this date when work was resumed in the Congregational Chapel [in Ruaig, just behind the school]. Two desks were sent us from Hillipol School and these are reserved for writing purposes as the school pews are high and very narrow.* Ruaig School Log, Jan 14<sup>th</sup> 1919.

John Lachie MacInnes, Salum, remembered that the boys had played football down the aisle using the lamps as goal posts (Hugh MacKinnon, Ruaig, personal communication).

The Chapel was far from satisfactory.

*The stove smokes terribly and we can't have a fire today. The day is very cold and we couldn't commence work.* Ruaig School Log, January 29<sup>th</sup> 1919.

*I am informed by the School Board clerk that when the stove smokes we are to meet in the kitchen of a neighbouring cottage (Mrs MacDonald's) [Sackhill which had been built around 1900]. Ruaig School Log, January 30<sup>th</sup> 1919.*

*School was held today in Mrs MacDonald's house. No geography was taken as there was no space for a map. Ruaig School Log, February 26<sup>th</sup> 1919.*

*On getting to the school this morning I found that the cleaner had been unable to open the door as the key, which is always stiff, refused to turn. Immediately went for a neighbour but he too was unable to open the door. I then went for a blacksmith and after great difficulty he managed to open it. It was then 11.30 and all the time the children had been standing outside as there was no shelter and very heavy rain was falling. On admitting them I discovered that most of them were soaking and I dismissed them without beginning work. Ruaig School Log, Feb 18<sup>th</sup> 1920.*

Isobel Hutchison, the traveller, spent the winter of 1920 in Ruaig, and wrote about her experience at the school while it was held in the church.

*I obtained a border of ground at one of the schoolhouses close to where I was living, and there, with the assistance of ten schoolboys who all had small plots of their own, we set about planting three thousand lilies, crocuses, tulips, hyacinths and chionodoxas. Few of the children had seen any of those plants; one boy told me that he thought there had been one lily last year.*

*As everyone on Tiree talks Gaelic, I determined that I must make an effort to try and learn it. On wet days I sometimes went to study in the little mission chapel [in Ruaig], which was being used as a temporary classroom during the re-building of the schoolhouse. Here I gradually became acquainted with the children, and often spent the morning writing exercises by the stove, which it was the duty of one of the boys to light each day.*



**Ruaig School in the 1920s (Q67)**

*And what a job he had of it! For the chimney, which was simply a small pipe let into one of the windows, was very refractory under an east wind, and more than once the school had to be closed early because the teacher could hardly distinguish the boys from the girls amid the thick haze of blue smoke which poured back into the room!*

*But to the eye of the gardener this stove teemed with possibilities. It happened that our bulbs had arrived from Edinburgh in a large, deep wooden box, the very thing for a make-shift frame. I was busy dividing and replanting some roots of rhubarb in the garden when this inspiration struck me. Why not fill the big box with sand and force some of the rhubarb beside the stove? The only drawback to this scheme was that, as the school was really a church in which services were held on Sundays, and in which the children were not allowed to sing anything but hymns, I was a little afraid of giving offence to some of the older members of the congregation by introducing vegetation and using the building for practical gardening! However, one cold December I could resist temptation no longer, and with the assistance of two of the boys, and after much puffing and blowing – for it was a weighty affair – eventually got the frame filled, planted and conveyed on a barrow to the church door, and finally deposited in triumph by the stove. There it reposed, watered at surreptitious intervals by the boys, pushed under the nearest pew on Sundays, and by New Year's Day it was already showing succulent pink stalks of alarming length, which were soon too tall to conceal under the pew and had perforce to be eaten before another Sunday...*

*In 1920 for the first time a more substantial sort of fairy, in the shape of Father Christmas, visited Tiree. Perhaps the treelessness of the island had hitherto prevented him from landing, for the first thing we had to do when we heard of his proposed visit was to send post haste all the way to Mull for a Christmas Tree, and much anxiety prevailed lest the weather should prevent the boat from landing it in time. Fortunately the sun was shining on a tossing green sea when the mail boat, two days before Christmas, arrived from Tobermory with a beautiful waving spruce tree, twelve feet or more high, an unusual spectacle amid the sacks of flour and wooden crates which are the boat's usual cargo. The tree was met by the minister himself, and triumphantly conveyed in his pony-trap across the three miles of glittering sand to its destination at the little chapel of Ruaig. The scholars were in the midst of a geography lesson, and the tree arrived just in the nick of time to save the "black sheep" of the class, who either could not or would not point out Glasgow on the map of Scotland, from his daily "palmy" [strap].*

*There was much excitement when the waving green tips were pushed through the doorway. Here was vegetation enough in the church to put the rhubarb to the blush indeed! The tree was carried in like a gigantic baby in the arms of three of the older boys, and deposited along the backs of the pews against the wall, where it exhaled a delightfully fresh odour of resinous sap in the stuffy little chamber...*

*More exciting than the arrival of the tree was the arrival of Santa Claus himself on Christmas Eve. Many of the smaller children had never heard of him before, and were struck silent with astonishment when a fine tall old gentleman with a long white beard – who was much too burly to get down the slender chimney pipe let into the window – solemnly appeared in the doorway, bowing and smiling and evidently well-acquainted with the Gaelic! He was dressed in red robes and wore a holly crown, and he carried on his back a huge sack, for all the world like a postman's bag! The children were awestruck. "Can that man hear, do you think?" asked one little boy who had obtained his heart's desire in the shape of a box of*



*soldiers, and he was assured that Santa had very sharp ears. He brought just enough gifts to go round; what is more, he actually remembered the “black sheep” who could not be asked to the treat because he had never been to Sunday school. This present, which was a glittering new knife with two blades, was presented next morning during lessons (the Tiree children do not all get a holiday on Christmas Day), and a wave of incredulous red swept over the owner’s face, which it would have done Santa Claus good to see, though it was just as well he was not a witness of the unhappy sequel. For what can one do with a new knife but use it? Alas, the nearest wood at hand was the spongy surface of the bookboard and pew in front, and here the “black sheep” proceeded instantly and energetically to carve his initials.*

*Scarcely had the glistening blade whittled out the first shapely semi-circle, however, when vengeance descended. Sacrilege is a serious crime, especially in the Highlands, but not even the usual punishment of six “palmies” could quite wash out the gleam in the culprit’s eye when he felt the bulge in his trouser pocket where the knife reposed.*

In fact the tradition of a Christmas tree had been introduced to Tiree some thirty years before. *Scholars had a half-holiday yesterday to enable them to attend a Christmas tree given by Mrs McDiarmid, Island House [the factor’s wife]. Balemartine School Log, Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 1888.*

Ten years later Miss Hutchison came back to Tiree following another of her expeditions. *Today we had a most interesting talk on Greenland by Miss Hutchison. The children were extremely interested in the skin clothes. Scarinish School Log, Oct 30<sup>th</sup> 1930.*

Ruaig School reopened in 1922. The father of Tommy MacKinnon, Vaul, remembered thirty children walking there from Vaul in the 1930s.



**Building Ruaig School in 1921 (B36)**

Back row L-R: 2<sup>nd</sup> - Calum MacKinnon, butcher in Scarinish, 5<sup>th</sup> - Colin MacArthur, mason from Caoles, 6<sup>th</sup> - Sandy Mor MacLean from Sea View, Caoles

Like Balemartine, Ruaig School had a large number of foster children. *On the day of inspection there were on the roll twenty pupils of whom nine were boarded out children from Glasgow. HMI Report 1953.*



One boy from Ruaig, who went to school in 1943, remembers that there were only 3 children who were born in Tiree out of 22 pupils.

For a while Hugh Archie MacLean, Salum, lived in the Ruaig school house. He was a butcher and had his slaughterhouse in a corrugated iron lean-to at the back of the school. He had to move out when Robert MacLeod came to teach at the school.

*The premises were in generally good condition but the corrugated iron roof of the playground shelter was falling into disrepair.* HMI Report 1953.

Jean MacFarlane from Tarbert, Loch Fyne, taught as the only teacher in Ruaig for many years. Before that she had taught in Balemartine, Heylipol and Scarinish. It is said that teaching was not her first choice of career, having originally set her heart on becoming a doctor. However, she came from a family of fishermen and she could not afford the training.

*Jean MacFarlane was a different teacher, a harder teacher...she did strap us for [making mistakes in] our school work. I didn't like that.* Ethel MacCallum, Scarinish, who came to Ruaig in 1943, AC 379.

Hugh MacKinnon, Ruaig, remembers that she was keen on the strap. She strapped you if you got a sum wrong and she strapped you if you couldn't do it! She was a heavy smoker and it was a bad day when the tobacco ran out – there would be plenty of strap then!

*She smoked like a chimney, and her forelock was orange-brown with nicotine...She would take us into the schoolhouse for singing lessons - transmitted to us through her little white radio, which squeaked and screeched, and excelled in atmospheric interference. We used to listen to 'Singing Together' every Monday, presented by William Appleby, and I can still remember many of the songs that I picked up there. 'Molly Malone', 'The Eriskay Boat-song', ...But I didn't learn any Gaelic song or verse until Mrs MacPhail arrived.* (Professor Donald Meek, personal communication).

She taught Highland dancing to some children in the dinner break through in her house.

*The other one [Miss Macfarlane] was terrible with the belt. I didn't like Ruaig School at all and I thanked my lucky stars the day I left.* Professor Donald Meek, Caolas. AC271.



**Ruaidh School in 1952-3 (W2)**

L-R: (back row) Mary Gardiner; Annie MacLelland; May Meechan; Jane Meechan; Irene MacDonald, Machair House; Jean MacFarlane, teacher; (2nd back row) John MacLelland; Agne MacCulloch; Jean Cunningham; Sandra Band; Tommy MacKinnon, Vault; Agnes Law; Gavin Clark; (3rd back row) Mary Ann MacLean; John Shanks; Robert MacDonald; David Conn; Lachie MacDonald; Alfie Tarbert; (front row) Mary MacInnes; Ann MacKinnon (Langley); Sylvia MacKinnon; Betty Cunningham; Ellen MacInnes.

Another teacher at the school was Mrs MacPhail.

*She was known as 'Bean Ailig Hector' and was Willie Clachan's mother. I thought the world of Mrs MacPhail. She taught briefly in Ruaidh in my time, and for that period (late 1950s, I think) Ruaidh was a two-teacher school. She taught in the east room of the school, and Miss MacFarlane held forth in the west room - the school was divided into two rooms as needed, by means of a movable partition. When Mrs MacPhail came, it was wonderful. She made the school gentler in its atmosphere by speaking Gaelic and by avoiding the use of the belt, except when strictly necessary - I always felt Ruaidh was a bit violent overall, and that the violence had its roots in Miss MacFarlane's incessant belting...Mrs MacPhail would take Gaelic classes in Ruaidh, and I loved these - I can still remember rhymes and poems that I learned from her, and it was very heaven to be taught Gaelic by such a genial, native Tirisdeach. It also made a huge difference that she had a child of her own - and I remember saying that to my parents when I went home one day... She was such a friend to me. (Professor Donald Meek, personal communication).*

Delivering telegrams was a good way to get out of school.

*One of the little perks we used to get. The post office was not that far from Brock, Hugh Lamont's croft, and of course, wartime, there were telegrams with various news and other things as well, and someone in the post office would come across and ask for one of the boys to take it away up to Caolas or Milton or Vault. You were out of school, on a lovely summer's day and the Caolas road in front of you and the rest were all in class. These telegrams would come in their yellow envelopes and away we would wander up to Roisgal, or wherever. I suppose we were delivering at times sad news. We were told to stand and ask if there was a reply. I think we were given 2 old pence for doing this. My aunt told me later that I was given*

*the privilege seemingly because I was the only one that came back in a reasonable time!*  
Duncan Grant, Ruaig, AC362.

Emptying the chemical toilets before mains water arrived in the 1950s cannot have been a pleasant task.

*It was dry toilets. At the weekends a lady and her cousin came in and emptied the toilets and put down disinfectant. It was put in a hole in the ground, and there was a fence round this hole. When I went to Cornaig I was fair thrilled to bits because they had toilets. I thought it was very posh!* Ethel MacCallum, Scarinish, who came to Ruaig in 1943, AC 379.

*Dr Brown recommended that lavatories to be sprayed with DDT as flies were bad.* Ruaig School Log, June 17<sup>th</sup> 1953.

In 1955 the school was electrified.

*During the holidays the school was wired for electricity.* Ruaig School Log, Aug 23<sup>rd</sup> 1955.

In 1969 Ruaig School closed its doors for the last time.

*Today this school closes and from Monday Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> children will be conveyed to Cornaigmore school. This has happened because I retire from teaching today. Lorries arrived at 1pm to convey the furniture etc to Cornaigmore. JM McFarlane.* Ruaig School Log, last entry, Aug 31<sup>st</sup> 1969.

## **Scarinish Public School – Sgoil Sgairinis**

Scarinish seems to have been the only school which closed for the Tíree Regatta which started around 1910.

*The school was closed on account of the regatta.* Scarinish School Log, July 19<sup>th</sup> 1926.

The Nisbet sisters from Heanish taught on Tíree for many years.

*Miss Kate Nisbet, a student attending the Glasgow Provincial Training College, has been allocated to this school for practice teaching.* Scarinish School Log, Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> 1929.

*Miss Joan Nisbet finished her practice in teaching at this school.* Scarinish School Log, Sept 25<sup>th</sup> 1931.

*Katie Nisbet (Mrs Muir) took over the whole school – seven classes – and we were taught thoroughly... They were a marvellous teaching family, all three sisters. Oh Gosh! They were good, excellent. Slates to begin with and then there were jotters...Toilets? Dry toilets outside! We had no drinking water in the school. When you wanted a drink, you ran down to the well at the shore. You never washed your hands and never ailed a thing!* Grace Campbell, Tullymet, who went to school in 1927, AC 25.

*School closed so that teachers could attend the funeral of Miss Flora Nisbet, teacher of Scarinish School, who has given nearly forty years service in the County.* Balemartine School Log, Mar 5<sup>th</sup> 1965.

*There was a playground inside the school wall with goal posts. Boys and girls played rounders which was a very popular game at that time. Iain Noan's mother lived across the wall and she was not too keen on us playing football and it wasn't unknown for her to confiscate the ball and we couldn't play football for a week and then someone was nominated*

*to be the brave guy and get it back. She was always on about the noise in the playground.*  
Angus Munn, Heanish, AC71.



**Tiree Agricultural Show at Scarinish School in 1927 (C100)**

The annual show was held at Scarinish School from 1880 until World War II.

Most of the schools taught gardening.

*Mr Grant has qualified himself to teach Horticulture and a school garden is about to be laid out.* HMI Report, Scarinish, 1925.

