

Lochbroom.

Presbyterianism in Lochbroom (1725–1929)

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Synopsis

| | |
|--|----|
| I. The Parish of Lochbroom | 34 |
| II. The Established Church, 1725–1808 | 35 |
| (a) James Robertson..... | 40 |
| (b) Alexander Stronach..... | 42 |
| (c) The Coigach Petition | 45 |
| III. Established Church – The ministry of Thomas Ross | 46 |
| (a) Ross in Rotterdam | 47 |
| (b) Ross in Controversy..... | 49 |
| (c) Ross and Education in Lochbroom | 52 |
| (d) Ross and Norman Macleod – The Assynt Separatist..... | 54 |
| (e) Ross and the Disruption in Lochbroom | 57 |
| (f) Ullapool Parliamentary Church | 58 |
| IV. The Disruption Free Church | 60 |
| (a) George Macleod..... | 60 |
| (b) John MacMillan..... | 64 |
| (c) Coigach Free Church | 67 |
| (d) Little Loch Broom Free Church..... | 69 |
| V. The Free Presbyterian Movement in Lochbroom | 72 |
| (a) John Macleod – The first Free Presbyterian minister..... | 77 |
| (b) Andrew Sutherland..... | 81 |
| (c) Donald N. MacLeod..... | 84 |
| V. Free Church of Scotland – Post 1900 | 85 |
| (a) Ullapool/Lochbroom..... | 85 |
| (b) Coigach | 89 |
| Appendix | |
| Ministers of the congregations in Lochbroom 1725 to 1929..... | 90 |

I. The Parish of Lochbroom

The parish of Lochbroom in the eighteenth century was the largest in Wester Ross, covering over 273,000 acres of territory. In the nineteenth century it was the third largest parish in Scotland. The rather vague description of the parish by Roderick Macrae in the *Old Statistical Account* is as follows:

The western boundary of this parish is washed by that part of the Atlantic Ocean, which divides the island of Lewis from the main land of Scotland. The exact length and breadth of it cannot be easily ascertained, as it is of a very irregular figure, being uneven in its marches with the neighbouring parishes, and indented in many places by several small arms of the sea. Some have computed it at 36 miles long, and 20 broad.¹

Prior to the Disruption of the Established Church in 1843, Thomas Ross, who was the parish minister of Lochbroom from 1808 to 1843, provides a more detailed account of parish for the *New Statistical Account of Scotland*; he writes:

It may, however, be very safely affirmed, that, in regard to extent of territory and number of inhabitants, and difficulty of the ground, and natural divisions, the parish of Lochbroom alone (independently of the village of Ullapool, in which there is a Government church,) would form four large parishes, which would furnish ample scope for the exertions of four able and active parochial ministers. It may be proper to add, that, if the parish of Lochbroom were divided into four such distinct parishes, having churches planted at the most suitable distances, with ministers in each, there would still be many persons in these parishes who would require to travel from five, to fifteen miles, of very difficult road, before they could obtain any of the sealing ordinances of religion. It may be further observed, that, in this parish, there are seven cemeteries, or public burying-grounds; eight stations in which the minister thinks it his duty (though not obliged) to preach occasionally – always in the open air – yet always to larger congregations than on ordinary occasions meet in the parish church; eighteen stations, at which from 45 to 220 scholars could assemble for instruction, if they were blessed with teachers, – besides

¹ Roderick Macrae, 'Parish of Lochbroom', in Sir John Sinclair (ed.), *The Statistical Account of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1794), Vol. 10, p. 461. Roderick Macrae (1762–1843) was licensed by the Lochcarron Presbytery in September 1792 and ordained as a Missionary Minister at Applecross, Kinlochewe, and Torridon on 1st July 1793. After a short pastorate in Shieldaig between 1827 and 1832 he became the parish minister of Applecross in 1832. He wrote the accounts of both Applecross and Lochbroom for the *Old Statistical Account*. See Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (2nd edn., 8 vols., Edinburgh, 1915–1950), Vol. 7, p. 145 (cited afterwards as Hew Scott, *Fasti* and Volume and page number).

several hundreds, who could only meet in tens, and fifteens, and twenties; and finally, that in this parish alone, there are above 1300 young people – all poor – who are either receiving, or require to receive, instruction in the first principles of an useful education.²

II. Established Church 1725 - 1808

At the time that Ross wrote on the parish of Lochbroom for the *New Statistical Account* he was able to state, ‘There is no Seceding, nor Episcopalian, nor Roman Catholic nor dissenting chapel of any denomination, in this parish. All the parishioners are of the Established Presbyterian Church, and firmly attached to its doctrines, discipline and government.’³ The Lochbroom parish formed part of the Lochcarron Presbytery which along with the Presbyteries of Skye, Uist, and Lewis comprised the Synod of Glenelg. The Lochcarron Presbytery was one in which ‘Moderatism’ was a deadening influence during the eighteenth century. After the death of Aeneas Sage in 1774, and until Thomas Ross was inducted to Lochbroom, Lachlan Mackenzie (1754–1819) was for almost forty years the only evangelical minister in the Presbytery. Aeneas Sage’s grandson described him as ‘the only minister who preached the Gospel with purity and effect.’⁴ Following the Revolution Settlement of 1688–89 many of the Episcopalian ministers remained as ministers of their parishes; this was particularly the case in Wester Ross where five extensive parishes still had ministers with episcopalian sympathies well into the eighteenth century. Lochbroom was the last parish to see the removal of a pre-revolution incumbent. Donald Sage asserts, ‘the first Presbyterian minister of Lochbroom was settled in the same year as my grandfather.’⁵ This was Archibald Bannatyne who was ordained to Lochbroom in September 1725 and later translated to Ardchattan and then to Dores.⁶ Intriguingly, Sage found a minute in his library referring to Bannatyne; he writes:

My library contains, among many books belonging to my grandfather, a fine, old copy of Turretine, which was gifted to me by his eminent

² Thomas Ross, ‘Parish of Lochbroom’, in the *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol. 14 (Edinburgh, 1845), p. 73.

³ Ross, ‘Parish of Lochbroom’, p. 87.

⁴ Donald Sage, *Memorabilia Domestica* (2nd edn., Wick, 1899), p. 188.

⁵ Sage, *Memorabilia Domestica*, p. 6. Aeneas Sage was ordained at Lochcarron on 10th February 1726. Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 6, p. 451 gives the date of Bannatyne’s induction as 1725, not 1726.

⁶ See Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 6, p. 451; *Guide to Ullapool and Lochbroom* (Ullapool, 1903), p. 26.

successor, the Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie. Opening this book one evening, I discovered, between the leaves of the second volume, a slip of paper in my grandfather's handwriting, containing these words:

At Lochbroom, 16th March, 1726. – The presbytery met, and after prayer – sederunt, Mr. Aeneas Sage, moderator; Mr. Murdo Macleod and Mr. Archibald Bannatyne, minrs; and John Palp, schoolmaster of Gairloch, ruling elder; Mr. James Smith, absent.

The presbytery being called to this place for a visitation of the parish of Lochbroom, by petition from the Rev. Archibald Bannatyne, minr. of Lochbroom, at the last diet at Keanlochow; and their clerk having served out warrants to cite masons, wrights, and land metters, one or more, for designing glebe and grass, and for valuing manse, office, houses, and garden; as also appointing the said Mr. Archibald Bannatyne to give an edictal citation from the pulpit to heritors, wadsetters, life-renters of the parish of Lochbroom, fifteen days before this date, to compear before the presbytery to join and concur with them, to have glebe, grass, manse, and garden provided for their minister. The said masons, wrights, and landmelsters being solemnly sworn, purged of malice and partial counsel, gave in the following reports, viz. Sage then adds, 'The venerable document ends thus abruptly, and without a signature.'⁷

It is clear from this minute that when Bannatyne, the first Presbyterian minister, was inducted in Lochbroom there was no manse. Around 1727 a manse was built for him of which a detailed cost-estimate of £729/13/4 has been preserved.⁸

Prior to the settlement in 1808 of Thomas Ross the two longest serving incumbents were James Robertson and Alexander Stronach who, though Presbyterians, were not evangelicals. The Established Church in Lochbroom was located at Clachan and situated near the shore of Loch Broom around eight and a half miles from Ullapool. There has been a church on the site going back to the thirteenth century. It was rebuilt in 1817 during the ministry of Thomas Ross.⁹

⁷ Sage, *Memorabilia Domestica*, p. 5. This minute confirms the accuracy of the *Fasti* date of Bannatyne's induction as 1725. The other minister at the Presbytery, besides Bannatyne and Sage's grandfather Aeneas Sage of Lochcarron, was Murdo Macleod of Glenelg. The absent minister was James Smith of Gairloch.

⁸ Kenneth J. B. S. Macleod, *Lochbroom through the Centuries* (Inverness, 2011), pp. 35-36.

⁹ In 1773, a last communion was held at the Clachan church for one of the first waves of Scottish emigrants bound for North America. The sailing ship *Hector* was moored in the loch nearby and from the church the Highlanders were rowed out to begin their journey



Clachan Church.

In the years between the departure of Donald Ross, James Robertson's predecessor, from Lochbroom in March 1742 and Robertson's ordination there three years later, a series of notable revivals were taking place in the south of Scotland at Cambuslang, Kilsyth, Baldernock, Kirkintilloch, Muthil and elsewhere. These revivals, which have been very well documented, took place under the preaching of such men as George Whitefield, William McCulloch, and James Robe.¹⁰ In the north of Scotland a number

to Pictou in Nova Scotia. The historic building was closed for public worship in 2016 and sold by the Church of Scotland to the Clachan Lochbroom Heritage Trust in 2018.

