

**Digitised copy of Letter from Malcolm McLaurine, chamberlain of Tiree, to the Duke of Argyll  
15 Apr 1803**

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Mr McLaurin  
to the Duke  
15<sup>th</sup> April  
1803

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Answ<sup>d</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> April &  
6<sup>th</sup> May

Tyrii 15<sup>th</sup> April 1803

My Lord Duke

I have had the honor [sic] of receiving under your Cover, Captain Campbell's letter of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, and Mr John Ferrier's letter of the 4<sup>th</sup> April, regarding the affairs of this Island, in answer to mine of the 22<sup>nd</sup> March

Captain Campbell's of the 8<sup>th</sup>, conveying your Grace's sentiments of Mr Ferrier's letter, will enable me to act up, as far as circumstances will admit of, to the former instructions, with the variations that these suggest, when this is found impracticable; and am happy, that the threat of emigration, has been considered by your Grace, as of no weight, to justify any alterations, of the system laid down, and that they are freely at liberty to indulge their humour when they refuse a compliance, with them

I have every reason to believe, that there will be more difficulty, in prevailing upon those who fall to be removed from the farms mentioned in the Sketch 22<sup>d</sup> March, in carrying the plan of 4. Mail Land into effect, to accept of Crofts as they have formed the strongest prejudices against them, than upon the others to take the 4. Mail Lands if they were allowed to occupy them in their old way

and

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and as your Grace has been pleased to direct, in Captain Campbell's letter of the 8<sup>th</sup>, that none able for 4. Mail Lands, shall be allowed to have a joint occupation all these farms will fall to be divided, which will be an immense expence [sic]; and probably upon further consideration your Grace will be induced to allow them a promiscuous possession, for a year or two to obtain their compliance with the 4. Mail Land possession in the first instance simply; which by the Sketch was only conceived practicable upon the old plan, relying, that the experience of the Divisions in the farms of Barapoll &

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Kenavar<sup>1</sup> & Kenovay, will prevail upon them when they see the advantages of the new system, more readily to adopt it afterwards. The expence [sic] of building new houses, forming inclosures [sic], and building Dykes, and Rotation of Crops, connected with it, terrifies them should they all at once be insisted upon, and possibly some temporary remedy for the evils of promiscuous possession will be found in obliging themselves, to divide the Arable Land & making a rent to each division according to their quality & value, at the rate of the farm, & putting them under restrictions of cropping the Outfield & Infield on a plan similar to the inclosed one of Salum as a Specimen for your Grace's consideration, which Mr Langlands has made, and allowing them to feed their Cattle in common upon what is called real Pasturage

under

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under proper restrictions of souming. And strongly assured that nothing will prevail upon them to take up the four Mail Lands under the new System all at one; and if some palliatives such as I have taken the liberty to suggest, will be approved of for the defects of the old one, at the outset, they will, I hope, be prevailed upon to take them, and they can be laid out in this way with Mr Langland's assistance – I would not press this now upon your Grace's notice, after all the instructions you have been pleased to give upon it, could I possibly see, that the tenants could be prevailed upon to adopt the new Plan, upon which no doubt their own prosperity so much depends, but to know if under such limitations, it is found practicable, whether it may have your Grace's Sanction.

It would be a very great comfort to me to have Mr Campbell Achnacroish's assistance, but as I have heard him say, he has no acquaintance of the natives of this Island, I fear, it would be putting him to trouble, without gaining any essential benefit from his influence with them.