*The new school garden appears to be in good condition.* HMI Report, Scarinish 1930.

Mains water arrived in 1967.

*New flush toilets...the mains water led into the house.* Scarinish School Log, Feb 1<sup>st</sup> 1967.



**Scarinish School in 1968 (H34)**

L-R: (front row) Mairi Morrison, bank manager's daughter; Fiona Johnstone, teacher's daughter; Lena MacNeill, Machair, Scarinish; David Weatherstone, dentist's son; Jennifer MacFadyen, Pier Road; Gary Johnstone, teacher's son; Neil Maclean, butcher's son; (middle row) Drew Beck, vet's son; Jacky MacFadyen, Pier Road; Alexander MacFadyen, Pier Road; Jane Weatherstone, dentist's daughter; Alison Petrie, daughter of the proprietor Scarinish Hotel; Christine Calvert, doctor's daughter; (back row) May Johnstone, teacher; Lachlan MacFadyen, Pier Road; Archie MacKinnon, Church Farm, Kirkapol; Brian MacFadyen, Pier Road; unknown.

Scarinish School was closed in 1974.

*The school is closing down tomorrow. The lorries arrived this afternoon to take the furniture and books to Cornaig school. There will be no dinners at school tomorrow as there is no crockery and no furniture. The children are expected to attend school tomorrow in spite of the fact that they will have nowhere to sit and nothing to do. Scarinish School Log, June 27<sup>th</sup>.*

*The school closed today. No children were present, so I closed the school early. Scarinish School Log, June 28<sup>th</sup>.*

## **Balemartine Public School – *Sgoil Bhaile Mhàrtainn***

The new school log book starts in 1885.

*Opened school today...37 boys and 33 girls in attendance. William Richardson [headteacher]. Balemartine School Log, Feb 19<sup>th</sup> 1885.*

*The children not yet supplied with books nor the school with the necessary apparatus. Blackboard useless and maps entirely wanting. Balemartine School Log, Feb 26<sup>th</sup> 1885.*

*Children have almost all got books and fully half have paid for the same. Balemartine School Log, March 18<sup>th</sup> 1885.*

It seems that the 'new 1872' school opened in the old building, because the *feu* from the Duke of Argyll for the building of the new Balemartine School is dated February 15<sup>th</sup> 1886.



The estate reserved “*always to me and my heirs and successors, the mines, metals and minerals within [the school boundaries]*” (An Iodhlann 1999.167.11).



**Balemartine Schoolhouse 1900-1908 (U27)**

According to the school log book entries of 1891 a new classroom was built, and this is presumably the ‘new’ school building as we know it today.

The new school was built 100 metres east of the old Balemartine School, which was demolished in the 1930s to make the foundations of the road between Island House and Balinoe (David McClounnan, Balephuill, personal communication).

The school was heated by a coal stove.

*Two tons of coal received [from the School Board]. No fires yet however, as the weather is uncommonly mild.* Balemartine School Log, Nov 22<sup>nd</sup> 1889.

After the First World War there was a shortage of coal, and the school received a letter in 1918 from the School Board asking for “Economy of Heating and Lighting of School” by lighting the stove for only four hours a day from November to April.

Life as a single teacher at an island school could be tough.

*Got telegram this morning as follows “John Simpson, Tiree: Mother dead – funeral Monday – come home.” Dismissed school.* Balemartine School Log, Jan 27<sup>th</sup> 1893.

In 1900 the staff of the school were Roderick MacLean, headmaster; Katie Wilson, A MacDonald and C Millar, pupil teachers; and Miss McMillan, sewing mistress. Balemartine School Log.

While Roderick MacLean was at the school he had one pupil that was finding the classes difficult, possibly because they were in English. The teacher pulled him out to the front of the class. “How do you spell ‘cat’” he asked the lad. There was no answer. “How do you spell

‘dog’?” Still no answer. “Rat?” Eventually the boy could not stand the humiliation any longer. “Can you not spell a thing yourself?” he blurted out to the teacher.

Kate Wilson and Sarah MacDonald were long standing teachers at the school. *Miss Catherine Wilson has been in charge since 1922 and Miss SF MacDonald who was appointed assistant [the same year].* HMI Report, Balemartine School, 1923.

*Sarah MacDonald becomes head teacher assisted by Miss Jeannie MacFarlane.* Balemartine School Log, Oct 28<sup>th</sup> 1942.

*Closed the school for Miss MacDonald’s funeral this afternoon. It was the largest in island memory, a tribute to her sterling character and her loyal service for the past forty years.* Balemartine School Log, Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 1962.

One islander, who went to Balemartine School in 1924 remembers being made to stand “for up to an hour” in the corner looking at his slate if he got his sums wrong. “It wasn’t teaching,” he says.

*Miss MacDonald is responsible for the instruction in school gardening.* HMI Report, Balemartine School, 1923.

*Tree seeds received from the Education Committee for planting in the school garden in commemoration of the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.* Balemartine School Log, May 19<sup>th</sup> 1937.

David McClounnan, Balephuill, told this story of his school days in Balemartine. He started smoking when he was 13 while he was still at school. He used to leave his pipe in a crack in the wall around the school yard in the morning. One day a teacher asked him to go to Mannaal House to get a form signed and gave him her pen to use. On the way he took his pipe to have a smoke on the way. When he got back in class the teacher asked him for her pen back and he pulled out his pipe by mistake. He had forgotten to put it back in the wall!

The toilets were emptied at the shore at *Bacanan Mòra Ghorraig*. *It is understood chemical toilets are to be supplied, but a urinal for the boys should also be supplied.* HMI Report, Balemartine, 1934.

*Four Elsan toilets supplied.* Balemartine School Log, April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1941.

Balemartine School, like Ruaig and Heylipol, had a large number of foster children from Glasgow from the 1930s to the 1960s. In 1953 the roll of the school was 61, of whom 38 were foster children.

*We have been raising funds for a television set.* Balemartine School Log, June 27<sup>th</sup> 1969.

Balemartine School was closed in 1972 and the pupils sent to Heylipol and then Cornaig. *Balemartine School was to close and that the pupils were to be conveyed here daily.* Heylipol School Log, Aug 24<sup>th</sup> 1971.



**Balemartine School in 1945-6 (A165)**

L-R: (back row) Helen MacPhee, Balinoe; Ishbel Bunting, Balephuil; Janet MacKinnon, Balemartine; Janet Wilkie, Balinoe; Georgina MacGregor, Balemartine; Patsy MacPhee, Balinoe; Marion Eadie, Balemartine; Agnes MacDonald, Balemartine; Colina MacDonald, Mannal; Helen Penman, Balephuil; Mary Woole, Balephuil; Lachie MacArthur, Balemartine; Alistair Straker, Balinoe; Ross Downie, Balemartine; Donald Downie, Balemartine; Frank Conway, Balemartine; Tommy Doctor, Balephuil; Joe MacLeod, Balemartine; Sydney Hamilton, Balephuil; Willie MacCreadie, West Hynish; Billy Penman, West Hynish; (2nd back row) Chrissie MacLelland, Balemartine; Lena MacDonald, Balemartine; Cathy Conway, Balephuil; Ina Brown, Balephuil; Agnes Armstrong, Balephuil; Margaret Carter, Balephuil; Charlotte MacDowall, Balemartine; Duncan MacPhail, Balephuil; John MacNeill, Hynish; Angus Paterson, Crossapol; Donald Archie MacFadyen, Balemartine; Willie Brodie, Balephuil; Donald MacKay, Balephuil; John MacKinnon, Balemartine; Neil Sinclair, Balephuil; (middle row) Isabella MacArthur, Balinoe; Nellie MacDonald, Mannal; Peggy MacLean, Mannal; Ruby Collins, Balephuil; Margaret Doctor, Balephuil; Janette Hendry, Balemartine; John Carter, Balephuil; Mary Catherine MacArthur, Balemartine; Sara MacDonald, Balemartine; George Miller, Balemartine; Murdoch MacArthur, Balemartine; Gordon Doctor, Balephuil; Jimmy Doctor, Balephuil; John Neil MacKinnon, Balemartine; Donald Archie MacPhail, Balephuil; (2nd front row) James MacArthur, Balemartine; Bertie MacLean, Balephuil; Jenny Penman, Balephuil; Mary MacKinnon, Balemartine; John Fletcher, Balemartine; Alistair MacNeill, Hynish; Neil MacKinnon, Balephuil; John MacLeod, Balemartine; Duncan MacKinnon, Balephuil; James MacDonald, Mannal; Donald Brown, Balephuil; Stuart Doctor, Balephuil; (5 in front row) Margo MacKinnon, Balemartine; Alistair MacDonald, Balephuil; James MacDowall, Balemartine; Jean Fletcher, Balemartine; Tina MacLean, Mannal.



## Heylipol Public School – *Sgoil na Mòinteach*

The Gaelic name, Moss school, reflects the fact that it was built on the moor where the townships of Heylipol, Moss and Barrapol meet. The new school building was erected on the site of the pre-1872 Heylipol School (Alasdair Brown, Balephuill, personal communication).

James Campbell, from Campbeltown, was a well-known teacher there in the 1930s. He stayed with the Patersons in Crossapol, and commuted to school on his motorbike. A very tall man, he played the button accordion with Robert Nisbet and the gamekeeper in the island's dance band (Willie MacLean, Balinoe, personal communication).



**Heylipol School around 1935 (P33)**

L-R: (back row) Flora Nisbet, Teacher; Alasdair MacDonald, Sandaig; Neil Brownlie, Barrapol; Calum Henderson, Moss; Neil MacLean, Hough; Donald Kennedy, Balephuill; Neil MacNeill, Barrapol; Hector MacKinnon, Sandaig; Archie MacLean, Greenhill House; Hector Campbell, Barrapol; Hector MacNeill, Barrapol; James Campbell, Headmaster; (2nd back row) Archie MacArthur, Middleton Farm; Nonnie Campbell, Hillipol; Nancy MacLean, Hillipol Farm; Flora MacArthur, Sandaig; Mary Anne Henderson, Moss; Cathie Kennedy, Kilkenneth; Cathie Campbell, Kilkenneth; Cathie Hume, Hillipol Farm; Johann Brownlie, Barrapol; Mary MacArthur, Sandaig; John Campbell, Barrapol; John Hume, Hillipol Farm; (2nd front row) Colin MacKinnon, Sandaig; Neil MacKinnon, Barrapol; John MacArthur, Middleton Farm; Flora MacLean, Greenhill House; Kate Kennedy, Moss; Morag Kennedy, Traigh Bhi, Balephuill; Peggy Campbell, Hillipol; Archie MacLean, Hough House; John MacKinnon, Greenhill; Neil MacLean, Hillipol Farm; unknown; (front row) Donald Alasdair, MacLean, Hough; Mary Kennedy, Traigh Bhi, Balephuill; Mary MacKinnon, Barrapol; Flora MacKinnon, Barrapol; Effie MacKinnon, Hough; Ishabel MacPhail, Balephuill; unknown; Marion Kennedy, Kilkenneth; Hugh Archie MacLean, Hough House; Donald MacKinnon.

*When I went to Heylipol School...there was only one classroom in use and all the pupils and the teacher were in that room, which I found a bit strange after [my Glasgow school]. Flora Nisbet was the teacher, and she was a really, really nice lady, very gentle. Mabel MacArthur, Hough, who came to stay with her grandmother in Moss in 1940, AC 395.*

*There were one or two tinker children when they used to come to the Doc, the old gravel diggings [at Heylipol Church]. In these days the travelling people would live there and they would go to the school – not for long, two or three weeks at a time. They were nice children, nice people. There was never any fighting. Angus MacKechnie, AC389.*

*David [one of the boys] decided one day he would go out in the loch in a barrel, and he sat in the barrel and he was well out in the loch, and his grandfather must have been watching with binoculars from his house in Moss. He really created something terrible that we shouldn't have been allowed outside the playground. So that put paid to some of our games outside the wall [of the playground]. Mabel MacArthur, AC 395.*

In 1954 there were 11 pupils at Heylipol School, of which 7 were foster children.

*The children here are still very undisciplined, but the lessons repeatedly given in manners are beginning to show some effect. Heylipol School Log, Sept 30<sup>th</sup> 1955.*

*It was a challenge in these days. The telephone service had overhead poles and every pole had an insulator that stopped the cable rubbing and it was just challenging to see who could break them and we would get big stones. As a matter of fact there was not an insulator left on those poles. [The girls] joined in – that was the biggest challenge. We didn't want the girls to beat us. If you didn't hit one you were a cissy! (anonymous Heylipol pupil of the 1950s).*

In 1955 police were called to the school.

*This week a Police Officer called to interrogate the children re the breaking by stones of the Hillipol Church windows. The culprits were cautioned and another of the many admonitions re stone throwing was administered. The deed was done after school hours. Stone throwing had been a punishable offence since I came to this school as it was rife amongst children. Head teacher MH Morgan, in Heylipol School Log, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1955.*

Everyday life was ruled by the weather.

*Unprecedented blizzards and frost and snow caused an equally unprecedented attendance. There were no pupils. Heylipol School Log, Jan 17<sup>th</sup> 1955.*

In 1956 the school received an unusual visitor.

*Carrier pigeon arrived at school buildings...discovered owner's name on wing and have written to Maria Lierde in Belgium...the carrier pigeon flew away...letter received from Belgium that pigeon was a very valuable bird and that we could keep it, so it is a pity that it has left us. Heylipol School Log, Oct 5<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> 1956.*

*We played rounders, that was a favourite, football, and Mrs MacLean [the teacher] had a wee vegetable garden north of the school. She or Kate Fraser [the cleaner and school meals helper] would show us how to plant vegetable and keep the garden tidy, and even to this day you can see the mounds where the turf was dug as a shelter belt – lettuces, carrots, quick growing [things]. Angus MacKechnie, Crossapol, AC389.*

*There wasn't a lot of sport then. The school playground is only a small area, it's restricted, and the footballs you had in these days, they were heavy leather, and more often than not they were underinflated and you couldn't kick them far, a piece of dead leather. AC389 Angus MacKechnie, AC389.*

*We had wee play and big play. We used to play 'houses' a lot. I was the baby of the family and then as I got a wee bit bigger there were other younger ones. Flora MacKinnon was the mother. It's sliabh between the school and Balinoe and I don't know if they were old foundations but they made perfect wee houses, and we had our wee bedrooms and wee bits of china and all the rest of it. That's how we amused ourselves. Nothing sophisticated at all. We used our imagination.* Mabel MacArthur, Hough, AC 395.

In 1956 electricity came to the school.

*This week sees the hydro-electric project coming nearer as the poles are being erected around the school.* Heylipol School Log, Dec 18<sup>th</sup> 1955.