¹⁰ For overview accounts, see John Gillies, *Historical Collections of Accounts of Revival*, ed. Horatius Bonar (Banner of Truth, 1981), pp. 433-464; James Robe, *Narrative of the Revival of Religion at Kilsyth, Cambuslang and other places in 1742* (Glasgow, 1840); *Narratives of Revival in Scotland, Ireland and Wales* (Glasgow, 1839); D. Macfarlan, *The Revivals of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1847). More recent accounts include Arthur Fawcett, *The Cambuslang Revival: The Scottish Evangelical Revival of the Eighteenth Century* (Banner of Truth, 1971); Tom Lennie, *Land of Many Revivals: Scotland's extraordinary legacy of Christian Revivals over four centuries, 1527-1857* (Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 2015). Of particular interest are the recently published accounts of the conversion narratives at Cambuslang; see Keith Edward Beebe (ed.), *The McCulloch Examinations of the Cambuslang Revival (1742)* (2 vols., Scottish History Society, Woodbridge, 2013).

of places in Easter Ross and Sutherland also witnessed outpourings of the Holy Spirit during these years. These were at Nigg, Rosskeen, and Rosemarkie in Easter Ross, and Golspie and Rogart in Sutherland.¹¹

Though the vast parish of Lochbroom was without a minister, there seems to have been a work of grace taking place among the people, though on a smaller scale, through the labours of a school teacher, Hugh Cameron.¹² We get an insight into this movement in a letter from two eminent Edinburgh printers and booksellers, Thomas Lumisden and Joseph Robertson, to John Moorhead, who was a Presbyterian minister in Boston, New England and a fervent evangelical. On one occasion he had George Whitefield assisting him at his communion.¹³ The letter was printed in America's first religious magazine, entitled *The Christian History*, which had been commenced in 1743 by Thomas Prince (1687–1758).¹⁴ Prince was a Congregational minister and a New England historian who joined Joseph Sewall as colleague-pastor of Boston's Old South Church in October 1718. He was a theological conservative in the mould of Cotton Mather. In the 1740s, he was one of New England's most influential supporters of Whitefield and the Great Awakening. The letter from the Edinburgh booksellers reads:

Edinburgh, February, 10, 1743–4

As for the present state of Religion in Scotland, you will readily understand something of it, by the Reverend Mr. Robe's Monthly *Christian History*. However, we thought fit in this way to inform you, that religion is thriving among the young people of this city, and the country round about, many of whom have of late set up societies for prayer and religious conference. And as some more ancient Christians do frequently visit these meetings, they

¹¹ Gillies, *Historical Collections of Accounts of Revival*, pp. 452–458; Macfarlan, *The Revivals of the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 250–256.

¹² Hugh Cameron was SSPCK school teacher in Coigach from 1738 to 1746. Before that, he had been in Glenartney, Arran. He was still alive and employed by the SSPCK in the 1770s when he received £5 for 'great and long service, his extraordinary usefulness and his having been removed to a new station.' See A.S. Cowper (ed.), *SSPCK Schoolmasters, 1709–1872* (Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh, 1997), p. 10.

¹³ John Moorhead was born near Belfast, educated in a Scottish University, and emigrated to America around 1830. For biographical details, see William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit* (9 vols., New York, 1857–69), Vol. 3, pp. 44–46.

¹⁴ Prince, along with his son Thomas, published accounts of revivals in the *Christian History*. Through this magazine Prince established connections with evangelicals in England, Scotland, Ireland, and the Continent. For biographical information, see Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, Vol. 1, pp. 304–307; Donald M. Lewis (ed.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730–1860* (2 vols., Oxford, 1995), Vol. 2, pp. 904–905.

give from time to time very comfortable accounts as to the knowledge and fervency which prevails among them, and the beautiful order with which their societies are conducted.

But besides this, we had last week very comfortable news from the North: In Ross-shire, Sutherland, Caithness, and other places thereabout, the same good work is beginning among the young ones; and even sundry old sinners have of late been touched. There is one Parish in the remote Highlands, remarkable for its being of the greatest bounds of any in Scotland, (for the extent of it including Isles &c. is said to be above 100 miles in circumference) we say we are informed that this parish has been greatly favoured of late. They have now no Minister; but their School-master, who is a pious man, has travelled amongst them, and instructed them to a great degree; so that from 6 years of age to 80, they are (at least great numbers of them) thirsting after the knowledge of God, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. They have formed Societies in sundry places; according as their contiguity does best answer for their meeting. There they pray, sing psalms, and instruct one another. Their School-master goes round them; so that through the year, he is not a Sabbath of ten at his own house. His Presbytery (because the Parish has no Minister at present) allows him to explain the Scriptures he reads, which has been a great benefit to the formerly poor ignorant creatures; whom he calls also to give their own thoughts on sundry passages of Scripture. By this means light is conveyed in a familiar way from one person to another. The name of this extended parish is Lochbroom, and the name of the School-master is Mr. Hugh Cameron, whom one of us is well acquainted with, and know him to be vastly useful in another Part of the Highland Country, where he formerly resided.¹⁵

Regrettably, we only have this glimpse of what was taking place in Lochbroom at the same time as the revivals in the south of Scotland, Easter Ross and in Sutherland.¹⁶

¹⁵ *The Christian History: containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival of Religion in Great Britain and America, &c.*, Saturday September 1744, No. 80, pp. 218-219. For details of the magazines resulting from the revivals of the 1740s, many of which were published for just a few years, see Susan Durden, 'A Study of the First Evangelical Magazines, 1740-1748', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 27:3 (July 1976), pp. 255-275; Susan [Durden] O'Brien, 'Eighteenth-century publishing networks in the first year of transatlantic evangelicalism', in Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, George A. Rawlyk, *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, The British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990* (Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 38-57.

¹⁶ The letter is referred to in Fawcett, *The Cambuslang Revival*, p. 205; Lennie, *Land of Many Revivals*, p. 145.

(a) James Robertson

Lochbroom almost had an evangelical incumbent before Thomas Ross. When Bannatyne's successor, Donald Ross (1692–1775), was translated to Fearn in 1742, the Duke of Athole recommended that the patron of the parish, the Earl of Cromarty, appoint James Robertson as his successor.¹⁷ His Lordship, however, was pre-occupied at that time in preparations for the Jacobite rising of 1745 which sought to place James Francis Stuart on the British throne. The presentation of Robertson was not lodged with the Moderator of the Presbytery until after the expiry of six months from the commencement of the vacancy; accordingly the Presbytery proceeded on the basis of the *jus devolutum*¹⁸ to induct Roderick MacKenzie, a native of the parish as the minister. Mackenzie was nearly related to several of the heritors. However, at that period the influence of the Duke of Athole and of the Earl of Cromarty could not to be resisted and the Presbytery was obliged to yield. MacKenzie was deprived of the parish, and James Robertson was inducted in his place.¹⁹

Roderick Mackenzie had been educated at King's College, Aberdeen and licensed by the Presbytery of Lochcarron in 1738. He then went to England and became the minister of an Independent congregation.²⁰ After being deprived of his ministry in Lochbroom he went back to England before becoming the first minister of the Antiburgher congregation in Nigg.²¹ On his way north to Nigg, Mackenzie inducted Thomas Boston Jr., one of the founders of the Relief Church, into the church built for him at Jedburgh on 9th December 1757, and introduced him to his charge by preaching for him on the following Sabbath.²²

¹⁷ Sage asserts that before Donald Ross's translation, he had employed Robertson as an assistant. Sage, *Memorabilia Domestica*, p. 6.

¹⁸ The *jus devolutum* was the right in Scots law of the Presbytery to appoint a minister to a vacant church if a patron failed to present a fit minister within six months of the vacancy.

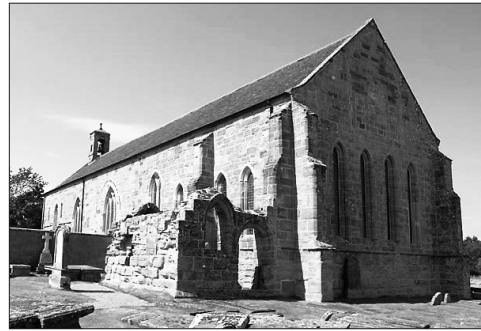
¹⁹ Ross, 'Parish of Lochbroom', p. 79.

²⁰ It is unclear where Mackenzie was a minister in England. Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 157 speaks of him being a minister in Staines in Middlesex, whilst the *Surman Index* at the Dr Williams' Library says he was a minister at the Church Street congregation in Deptford in Lewisham. Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London, Westminster, and Southwark; including the Lives of their Ministers from the Rise of Nonconformity to the present time* (4 vols., London, 1808–1810), Vol. 4, p. 175 refers to a Scotchman called Mackenzie being the first minister of the Independent congregation at Maid Lane in Southwark.

²¹ For biographical details of Mackenzie, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 157; Robert Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church from 1733 to 1900* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1904), Vol. 1, pp. 632–632; William Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh, 1873), p. 255; Ross, 'Parish of Lochbroom', p. 79.

²² Gavin Struthers, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church* (Glasgow, 1843), pp. 147–148.

James Robertson (1701–1776) was inducted to the Lochbroom congregation on 8th May 1745; he was nicknamed the ‘strong minister’ on account of his many feats of physical strength, particularly the incident on 10th October 1742 at the Fearn Abbey church. Soon after his settlement, while on a visit to Donald Ross, his



Fearn Abbey.

predecessor at Lochbroom, who was then minister at Fearn, the building was struck by lightning and the roof of the ancient Abbey gave way and fell in upon the worshippers. Forty-two were killed and many were badly injured. James Robertson, the preacher that day, placed his shoulder under the lintel of one of the doors which was giving way, and so helped to prevent it falling until most of the people had escaped. He was known thereafter as ‘*Am ministèir Laidir*’, ‘the strong minister.’²³ Donald Ross was in the Abbey at the time and was seriously injured by the falling roof, from which he did not fully recover and would have died, but for Robertson, who prevented the sounding board coming down on him.²⁴

Robertson became the minister of Lochbroom just a few months before the outbreak of the Rebellion of 1745. He was distressed to find that his patron and other heritors were decidedly favourable to Charles Edward Stuart’s attempted to regain the British throne for his father, James Stuart. As a consequence of the patron’s views, a large number of Robertson’s parishioners, in spite of all his remonstrances, became involved in the Jacobite rising of 1745. Robertson’s loyalty to the Hanoverian succession remained unshaken, and by his persuasion and influence many were deterred from throwing off their allegiance to the Crown.

After the victory of the Highlanders at the battle of Falkirk the King’s forces abandoned the town and county of Inverness and withdrew to Sutherland on a secret route that involved passing through Lochbroom. Aware of the danger of such a journey, and of the well-known loyalty of the minister of Lochbroom, a confidential messenger was sent to Robertson, directing that provisions and accommodations should be furnished for one

²³ Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 55.