Upon the 29<sup>th</sup> March I set 16 of the Crofts of Scarinish to the old Possessors, taking them bound for improvements according to the Instructions, but none would agree to follow the fishing, being

mostly

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mostly old men; and such of them as are young are employed in sea faring with large smacks ---

I have of this date, wrote Morrison agreeing to the Mills, and urging his commencement of them instantly, that they may be finished before the crop now sowing, is ready for grinding – I have also informed him, that the store house is to be finished which your Grace formerly approved of ---

Upon the Subject of the Encroachment of the Reef, Mr Campbell Barmolloch has requested of me to transmit his Memorial to your Grace. Mr John Ferrier has observed, that if the grass could be spared that the 22 Acres which was the first part added might be continued for this year; but tho' the grass can be spared, as the present March dyke between Baliphetrish and Reef is held at the second line of Encroachment marked upon the plan B. B. B. consisting of 34. Acres more, it would submit Barmolloch to the inconveniency of breaking down his present March dyke, and for a year's possession it would be hard to build one at the line A. A. A.; so that it will fall to be considered whether your Grace will be pleased to allow him to continue it as it is for this year, or to follow out

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tireeplacenames.org/barrapol/kenvar/>

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the first intention of taking the whole Encroachment from that farm all at once; or giving him the 22 Acres altogether, & charging him a rent for them,

as

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as no consideration seems to have been made for them, when the old Chamberlain sanctioned their being added to his possession, so that he may all at once build his March dyke there.

The Tenants are anxious about the barley, and the sooner a market is found the better, as many of the Tenants are contriving means to carry it off to Islay and Ireland for the purpose of illicite [sic] distilling – A few days ago, I seized a boat load they were sending off in this way – Their propensity to smuggling is very hurtful; withing these few days, two large Barkers have been upon the coast loaded with Gin Brandy and Tobacco, and notwithstanding of any thing that could be done to prevent it, am informed, they have purchased about 300 Ankers of Sprints, and as the whole will be consumed in the island, it is a loss, I dare say, of near £1200 to themselves – Should any arrangements of Volunteer Companies be forming by Government, I beg leave to submit to your Grace the great utility one would be of to check such a pernicious practice.

I have inclosed [sic] a Sample of this years Barley, under your Grace's cover, to be sent to Mr John Ferrier, for Mess<sup>rs</sup> Ramsay and Williamson of Leith in compliance with his letter of the 6<sup>th</sup> which your Grace would have perused and it is to

be

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be hoped that they will soon find a market for it. Mr Campbell Coalessan I would presume does not want it, as he has not signified any wish about it – Mr Langlands with the assistance of all the Tenants in turn, is busy draining the Moss. The weather for some time has been favourable to the plowing [sic], and of late a good deal has been sown –

I have the honour to be with the utmost respect

My Lord Duke  
Your Grace's  
Most ob<sup>t</sup> and Humble Serv<sup>t</sup>  
Malcolm M<sup>c</sup>Laurine

Last year Mr Maxwell and I took the liberty of recommending Alex<sup>r</sup> Campbell for 8. Mail Land of Gortendone<sup>l</sup><sup>2</sup>/Barapoll & Kenavar / to which your Grace agreed and since last Whitsunday he has possessed that portion of the possession. In my letter of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Ult<sup>o</sup> to Mr Ferrier I took occasion to recommend Donald M<sup>c</sup>Phail Serg<sup>t</sup> of the late Volunteer Company, as deserving of encouragement [sic], and possessed of a good subject, who wishes for 8. Mail Land too, of that possession, and is very desirous to carry on the new Improvements. The Division he wishes to have, is, what the Petitioners of late complained of, as incapable of Improvements, and adduced as argument against

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.tireeplacenames.org/barrapol/goirtean\\_domhnaill/](https://www.tireeplacenames.org/barrapol/goirtean_domhnaill/)

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the Division Scheme: and begged to know if your Grace would order him to be accommodated; as so few wish to be concerned, owing to its division.

M<sup>r</sup>

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M<sup>r</sup> John Ferrier has mentioned that Alex<sup>r</sup> Campbell might have 8. M. Land if your Grace approved, but I apprehend he meant this Donald M<sup>c</sup>Phail.

I have spoken to Barmolloch about the Tools of the Marble Quarry, but he says few of them are now to be had, and that such as are, must be sold for the benefit of the Company; so that we can have no dependence upon those for Blasting & Quarrying Tools

Malcolm M<sup>c</sup>Laurine