*Today is a special day in Tiree's history. At 3pm Mrs Hunter, wife of the local doctor, is to turn on the current to light up the east end of the island under the Hydro-electric scheme. We hope we will be in the same position before next winter.* Heylipol School Log, Mar 16<sup>th</sup> 1956.

*Today electricity supply for this area was switched on and proved quite satisfactory.* Heylipol School Log, Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 1956.

*Electric [hot water] geyser installed in dining room – so far not very satisfactory.* Heylipol School Log, June 9<sup>th</sup> 1960.

*There were dry toilets and in those days the Oban Times was there or the Bulletin and that's the toilet paper you used, cut in strips on a nail on the wall.* Angus MacKechnie, AC389.

The dry toilets were replaced in 1956.

*New Elsan [chemical] toilets are to be installed.* Heylipol School Log, Sept 7<sup>th</sup> 1956.

*Boring for iron ore has commenced around the school and children are very interested in the various machines and equipment near the school.* Heylipol School Log Oct 10<sup>th</sup> 1957.

*A whist drive in aid of school funds to purchase a school wireless is to be held in the school tonight.* Heylipol School Log, Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> 1960.

AMcK: *Kate Fraser, the cleaner cum dinner lady, she had a bicycle and there used to be a collection for Post Office Savings stamps. The fact that I was older and more responsible and I could ride a bicycle – it was my duty once a week to go up to Middleton post office. Archie MacArthur was there and I paid for them [the stamps], gave them to the teacher. I would take maybe an hour.*

MC: *To teach the children to save?*

AMcK: *I think it was maybe two shillings a week. Maybe at the end of the term the books were handed to the parents and they could cash them at the post office.* Angus MacKechnie talking to Maggie Campbell, AC389.

Heylipol School was closed in 1975.

*Today this school closes down. Pupils will transfer in August to the new open-plan Primary at Cornaigmore. I have now completed twenty happy years in charge here.* Doilidh Cameron, Heylipol School Log, June 27<sup>th</sup> 1975.

*In the first year I was here [1962] they were talking about having two primary schools, the existing one in Cornaig and building a new one in Crossapol but that never materialised. The*

*advantages [of bringing all the schools together] are there, but there was a lot of good competition [between the individual primary schools], you saw it on sports day when they all got into their wee boxes and ran and jumped against each other. There were a lot more youngsters then there are now. But from an educational point of view it's obviously better to have them all together in the one school.* Gordon Connell, AC299.

## **Cornaigmore Public School - *Sgoil Chòrnaig***

This school opened in 1876. Five children in the first three years won bursaries to Glasgow, three to Hutchisons School, and between 1901 and 1903, 12 out of 24 children left to emigrate - to Canada, Australia, America and Glasgow.

Sandy MacKinnon (*Sandaidh Ghobhainn*), Kilkenneth, told this story about Cornaig School. *The headmaster at the time was called MacKinnon. He kept chickens in the school yard and one morning a bird was found dead. The dead chicken was being thrown around from boy to boy when who should walk round the corner but the headmaster. Roderick Lamont from the Sràid Ruadh , Balevullin, was holding it at the time and he was blamed and expelled. He was leaving school the next week anyway and later emigrated and joined the Canadian army.*



**Cornaig School in the late 1910s (R98)**

1<sup>st</sup> on the left is Duncan MacLean, the first vet in Tiree

Donald Kennedy (*Dòmhnall Eachainn*), Balevullin, was born in 1917 and went to Cornaig school. In his day the boys did not wear shoes in summer. He left school at 14 to become a herd boy because his family needed him to be out working. By contrast, one of his contemporaries, John Henderson (*Iain Mòr a' Bhrochain*) was still at school when he was 17.

For many years the infants' class was in the front room of the headmaster's house with an open coal fire.

*When I went to school [around 1930] it was into the headmaster's sitting room, because they were short of accommodation. Mr Morrison stayed in the other parts of the house...In the*

*porch they had a couple of buckets of clean water [from a well near the headmaster's house] – this was before 1936, and they had a tankard and everyone got a drink out of that if they wanted... There was one coal fire in every classroom. [The cleaner] would clear out all the fires in the evening and set them and in the morning she would set a match to them... There were only four teachers there altogether before [1936]. Hector MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, AC377.*



**Behind the new Cornaig School in 1933 (C166)**

L-R: unknown boy; Mary Flora MacKinnon née MacKenzie (the plumber's wife); Neil MacLeod, Carrachan; Duncie MacKinnon née MacMaster, Kenovay; Doris MacLean née MacKechnie, Lochside; Jean MacKinnon (Sine Eòghainn Èairdsidh); Jessie Kennedy; Morag Lamont, Balevullin.

*Arrangements made for sheltering infants, whose class room is within dwelling house.*  
Scarinish School Log, Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> 1939.

There was a First World War 'cannon' outside the headmaster's house, and as boys they played on it in the 1930s. It was taken away at the start of the Second World War for scrap for the war effort (Archie MacKinnon, Cornaigmore, personal communication).

Before 1936 there was no Janitor. The school cleaner was *Cailleach NicChaluim*.

## **DO MacLean**

DO MacLean, the headmaster in Cornaigmore from 1922 to 1927, is still fondly remembered on Tìrè. He started the Inter-School Sports and began evening classes and a choir. He was also indirectly responsible for the first vet on the island. Flora MacKinnon, Balevullin, tells this story. Her uncle, Duncan MacLean, had left school and had gone sea. The headmaster came to visit Duncan's father and persuaded him to send the young man back to school. Duncan then went to Glasgow University and qualified as a vet when he was 27, coming back to Tìrè to set up the first practice.

DO MacLean left Tiree for Crieff Public School, and he became the Provost of the town in 1956. He returned every summer to Calum MacLean's guest house in Salum, where he would organise games of cricket on the machair. His son, the optician Sir Donald MacLean, was a prominent Conservative who became chairman of the Scottish Tory party. Sir Donald's wife, Muriel, was sadly killed in the IRA bombing of the 1984 Conservative conference at Brighton.



**Cornaig School in the 1920s (Q66)**

DO MacLean, Headmaster, is seated centre. Standing on the right is Miss MacDiarmid.

## Weather station

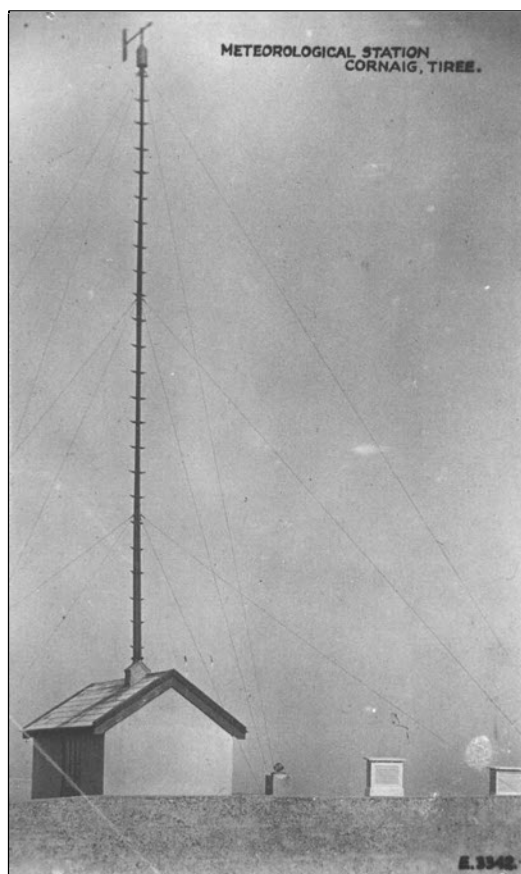
DO MacLean was also the first Met Office observer on the island. This grew in importance during the Second World War and led to the creation of the Tiree Meteorological Station.

*May 1925*

*Letter to Director of Education, Dunoon,*

*The Meteorological Office has been trying to make arrangements for the erection of a meteorological station on the island of Tiree and the intention has been to offer the post to the Headmaster of the Cornaigmore School...One reason for the selection of Cornaigmore was that the existence of the Higher Grade School appeared to offer there a fairly permanent promise of a competent observer. Mr Ross [the previous headmaster] in particular is known to have had previous meteorological experience.*

The plan was to make three weather reports a day, seven days a week, and for this the Met Office offered to pay the head teacher £50 a year. In December 1925 a weather station was set up in the south side of the school playground with the barometer on the landing of the schoolhouse staircase. The first weather report was sent by DO MacLean to London on Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 1926, using the new telegraph line at Cornaigmore post office.



**The Metereological Station at Cornaig School (N1)**

JR Morrison (nicknamed *Mogan* by the children because of his wide ‘sailors’ trousers) took over as headmaster and weather observer from 1929 until 1938 when the duties were taken over by the first non-teacher, John MacPhail, Cornaigmore. Morrison is remembered by Angus MacLean, Scarinish, as a “great teacher” and by Cathie Omand, Kilmoluaig as “always being in a hurry”. He was unmarried and had a housekeeper called Mrs Allen. He drove a motorbike with a sidecar, a great novelty at the time. He went on to become a Director of Education in the north of Scotland.

## **Inter-School Sports**

The Inter-School sports were started by DO MacLean around 1925. At first they were held on *Pàirc an Eilein*, by Island House.

*Sports were held for all School Children at Island House Park in honour of the King’s Jubilee.* Scarinish School Log, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1935.

However, Ruaig School refused to take part at first because it was too far to travel (Iain MacKinnon (*Iain Chaluim*), Kilmoluaig, personal communication), and for a few years the games were held east of Baugh House, so that all schools would take part (Alasdair Sinclair, Brock, personal communication).

After Cornaigmore Junior Secondary School was set up in 1936 the Sports moved permanently to Cornaig. Rather than all the pupils competing, as they do today, teams of the best athletes were selected from each school.



*This week the Annual School Sports was held at Cornaig School. A team of 8 from each school competing. Heylipol School Log, June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1955.*

The Tiree Association, which was set up in 1901, was a generous sponsor of all the island schools.

*A shield for the Primary school with the highest points is to be awarded by the Tiree Association. Heylipol School Log, June 1<sup>st</sup> 1956.*

*School team yesterday won Shield awarded by Tiree Association for primary school having most points. Heylipol School had 23 out of a possible 36. John MacDonald, Primary 6, has been chosen to go to County Sports though he is only 11 years old. Heylipol School Log, June 7<sup>th</sup> 1957.*



**Tiree High School football team in the early 1970s with teacher Gordon Connell. (F146)**

L-R: (back) Hugh 'Doodan' MacArthur, Caoles; Lachie MacFadyen, Scarinish; Iain MacKinnon, Balephetrish; goalie Raymond Clark, Barrapol; George Straker, Mannal; John Neil Brown, Cornaigbeg; Hugh 'Paddy' MacInnes, Salum; (front) Archie MacFadyen, Balemartine; Douglas Rowan, Crossapol; Russell MacIver, Kilmoluaig; Donald 'Dote' MacDonald, Vault; John Omand, Balephetrish; Alasdair MacInnes, Ruaig. The boy leaning over on the left is Murray Omand, Balephetrish.

*A team of eight pupils were conveyed to Cornaigmore to compete for Tiree School Sports Shield. Ruaig School Log, June 15<sup>th</sup> 1961.*

*Mr Brown, contractor, has kindly made temporary jumping stands to enable the children to practice for the forthcoming sports, Heylipol School Log, May 10<sup>th</sup> 1957.*

Alec Hector MacDonald, Hynish, remembers training for the Balemartine School sports team by running round the school yard in the 1960s.

## 5. Secondary schooling

Before 1872 some schools did provide some 'higher' education. In 1863 five pupils in Kirkapoll were studying Latin and two Greek (Inveraray Archives Bundle 1541, An Iodhlann 1999.167.6).

*Set an examination in First stage Greek. The marks were 46, 44, 39, 35 and 33 out of a possible 70. Balemartine School Log, Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 1897.*

Pupils could go to university straight from their 'primary' school.

*Two of my pupils left last week for the Medical Preliminary, Glasgow. Balemartine Log Book, March 31<sup>st</sup> 1886.*

*One of my young doctors passed in all the preliminaries, the other passed in all but two. April 7<sup>th</sup> 1886.*

*Neil MacKinnon (ex-year 6) has gained a MacKinnon Bursary. He must be off to Glasgow next week to attend a Technical school there. This makes him the third bursary gained by pupils of Balemartine. Balemartine Log Book, Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> 1897.*

The 1872 Act was concerned only with primary schools. Even by 1897, only 5% of children in Scotland went on to secondary education.

From 1892 pupils were given a Merit Certificate if they left school having reached a certain level.

Oban High School had opened in 1893, and after 1903 a Qualifying Examination allowed some pupils to progress to secondary school. A typical question for the 'Qualifying' was, *Recently £1 was worth 112 francs and 400,000 German marks. How many francs could be obtained for £6 18s 9d and how many German marks for £2 6s 3d?*

*6 pupils presented in the Qualifying Exam. All passes. 7 pupils not presented. HMI Report, Balemartine, 1923.*

In Scarinish, it was 1916 before the first children went on to secondary education - Flora Nisbet, Heanish went to Cornaigmore 'Higher Grade' School and her sister Kate went on to Oban High School. The first pupil to leave Cornaig School for Oban was in 1923, when Sarah MacDonald, Kilmoluaig left aged 15.

But by the 1930s 10 out of 34 school leavers in Scarinish went on to Cornaigmore (An Iodhlann 1997.259. 1&2).

*One boy and two girls left for Cornaigmore Higher Grade. Balemartine School Log, Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> 1933.*

*At that time [she was born in 1914] Scarinish, Ruaig, Balemartine and Heylipoll were known as 'small' schools – now they'd be called primary schools. If you came from the smaller schools you took a small exam [Qualifying] which gave you a bursary which kept you in lodgings in Cornaig. [Around 1928] we came home on the Friday and went back on the Monday morning, except in the winter when we went up on Sunday night because it was dark*

*in the morning. [We walked] every step of the way. There was no other form of transport. Donald [her elder brother] was there for three years but I was there for only one year because Johnny Brown from the [Scarinish] Hotel got a car and we were able to go [daily] by car. Donald went to Oban and took his 'Highers' [Post-Qualifying Exam] and was ready to go to University, but my mother was a widow and just couldn't do it. He had to go sea [although] he didn't like the sea. I think it's very wrong that a poor man's son shouldn't have the same chance as the rich man's son. Annie Kennedy, Scarinish, AC 66.*

An Act in 1936 created two sorts of secondary schools – three-year Junior Secondaries, as in Tiree, and five-year Senior Secondaries, as in Oban, which would give you the qualifications to go university.