²⁴ John Noble, *Religious Life in Ross* (Edinburgh, 1909), pp. 114-115; Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 56. Noble states that Donald Ross, ‘though not a talented man, had the reputation of being a good man...He made the practice of repeating the divisions and sub-divisions always at the close of his discourse, so as to impress them on his hearers.’ *op.cit.*, p. 115.

of the King's senior military officer, Lord Loudoun (John Campbell, 4th Earl of Loudoun). After accommodating them, Robertson arranged for a trusted guide to convey them safely to their destination. The Lochbroom minister's actions are said to have been a significant step in the ultimate triumph of the royal cause. Shortly after the battle of Culloden, he waited on the Duke of Cumberland, at Inverness. His Royal Highness received him graciously and thanked him for his zeal and services.

Many of his parishioners were taken prisoners and were tried in 1746. Though Robertson was loyal to the Crown, as minister of the parish he was concerned for his parishioners and set out on a journey of seven hundred miles, to London at his own private expense, to use his influence in their behalf. When one of the ringleaders among his parishioners was condemned, he went directly to the Duke of Newcastle and earnestly entreated his intercession with the Sovereign, for clemency. This proved successful and he was able to save the lives, not only of the ringleaders but of many of the Lochbroom men, from execution, and to secure their eventual release.²⁵ Donald Sage comments: 'by his successful exertions on behalf of the accused he earned the gratitude and admiration of his parishioners.'²⁶

Clerical discipline appears to have virtually been abandoned in the Lochcarron Presbytery during Robertson's ministry. He was accused in July 1748 of running a 'shebeen' (selling excisable alcoholic beverages without a licence); it was asserted that Robertson 'has spirituous liquors and wine retailed in his house frequently and even upon the Lord's day.'²⁷ His thirty-one-year pastorate ended on his death in March 1776.

(b) Alexander Stronach

Four months after Robertson's death, he was succeeded by Alexander Stronach (1746–1807) of whom relatively little is known. Prior to his ordination at Applecross, which took place in April 1776, he was a school-teacher in Lochbroom where he taught Latin and Greek. He was at Applecross for less than four months and was translated to Lochbroom in July 1776. In August 1798 after being the parish minister for twenty

²⁵ The fullest account of Robertson and the Forty-Five Rebellion is given by Thomas Ross, 'Parish of Lochbroom', pp. 78-83. See also Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 158; *Guide to Ullapool and Lochbroom*, pp. 26-34.

²⁶ Sage, *Memorabilia Domestica*, p. 7.

²⁷ William Ferguson, 'The Problems of the Established Church in the West Highlands and Islands in the Eighteenth Century', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 17:1 (1969), p. 29, quoting the minutes of the Synod of Glenelg of which the Lochcarron Presbytery was a part.

years he was suspended from office by the Presbytery of Lochcarron on the basis of a scandalous report against him regarding both the discharge of his pastoral office and of his private life. Stronach alleged that it was a 'thin meeting of the Presbytery' in which the decision was made. Though that may have been the case, the suspension was later renewed *sine die*. He appealed to the Assembly, charging a probationer of being at the bottom of the whole business. A local history book on Lochbroom commenting on his suspension states, 'no details of why are available. Local rumour has it that he became addicted to alcohol.'²⁸ The Assembly eventually removed Stronach's suspension in 1802.²⁹ He died on 21st June 1807.

The probationer who gave in the report concerning Stronach's conduct was John Kennedy (1772–1841) who would later become the minister of Killearnan and the father of John Kennedy of Dingwall.³⁰ Kennedy was licensed by the Presbytery of Lochcarron in November 1795 and after a period as schoolmaster in Lochcarron during the ministry of Lachlan Mackenzie, he was ordained in December 1798 as an assistant in Lochbroom whilst Stronach was suspended. His son, writing about his father's ministry at Lochbroom, stated,

About two years after being licensed he was appointed to preach in Lochbroom, the parish minister having been suspended. The time which he spent there was in some respects the happiest portion of his life, and a light rested on it that drew the eye of memory frequently towards it. It was the season of his 'first love' as a preacher; the Lord was very near to his soul, and a manifest blessing rested on his labours. During that time many souls were truly converted unto God, some of whom, in Lochbroom, and some in other places, to which they were scattered, continued till their death to shine as 'lights in the world'. Many a sweet hour of communion with the Lord he enjoyed in those days in the woods of Dundonnell.³¹

John Noble adds, 'A manifest blessing attended his ministrations – not a few members were awakened to concern, and many were won to Christ.'³²

²⁸ Macleod, *Lochbroom through the Centuries*, p. 68.

²⁹ For Stronach, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 158; *Guide to Ullapool and Lochbroom*, p. 34; John MacInnes, *The Evangelical Movement in the Highlands of Scotland* (Aberdeen University Press, 1951), pp. 112, 229.

³⁰ See Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 13.

³¹ John Kennedy, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire* (5th edn., Inverness, 1897), pp. 177–178. This volume contains a 107-page life of John Kennedy senior by his son, entitled, 'The Minister of Killearnan'.

³² Noble, *Religious Life in Ross*, p. 262.

Kennedy is believed to have lodged at Dundonnell House³³ and walked over the hill to the church at Clachan. Though Stronach was suspended he would most probably still be living in the Clachan manse. A recent detailed account of the Scoraig peninsula, which was part of the Lochbroom parish, states: ‘John Kennedy baptised several of the Little Loch Broom and Scoraig people in the years 1798 to 1802. At that time he was the locum minister at Clachan Church, Lochbroom, when the incumbent Alexander Stronach was suspended.’³⁴ John Kennedy, Dingwall, has recorded an experience of his own that made reference to his father’s ministry at Lochbroom. He writes:

I cannot forget a trying scene, into which a streak of the light of those days was once cast to cheer my heart. Being called to see a dying woman, I found on reaching the place to which I was directed a dark filthy attic, in which I could observe nothing till the light I had carried in had quite departed from my eye. The first object I could discern was an old woman crouching on a stone beside a low fire, who, as I afterwards ascertained, was unable to move but ‘on all fours’. Quite near the fire I then saw a bed, on which an older woman still was stretched, who was stone blind, and lying at the very gates of death. The two women were sisters, and miserable indeed they seemed to be; the one with her breast and face devoured by cancer, and the other blind and dying. They were from Lochbroom; and we had spoken but little when one of them referred to the days of my father’s labours in their native parish, and told of her first impression of divine things under a sermon which he preached at that time. The doctrine of that sermon was as fresh in her mind, and as cheering, as when she first heard it half-a-century before. Such was the humble hope of both of them, and their cheerful resignation to the will of God, that I could not but regard

³³ Dundonnell House was built about 1703 and became the seat of a branch of the Mackenzie clan who were the lairds of land in the Lochbroom area. The Mackenzies purchased Keppoch in 1742–44 and acquired other neighbouring lands; with the purchase of Kildonan and Scoraig in 1775 they achieved complete ownership of the peninsula between Little Loch Broom and Loch Broom. The laird during Kennedy’s ministry was George Mackenzie (c. 1740–1816). He was a popular landlord, providing employment for many and adopting a down-to-earth manner with his tenants. In 1803 the Mackenzie family were visited at Dundonnell by the writer James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, who noted that George was reluctant at that time to clear the people completely off his land to make way for sheep, even though this would have been to his financial advantage, due to the high prices for wool and meat on account of the Napoleonic wars. For the Mackenzie family at Dundonnell House, see Malcolm Bangor-Jones, ‘Mackenzie Families of the Barony of Lochbroom’, in *Peoples & Settlement in North-West Ross* (Scottish Society of Northern Studies, Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 79–117, esp. pp. 102–107.

³⁴ James MacGregor, *Scoraig: A Peninsula and its People* (JRM Publishing, 2020), p. 66.

them, even in their dark and filthy attic, as at the very threshold of glory. I left them with a very different feeling from that with which I first looked on them; nor could I, after leaving them, see among the gay and frivolous whom I passed on the street, any who, with all their health, cheerfulness, and comforts, I would compare in point of true happiness with the two old women in the cheerless attic.³⁵

(c) The Coigach Petition

In the late eighteenth century, Lochbroom was a remote and neglected corner of the Highlands. The parish church at Clachan was at the head of Loch Broom, a distance of over thirty miles from the Lochbroom parishioners living on the Coigach peninsula. If the Lochbroom minister had been considerably more zealous than either Robertson or Stronach, the people of Coigach would still have had very little spiritual instruction in the form of Gospel preaching or education for their children. Accordingly, in January 1793, during the ministry of Alexander Stronach, the inhabitants of the northern part of Coigach mounted a campaign which allowed their collective voice to be heard. It was in the form of a petition addressed to the Scottish Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, in the Highlands (SSPCK). It concerned the appointment of a missionary minister and schoolmaster, and the need for decent accommodation as a requisite condition of anyone coming to Coigach. The petition makes clear the widespread appetite of the Coigach people both for religion and education. The petition paints a self-portrait of the district. It stated that the people laboured 'under the greatest of all possible earthly grievances – a total deprivation of every means and opportunity of religious comfort and instruction.' They lived thirty miles from the nearest church to which 'we have only access over roads impracticable to active and vigorous youth, and totally so to the old, frail and infirm!' Their case, they believed was 'most pitiable and affecting' and they asked the Society to provide a salary for a schoolmaster or minister to come amongst

the poor Inhabitants of this much and long neglected, dark and unenlightened corner. It is particularly distressing, when Baptism or marriage require it, to be under the necessity of going to such an extreme distance as their parish church, which on these occasions is only practicable by sea, and when by stormy weather they are frequently detained for many days, from their labour, families, and homes, to their great detriment and loss...Who have not the advantage of hearing publick

³⁵ Kennedy, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, pp. 178-179.

worship more than twice a year, and during the rest of the year the poor, ignorant and illiterate inhabitants, only know the Lord's day from the other days of the week, by a resting from bodily labour, which the brutes in the field enjoy in common with them! How then can this poor and dark corner be said to enjoy man's greatest boast, the comforts of religion!³⁶

The petition states that they represented about 110 families and about 550 souls. The Coigach petition appears to have won the support of John Kemp, secretary of the SSPCK in Edinburgh. He confirmed the people's claims, and acknowledged that in the past the problem of accommodation had driven off the previous recruit to the district. He told the Society that anyone going to Coigach would need a security from the proprietor or the tacksmen. The petition was unsuccessful due to the SSPCK expecting the heritors to contribute more money than they were willing to subscribe.³⁷

III. Established Church – The ministry of Thomas Ross

The man who succeeded Alexander Stronach was probably the most eminent Establishment minister to occupy the Clachan pulpit. Thomas Ross (1768–1843) was born at Creich in Sutherland and educated at Edinburgh University. Thomas Brown wrote regarding Ross that he was 'the best Gaelic scholar of his day, he spoke with fluency five languages, read Hebrew and Greek... a man of general culture, Sir David Brewster engaged to assist him when publishing the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*.'³⁸ After a period as a tutor to the children of John Kemp, minister of the Tolbooth Parish in Edinburgh, he was licensed by the Edinburgh Presbytery on 10th February 1802 and was ordained by the same Presbytery as one of the ministers of the Scots Church in Rotterdam.³⁹ After being awarded a doctorate by Glasgow University in 1807, he was presented to the Lochbroom church by the patron Mrs Maria Hay-Mackenzie, the proprietor of the Cromartie

³⁶ For the details of the 1793 Coigach petition to the SSPCK, see Eric Richards and Monica Clough, *Cromartie: Highland Life, 1650–1914* (Aberdeen University Press, 1989), pp. 137-138.