*Since the school was last reported the advanced division has been discontinued, post-primary pupils being now conveyed to Cornaigmore Higher Grade Public School. HMI Report, Balemartine, 1937.*

To get into Cornaigmore School children from the five island primaries had to take the Qualifying Exam. There were three streams in Cornaig - the 'A's did Latin and the 'B's cookery and woodwork.

*A: Once they went up into the secondary, the ones that were taking Latin and Gaelic and English – that was the three languages – you were in an A class. But if you didn't take Latin you were graded a B class and that was Technical and Home Economics. And all the ones that were in the A class, when they reached 13, that was the third year, they got the chance then, if their parents were behind them, to leave school or sit an entrance exam to get into Oban High School.*

*H: They would get bursaries that would give them accommodation, but they [also] had to fork out as well.*

*A: Keil School was a private school and a few of the boys went, the ones where the parents could afford to send them [Keil School, Dumbarton, opened in 1925 and closed in 2000]. Hector and Archie MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, AC377.*

If you failed the Qualifying exam twice you still went to Cornaig but stayed in the 'C's. The 'C's were known in the playground as the 'Clowns'.

*Katie Nisbet told me a few years ago that the only school that had a 100% record in the Qualifying was Scarinish. There were one or two that didn't go on but she very craftily didn't present them so she had no failures. Angus Munn (who went to school in 1933), Heanish, AC71.*

To get in to Oban High School pupils had to pass a Post-Qualifying Exam.

*Intimation received from Dunoon that Ann MacLeod and Mairi Campbell have passed the third year Post-Qualifying Examination and that the latter has been awarded a Class II Bursary. Cornaigmore School Log, June 26<sup>th</sup> 1943.*

*Received intimation of County exam results. All of the 11 candidates passed the Qualifying Examination, and 11 candidates (out of 14) passed the 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Post-Qualifying Examination. Cornaigmore School Log, June 15<sup>th</sup> 1944.*

There was some financial help.

*Highlands and Islands Bursary (School) Examination held.* Cornaigmore School Log, May 6th 1941.

*In my time at Cornaig, Argyll County Council instituted an examination to enable good pupils to leave Cornaigmore at the end of second year, and go to Oban for 'advanced' teaching.* Professor Donald Meek, personal communication.

*I went to Oban then. Oban was good, but the main thing was being separated from one's island, one's home. It's a really sad thing to leave your home- I loved this place so much. The headmaster [in Oban] at the time was Iain MacLean, the brother [of the poet] Sorley – a good man and a terrific scholar. The English teacher was Iain Crichton Smith.* Professor Donald Meek, Caolas. AC271.

## 6. New Cornaigmore School: 1936



**The new Cornaigmore Higher Grade School opened in 1936 (H115)**

Cornaigmore School was rebuilt in 1936 as a Junior Secondary, or Higher Grade School (although this term had been mentioned in the Scarinish School Register in 1922). Since 1872 it had always been the biggest of the five schools with four teachers and older pupils coming there for further education. It also had more room for expansion than Scarinish, Balemartine or Heylipol, but it was by no means the most central.

*Operations began today preparatory to the erection of the new school building. This day therefore ranks as a red letter day in the history of the school [written in red ink]* Cornaigmore School Log, June 13<sup>th</sup> 1935.

Miss McDiarmid, the infants' teacher in Cornaigmore, laid the first stone of the new school, putting two pennies in the cement for luck (Archie MacKinnon, personal communication). Hugh MacDonald, Mannal, remembered a puffer carrying the building materials coming in to the beach at *Cladach a' Chrògain* in Balephetrish.

*The death of HM King George V was suitably recognised by the observance of two minutes silence at 1.30, forming part of a short service...attended by tradesmen working at the new building.* Cornaigmore School Log, Jan 21<sup>st</sup> 1936.

*School closed today for May holiday. Resumed today in the New Building [also written in red ink].* Cornaigmore School Log, May 19<sup>th</sup> 1936.

As the Third Statistical Account reported, *Cornaigmore school became one of the best-appointed schools in the county, with its own electric lighting plant, central heating and an ingenious water supply necessitating the installation of a windmill. Natives of Tiree have achieved distinction in the learned professions as well as in other walks of life: the island is noted for its exports of 'mariners, ministers and men'* (Third Statistical Account, 1953, p. 129).



**Secondary 1 at Tiree High School in 1966 (F93)**

L-R: (back row) Kathleen Burnett, Ruaig; David Corbett, Barrapol; George Smith, West Hynish; Roddy MacIennan, Caoles; Flora Brown, Balevullin; (front row) Jean Bucher, Barrapol; Nell MacKinnon, Sandaig; Ann Hayes nee Munn, Crossapol; Jean MacKay, Balemartine; Mairi MacKay, Balinoe.

## Water

Before 1936, Cornaig School had a hand pump over a well in the school grounds. After the staff room and house were built in the 1920s, the school cleaner had to fill a sixty gallon tank by hand every morning.

In 1936 a William Dickie windmill was erected at the north end of Loch Bhasapol. This pumped water from a well into a 1,000 gallon tank in the school attic and this water was used for toilets and cleaning. As the loch water entered the tank, however, it also powered an ingenious wheel which lifted water from the school well for drinking.



**The windmill on the shore of Loch Bhasapol that pumped water to header tanks at Cornaig School (P114)**  
 Danny Gillespie in the foreground was preparing the windmill for demolition when the photo was taken during the 1970s.

The new school had outside flushing toilets.

*The new sanitary offices for the pupils were brought into use yesterday, thus providing them with water-borne sanitation for the first time in the school history of Tiree. Cornaigmore School Log, June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1936.*

*Headmaster arrived back in Tiree to find water supply system out of order. Janitor had to send part of the wind pump to Surveyor, Tobermory, to be repaired. Cornaigmore School Log, Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> 1938.*

*Windmill wheel snapped off in gale through night. Cornaigmore School Log, Dec 14<sup>th</sup> 1941.*

*Arranged for use of two-man manual fire pump with Mr John MacPhail and Constable D MacInnes. Cornaigmore School Log, Dec 15<sup>th</sup> 1941.*

*Janitor and boys got pump under way. Cornaigmore School Log, Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 1941.*

*It was three months before it was repaired, during which time water was pumped by hand. Windmill now repaired. Cornaigmore School Log, Mar 16<sup>th</sup> 1942.*

*School well cleaned out by contractor. Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 1945.*

In 1971 the windmill was replaced by an electric pump at the loch. In 1984 the school was connected to the mains water.



## Heating

The old school had an open fireplace in every room. In 1936 the new school was heated by a coal fired boiler and radiators. The Home Economics Room had an eight ringed stove, a copper boiler for heating water and a stove for heating the irons, all burning coal.

*Central heating system in operation quite successfully.* Cornaigmore School Log, Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 1936.

*Insurance Inspector examines Boiler and Generating plant.* Cornaigmore School Log, Aug 13<sup>th</sup> 1941.

By the time the new Dining Room was added in 1946 the school was using 70 tons of coal a year. This was brought over from the 'Coalree' at Kenovay, having been unloaded earlier from puffers which landed on the beach.

## Lighting

The old school was lit by hanging paraffin lamps in each room. After 1936 a diesel generator charged up a bank of 50 batteries which lit the buildings with 110V supply. The batteries were charged up twice a week, and powered the light bulbs and a small vacuum cleaner in Mr MacDougall's house.

*The electric light functions very well so far but the engine (10 hp diesel) seems to require a rather large quantity of lubricating oil. This however may be normal to its type.* Cornaigmore School Log, Jan 13<sup>th</sup> 1937.

*Generating engine overhauled by Potter's engineer.* Cornaigmore School Log, June 6<sup>th</sup> 1945

In 1938 the police station moved from Heanish to a building next to the school so that it could get its electricity and water supply from the school. The station was taken over by the school in 1973 when the police moved to Scarinish, and it was used as a flat for teachers. The school was connected to the electricity grid in 1955 (information from Archie MacKinnon, Cornaig, school Janitor 1952 to 1992).

A school Janitor was appointed for the first time to help run all this new machinery.

*The necessity of appointing a janitor (part time) to attend to the hydraulic, heating and electrical mechanisms in connection with the new school was pointed out.* Cornaigmore School Log, May 9<sup>th</sup> 1936.

*Mr Angus MacKinnon [Kilmoluaig, the father of Iain Aonghais] was appointed Janitor,* Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 28<sup>th</sup> 1936.

Other modern conveniences followed,

*The new clock was delivered today, an electric battery model stated to go for 800 days without attention or renewal of battery.* Cornaigmore School Log, Dec 10<sup>th</sup> 1936.

*The piano was delivered today.* Cornaigmore School Log, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1936.

However, all was not plain sailing in the new building.

*Today 8 hours of bright sunshine were recorded on Tiree and conditions in the south class rooms were very uncomfortable for both staff and pupils, many of whom felt ill and/or sleepy in consequence of the “glare”. The attention of the Director of Education was again drawn to the need for the provision of some kind of protection from direct sunlight.* Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> 1937.

Two corrugated-iron shelters, one for boys and one for girls, were built so that the children could be outside in wild weather. The sexes were encouraged not to play together, and the staff room gave a good vantage point for the girls’ shelter.

## The Curriculum

*The lack of a gymnasium or assembly hall creates a serious obstacle to the proper development of physical education. The addition of a drying room for cloaks would be of much benefit. The headmaster [Mr MacDougall] has to undertake a considerable share of the teaching...and is left with only one period free for administration and supervisory duties.*

- *Gaelic: as an appreciable number of the pupils are boarded out from the south and have only a limited facility in speaking the language, further attention could with advantage be devoted to oral practice.*
- *Rural Subjects (Gardening and Handwork): the regular teacher is on war service but temporary arrangements have been made to continue the instruction. Sewing was not of a high standard. There was some weakness in pattern making and stitchery. Further attention should be given to mending and darning.*

Inspectors’ Report, Cornaigmore Higher Grade School, 1943-44.

*Cookery and laundry work have been effectively taught. Manipulation was neat and finished results were good. The substitution of house-wifery would add considerable interest. Knitting and mending had received attention but a better quality was desirable in the former.* HMI report 1946-7, Cornaigmore Junior Secondary School.

## Games

*When the school came out at 11 o’clock we used to play football and it didn’t matter if it was raining or not – you still enjoyed your football. And into the class, maybe soaking. Coming out at dinner time, and sometimes I was so engrossed in the football I wouldn’t come home at all [for lunch] and my sister would be going up and bring me a scone and cheese. And into again the school, and there would be steam arising off you with the dampness. The football [itself] wasn’t supplied at all, but one of the boys, Archie MacLean, Lochside, he was quite a good athlete and keen on football and running. He took it upon himself and he would get this football and you had to pay 6 [old] pence towards buying this football. And he sent away and he got this football and, providing you had paid your six pence you could play. If you didn’t pay you couldn’t play, and that was it! Hector MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, AC377.*

*Lord Provost of Glasgow and Lady MacNeill presented football to school.* Cornaigmore School Log, June 18<sup>th</sup> 1947.

*We played football on whatever machair was available. There was a pitch of sorts at the school... Occasionally we got a team together and played the RAF boys. That didn’t happen*

*on a regular basis. There was no bringing in teams from other islands. Gordon Connell, AC299.*

*The biggest sport [at Cornaig school] was shinty. It wasn't the most popular sport with the pupils, but Mr MacDougall was a great man for 'must play shinty.' Angus MacKechnie, AC389.*

*When I came to Tiree at first [1962] shinty was the poor relation of football, much to the chagrin of Mr MacDougall, because he was a great shinty man. He used to take the football and lock it in the cupboard and make the kids play shinty, which didn't endear the boys to shinty. However, there were shinty sticks of sorts. They were just bits of tree trunks with a bend in the end of them! There was a time in the 1970s and 80s when shinty wasn't played an awful lot on Tiree, but it was revived by the Fèis. Gordon Connell, AC299.*

Shinty sticks were donated to the school by *Comunn na h-Oigridh*. The girls played hockey with them.



**Cornaigmore School pupils playing shinty in the 1930s-40s (N199)**

## **Gardening**

There was a school garden in the south-east corner of the playground. Crofters would bring loads of manure and seaweed.

*Garden has been extended and properly fenced.* Cornaigmore School Log, Oct 7<sup>th</sup> 1940.

*Miss Sarah MacDonald [the teacher at Balemartine School] unable to come over for Gardening lessons.* Cornaigmore School Log, Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> 1945.

John Fletcher, Balemartine, remembers the Technical teacher (also called Mr John Fletcher) teaching children who were not doing Technical Drawing. There were about 15 small plots, each shared between two children.

Mr Rowan was another Technical teacher and he also took Gardening. One day the class were admiring a row of carrots when the teacher was called inside. He told a Glasgow boy to thin the carrots by taking out every second seedling. The boy did this and got to the end of the row. "That's me finished," he said. The other Tíree boys thought they would play a trick on him and said, "The teacher told you to go on until he got back." The poor boy went on pulling up every second plant up and down the drill until almost all the carrots had been pulled out! (Archie MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, personal communication).

During the Second World War, joinery was taught by an islander, as many male teachers were away in the services.

*Joiner* [Hugh MacDonald, *Eòghann Eachainn*, Kenovay] *resumes his weekly afternoon with the Benchwork boys.* Cornaigmore School Log, March 16<sup>th</sup> 1946.

*Mr Duncan MacInnes commenced duty as teacher of Benchwork, Technical Drawing etc.* Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> 1946.

Woodwork was taught in the Science Room until 1948, when a Technical Block was built next to the Dining Hall.

The leaving age was raised to 15 in 1947.

## Clothing

There is currently a dress code at Cornaig School, but there has never been a uniform *Well, I can remember wearing big, heavy tackety boots* [made by Hoggs of Fife, founded in 1888], *also short trousers, dungaree jacket, woolly hat and probably a typical checkit shirt. Not the fancy things you get today. Very basic clothes, but serviceable for out of school chores. Long lasting gear, you had them from one year to the other.* Angus MacKechnie, AC389.

The boys loved to slide along the school corridor on wet days when they couldn't get out, with sparks flying from their tackety boots. The skill was to grab the corner by the Staff Room stairs and roar round the corner towards the girls' cloakroom.

*My mother was very good at knitting and we always had Fair Isle jumpers – a bit scratchy! I had a coat which my mother had made out of an army blanket. It was a nice Air Force blue, lined and it was really, really cosy. We had oilskins of course and wellingtons. We had to have those because we walked to school. In the summer, around Easter, you took off your shoes and went in bare feet then. Everything was handmade...What I remember is Liberty bodices and combinations! Not very glamorous, I'm afraid, and the young ones nowadays wouldn't be seen dead in them. The combinations had long legs and long sleeves, an all-in-one like long johns and tops. And then we wore Liberty bodices on top of that, and long woollen stockings – very cosy! You didn't wear trousers.* Mabel MacArthur, Hough, AC 395.

*There was no such thing as girls in trousers in these days.* Ethel MacCallum, Scarinish, who came to Ruaig in 1943, AC 379.

## Foster children

From the 1920s Glasgow had been sending children needing a home to the country areas of west Scotland, and Tíree had a large number of children who were called officially in those days 'Boarded-outs'.

*A lot of people called them 'Boarded Outs'. I didn't like to call them that. I called them foster children. They couldn't help it. There were some lovely children there. Archie MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, AC377.*

*Six girls and one boy attending the school and 'boarded out' by Glasgow Parish Council were removed to Glasgow this week. Scarinish School Log, Dec 14<sup>th</sup> 1923.*

During the Second World War this increased.

*Messrs Ford and MacKay, Inspectors of Children Boarded-out here called at school. Cornaigmore School Log, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1941.*

One foster child of the 1940s remembers the 'uniform' they had to wear.

*Navy blue gym slips, black stockings, black boots, a blouse and raincoat with a belt. That's definitely what we had to wear. We were all dressed the same. The boys had grey suits with short trousers, grey knee socks, a boys' school cap and the same coats that we had. We were all under the Glasgow Corporation and they sent clothes home and we were all dressed that way.*

Another foster child recalls that,

*You daren't wear trousers in school in my days. It was only ones going through the Corporation of Glasgow that had the gyms and black jumpers, and it was boots we wore, like boys' boots and a half moon plate on the heel.*

Sometimes these children found it hard to adjust to their new homes.

*Mr Lord, Glasgow, Depute Director of Public Assistance called at school at request re troublesome pupil. Cornaigmore School Log, Mar 28<sup>th</sup> 1945.*

*Glasgow Public Assistance Inspector MacGill visits school and is allowed opportunity to interview Boarded-out children. Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 25<sup>th</sup> 1946.*

*Mr Meldrum of Glasgow PA Dept called, on request, to hear evidence of apparent ill-treatment at home of Boarded-out child. Cornaigmore School Log, April 26<sup>th</sup> 1949.*

*Constable MacInnes visited the school and interviewed several pupils in connection with the theft in MacArthur's store. Balemartine School Log, Mar 26<sup>th</sup> 1947.*

*Five Glasgow Boarded-out pupils removed from the district because they took part in the theft from a local store. Balemartine School Log, April 21<sup>st</sup> 1947.*

*Two boarded out girls leave school early, without permission, to begin planned attempt to stage runaway. Cornaigmore School Log, April 27<sup>th</sup> 1949.*

*Nurse MacDonald, of Glasgow Welfare Dept called, on request, to hear evidence of apparent unfair treatment of Boarded-out child at home. Cornaigmore School Log, May 25<sup>th</sup> 1949.*

*Mr Baron, optician employed by Glasgow Corporation calls at school and is given facilities to test the eyes of three boarded out children. Cornaigmore School Log, Dec 7th 1949.*

*[I'm still friendly with] the boarded out people. Even to this day. People like Billy Whiteside. They blended in very well with the local community. Angus MacKechnie, AC389.*

## Allan MacDougall

The man who exerted the greatest influence on Cornaig School was Mr MacDougall, headmaster there for 31 years from 1938 to 1969. Allan Campbell MacDougall was from Oban, and came to Tiree in 1933 after six months working at Keills School, one mile from Port Askaig in Islay. He had worked on MacBrayne's ships as a purser during his holidays.



**Allan Campbell MacDougall working as a purser on one of MacBrayne's ships (N192)**

At first he worked under the headmaster, Mr Morrison, teaching senior primary. When Morrison left, a Mr Brown was appointed to be the new head teacher. Brown had to withdraw, however, because of ill health and MacDougall was appointed acting head in 1938 (Archie MacKinnon, personal communication). When war broke out, he was found medically unfit for military service.

Mr MacDougall, known to the children as 'Dougie', or *An Dughallach*, had had polio as a child. He limped but had a very strong upper body, and the children remember he could move the school piano on his own. He swam almost daily on Cornaig beach and was keen on golf which he played on a nine hole course which went from Loch Bhasapol to Seafield (Archie MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, personal communication). He insisted that the children went out at playtime, saying "Go and develop yourself."

*He had a robust constitution and had never been known to miss a day's duty through illness. He rarely missed his daily dip in the sea, summer or winter (Oban Times, Sept 18<sup>th</sup> 1969).*

*When I came to Tiree the only golfing activity was on the machair in Corraig, and that was Mr MacDougall and myself. When he found out I played golf he told me he had a wee golf course out the back of the house. There were about four or five holes, and by approaching the holes from different angles you were able to manufacture a nine hole course. We went out a few times on the summer... Apparently [Mr MacDougall went out swimming] every evening or morning, summer and winter, hail, rain or snow! He was hardy; he had great upper body strength, and I think it was swimming that gave him that. He had huge shoulders and he could hit a golf ball very well but, because of the disability in his legs, he got pretty tired towards the end of an 18 hole tournament. He was a big, powerful man, and he had a big powerful voice. Gordon Connell, AC299.*

*Mr Donald MacPherson concludes what has been a refreshing course of Physical Education held mostly in open air. Allan MacDougall, writing in the Corraigmore School Log, March 26<sup>th</sup> 1941.*

He was very particular and inspected the children's teeth, hair and shoes, as well as their fingers for nicotine stains (Seonaid Brown, Balephuill, personal communication). One girl was a heavy smoker, even at school. Mr MacDougall could smell the cigarettes and noticed the nicotine stains on her fingers. She denied that she had ever smoked and told him "It's the rust from our gate." "Well, tell your uncle to buy a new gate!" was the headmaster's reply.

He was also a fine singer and led the singing in the school Monday morning service, accompanied by a piano. He always put a tuning fork to his ear to find the note before he sung.

*Some pleasant choral singing conducted by the headmaster was heard. Inspectors' Report 1946-7, Corraigmore Junior Secondary School.*

*A conscientious church attender, he acted as precentor in Corraig church for well over 30 years and his deep rich voice was heard and admired on [BBC] Radio 4 in a Gaelic church service from Tiree when he led two psalms in the traditional manner. Oban Times, Sept 18<sup>th</sup> 1969.*

He was also a JP, the Tiree correspondent of the Oban Times and a member of the Nursing Committee which raised funds for the district nurses before the NHS was set up in 1948.

He was a fierce disciplinarian. Archie MacKinnon, the Janitor from 1952 to 1992, calls him a "straight man. All he had to do was cough and there would be silence!" He could be very strict with his young female teachers, who knew they had to behave themselves at the weekend dances. He would ask the children in the assembly to put their hands up if they had been to a dance (Seonaid Brown, Balephuill, personal communication) and would be furious with the older school girls if they had been to a dance at the RAF camp. They'd be "on the carpet" on Monday morning (Effie MacDonald, Middleton, personal communication).

*He learned his Gaelic on Tiree through Gaelic songs. He was one of the best singers that I can recall. Some of the boys would sneak into Room 3 to play that piano, and when he came around you got belted for it. You weren't encouraged...Murray Omand. he was a keen accordionist. He learned himself the accordion by listening to the Scottish dance broadcasts on the radio and he used to go down to the old weather station with his accordion and we would all gather round there at play time and listen to Murray play. When Murray got a wee bit older, when the chance came he was going to the dances to play. He went to school on*



*Monday morning and he had blisters on his fingers [from being strapped] because he was at the dance. That's the sort of man Allan C MacDougall was. He did not encourage music on Tiree. He was very against pupils going to a dance. He liked music, he liked ceilidhs, he liked concerts, but while you were still at school he was bitter against you going to a dance. Jean MacCallum, Balevullin. AC 384.*

*Dances were much more frequent [then]. Quite often you had one dance a week in the winter and in the summer it was, maybe, three times a week in the [Glasgow] Fair time. Officially [schoolchildren] weren't allowed to go to the dances. The head teacher, Mr MacDougall, apparently took great exception to kids going to dances and the stories I got when I came to Cornaig was that he lined them up on a Monday morning and belted the ones that had been at dances. Very few [children] went to dances when I came here [in 1962].*

*MC: I can remember at school on a Monday morning he would say, "Anybody in this class at the Friday night dance?" "No," [we replied]. We were so frightened!*

*GC: In many ways he was ruling with a kind of 1930s attitude. Most people thought it wasn't up to the school what [kids] did out of school. But the old fashioned style was that you looked after your lids whether they were in school or out of school. He wasn't challenged over the years. He got away with it. But he mellowed in his later years.*

*MC: Parents weren't very keen that their children should be at dances before they were 16 anyway.*

*GC: Probably not, but as the Swinging Sixties [arrived] kids started to mature a bit earlier. They saw their big sisters and brothers going to the dances and they wanted to go as well. Gordon Connell and Maggie Campbell, AC299.*

*Some of his pupils felt he used the belt "too much," even if you spelt something wrong. You always got so many spellings every week to learn and then you got this test on a Friday and for every spelling you got wrong you got one whack of the belt. Oh! [Mr MacDougall] would be strapping away for about half an hour. The girls got the belt too. Yes! Archie MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, AC377.*

*A mark of the tight discipline in the school is the pristine wooden panelling in the 1936 school corridors. Most of the old desks were covered in the names of former pupils carved into the wood, but if Mr MacDougall caught a boy with a penknife in the corridor they would pay for it! (Archie MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, personal communication).*

*One boy remembered he was "so strict" he "could see through walls" and "appeared out of the blue". He was "tough" and "the strap was his pride and joy." There was a black strap coiled in his pocket, another in his desk in the classroom and a third in his office. He was very strict if you were off school sick. If he saw you outside when you were meant to be ill you would be strapped. One of his pupils remembers boys and girls not even being allowed to talk to each other in the playground. They had separate cloakrooms and if the pupils went one inch over lines drawn around the cloakroom they were severely strapped.*

*Room 3 was known as "the slaughterhouse."  
We always remembered Room 3 [Mr MacDougall's room]. We never liked Room 3. We never did. Jean MacCallum, Balevullin. AC 384.*

One day two boys went looking for peewit's eggs at break time. They were late back for classes and one of them excused themselves to Mr MacDougall by making up a story about having to help a crofter haul a cow out of the loch. The two were put into separate rooms and questioned about the exact colour of the cow. The first said, "A brown cow," and the second, "A black cow, sir!" They were well and truly strapped!

One pupil in the 1950s remembers being s\*\*t scared of him – "he was a tyrant." Another boy, who went to school in 1963, remembers sitting down in the dining room. His spoon had been bent by one of the other boys and he tried to straighten it. Too late! Mr MacDougall had seen him and he was hauled off for a strapping. He couldn't convince the headmaster he was actually trying to put things right.

However, he was "great at the Gaelic" (Seonaid Brown, Balephuill, personal communication), and every month he would hold a ceilidh in the school, in rooms 4 and 5, under the auspices of *An Comunn Gàidhealach* (of which he was a founder member on Tiree).

*He held ceilidhs once a month in the school. They were great. You went along and sang or recited. I remember once or twice I played the accordion in my early learning days. It tended to be the old songs that were sung. It was good, a real throw back to the old days. Colin Lamont [Cailean Dhòmhnaill, from Cornaigmore], he was a great character. He had songs with goodness knows how many verses, some of which I believe he made up, although it was all in Gaelic. He was a great joke teller as well, and he had a very, very distinctive laugh. The joke itself wasn't that great, but when you heard his laugh, everybody just fell about laughing themselves!*

*Alasdair Campbell from Balevullin and his wife Mary Ann. He would go to the ceilidh with her, she would get up to sing, and as soon as she got up he decided it was time to go to the toilet. And this happened frequently! It was too much of a coincidence.*

Professor Donald Meek, from Caolas, loved Cornaig School after the confines of Ruaig. He remembers 'Dougie' as an excellent teacher of English, and for a year, Gaelic.

*I never had the slightest trouble with Mr MacDougall. He was firm, yes - but he was full of stories, including yarns about his time as a student purser on the 'Grenadier'. He was an excellent teacher, as I have said. He taught us all the basics of English grammar and syntax, to the point that my English teacher in Oban - Ian Crichton Smith - once said to me that ex-Cornaigmore pupils knew far more grammar than he ever did! (Professor Donald Meek, personal communication).*

*I liked Cornaig School altogether. Mr MacDougall really encouraged Gaelic. In Ruaig, all we learned about was raffia-work and useless things. I think the teaching in Cornaig was the best I've ever had. There was good education. good discipline and good encouragement.* Professor Donald Meek, Caolas. AC271.

Mr MacDougall married Alice MacMillan from Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire, who was a fellow teacher at the school. Before the big day, the infant class were having a collection for a wedding present. Mostly the children were putting in sixpences. One small lad, Iain, only put in a ha'penny and his classmate asked him why. "I'm away to MacPhail's shop and I'm going to buy a packet of five Woodbines [cigarettes], and if you want you can come too!"



**Mr Alan Campbell MacDougall and his wife Alice (nee MacMillan), 1940s. (N190)**

Mr MacDougall was headmaster at Cornaigmore School from 1940. Alice MacMillan was the science teacher.

*I particularly enjoyed Mrs Alice MacDougall's teaching. She was a superb scholar, and a most gifted teacher, with a wonderful way of encouraging 'good' pupils. I used to buy the latest science textbooks, so that I could discuss their contents with her. In my Cornaig years, I loved the science subjects...Had I stayed on in Cornaig, I would have become a scientist or an engineer. (Professor Donald Meek, personal communication).*

He was “straight down the line” with very strict moral values, but very fair. One of his faults though was stubbornness, a part of his character that led to his untimely death. *A man of great integrity and outstanding strength of character, he stood firmly by his principles.* Oban Times, Sept 18<sup>th</sup> 1969.

He died in September 1969 during the school holidays as he came back to the island on the *Claymore*. At that time cars were kept on deck and lifted onto the pier with a net, using cushions to protect the paint of the wheel arches. The pier master would then reverse the car out of the sling and let the winch man lift the net back on deck. Mr MacDougall was very proud of his Morris 100 and, trying to make a shortcut, jumped straight from the boat deck to the pier so that he could manoeuvre his car himself. In front of the horrified onlookers he slipped and fell between the boat and the pier. He swam round to the slipway where he was helped out. A proud man, he refused to see the doctor at the time, Dr Calvert, and insisted on going home. A few days later at the start of the school term he became unwell and sadly died. *Mr MacDougall passed away in Glasgow's Western Infirmary on Wednesday night (the 10<sup>th</sup>) after a short illness – he only left Tiree last Thursday. His passing will be a great loss to local education and to the island in general.* Heylipol School Log, Sept 15<sup>th</sup> 1969. He is buried in Pennyfuir, Argyll.