³⁷ David Paton, *The Clergy and the Clearances* (Edinburgh, 2006), p. 138. In parish government, heritors were proprietors of lands or houses who were liable, due to it being written in their title deeds, for the payment of public burdens, such as the minister's stipend, manse and glebe assessments, and the schoolmaster's salary. For a detailed description of the role of heritors, see William George Black, *A Handbook of the Parochial Ecclesiastical Law of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1888), pp. 23-51.

³⁸ Thomas Brown, *Annals of the Disruption* (Edinburgh, 1893), pp. 104-105.

³⁹ For an account of Ross's ministry in the Netherlands, see William Steven, *The History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam* (Edinburgh, 1832), pp. 242-244, 336.

Estate who was tenacious in asserting her rights of patronage which led on occasions to disputes, one of which went to the House of Lords.⁴⁰ Ross was inducted at Lochbroom on 25th May 1808. Two years later he married the daughter of the Dundonnell laird, George MacKenzie, and in consequence his manse was rebuilt in grand style. One cannot help thinking that the minister's marriage to the daughter of the laird was also a contributory factor in the Clachan church being rebuilt a few years after the marriage. James MacGregor notes: 'In those days when there was no police or social service, it fell to him to solve many local problems. His voice was so strong and clear that it was said he could be heard at a distance of several hundred yards.'⁴¹ Ross came into conflict with local people over his extensive glebe-farm, and the large quantities of fish he was capturing in his yair⁴² at Lochbroom. He would remain the minister of Lochbroom until the Disruption and the formation of the Free Church of Scotland in 1843.

(a) Ross in Rotterdam

The Dutch port was a centre for Scots migrants. Andrew Drummond called Rotterdam a 'nest of covenanting refugees'.⁴³ John Erskine was the leader of the Church of Scotland evangelicals in the later part of the eighteenth century and was an 'ecumenical protestant', anxious to recover contact with other Reformed Churches which had largely lapsed in the eighteenth century. The Kirk Session of the Rotterdam Scots Church were in frequent correspondence with Erskine for ministerial and financial support. In January 1802 the congregation's financial difficulties were relieved by an act passed by the municipality which guaranteed a permanent salary to the person who might be called. A leet of three names was drawn up consisting of two probationers then resident in Edinburgh, Thomas Ross and James Brewster,⁴⁴ and Alexander Thom, headmaster of Gordon's Hospital,

⁴⁰ See Eric Richards and Monica Clough, *Cromartie*, pp. 160-162. Richards and Clough observe, 'Evictions and inductions were the two great sources of riot in the Highlands' (ibid., p. 160).

⁴¹ MacGregor, *Scoraig: A Peninsula and its People*, p. 139.

⁴² A yair is an enclosure for catching fish as the tide ebbs.

⁴³ Andrew L. Drummond, *The Kirk and the Continent* (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 99. For a comprehensive history of the Scots Church in Rotterdam in the seventeenth century, see the four-part article by Robert J. Dickie, 'The Scots Church in Rotterdam: a Church for Seventeenth-Century Migrants and Exiles', *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 3 (2013), pp. 71-108; Vol. 5 (2015), pp. 83-127; Vol. 9 (2019), pp. 42-58; Vol. 10 (2020), pp. 59-82.

⁴⁴ James Brewster (1777-1847) was the brother of Sir David Brewster and became the minister of Craig and Dunninald in 1804. He joined the Free Church at the Disruption and became the Free Church minister of Craig. He was the author of very many books



Rotterdam Scots Church in 1798.

Aberdeen. Ross became the choice of the Session and was ordained by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, 14th April 1802. On 27th June, he was duly admitted as pastor of the Scottish Church in Rotterdam by John Hall.⁴⁵ In less than three months after his settlement, Ross's health became so impaired as to prevent him from satisfactorily discharging his clerical duties, which to that point he had zealously performed. At Ross's suggestion, the Consistory resolved to apply both to the Batavian government and to the magistrates of the city for permission to call a second minister.⁴⁶ The municipality agreed to the request of the petitioners who immediately proceeded unanimously to elect William MacPhail, then an assistant to John Erskine, who was ordained by the Edinburgh Presbytery on 15th December 1802 and introduced as joint pastor with Ross on 30th January 1803.⁴⁷

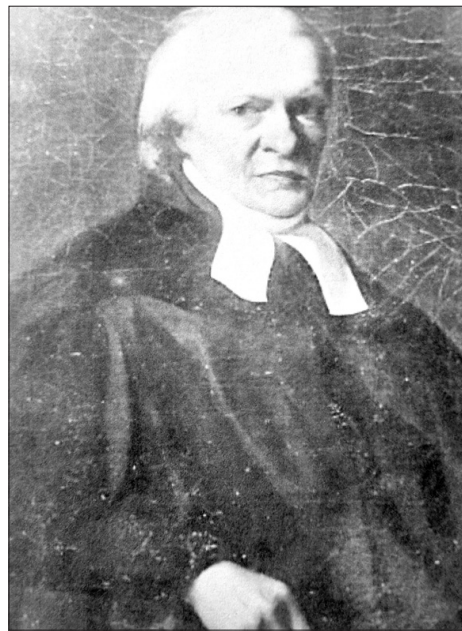
including *Lectures upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount* and *Lectures on the Acts* (2 vols.). See Hew Scott, *Fasti*. Vol. 5, p. 386.

⁴⁵ John Hall was minister of the English Presbyterian Church in Rotterdam. Previously, from 1761 to 1780, he had been minister of the Presbyterian Church in Sheffield-Stannington. See James G. Miall, *Congregationalism in Yorkshire* (London, 1868), p. 360; Steven, *The History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam*, p. 229.

⁴⁶ The Batavian Republic was the successor state to the Republic of the Seven United Provinces. It was proclaimed on 19th January 1795 and ended on 5th June 1806 with the accession of Louis I to the Dutch throne.

⁴⁷ William MacPhail was the son of Hector MacPhail of Resolis (1716–1774). On the elder MacPhail, see Donald Beaton, *Some Noted Ministers of the Northern Highlands* (Inverness, 1929), pp. 102–108.

With a view to recovering his health, Ross left Rotterdam and returned to Scotland in April 1803. His share of the pastoral duties was undertaken by his colleague, and by John Henderson of Flushing.⁴⁸ As Ross's indisposition was continuing, the magistrates, at the request of the Session, allowed him to employ an assistant for one year. Accordingly, Alexander MacIntosh was ordained for the purpose, by the Presbytery of Dornoch, in September and commenced his ministry at Rotterdam in December 1804. Though Ross appears to have returned briefly to the Netherlands, in April 1806 he wrote to the congregation from Edinburgh informing them that he was resigning his office as a pastor in the Scottish Church at Rotterdam. Whilst supplying the Rotterdam congregation MacIntosh was asked to become the minister of the vacant English church at Middleburg. He was, however, persuaded to stay in the Dutch port where his services had been well received. His induction as colleague minister in Rotterdam took place on 11th May, just five weeks after the resignation of Thomas Ross.



William MacPhail (1771–1844) the successor to Ross in Rotterdam.

(b) Ross in Controversy

When, on account of his health, Ross was in Scotland, and still a minister of the Rotterdam Church, he was employed by the SSPCK in superintending the publication of the second edition of their Gaelic Bible in which Alexander Stewart of Dingwall had been significantly involved.⁴⁹ Ross had a disagreement with the Directors of the SSPCK over the money he was promised for correcting the proofs of the Gaelic Bible. This then led

⁴⁸ For an account of the English Church in Flushing, see Steven, *The History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam*, pp. 301-306.

⁴⁹ Alexander Stewart of Dingwall was the father of Alexander Stewart of Cromarty. For his contribution to the translation of the Bible into Gaelic, see D. MacKinnon, *The Gaelic Bible and Psalter* (Dingwall, 1930); Donald Meek, 'The Gaelic Bible', in D.F. Wright (ed.), *The Bible in Scottish Life and Literature* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 9-23; Donald Meek, 'Bible (Versions, Gaelic)', in N.M. de S Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology (DSCHT)* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 74-76.

to an unfortunate exchange of letters with John Campbell, the minister Tolbooth Church and the successor to John Kemp as both the secretary of the SSPCK and minister of the Tolbooth Church. The exchange regarded the ministerial vacancy at the Gaelic Chapel of Ease in Edinburgh of which the SSPCK had the patronage. Ross asserted that the Gaelic congregation desired him to be their minister but that Campbell had spread false reports about him in relation to his work on the Gaelic Bible that led the directors to present another minister for the vacancy. Ross, to defend his reputation, published his correspondence with Campbell, the secretary of the SSPCK. Campbell was an evangelical and had been a chaplain to Willielma, Lady Glenorchy. The choice of the Society for the vacancy in preference to Ross could hardly be faulted; it was the young John Macdonald, later of Ferintosh, who would become 'The Apostle of the North'. Campbell considered Ross's conduct as rather intemperate.⁵⁰

Ross was a Gaelic scholar and thought that the Gaelic Bible which he had seen though the press in 1807 was not easily understood by those who spoke the dialect that prevailed in Ross-shire. Accordingly, he produced a translation of the Bible into Gaelic that would be more readily understood by the those who spoke the Ross-shire dialect. This resulted in the Synod of Ross overturing the 1820 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for permission to print Ross's translation and for its use in Ross-shire. It would seem that the object of the overture was two-fold: first, to induce the Assembly to repeal the Act which they had passed a few years previously at the instigation of the SSPCK, prohibiting the use of any Gaelic Version of the Scriptures other than the one produced by the Society in any Church or School belonging to the Church of Scotland; and secondly, to secure the countenance and patronage of the Church, through her General Assembly for a new Gaelic Version of the Scriptures, which Ross of Lochbroom was understood to have ready for publication. Donald Mackenzie of Fodderty appeared in support of the Ross-shire overture and asserted that a great part of the people of Ross-shire could not understand Stewart's translation and that the type was so small that the generality could not read it. He concluded rather trenchantly: 'That to indulge any body of men with a monopoly of translating the Scriptures, was as dangerous and hurtful as the monopoly of the trade to China and India.'⁵¹

⁵⁰ See Thomas Ross, *Letters to the Rev. John Campbell...on the subject of a false report said to have been circulated by Mr. Campbell to the prejudice of the Rev. Thomas Ross* (Edinburgh, 1807), where he vigorously defends his side of the controversy.

⁵¹ Mackinnon, *The Gaelic Bible and Psalter*, pp. 68-69.

Mackenzie sat down, and was followed by Alexander Irvine of Little Dunkeld who disapproved of the overture on the table.⁵² He thought that a more unnecessary and improper overture was never laid upon the table of the General Assembly. ‘Were this overture listened to, what would be the consequence? Why, this; that as in the county of Ross various dialects prevail, and as this translation of Dr. Ross cannot be adapted to them all, the same complaint would never cease to exist.’ He denied that the Highlanders of Perthshire could not understand the Gaelic of Ross-shire. Besides if everyone who thought fit were allowed to make translations of the Scriptures, ‘there would be great danger of misleading and bewildering the people.’⁵³ The Assembly rejected the overture on the basis that the version in use was intelligible in Ross-shire and they disapproved of multiplying translations as tending to mislead and bewilder the people.⁵⁴ The dismissal of the overture led to a fierce newspaper controversy which lasted for almost a year in the pages of the *Inverness Journal* in which Thomas Ross vigorously defended his translation. His main interlocutor was Alexander Irvine, a Gaelic scholar who had revised and prepared for publication the quarto edition of the Gaelic Bible issued by the SSPCK. Between July 1820 and May 1821 Ross wrote five letters to the newspaper, two of which were very long and detailed; in the printed book edition one takes twenty-six pages and the other twenty-three pages.

As in his controversy over the vacancy at the Gaelic Chapel of Ease in Edinburgh, Ross published his newspaper correspondence in a book. The volume contains not only his and Irvine’s letters but those of two other anonymous correspondents along with a report of the 1820 General Assembly and minutes of the Lochcarron Presbytery and those of the Provincial Synod of Glenelg.⁵⁵ Ross’s exchange of correspondence with John Campbell concerning the Edinburgh vacancy and his contributions to the *Inverness Journal* in the newspaper controversy are part of the

⁵² Alexander Irvine (1772–1824), after training at St. Andrews, was a missionary at Kintra, then at Rannoch, followed by a short pastorate at Fortingal before he became the minister of Little Dunkeld in 1806. He was awarded a D.D. from Edinburgh University in 1812. See Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 4, p. 159.

⁵³ Mackinnon, *The Gaelic Bible and Psalter*, p. 69.

⁵⁴ For an overall account of the overture, see Mackinnon, *The Gaelic Bible and Psalter*, pp. 66-70; Donald Meek, article on ‘Thomas Ross’ in *DSCHT*, p. 731.

⁵⁵ Thomas Ross, *Letters and other documents on the subject of a new translation of the Sacred Scriptures into Gaelic* (Edinburgh, 1821). This volume which contains the newspaper exchanges has 102 pages.

background to Principal John Macleod's observations about Thomas Ross, that he was 'one of the ablest men that the Highlands had in his time, but withal a masterful, litigious man, disposed to stand on his ecclesiastical rights.'⁵⁶ Donald Sage is rather more critical; he writes, 'Dr. Ross of Lochbroom was an able man, and a sound and talented preacher, but his love of controversy and of litigation destroyed his ministerial usefulness and was withering to his soul.'⁵⁷

(c) Ross and Education in Lochbroom

Ross's reputation for learning as a Gaelic scholar is clearly evident in this anecdote regarding a communion at Lochcarron during the ministry of Lachlan Mackenzie:

In the year 1816, Mr. Lachlan invited three of his brethren to assist him at his Communion, namely, Dr. Macdonald, Ferintosh; Mr. Kennedy, Redcastle, and Dr. Ross, Lochbroom. Dr. Macdonald received the following letter: 'I hear that you keep a large store of powder, which you use in blasting. I wish you to come to try your skill in breaking the hard rocks of Lochcarron.' He accepted the invitation, and reached the manse of Lochcarron on the evening before the Fast-day, along with Dr. Ross, of Lochbroom, and Mr. Kennedy, of Kilearnan. Mr. Lachlan had been looking forward with great delight to the prospect of their visit and their services. He said to his sister a few weeks before, 'I have sent for Mr. Macdonald with the Law, and for Mr. Kennedy with the Gospel, and for Dr. Ross with the Learning, and I will come after them myself with prayer, and I think we shall have a good time of it.'⁵⁸

Doubtless in consequence of his own love of learning Thomas Ross was concerned about the education of the people in his vast parish. Responding to a Gaelic Schools Society circular letter in 1811, Ross observed:

There can hardly be said to exist any means of religious or moral instruction, but what results from my personal labours alone. There has not been a Parochial School of any standing for above thirty years back. Since I came here, a schoolmaster was appointed; but there being no School-house he had not commenced his labours, when he was called to a mission on the Royal Bounty; and the position is still vacant. There has been no Society Schoolmaster in this parish for many years back, except a Mr.

⁵⁶ John Macleod, *By-paths in Highland Church History* (Edinburgh, 1965), p. 138.

⁵⁷ Sage, *Memorabilia Domestica*, p. 188.

⁵⁸ *Additional Lectures, Sermons, and Writings of Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie of Lochcarron* (Inverness, 1930), p. 13.

Robert Munro, who acted as a Missionary and Schoolmaster in the village of Ullapool, and who is dead about two years and a half ago.⁵⁹

He added that, in consequence, in the remote areas, ‘There may not be a single individual found capable of reading the Scriptures in English or Gaelic, and these perhaps from fourteen to twenty-five miles from the Parish church.’⁶⁰ In the areas closer to the parish church and school, things were a little better:

There are about 4000 inhabitants in this parish, of whom, perhaps, six or seven hundred of the rich and poor may be able to read the Scriptures in the English language; but with the exception of about half a dozen strangers, the whole prefer religious instruction, and are more capable of improving by it, in the Gaelic. 2ndly, about a score may be capable of reading a psalm, or a chapter of the Bible in Gaelic alone ... Of consequence, about three thousand precious souls in this parish alone, are excluded from the word of life, excepting by the ear only. Many of these cannot hear a sermon preached above twice or thrice in the year; and many are not within ten miles of one who can read the Scriptures in any language.⁶¹

However, matters seem quickly to have changed for the better. In the Second Annual Report of the Gaelic Schools Society, produced in 1813, there is correspondence from Ross indicating that three schools have been set up in the parish at Badantarbet, Keppoch, and Monkcastle.⁶² In addition to the Gaelic Society Schools and those of the SSPCK, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1824 formed an education committee to promote education in the Highlands and Islands. The Committee in its report to the May 1833 General Assembly listed eighty-five Assembly schools, of which there were three in the Parish of Lochbroom, at Ullapool, Monkcastle, and Altandhu. The Altandhu school on the Coigach peninsula had sixty-six pupils all of whom were learning English, thirteen learning Gaelic and Arithmetic, and twenty-one learning to write. The school’s library had issued one hundred and fifty-eight books on loan in the year to 1st February 1833. There was also a

⁵⁹ *First Annual Report of the Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools* (Edinburgh, 1811), p. 15, cited in David Paton, *The Clergy and the Clearances*, p. 138.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *First Annual Report of the Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools*, p. 16 cited in Paton, *The Clergy and the Clearances*, p. 138.

⁶² *Second Annual Report of the Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools* (Edinburgh, 1813), pp. 3-5, 25-27.

Sabbath evening school attended by seventy pupils.⁶³ When Ross came to write the account of Lochbroom for the *New Statistical Account* in 1835, educational provision was still increasing.

The total number of schools in the parish is eight; one parochial school, and seven supported by various charitable societies. In the parochial school, there are taught, Gaelic and English reading, writing, arithmetic, Latin, Greek, and mathematics. The master's salary is £84, 4s. Sterling, with the legal accommodations. The school fees may amount to about £6. He has also £3, 6s. 8d. as precentor and session-clerk, all too little for a man of liberal education. Of the whole population of the parish, only 1496 can read or write in any language, and many of these very imperfectly indeed; while 3710 can neither read nor write; and it is to be lamented, as well as confessed, that many of the people are not sufficiently alive to the benefits of education. They make general professions of regard to the means of instruction, when destitute of them; but when these means are put within their reach, the sacrifice is small indeed, which many will make to give their children the benefit of them.⁶⁴