## Archie MacKinnon



**Archie MacKinnon, Cornaigmore, standing outside the main door of Cornaig School in the 1970s-80s (P111).** Archie was the school janitor from 1952 to 1992

*A most kind, unassuming man, whose presence in Cornaig School was one of the school's attractions for me. (Professor Donald Meek, personal communication).*

## Gordon Connell

Gordon Connell is from Blairmore, a village north of Dunoon. He came to Cornaigmore School in 1962 straight from Jordanhill College to teach History and Modern Studies and taught his entire career in the one school until he retired in 1996.

*I came on the boat and when I saw the shoreline of Coll I thought, what is Tiree going to be like, because I couldn't see houses or anything. I left my bicycle at the pier and Mr MacDougall gave me a lift up to my digs in Cornaig [Mrs Chicken's]. In the afternoon I walked down to the pier and cycled back up. I was 22....I wasn't a townie. I was brought up in a wee village and the idea of going to an island appealed to me... [Living on an island] appeals to me immensely. I don't like shops and the bustle. I don't like travelling around all that much. You get to know a place and you get to know folk, and you just say, that's fine, I'll stay where I am.*

*When I came at first I taught a wee bit of anything and everything. My subjects were History and Modern Studies, but I taught a bit of English and a bit of Maths a bit of Geography. I taught Science for the first couple of years. There were six secondary teachers and two primary teachers. We got a French teacher, a PE teacher and an Art teacher over the years. The primary schools were being centralised in Cornaig around 1975 and the new primary extension was built for that. The next building programme was the new gym and the primary and secondary were joined up in a long corridor.*

*[The Fèis] is one of the best things that's ever happened to Tiree from a musical point of view. Kids and adults are full of music in Tiree. I don't know if anyone's done a survey to find out what percentage of the island has some kind of musical ability, but it's there. Over the years it hadn't been tapped until the Fèis was established at the beginning of the 1990s. It's amazing the number of people who can play instruments and are not frightened to get up in front of other people.* Gordon Connell, AC299.

*I've taught two generations on Tiree. When the third generation was coming through the primary I thought it was time to retire! I didn't want to teach three generations but it was close!* Gordon Connell, AC299.

## Discipline

The leather strap, or tawse, was the main punishment, both for bad behaviour and making mistakes in class work.

*There was a factory, I think it was in Lochgelly in Fife, and they produced black belts for teachers. It was about three feet long, about one inch wide and a quarter of an inch thick. It was reckoned it was soaked in all sorts of dreadful things – pepper and vitriol and so on. You held your hand out and, since you had a natural tendency to draw your hand away and the belt would miss, you had to put both your hands out.* Alasdair Sinclair, AC362.

Flora MacArthur, Sandaig (*Floraidh Alasdair*) remembered her teacher in Heylipol School being very strict. If you made three spelling mistakes you got the strap, girls and boys. You had to put your hands out in front of you, one on top of the other, changing the top one with each blow (Flora, personal communication).

*Mrs MacLean [the teacher at Heylipol School], she was a really gentle woman, and her husband, he was kind of a hard man. If things got so severe in school – I don't know if she couldn't sort of administer the required punishment, or was it that she felt sorry, she didn't want to hurt [you]. She used to ask for her husband to come through [from the school house next door] and he would administer the punishment, the strap. I suppose, looking back, it was kind of illegal, because he wasn't on the staff at that time. Everyone was frightened of him.* Angus MacKechnie, AC389.

Jean MacFarlane from Tarbert, Loch Fyne, taught in Heylipol School before she went to Ruaig. She is remembered as being a particularly enthusiastic strapper. Seonaid Brown, Balephuill, tells this story. Jeanie was fond of the strap. When she left the room the boys put the strap on the stove to warm it, thinking that if the leather was warm and supple it would hurt less. By the time the teacher returned to the classroom the strap was back in its place. Seonaid never said how successful this tactic was! (Seonaid, personal communication).

One girl in Cornaigmore got the strap from Mr MacDougall for jumping over the playground wall – he told her it wasn't "ladylike."

Lachie Campbell, Corrairigh, was just starting Infant classes and he had been brought to school in Johnny Kennedy's black Austin 8. The boys and girls ran into school and were taking off their coats and boots. Archie MacKinnon, the Janitor, left the boys to help the girls and then came back to see how Lachie was getting on. Just then Mr MacDougall walked past. "Could you come down to Room 3, Mr MacKinnon? I would like to see you." Later on Lachie asked him, "What did you do wrong? *An d' fhuair thu belt* [Did you get the belt]?"

Gordon Connell came to Cornaig to teach in 1962 and bought his first belt for £2 the next year. He sold it in 1975 and the teachers met in 1980 and decided to stop using them.

By contrast, some teachers taught quite happily without using physical punishment. Flora Nisbet was the teacher in Heylipol School when Nonnie MacFadyen, Crossapol, was there in 1932. “She was a gem, a lovely woman,” Nonnie says. She never used the strap and would make tea for them if it was a wet morning coming to school.

*I never knew if Miss Nisbet even had a strap. I never saw one.* Mabel MacArthur, Hough, AC 395.

*We actually knew the [teachers]. In these days, I don’t know what it was. You actually respected the teachers, you know. All they had to say to you was, “I’ll tell your mum or I’ll tell your dad.” And you did behave yourself. There was none of this going round smashing things.* AC 89 Hugh MacKinnon, Baugh.

*I hardly remember a discipline problem at that school [Scarinish in 1933]. If you did offend the teacher and there was a problem and your father got to know you got another hammering. The view was that anything you got from the teacher you deserved. Jean Macfarlane [who arrived as a young assistant teacher to Katie Nisbet] brought a strap which was a sensation in the school. Miss Nisbet had this power over you. Not only had you let yourself down, but you had let Katie Nisbet and the school down...She wasn’t just our teacher – she was our mother, our father, she was our grannie. She knew our birthdays and gave us a sweetie.* Angus Munn, Heanish, AC71.

In 1938 Tina MacArthur, Caolas, went to Ruaig School. Margaret MacLean, *Magaidh Mhòr*, from Balevullin, was the teacher in Ruaig at that time. She was the sister of Duncan Maclean, the first vet on Tiree. Tina remembers that she was “very clever” with an MA, and lived in the school house. She gave children a sweetie if they went through and tidied the house for her. She was “awful soft-hearted” and would gather the children round the fire if it was wet. She rarely used the strap, but it came out once when she strapped the whole school for being late after the children had been down at the puffer on the beach at Brock. The children had even been allowed up the ladder on to the deck by the skipper.

Duncan Grant, Ruaig, also has fond memories of Margaret MacLean.

*The teacher we had then was Magaidh Mhòr. [She] was rather popular with us all. She was a sort of kind-hearted, gentle soul, and eventually, boys being boys, we would head up to Vault and throw off our clothes and into the sea – this was wee play time – and have a dip. Dry ourselves with our own semmets [vests] and then put them on and then wandered down the machair and there would be poor Maggie and she would be going ding-a-ling, ding-a-ling with the bell to get us back. And I’m afraid it got to the extent that poor Maggie decided enough was enough. She decided we were all to get the belt and we were all lined up in the porch for this rather unusual and traumatic event, and it was distressing her rather more than us...[But] generally the punishment we had in Ruaig school for talking in class would be to be hauled out and stand in front of the class for quite a considerable length of time. You almost felt you would buckle at the knees, standing in one position.* Duncan Grant, AC362.

## 7: Second World War: 1939-1945

No sooner had the new school been built in Cornaig when Tiree's world was turned upside down. Allan MacDougall, the headmaster at Cornaigmore, recorded the following entry in his Log Book.

*Informed by Constable JP MacDonald of the grave turn in European affairs as a result of Germany's aggression against Poland.* Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 1<sup>st</sup> 1939.

*School closed today for a week as per War Emergency Instructions.* Balemartine School Log, Sept 4<sup>th</sup> 1939.

Within a few days, all of the island's schools were filling up with children of the Tiree diaspora who were sent back to the relative safety of the island, out of reach of German bombers.

*Enrolled 6 pupils who have been on holiday here and have decided to stay in Tiree since war has been declared. According to section 10 of War Emergency Instructions issued today the school will not meet tomorrow.* Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 4<sup>th</sup> 1939.

*Headmaster interviewed by parents and guardians of pupils from Glasgow and London on question of enrolment of their charges in this school till the end of hostilities.* Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 7<sup>th</sup> 1939.

*There was a lot like that came [evacuees with Tiree connections]. Their husbands stayed in Glasgow, whether it was like the docks or whatever they were doing, and they sent their wives and children home because they would be safe because there was bombing in Glasgow.* Archie MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, AC377.

*One private evacuee admitted which brings the roll up to 40.* Balemartine School Log, Mar 8<sup>th</sup> 1940.

*Nine pupils have been added to the roll which brings the number to 60.* April 4<sup>th</sup> 1941.  
*Balemartine School Log, April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1941.*

By February 1942 the Balemartine school roll had risen to 70.

The RAF took over the Cornaig headmaster's house for billets during the war. Mr MacDougall had lodgings in the house opposite Torosa, Cornaigmore.

Preparations for war were made.

*Received intimation that gas masks are to be issued from school on the morrow.* Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 25<sup>th</sup> 1939.

Children had to take the masks home at night. Mr MacDougall checked the cloakrooms after the children had left, and Mary Ann MacLennan, Caolas, remembers being strapped for leaving her mask at the school.

*Instructions for Gas Mask Drill given to teachers.* Cornaigmore School Log, Nov 17<sup>th</sup> 1939.



*ARP [Air Raid Precautions] Official inspected children's respirators and carried out adjustments where necessary. Cornaigmore School Log, May 29<sup>th</sup> 1940.*

*Tested Girls' Playing shed to see if it could accommodate all scholars for purposes of shelter in event of Air Raid. Cornaigmore School Log, Oct 19<sup>th</sup> 1939.*

*Decided that part of interior of school – the corridor leading past the Ladies' Staffroom – will be most suitable place for air raid shelter if Boy's Cloakroom is also used. Cornaigmore School Log, Oct 20<sup>th</sup> 1939.*

*Janitor boarded up doors and windows necessary for completion of Air Raid Shelters. Air Raid drill carried out very satisfactorily. Cornaigmore School Log, Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> 1939.*

*Sergeant Maxwell, Tobermory, commences instruction of class of wardens, Special Constables and members of this staff in Air Raid Protection and procedure in the event of gas attack. Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 5<sup>th</sup> 1940.*

*Received delivery of five packets of adhesive anti-splinter netting for school windows. Cornaigmore School Log, Jan 15<sup>th</sup> 1941.*

*Staff completed fitting of anti-splinter netting to main rooms of school. Cornaigmore School Log Jan 25<sup>th</sup> 1941.*

*Heavy southerly gale and rain has caused much havoc among the recently fitted anti-splinter netting. Desks have been badly soaked and one of the small panes in the Science Room windows has been smashed. Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 5<sup>th</sup> 1941.*

*Blackout blinds have been fitted on all windows. Cornaigmore School Log, Oct 27<sup>th</sup> 1942.*

*Form relating to Hours of opening with reference to Black-out received. Cornaigmore School Log, Nov 26<sup>th</sup> 1940.*

*School now opens each day at 10 am. Cornaigmore School Log, Nov 29<sup>th</sup> 1940.*

*First Aid classes conducted by Dr Hunter in Room 3. Cornaigmore School Log, Oct 17<sup>th</sup> 1940.*

*When the destroyer HMS Sturdy was wrecked on the shore at Sandaig, the headmaster wrote, Instructed Miss Clark to have hot water, etc. in readiness in case survivors from destroyer wrecked at Sandaig come this way. Cornaigmore School Log, Oct 30<sup>th</sup> 1940.*

*Sergeant Maxwell gives lecture on Fire Bombs and demonstrates the use of stirrup pump. Cornaigmore School Log, Aug 20<sup>th</sup> 1941.*

*Wrote to Dunoon to get official indication that the Crash Hospital equipment storage in the Domestic Science Room has been sanctioned. Cornaigmore School Log, Aug 4<sup>th</sup> 1942.*

There were regular fund raising efforts for the war effort.

*Concert and dance in aid of Sailors' Comforts Fund held in school.* Cornaigmore School Log, April 11<sup>th</sup> 1940.

*The girls in Primary 4 and 5 are knitting socks and scarves for the army and navy instead of their usual school knitting. Wool supplied by An Comunn Gàidhealach.* Balemartine School Log, Jan 31<sup>st</sup> 1940.

*Agreed to request of Mr MacLaren, Island House, that corridor of school be placed at disposal of Home Guard each Friday for target practice.* Cornaigmore School Log, Oct 31<sup>st</sup> 1940.

*Closed the school Penny-a-Week Red Cross Fund for the term. £6 10s has been realised.* Cornaigmore School Log, Dec 18<sup>th</sup> 1940.

*School has been granted to RAF and RE for Dance.* Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 25<sup>th</sup> 1941.

*A Concert and Dance in aid of Home Guard Funds to be held in school.* Cornaigmore School Log, Nov 24<sup>th</sup> 1942.

*School concert held in evening in aid of Red Cross.* Cornaigmore School Log, June 25<sup>th</sup> 1943.

*Two minutes silence observed.* Cornaigmore School Log, Armistice Day, Nov 11<sup>th</sup> 1941.

The decision to change to Double Summer Time in 1941 was unpopular with some parents. *Received intimation from X (who does not send her ward to school until 10 am on account of change to Double Summer Time) that SMC [School Management Committee] has granted her use of room in school for meeting of parents and guardians (purpose not stated). Replied that access could not be granted as desired...this guardian has been a maker of trouble for some time past. In evening observed notices in Post Office, issued and signed by X, summoning all parents and guardians who protested against change of hour throughout the country to meet in Cornaig School. At 10.45 pm a letter was delivered at Headmaster's lodging. It was from the Clerk, SMC, and stated that [they] had granted the necessary permission to X. Access was then granted despite the belated and discourteous manner of intimation. Headmaster lodged a very strong protest with SMC in interests of discipline and decency. At the same time the opportunity was taken to deprecate any change from national time.* Cornaigmore School Log, May 12<sup>th</sup> 1941.

*Informed that the SMC have decided to hold an 'official' meeting to give all parents an opportunity of expressing their views on opening times of the school.* Cornaigmore School Log, May 21<sup>st</sup> 1941.

The meeting must have suggested withholding children from school. *Deputation from SMC... Assurances were given that 'strike' weapon on trivial grounds would be firmly discouraged.* Cornaigmore School Log, May 24<sup>th</sup> 1941.