(d) Ross and Norman Macleod – The Assynt Separatist

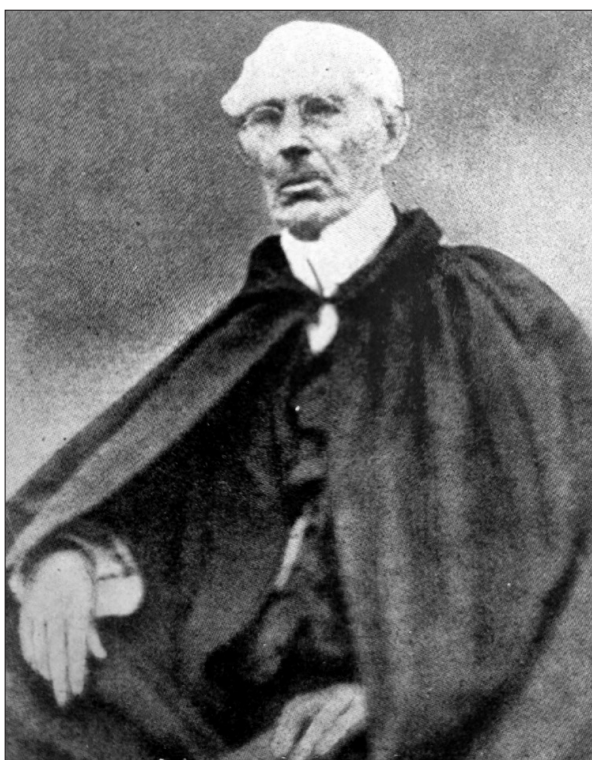
Norman Macleod was born in the village of Clachtoll in Stoer in 1780; his mother was said to have been related to Lachlan Mackenzie. He studied at Aberdeen with a view to preparing for the ministry. However, after two sessions of theology at Edinburgh he was suspended and in 1815 became the parish schoolmaster in Ullapool. Whilst he was a teacher, and not a licentiate for the ministry, Macleod began to preach. Thomas Ross regarded this as a grave irregularity and he was not a man to acquiesce in the schoolteacher's irregularity. As a consequence, the relations between the minister and teacher became strained. After a child was born to the teacher the thought of Ross's baptizing the infant was out of the question. He and his wife decided that their baby son should be taken to the Lochcarron communion for baptism. Lachlan Mackenzie was the minister and he was a relative. Macleod felt sure Mackenzie would agree to baptize the child, so they set out on a forty miles journey with their infant son to Lochcarron. To their consternation, Mackenzie had invited Thomas Ross to assist him at the sacramental services. Mackenzie planned that the two

⁶³ *Report of the Committee of the General Assembly for increasing the means of Education and Religious Instruction in Scotland particularly in the Highlands and Islands* (Edinburgh, 1833), pp. 18-19, 21.

⁶⁴ *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol. 14, p. 87.

men would meet in his study and be reconciled; he had, however, underestimated the antagonists. Ross's temper and Macleod's harsh obstinacy made compromise impossible. The infant could not be baptized without the consent of his father's parish minister; hence the child was carried home unbaptized.⁶⁵

Ross, as we have noted, was litigious man; this and everything about the minister irritated the uncompromising teacher. Macleod thought that Ross lacked zeal and, though unlicensed,



Norman Macleod – The Assynt Separatist, in old age.

he expressed his views in his preaching to the separatist congregations which he had established at Assynt and Ullapool. A recent account of Macleod's life, which is doubtless somewhat partisan in his favour, describes the contest at Ullapool:

As his (Ross's) parish was large, he could seldom preach in Ullapool, and Norman was required, as his predecessors had been, to read the Scriptures to the villagers each Sunday and comment upon them. As in his home parish, his intensity and eloquence captured his hearers in Ullapool. Dr. Ross, one of the outstanding Gaelic scholars of his time, a man whose intellect Norman freely admired, was fully in the tradition of the Moderate Party of the Church. His sermons were broad but not deep. Norman describes how in preaching on 'Ye are the light of the world', 'all the planetary system is at once in blaze as the scene of action – Hercules and Herschel, Neptune and Newton are all in motion.' But, says Norman, 'the name of a sinner or a Saviour would rarely occupy a place in his philosophical discourses.' Although his unlearned parishioners listened in awe and admiration to the Doctor's knowledge, Norman saw it as a superficial display. He bluntly said so and did not attend the services. The Doctor, an irascible man, understandably annoyed by the attitude of the arrogant schoolmaster under his supervision, became violently excited

⁶⁵ Flora McPherson, *Watchman Against the World* (Cape Breton Island, 1992), p. 28.

during one of his rare sermons at Ullapool. He warned any of his hearers who supported Norman's religious services to leave the meeting and his ministry at once. He then ordered the people of the village to withdraw their children from Norman's school or to forfeit their church privileges if Norman continued to disobey him by not attending his services. The people all stood by Norman and refused to comply, except the chief elder who withdrew his son – no great loss, according to Norman, who, after many years of teaching, still remembered him as 'the toughest twig that ever graced my drill'. The Doctor, however, became so violent in his threats against the neighborhood that Norman's resignation seemed the only solution. Norman faced the decision, he records, 'with very tight struggles of mind between my sense of duty and desire of ease in my dear native land, and among my generous employers.'

Before Norman had announced his resignation, Dr. Ross summoned him to appear before his Kirk session. It was a tense contest. The Doctor accused him of keeping the people of Ullapool from attending his ministry. Norman insisted that their choice was free. The Doctor offered a compromise, 'If you yourself should appear here now and then, even rarely, say once in a quarter, and show otherwise by your conversation and conduct your approbation of my ministry, I could freely indulge you. But your example beside your preaching is a stumbling block to them.' 'I don't call my service preaching,' said Norman. The contest then turned to Norman's right to explain the Scriptures. Norman, in his defence, quoted the Biblical passage, 'As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards'... Here the impasse was complete. The Doctor insisted that Norman was claiming some extraordinary spiritual gift; Norman declared that the words referred to every individual. Neither ever yielded. There was no winner in the long day's argument, but the authority was all the Doctor's. He offered Norman twenty days of grace before he should be deprived of the school. Norman strode from the house.⁶⁶

This irregularity angered Ross who arranged for his salary to be stopped. This estrangement was one of the factors that prompted Macleod to emigrate to Nova Scotia in July 1817; they sailed from Lochbroom. Many of his four hundred fellow-passengers shared his views and, under his leadership, finally settled at St Ann's on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia after a three-year period in Pictou. There they established a rigorous theocratic

⁶⁶ McPherson, *Watchman against the World*, pp. 24-26. A very full account by Macleod of his controversy with Ross is in Norman Macleod, *The Present Church of Scotland and A Tint of Normanism, contending in a Dialogue* (Cape Breton, 1841), pp. 298-320.

community which continued until the potato famine of 1847. This caused Macleod to lead them yet again, as a community, to the other side of the globe, first to Adelaide, then Melbourne, in Australia, and finally to a 30,000-acre land grant at Waipu, north of Auckland in New Zealand. The solidarity of these Lochbroom and Assynt people transcended all manner of adversity. They were subsequently joined by other shiploads direct from St Ann's and reconstituted the unique, co-operative Christian socialist community which Macleod had first created at Pictou fifty years earlier.⁶⁷

(e) Ross and the Disruption in Lochbroom

The conflicting rights of patrons and congregations in the appointment of ministers led to litigation in the civil courts and resulted in the Disruption of 1843, which split the Church of Scotland in two. The religious life of Ross-shire was deeply affected, particularly in Easter Ross. In Wester Ross the only parish minister to leave the Establishment and join the new Free Church of Scotland was Thomas Ross of Lochbroom; his name was given in by his family, but he only lived for two months after the event and never signed the Deed of Demission. However, three out of four ministers of the Wester Ross parliamentary churches 'came out', the only exception being that of Ullapool in the Lochbroom parish. Ross had foreseen the inevitable well in advance, and was followed by his people 'almost to a man'. Thomas Brown, in the *Annals of the Disruption*, cites a manuscript account of the parting service at Lochbroom and of Ross's final Sabbath in the Clachan Church:

He spent a most useful and honourable life among his people, who still cling to his memory with fond affection. Dr. Ross was one of those who saw, at an early stage of the struggle with the Civil Courts, that the maintenance of a faithful testimony for Christ and the spiritual rights of His people would end in the separation of the Church of Scotland from the State. They are still living to whom he said, five years before the Disruption, that it would take place, and that they would see the road leading to the

⁶⁷ For a rather sympathetic account of the Assynt Separatist in which he says that Lachlan Mackenzie came to share, though in a modified degree, the censorious judgement that his young relative held concerning Thomas Ross, see John Macleod, *By-paths in Highland Church History*, pp. 136-161, esp. p. 139. On Norman Macleod's extraordinary career, see McPherson, *Watchman against the World*; Neil Robinson, *Lion of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1999); Neil Robinson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Norman Macleod and the Highlanders Migration to Nova Scotia and New Zealand* (Auckland, 1997); R. MacLean, 'Norman McLeod', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 9, pp. 516-17; Maureen Molloy, 'Norman Macleod', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, 1990, in *Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies> (accessed 7th October 2020).

door of the Established Church of Lochbroom covered with grass, as the church would be deserted by the people, because it would be occupied by such as are described by the prophet Isaiah, lvi. 10. The first Sabbath after the Disruption, Dr. Ross, then in very infirm health, attended the church as a hearer. After sermon by the Rev. Mr. Grant, Dr. Ross rose in his seat, and, with tears running from his eyes, praised the Lord for the testimony to the honour of Christ given by the Disruption party. He then exhorted the people to leave the State Church, which, almost to a man, they then did, and to this day (1867) have never returned.⁶⁸



Thomas Telford, the designer of the Parliamentary Churches.

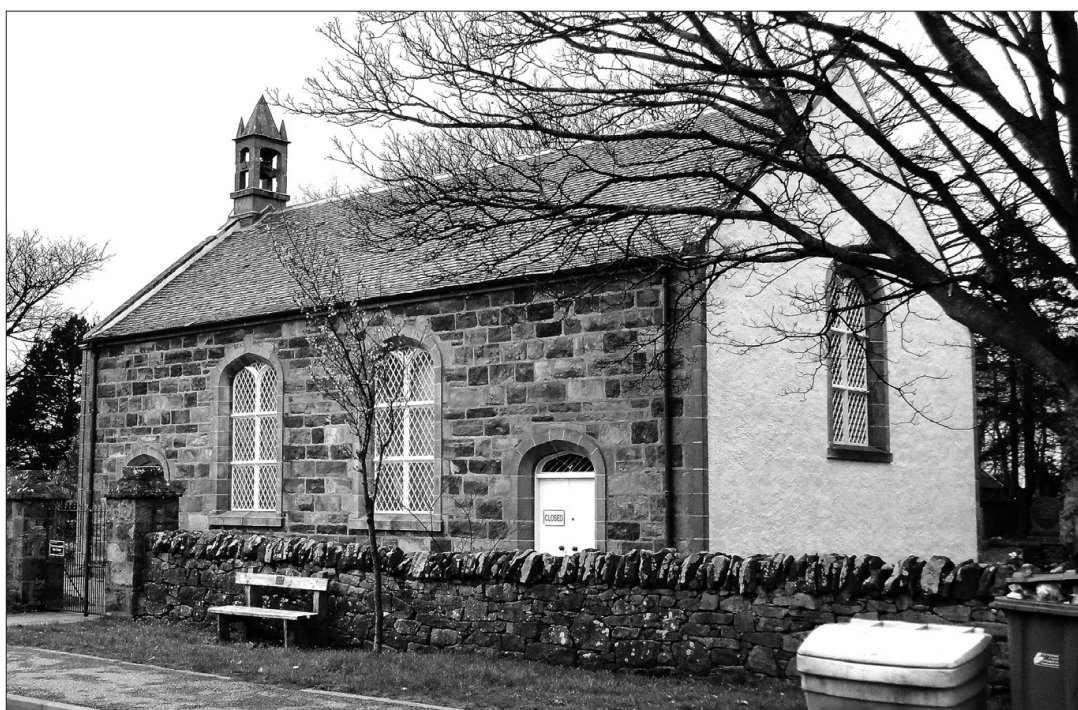
(f) Ullapool Parliamentary Church

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the provision of churches in the Highlands did not match the spiritual and religious requirements of the population, particularly in thinly populated areas. Most Highland parishes were large areas of rough mountainous land, and many parishioners, especially those who had been cleared from the land, lived so far from the parish church that they could not attend worship regularly. To remedy the situation, Parliament voted, in the *Church of Scotland Act 1824*, a grant of £50,000

for the building of new churches, the paying of ministers' salaries, and in most cases also, the providing of a manse. Four of these parliamentary churches were located in the Lochcarron Presbytery, at Plockton, Shieldaig, Poolewe, and Ullapool. They became popularly known as 'Telford churches' as they were built by the Scottish stonemason and architect Thomas Telford. Each church (plus manse) was to cost no more than £1,500 which meant that Telford had to keep his design simple. The original plan was for forty-three churches and manses to be built, but by the end of the program in 1830 only thirty-two were completed and eleven churches were renovated. A Bill was passed in 1824 requiring heritors who desired a new kirk to be built to apply to a Commission and give assurances that land would be made available. In August 1825 the Commissioners considered

⁶⁸ Brown, *Annals of the Disruption*, p. 105 citing Parker MSS, Presbytery of Lochcarron.

seventy-eight applications; a further eighteen more were received by June 1826. The task of selecting the sites and overseeing the work was entrusted to the Commissioners for Building Highland Roads and Bridges, and in particular to their Chief Surveyor Thomas Telford. The parliamentary church in Ullapool was completed in 1829 on West Argyle Street. It was declared to be a *Quoad Sacra* parish⁶⁹ by an Act of Assembly on 25th May 1833 and erected as such by the Court of Teinds and eventually disjoined from Lochbroom on 16th March 1859 to become Ullapool Parish Church.



Ullapool Parliamentary Church.

In the century between 1829, when it was completed, and 1929, the congregation had nine ministers. The first was Alexander Ross who was a missionary in the Lochbroom congregation from 1819.⁷⁰ When in 1929 the United Free Church merged with the Church of Scotland the parliamentary church on West Argyle Street continued to be used for a number of years. Joint services were held in the morning in the Mill Street Church (the original Free Church property, built in 1844, that became the United Free Church place of worship in 1900) with separate services in both West Argyle Street and Mill Street in the evening. This

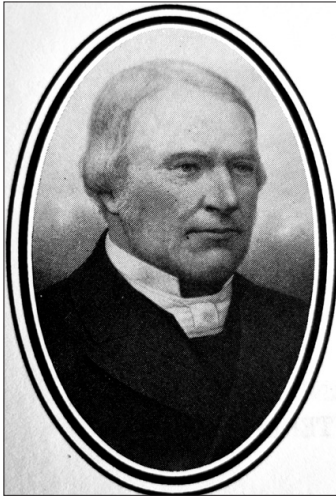
⁶⁹ A *Quoad Sacra* parish was the creation of an ecclesiastical parish without the creation of new civil parish and without the consent of the civil authorities. They were set up where population growth created a demand for more church seats.

⁷⁰ For Alexander Ross (no relative of Thomas Ross), see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 165.

arrangement continued until around 1935 when the Mill Street building became Ullapool Parish Church.⁷¹

IV. The Disruption Free Church

Most of the people in the Lochcarron Presbytery (but not the ministers) joined the Free Church; this was so in Applecross, Gairloch, and Lochcarron.



Alexander MacColl.

In the absence of ministerial oversight a young man from Lochcarron, Alexander MacColl, took charge of three parishes until new ministers were settled. MacColl would eventually become the eminent Free Church minister of Duirinish in Skye and later of Lochalsh.⁷²

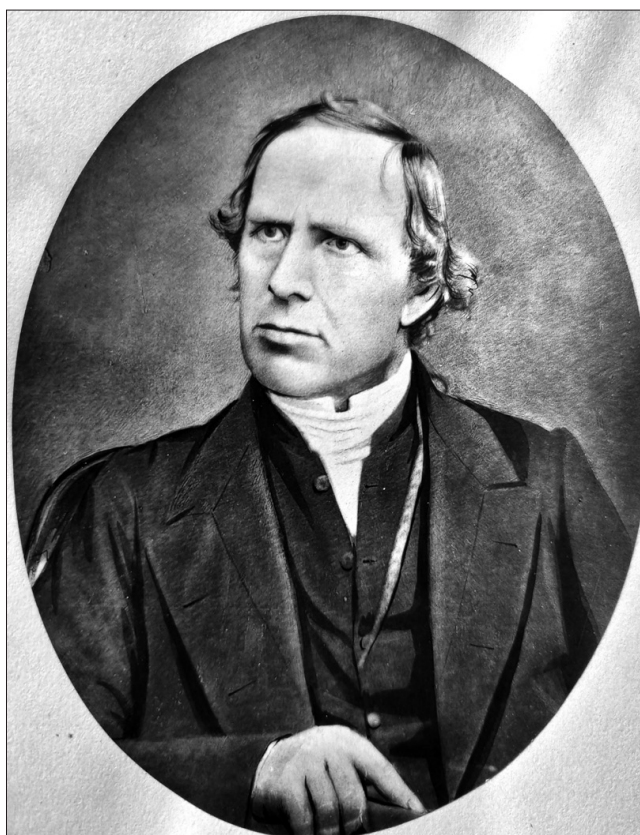
(a) George Macleod

The man who would eventually succeed Ross in July 1844 was George Macleod. Born in 1803 at Latheron in Caithness, he was converted at the age of twenty-eight, educated at Edinburgh University, licensed by the Presbytery of Dunoon in 1839, and shortly afterwards ordained by the Presbytery of Dingwall and inducted in the Maryburgh congregation of that Presbytery.

⁷¹ Macleod, *Lochbroom through the Centuries*, p. 129. The Telford Church was classified as a Category A listed building and when the Ullapool Museum Trust was formed in 1991 to collect, promote and preserve the history and heritage of Lochbroom it was offered the historic Thomas Telford church for just £1 from the Church of Scotland. The Trust preserved and restored the building and it opened as Ullapool Museum in December 1995.

⁷² Alexander MacColl (1815–1889) was a Free Church minister first in Duirinish, Skye, from 1852, Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston from 1870 and Lochalsh from 1877. See *Biographies of Highland Clergymen – Reprinted from the Inverness Courier* (Inverness, 1889), pp. 114–119. The beginning of a newspaper obituary speaks of him in these terms, ‘Mr. MacColl was a typical Highland minister of that old and respected school, the members of which are rapidly passing away. He occupied a position among his Highland brethren second only to that which was occupied by Dr Kennedy, of Dingwall; Dr Mackay, of Inverness; or the present Moderator of the Assembly (Gustavus Aird). It was a position of consideration and honour. He was a power in the Presbytery and a leader in the Synod of Glenelg; he was beloved by his congregations; and at the great communion gatherings which he frequently attended he was immensely popular. Mr. MacColl, it need hardly be said, belonged, both as regards theology and Church politics, to the Constitutional party that acknowledged Dr. Begg and Dr. Kennedy as their leaders. He hated “innovations” in any form. No one was more pronounced in condemnation of the views of Dr. Robertson Smith.’ It was under the preaching of MacColl on the Monday of a communion at North Uist that Donald Macfarlane, the first minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, was brought to concern for his soul’s salvation. See Donald Beaton, *Memoir, Diary & Remains of the Rev. Donald Macfarlane* (Inverness, 1929), p. 3.

Macleod preached his first sermon in Milton Church, Glasgow and it made an impression on the minister of the congregation, John Duncan, afterwards Dr Duncan of the New College, Edinburgh. In a letter written by Duncan to John Macdonald of Ferintosh, there is the following statement regarding the sermon: 'Mr George Macleod, having been licensed by the Presbytery of Dunoon on Thursday last, preached to us in Milton Church on Sabbath forenoon; I never expected to hear, nor do I expect to hear again, such a first sermon. Considered as a piece of composition it was highly respectable, the language plain and good, the arrangement orderly, and the delivery marked by a firmness, pith, and animation which surprised me in the circumstances. The doctrine was scriptural, close, pointed, and practical, from the text, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."' ⁷³



George Macleod – The first Free Church of Scotland minister in Lochbroom.