Fuel, and other supplies, was limited.

*Miss Sarah MacDonald, Teacher of Gardening, unable to get over from Balemartine owing to lack of petrol among car hirers.* Cornaigmore School Log, Oct 21<sup>st</sup> 1941.

*Paraffin supply exhausted.* Cornaigmore School Log, Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 1942.

*Wired Clerk SMC on urgency of coal requirements and non-delivery of books which have lain at pier since beginning of August [three months].* Cornaigmore School Log, Nov 5<sup>th</sup> 1941.

*Headmaster learns on inquiry at the pier that the books and stationary for Session 1943-44 have not yet been delivered to the pier. Requisition Lists were sent off in March [five months earlier].* Cornaigmore School Log, Aug 14<sup>th</sup> 1943.

*Distribution of Ration Books in school.* Balemartine School Log, June 4<sup>th</sup> 1945.

Clothing was also scarce.

*Children tested for weight and height to ascertain those eligible for extra supply of clothing coupons.* Cornaigmore School Log, Oct 30<sup>th</sup> 1942.

*Rubber boots would be supplied to the children deserving (under WVS [Womens Voluntary Service, set up in 1938] scheme) if each of them got a certificate from the MOH [Medical Officer of Health] to back their application.* Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 14<sup>th</sup> 1944.

*Letter from WVS to state that applicants for boots have been unable to get their sizes.* Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 29<sup>th</sup> 1944.

The war effort meant that teachers could be in short supply.

*No primary teachers.* Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 1<sup>st</sup> 1945.

*Reduced secondary programme and set secondary teachers to share work of primary classes.* Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 6<sup>th</sup> 1945.

Tradesmen were also scarce.

*To meet difficulty experienced in getting local tradesmen to do repairs to slates and windows, County Architect agrees to Janitor undertaking the work.* Cornaigmore School Log, Nov 10<sup>th</sup> 1942.

But there were also opportunities.

*Mr Seton Gordon, the naturalist, on a visit to the island kindly agrees, by courtesy of Group Captain Fairclough [RAF Tiree commanding officer and a keen ornithologist], to address the children on 'Wild Birds.'* Cornaigmore School Log, May 24<sup>th</sup> 1944.

In 1945 it was over.

*Phoned Dunoon for clarification of procedure in the probable event of clashes between the 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Post-Qualifying [Exam] and the approaching cessation of hostilities in Europe celebrations. Examinations postponed for one week.* Cornaigmore School Log, May 7<sup>th</sup> 1945.

*VE Day. National Holidays.* Cornaigmore School Log, May 8 and 9<sup>th</sup> 1945.

*The school was closed for two days 8<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> May to celebrate the end of hostilities and to take part in the Victory celebrations. Scarinish School Log, May 10<sup>th</sup> 1945.*

*VJ day. Victory over Japan. School closed for two days. Cornaigmore School Log, Aug 15<sup>th</sup> 1945.*

*Half holiday to enable children to be present at Reef Services Sports. Cornaigmore School Log, Aug 30<sup>th</sup> 1945.*

*Welcome Home function and dance held in School Hall. Cornaigmore School Log, April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1946.*

*Victory Day Commemoration cards from HM the King handed over to pupils at short ceremony. 'Victory' sports held in afternoon. Cornaigmore School Log, June 7<sup>th</sup> 1946.*

The other schools were also affected.

*Following damage to the school room done by live ammunition discharge by the Home Guard on the evening of Monday 24<sup>th</sup> January – total penetration of stove pipe, shattering of glass partition panel, damage to wall plaster. Scarinish School Log, Jan 28<sup>th</sup> 1944.*

And even after the war had ended,

*School was closed on Tuesday as a mine was floating inshore close to the beach and it was considered dangerous. During the day the mine was rendered harmless by members of the Air Force and school was resumed on Thursday. Balemartine School Log, Mar 3<sup>rd</sup> 1946.*

## **Medical care**

Dr Buchanan, Tiree's doctor, reported on an outbreak of scarlet fever in 1894.

*The source of infection was through a young man who had returned to the island from Glasgow where he had been employed as a labourer. On coming home he had a sore throat but his friends took it for a common cold...What contributed to the spread was frequent assemblies of the people to take part in religious revival...The disease obtained hold of the children attending Helipool Public School and it was through the falling off in the attendance of that school that my attention was called to the occurrence of the disease...on my advice it was closed by the school managers. The fever spread to two other schools (Cornaigmore and Balimartin Public Schools) and the teachers' families were laid up with it...The schoolrooms to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before the assembling of the schools.*

Dr Buchanan recommended that he be informed if several members of the same family came down with an illness, so that the families could be isolated in time. (5<sup>th</sup> Annual Report on the Health and Sanitary Conditions of Argyll, 1895, An Iodhlann 2001.97.28).

*The school was examined medically by Dr Hunter. Balemartine School Log, May 14<sup>th</sup> 1935.*

*Nurse Reid visited the school and examined the children for cleanliness. Balemartine School Log, Oct 18<sup>th</sup> 1950.*

Diphtheria vaccination was started on the mainland in 1940 and on the island a year later.

*Inoculation of children and pre-school children performed by Dr CA Brown [Catherine Brown from Mannal, who was a schools medical officer in Argyll for many years] and Dr DG Hunter. Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> 1941.*

Despite this programme,

*Poor attendance due to diphtheria scare, one or two cases having broken out in Balemartine.* Cornaigmore School Log, April 19<sup>th</sup> 1944.

*Attendance almost normal as 'scarees' have returned.* Cornaigmore School Log, May 1<sup>st</sup> 1944.

*Pupil was unable to sit Qualifying exam by reason of being in quarantine as a contact of diphtheria.* Balemartine School Log, May 1<sup>st</sup> 1944.

The first report of a visit by the school dental service was in 1948.

*Mr McCaig and Miss Hepburn begin work in mobile dental unit.* Cornaigmore School Log, June 9<sup>th</sup> 1948.

## 8. Post war: 1945 –

Until Cornaigmore School became a full five year secondary in 1980, children wishing to pursue their education had to go to Oban, staying in digs or the hostel. Some of the island children remember feeling “slow” at first compared to the town children. Attendance at church on Sunday was compulsory, although some would go to the Catholic Cathedral because it was closer!



**Senior girls staying at Craigenard Hostel, Oban (R97)**

Margaret MacLean, Balevullin (2<sup>nd</sup> row from front, 6<sup>th</sup> from left) was the dux of Oban High School.

In 1961 Cornaigmore Secondary School was set up as four year school, and in 1980 as a six year secondary (this status was officially confirmed 1983) (An Iodhlann 2004.97.1). This meant, for the first time, that pupils could have their entire schooling on the island.

*In the 1970s, I was one of those who advocated turning Cornaigmore into a fully-fledged 'high school', in order to allow Tíree pupils to remain in the island. I wrote a letter to the 'Oban Times' to that effect. (Professor Donald Meek, personal communication).*

The flat-roofed primary school at Cornaig was opened in 1975 with Dolly Cameron as its first head teacher. The latest extension to the 1936 school was opened in 1989.

During the 1980s pressure grew to introduce Gaelic medium education in the Cornaig School. *Mr Colin O'Brien moved up from Dumbartonshire three years ago to become headmaster of the island school. He said: "The school here is special and unique because of the resources Strathclyde has pumped into it. It has only 116 pupils, but is a six year school because that is the Region's policy for all schools.*

*“With 16 teachers it has the best pupil-teacher ratio in the whole of the UK. We have excellent facilities including a minibus and five microcomputers.*

*“We are also better placed than ever before for teaching Gaelic, with three members of staff taking classes which are compulsory from 5 to 14.*

*“The trouble with Gaelic on Tìrè does not rest at the school, but the fact that so few families speak the language at home. Only one out of nine of the infant intake comes from a home where the language is used.” (Will UDI vote make Tìrè Little Cyprus of the Hebrides? by Tom Shields, Glasgow Herald August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1982).*

After years of pressure by a body of parents, a Gaelic Unit was set up in the Cornaigmore primary school in 1989.



**Gaelic Unit pupils at Hynish Pier in 1992 (T29)**

There was some resistance on the island to the idea of separating the children of such a small school into two streams. The arguments came to a head at a passionate public meeting on the island.

*Friday night made history for the Isle of Tìrè when education chiefs from Glasgow [Strathclyde Regional Council] agreed to introduce a Gaelic unit in the primary school. Tipped to be a stormy meeting between the majority of supporters for the unit and other more reticent parents, chairman of the Education Committee, Dr Malcolm Green, steered discussions to an agreeable reconciliation.*

One speaker at the meeting said, *“Children should not suffer isolation from their friends.”* Alec MacArthur, Heylipol, replied, *“Perhaps we are just too courteous to use it in the presence of non-Gaelic speakers.”* (An Iodhlann 1999.58.1)

## 9. Outside class

### School meals

Until the end of the Second World War, pupils had to take their own food to school, unless they lived nearby.

Lady Victoria Campbell, the sister of the Duke of Argyll, was disabled by polio. She became a frequent visitor to Tiree in the 1880s and 90s and set up a number of programmes to help the islanders. She was concerned about the poor diets of some of the children, writing, *I am perfectly determined the benefit of the soup kitchen shall be extended to the children. There is a fear of it 'pauperising.' It will have to be done for all the schools, or the children won't attend...In the first place, I mean the parents of the children who can, pay. No one has any idea what it is to see their pale little faces, and to hear the schoolmasters say that many come miles with only a potato on their stomachs in the morning.* (Lady Victoria Campbell, Frances Balfour, Hodder and Stoughton, p 287).

The factor, Mr Macdiarmid, wrote to the teacher of Heylipol School in 1905. *A soup kitchen is to be started by Lady Victoria tomorrow in the house of Mrs Donald MacKinnon, Moss, for the benefit of the scholars attending your school* (An Iodhlann 1998.107.1).

Lady Victoria's biographer, Lady Frances Balfour, wrote that, *It was always a great grief to Lady Victoria that some children of the cottar class in Tiree and elsewhere should be allowed to grow up without an adequate supply of milk. She maintained that when she visited the schools, she could pick out those children who came from homes where no cow was kept. To give these cottar children a chance of growing up strong and healthy like their neighbours, she got the proprietor to subsidise milk cows at different places. In this way, all who required milk were supplied, whether they were in a position to pay or not* (p 304).

*The scholars have to be entertained to tea at Moss [Heylipol] School this afternoon by Lady Victoria Campbell.* Balemartine School Log, Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 1893.

*When I went to Cornaig School first [in 1928] we were given hot water and we had taken our own cocoa.* Annie Kennedy, Scarinish, AC 66.

*The basic thing for us was cocoa. We had a tin, and one side held the cocoa and the other side held sugar, and the teacher boiled the water, and you took a packed lunch – in those days a scone, sometimes with cheese, sometimes with jam.* Mabel MacArthur, Hough, AC 395.

*When I first started at school there were no school meals. The food you had you took it yourself – a scone, pancake, all home baked stuff – in your piece box.* Angus MacKechnie, AC389.

School meals on Tiree began in 1945.



*Informed by letter from Director of Education that School Meals Scheme is, at last, to be put into operation with Kitchen and Dining Hall [to be] erected. Cornaigmore School Log, May 20<sup>th</sup> 1944.*

*Two workmen inspect soil in corner of garden in front of the school as a preliminary to the erection of a Dining Hall and Kitchen for the mid-day meals for the pupils. Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 1944.*

*Received large consignment of dining hall equipment. Cornaigmore School Log, Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 1945.*

*Dining Hall excavations begin. Cornaigmore School Log, Jan 26<sup>th</sup> 1945.*

*Staff for the Dining Room commence work under Miss Duncanina MacFadyen [Balephuil]. Nov 26<sup>th</sup> 1945.*

Flora MacArthur, Sandaig and Dolina MacCallum, Scarinish, were two of the other cooks.

*Meals in School Scheme commences. Cornaigmore School Log, Nov 29<sup>th</sup> 1945.*



**The old school canteen at Cornaig School in 1974 (P113)**

There were teething troubles.

*Electric cable to dining hall sags in gale. Cornaigmore School Log, Jan 16<sup>th</sup> 1946.*

*Electricians install refrigerator. Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 13<sup>th</sup> 1946.*

*Gale blows off top of dining hall chimney. Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 19<sup>th</sup> 1946.*

The meals for Balemartine and Heylipol Schools were prepared in Cornaigmore and transported by Donald Kennedy, Balinoe.

*Meals Scheme extended to Balemartine and Heylipol, commencing today. Cornaigmore School Log, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1948.*

*School meals were served in school today. There are two paid helpers. Mr Kennedy, Balevullin, brings the meals from the centre at Cornaigmore School. 56 meals are supplied. Balemartine School Log, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1948.*

*Yesterday school was unable to be held as there was no water at Cornaigmore to make school meals so both Cornaigmore and Heylipol were unable to meet. We could have been working had it not been for the need of school meals.* Heylipol School Log Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 1972.

The school meals in Scarinish and Ruaig were cooked in the townships.  
*School meals, cooked in a neighbouring house [by Morag MacDonald, Sackhill] and served in a spare classroom, are taken by the majority of the pupils.* Ruaig School Inspectors' Report, 1953. Mary Ann MacLennan later took over the Ruaig School meals service, again cooking in her own house.

*[When school meals came] we thought we were in seventh heaven. Lovely meals, five old pennies a day. Nice mince and stew and a sponge pudding with jam...I didn't like the meals in Cornaig so much. They were catering for more children. I always remember the sago pudding and semolina.* Ethel MacCallum, Scarinish, who came to Ruaig in 1943, AC 379.

*The school meals were excellent. The cooks were Flora MacArthur, Mary MacArthur, Mary Brown and also Joanne MacLeod. We used to look forward to the day we got Flora's home-made steak pies, that and the doughnuts. If we got both in the one day it was heaven! Mary MacArthur delivered them to [Heylipol and Balemartine]. The ladies that stayed in Braeside [Balinoe] cooked the meals in Scarinish. [They used to call it the cookhouse] but we called it the canteen. Mr MacDougall was a very strict disciplinarian and he said grace, he told the children when they could go out and made sure they didn't get up to any mischief.*

*MC: There were three boys [who were misbehaving] in my days and they had to sit up next to Mr MacDougall and the teachers. They were supervised by Effie MacKinnon [Kilmoluag] and myself and we had to watch how we behaved or we would get into trouble too! Continuously they would ask for a second helping. We would look across to see if Mr MacDougall was talking to somebody and then we would slip up and get a second helping [for them]. The poor wee boys, they were hungry and maybe they didn't have much breakfast before leaving the house.*

*GC: Many's the time I wouldn't have minded a second helping myself but I had to go out and play football and I had to take it easy!* Gordon Connell and Maggie Campbell, AC299.

The meals were not free.

*£14 1s 1d forwarded to Dunoon this week. This is money collected for meals.* Scarinish School Log, April 9<sup>th</sup> 1954.

Milk also supplied to the children on Tìree in 1947, although a national scheme had begun in 1934..

*Milk in Schools scheme begins.* Cornaigmore School Log, April 18<sup>th</sup> 1947.

*A box of dried milk (36 tins) was received today.* Balemartine School Log, Sept 19<sup>th</sup> 1949.

*No milk has been served in school since Monday as there is none in stock. A carton was shipped from Glasgow in December but there is regular carrier in this district and it is very difficult to get goods over from the pier.* Ruaig School Log, Jan 21<sup>st</sup> 1953.

*At 11 o'clock we got that terrible National Dried Milk. These big kettles on, and huge, big jugs, and she [the teacher] mixed up the milk for us. I liked it with cocoa, but very, very rarely we got that. Some of the children liked it. I didn't. I was used to milk from the cow in the byre in the morning. Ethel MacCallum, Scarinish, who came to Ruaig in 1943, AC 379.*

*When I came at first there was the infamous powdered milk. One of the teachers had to go down at what they called the 'wee play' and supervise the ladling out of this milk to anyone who wanted it. The whole of the secondary went down and probably, on average, only about three people ever took it on a regular basis. In fact we were actually urged by Mr MacDougall to get more of them to take it. One day I said to the cook, "Can I try this stuff?" I thought no wonder they don't like it, it's there's not a nice taste off it. Eventually the whole milk thing petered out. On an island full of cows it was a bit weird! Gordon Connell, AC299.*

## Getting to school

Until the 1950s most primary children walked to school, whatever the weather.

*In those unhappy days, if you were lucky you might get a lift on your father's crossbar, but usually it was walk [from Balephetrish to Scarinish, three miles each way]... There were some long hauls and some rotten weather... There were two stoves and the old paraffin lamp hanging from the roof [in the school]. The coats hung in the cloakroom and they were still wet when we went home. Grace Campbell, Tullymet, AC 25, who went to school in 1927.*

Flora MacArthur, Sandaig (*Floraidh Alasdair*) went to Heylipol School (*Sgoil na Mòinteach*) in 1927. In bad weather she remembered walking to school in a group in single file, one sheltering behind the other. On wet days there was a kettle on the stove for hot drinks. She said she had heard that "The doctor had ordered it."

*As today a storm of snow and sleet was raging only 13 children were present. Those who arrived being wet and cold the school was closed at 2pm. Scarinish School Log, April 25<sup>th</sup> 1927.*

Effie MacDonald went to Heylipol School in 1933. She lived in Hough and walked to school too except on Monday mornings when Margaret MacLean, the teacher in Ruaig, but who lived in Balevullin at weekends, gave her a lift. Nurse MacAllister had a motorbike and side car and would give her a lift too if she was passing. Effie remembers Flora Nisbet as being particularly kind, as well as being an excellent teacher. She always made sure you dried your wet clothes at the fire.

*We had to walk to Scarinish School, a couple of miles away. In the summer time I went across the moor – we used to go to school barefoot in those days, but in the winter the moor was too wet. Hugh MacKinnon, Baugh, who went to school in 1939, AC89.*

Seonaid Brown, Balephuill went to Heylipol School in 1939. She walked from Moss on her own – there were no other children going from that part then. She remembers hiding in the ditch when the RAF planes flew low overhead.

*It was a long walk. What stands out clearest in my mind was getting lifts from the RAF boys. These huge vehicles, and the boys had to get out to lift us up. The bottom step was well above*

*our heads. It was great if you were walking home and you saw an RAF vehicle coming along the road. Mabel MacArthur, Hough, AC 395.*

Mary Ann MacLennan, Caolas, walked the 50 minutes to Ruaig School in the 1930s. "In winter, it was dark when we left the house and dark when we got home!" She took a 'piece' (sandwich) with her, but had often eaten it by the time she had reached school in the morning. Duncan MacInnes' father grew turnips in Ruaig and he would allow the children to help themselves. They would break the vegetables on a stone at the crossroads, and to this day she prefers turnips raw to cooked. Lizzy McGill, Ruaig, would often be cross with the children for the mess they made, saying the cattle would choke themselves on the big pieces they left.

*In the autumn you always had the pleasure of stealing turnips from the field. You wouldn't pinch them from your own field, you pinched them from next door's field. We didn't have sweets or chocolates or biscuits. So to get a nice fresh turnip was a real treat. Mabel MacArthur, Hough, who walked to Heylipol School in 1940, AC 395.*

*When we arrived, if it was a wet day, we kept slippers at the school and we took off the wellingtons and the big, thick socks, and the teacher put them on a rail round the solid fuel stove so they would be nice and dry for us going home again. Mabel MacArthur, Hough, AC 395.*

Some teachers could be strict, despite the weather. Sarah MacLean, Barrapol was brought up in the *Bail' Ùr*, Balephuill, and went to Balemartine School in 1934. If the children were one minute late walking the two miles to school they would be strapped, even if they had been sheltering on the way from a hail shower!

*Many a time you were soaking wet going to school and that was you all day, wet. Angus MacKechnie, AC389.*

Four girls from Heanish came to Cornaig by pony and trap every morning. They kept the pony in the stable of MacPhail's shop and post office in Cornaig, and brought two sheaves of hay to feed it during the day. In the evening (the school came out at 4pm in those days) they would go back the same way (Archie MacKinnon, Cornaigmore, personal communication).

Bicycles came in around 1938. It was not unusual to see thirty parked three deep around the school (Archie MacKinnon, Cornaig, personal communication).

*Mr MacInnes, police constable, called in school today and looked over the pupils bicycles. Balemartine School Log, April 24<sup>th</sup> 1950.*

When the new Cornaig School opened in 1936, two twelve-seater buses were used to carry children who lived more than three miles from the school. The two contractors were Alasdair Kennedy, Balephuill and Willie MacPhail (*Uilleam Eòghainn*), Balephetrish. At first, the buses stopped where the tarmac ended at MacPhail's post office, and the children had to run the rest of the way.

*H: Willie MacPhail had one [bus]. He used to go down to Ruaig and Caolas, and a man Kennedy at Balephuill. He brought the scholars from Balemartine and Hynish [the south]. There were two buses.*

*A: You had to be three miles from the school here to get free transport. If you were within the three miles you had to walk. Hector and Archie MacKinnon, Seafeld, Cornaigmore, AC377.*

Not every child was entitled to the new buses.

*Mr John Brown, Scarinish and Mr Munro called at school and informed headmaster that they were about to measure the roads from the school in order to settle definitely whether certain houses are within the three mile radius from Cornaigmore. Roads dangerous [from the greatly increased wartime traffic] and attendance still poor. School buses make their usual runs. Scarinish School Log, January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1940.*



**The West End school bus in 1994-5 (E198)**

Donald Archie MacLean, Kenovay, with pupils Peter MacLeod, Heylipol, Christina Cameron, Balevullin and Hannah Williams, Balemartine

Some children with medical problems were allowed to use the bus even if they lived within the three mile limit.

*Received copy of conditions under which pupils not entitled to free conveyance are granted permission to travel...Donald MacX, Balephetrish, has been granted permission to use the bus on medical grounds. Cornaigmore School Log, Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 1940.*

During the war, the huge increase in children from the mainland put a strain on the vehicles. *Evacuees refused bus by the driver [who] has, apparently, ...been informed that responsibility for overcrowding bus is entirely his own.* Scarinish School Log, Jan 9<sup>th</sup> 1940.

The weather played its part then, as it does today.

*Received telegram from owner of bus (south) that owing to state of roads consequent on last night's torrential rain, the vehicle cannot convey scholars to school today.* Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 4<sup>th</sup> 1939.

*Very boisterous nature of weather has prevented East bus from leaving to collect pupils and 7 pupils came from the South by motor car, their bus being 'hove to' also...two of the Science Room windows have been blown in by the gale, and since some of the pupils are likely to have a struggle to get home, an early closure was decided upon and the contractor who took the pupils from the south informed by telegram.* Cornaigmore School Log, Dec 6<sup>th</sup> 1940 [this contractor was Alasdair Kennedy, Balephuill. The telegram would have been sent to the Balinoe post office and someone would have walked down to his house – 2 miles - with it].

*Wrote to SMC [School Management Committee] on matter of the present route and collecting points off the South bus contractor with special reference to Moss parents' complaint that the Moss Church stance is too far away for their children to walk.* Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 10<sup>th</sup> 1943.

Some children were transported to school by car.

*Informed in morning by Mr JM Brown JP that bus run will be resumed today. Informed by the pupils that the car driver has told them that he will not be available to take them home tonight.* Cornaigmore School Log, July 30<sup>th</sup> 1943.

Alasdair Kennedy, Balephuill, bought two cars which had been used in Oban as taxis, to do the school run. They cost £10 and £15 (Morag MacLeod, personal communication).

Before the 1930s all the staff at Cornaig School lived in digs nearby – they had no other transport (Archie MacKinnon, Seafield, Cornaigmore, personal communication).

## **Use of the schools by the community**

Apart from the Reading Room in Scarinish, the schools were the only public buildings on the island, and they were in demand for evening meetings, classes and dances.

*Had to dismiss school early this afternoon as school room was required by Lady Victoria Campbell for a meeting of the 'Clothing Club.'* [presumably so that the group could meet by daylight, as only paraffin lamps were available after dark] Balemartine School Log, Feb 26<sup>th</sup> 1897.

*Would you kindly give me a note to say that I may have one of the classrooms here. I find the old school is not suitable to hold a sewing class in. It is dirty and dark although it may do well enough for other meetings.* Letter to the headmaster, Balemartine School Log Aug 1<sup>st</sup> 1916.

*No school tomorrow as school is required for a polling station for General Election.* Scarinish School Log, Dec 5<sup>th</sup> 1923.

In 1935 Cornaig School hosted a film show, probably the first to come to the island.  
*Last night a public cinematograph entertainment was given in the school by Mr William Mack. As a result, two panes of glass in Room 3 were broken.* Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 25<sup>th</sup> 1935.

Mr MacDougall was a founder member of *An Comunn Gàidhealach* on Tiree. There were several branches on the island.

*By permission of the School Management Committee, An Comunn Gàidhealach, Cornaigmore, held a ceilidh in the school tonight.* Cornaigmore School Log, Jan 21<sup>st</sup> 1939.

*Social on behalf of United Free Church held in School Hall.* Cornaigmore School Log, Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> 1939.

*A lantern lecture was given on the voyage of the Discovery by her captain, Cpt MacKenzie [the Discovery, now in Dundee, was the boat of the British and New Zealand Antarctic Research Institute and Captain MacKinnon, from Heanish, was its captain],* Scarinish School Log, Oct 12<sup>th</sup> 1931.

*In evening School Hall was used by Mr JS MacKenzie, Achterneed, for giving one of his lantern Recitals.* Cornaigmore School Log, June 13<sup>th</sup> 1939.

Before the start of the NHS in 1948, much of the Tiree District Nurse's salary was collected by local fund raising.

*In evening School Hall and Domestic Room used for whist drive and dance in aid of local Nursing Funds.* Cornaigmore School Log, June 15<sup>th</sup> 1944.

*The school was granted to Mr Sandy Campbell, Hynish, today for his wedding reception.* Balemartine School Log, Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 1947.

*Balemartine Girls Club: approval has been given for a grant to purchase a sewing machine. County Youth Organiser.* Balemartine School Log, Jan 12<sup>th</sup> 1948.

Dances were also usually held in the schools. At Cornaigmore, these were often not popular with the headmaster, Mr MacDougall.

*Janitor reports that on Friday evening the Dance held in the School Hall by permission of the School Management Committee (SMC) was an unpleasant affair and one good double desk has been broken.* Cornaigmore School Log, April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1941.

*Inspected school on return to the island and found it has been thoroughly washed and cleaned. The school hall, however, which had, by permission of the SMC, been used for a dance on the previous Friday night had been left in a condition particularly distressing to anyone who had hoped to start the new session with the house in order. Seats were still stacked round room and were thick with dust. Floor was half-washed. Decided, though this dance committee had given trouble before, to ask janitor to put things to rights and to lodge strongest possible protest with Director of Education., the SMC having through their laxity in the grant of the school done nothing to assist Headmaster in countering this kind of thing.* Cornaigmore School Log, Aug 4<sup>th</sup> 1942.

*Informed by Janitor that Clerk to SMC had intimated to him that Hall has been granted to same Dance Committee for Friday night...Informed Clerk that Headmaster would not instruct Janitor to open school since the whole matter of granting of the school was sub judice in Dunoon. Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 9<sup>th</sup> 1942.*

*SMC having ignored Headmaster's protest and dance not having been cancelled, members of public (including service officers) gather at school. Headmaster, under strong protest, decides to give Janitor instructions to open hall to avoid unfair trouble for members of the public. Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 1942.*

*Informed Director of Education by telegram that School Hall is in condition just as when dance stopped on Friday night and that the two rooms (4 and 5) would be considered unavailable till things were restored in the condition in which they were left on Friday at 4pm... Nine dozen empty beer bottles have been left at front door after dance...Floor of the hall has been left half-washed and desks left thick with dust. Headmaster decides to insist that matters be put right. Chairman of SMC and Local Councillor (both JPs) call at school to inspect hall. They obviously resent Headmaster's complaint about things and are informed that their attitude will be made known to the authorities. Cornaigmore School Log, Sept 14<sup>th</sup> 1942.*

*Informed by Janitor that seat bracket (metal) has been broken at dance. Cornaigmore School Log, June 19<sup>th</sup> 1944.*

*Informed by Clerk to SMC that the committee has granted the use of the School Hall and Domestic Room for a dance on Friday night. Have protested to the chairman and Convener that the present SMC practice of granting the school without first ascertaining if it is convenient for the work of the school is not fair. Cornaigmore School Log, Aug 15<sup>th</sup> 1944.*

*Mr MacDonald, School Convener, informs headmaster that his proposal that four names should always be given by members of any committee requesting use of the school hall has been turned down, despite the irresponsible behaviour of some of those to whom the premises have been granted in the past. Cornaig School Log, Nov 29<sup>th</sup> 1940.*

*There was a concert held in the school yesterday evening and this morning the inner door of the classroom was found to be badly damaged. Scarinish School Log, July 25<sup>th</sup> 1924.*

*After unanimous consideration the [Schools Management] Committee unanimously resolved that schools be granted to ratepayers only and for concerts only, and that on no account must dancing be permitted. Schools must be closed by 11pm prompt. Scarinish School Log, Jan 13<sup>th</sup> 1926.*