Macleod was member of the General Assembly in 1842 and a member of the Convocation that preceded the Disruption. The evangelicals in the Established Church deputed him to visit the West Highlands in order to prepare them for the Disruption. His biographer says:

On this work he entered with all his heart and energy in due time. In April 1843 he visited Applecross, Shialdaig, Lochcarron, Plockton, Lochalsh, Kintail, Glenshiel, and Glenelg, in the Presbytery of Lochcarron; Kiltarlity, Glenurquhart, and Daviot, in the Presbytery of Inverness; Boleskine, Kilmonivaig, Kilmalie, Fort-William, and Fort-Augustus, in the Presbytery of Abertarff. All these congregations, with

⁷³ Kenneth M. Macdonald, 'George Macleod, Maryburgh and Lochbroom', *Disruption Worthies of the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1877), p. 194.

one or two exceptions, were under the reign of moderatism which could not tolerate the face of an evangelical minister. Nevertheless the people turned out with great readiness to hear the gospel and get information on those points that referred to their spiritual rights and liberties. To many of them this preaching tour was a prelude to great gospel privileges, and when the Disruption took place, it was to them as 'the opening of the prison to them that are bound.'⁷⁴

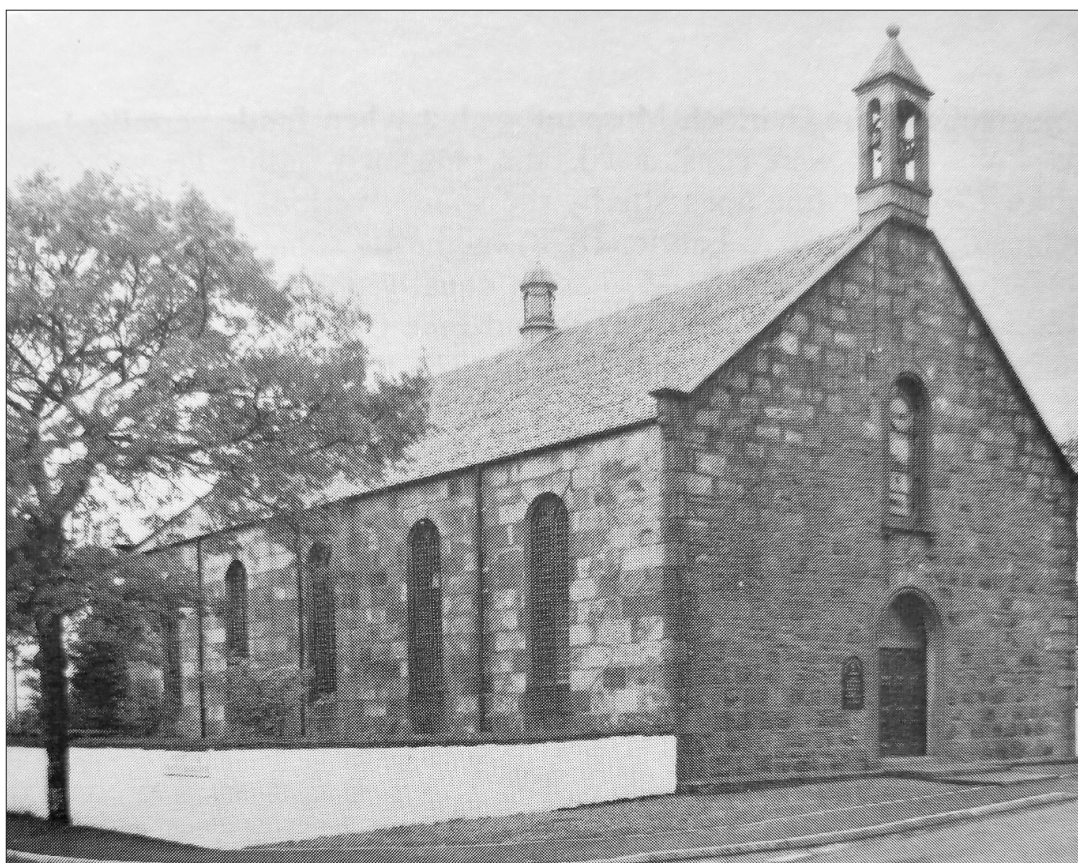
Macleod went to Lochbroom for the first time at the end of September 1843; it had been arranged that he would preach in the open air on the first Sabbath of October. On the Monday he met the congregation and addressed them on the principles and position of the Free Church after which he expected that his work there would be finished. There was, however, such an earnest desire of the people to hear the gospel that he was persuaded to continue preaching on Tuesday and Wednesday. The people, some of whom came from distant districts of the parish to the number of upwards of two thousand, remained all the time. As his biographer notes, 'It was evident that great work had begun. There was great shaking among the bones.'⁷⁵ In the spring of 1844 Macleod was given a call to the Lochbroom congregation signed by 2,530 people. The Free Presbytery of Dingwall agreed to translate him, but an appeal was made to the Free General Assembly by the Maryburgh congregation. This was hardly surprising. To the Maryburgh people such a move would be like separating a father from his children. His biographer states that 'many of them regarded him as their spiritual father, and the congregation owed its then prosperous state to his successful labours. In pleading the case before the Assembly they offered to give six months in the year of his service to the Church if the pastoral tie would not be broken.'⁷⁶ The General Assembly confirmed the judgment of the Presbytery, and he was inducted to Free Church congregation of Lochbroom on 18th July 1844. The church building of the Ullapool Free Church at Mill Street was opened in 1844 along with a suitable manse for Macleod.

The extent of the parish of Lochbroom was a field of labour worthy of a man of herculean powers. With a population of nearly 5,000, it was scattered over a district of at least forty miles by thirty in extent, with a sea coast line of upwards of 200 miles. Though he made Ullapool the centre point of his labours, he administered ordinances occasionally at five other

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 189.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 190.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 192.



Free Church on Mill Street.

stations. In travelling to some of those remote stations he would leave his house at six o'clock in the morning, and would not get back until ten at night. Three of the places that were in Coigach and those in Little Loch Broom involved journey by sea. 'At these places the people would gather at the appointed time and wait in the open for the boat, sometimes delayed by storm. When the boat finally arrived, Macleod would begin the service immediately without changing his clothes, even though they might be drenched with sea spray or rain... In his labours Macleod was assisted by a faithful catechist named Finlay Matheson.'⁷⁷ George N. M. Collins speaking of Macleod's pastorate observes:

The ministry of twenty-six years that followed was truly remarkable in its fruits. Many were translated from the darkness which is the shadow of death to the light and liberty of the Gospel; and the spiritual children of this greatly-honoured soul-winner were marked by the keenness of discernment and strength of conviction that are usually

⁷⁷ MacGregor, *Scoraig: A Peninsula and its People*, p. 139. See also *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 32 (March 1928), p. 427.

characteristic of those whose privilege it has been to wait upon an edifying ministry.⁷⁸

James MacGregor has recorded a local anecdote that seems to be typical of the man. He writes: ‘he was a kindly and approachable man, and consulted by many in the parish on all manner of subjects.’ This he illustrates from the memory of an old Ullapool lady who died in 1991 who as a teenager knew an old woman who once offered Macleod a meal of potatoes and salt without apology (it was all she had). She simply said (in Gaelic), ‘What a lot we have been given.’ He replied in Gaelic, ‘You’ve already said the Grace, Elizabeth.’⁷⁹

Macleod was a loyal servant of his Church. By appointment of Free Church General Assembly in 1844, he went to Caithness and Sutherland, where the Free Church was sorely persecuted, and addressed seventeen congregations in the Presbyteries of Dornoch, Tongue, and Caithness. He was the first Free Church minister that visited the Island of Ronaldsay in Orkney and in 1846 he officiated for six weeks in the floating church at Loch Sunart, where he endured, in Kenneth Macdonald’s words, ‘the privations and suffering worthy of an apostle, sleeping at night alone in the cable-room of the craft.’⁸⁰ Before his death in May 1871 his biographer says ‘that he travelled upwards of 9,000 miles in open boats on public duty on the west coast.’⁸¹ George N. M. Collins also adds with regard to his ministry, that it was one which, ‘by the grace of God, produced in Lochbroom a crop of Christians second to none in the entire Highlands of Scotland.’⁸²

(b) John MacMillan

The man who succeeded George Macleod at Lochbroom was John MacMillan. Trained at Glasgow University and at the Glasgow Free Church College, he was ordained at Lochbroom, just over a year after Macleod’s death, in October 1872. MacMillan was regarded as a notable Gaelic preacher. It is said that Professor John Stuart Blackie made periodic visits to Ullapool to hear his Gaelic.⁸³ He was also regarded as one of the crofters’ heroes in the agitation for land reform.⁸⁴ In 1879 Colonel Davidson sold the Leckmelm estate to Alexander Pirie, a successful Aberdeen paper manufacturer. This was a small

⁷⁸ George N. M. Collins, *Principal John Macleod, D. D.* (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 66.

⁷⁹ MacGregor, *Scoraig: A Peninsula and its People*, p. 140.

⁸⁰ Macdonald, ‘George Macleod’, p. 193.

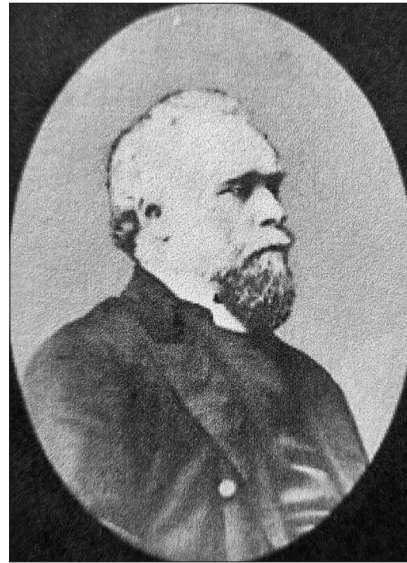
⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁸² George N. M. Collins, ‘Where We Worship – Ullapool Free Church’, *Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, May 1970, p. 88.

⁸³ John A. Lamb, *The Fasti of the United Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 488.

⁸⁴ Joseph Macleod, *Highland Heroes in the Land Reform Movement* (Inverness, 1917), p. 97.

property on Loch Broom and close to the large Cromartie Estate, The new proprietor decided to remove twenty-three families off their crofts into cottages in order to consolidate the agricultural land in one large farm. The crofters were to become day-labourers on Pirie's estate without holdings after Martinmas (11th November) 1880. An historian of the crofters' struggle described the new landlord's actions in these terms: 'In one stroke...they were reduced from a position of relative poverty to a position of absolute poverty.'⁸⁵ Leckmelm was in John MacMillan's parish and he was outraged by



John MacMillan.

Pirie's actions; as a leader and an accomplished orator he became the voice for the people of Wester Ross. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1880 MacMillan wrote letters to the press in order to publicise the events on the Leckmelm Estate. In a letter to the *Highlander* that appeared on 27th October, 1880 he attacked the hereditary monopoly of power amongst the landed elite, criticising the House of Lords, and, using language which would have been regarded as very radical for a loyal Protestant minister, he praised the values of 'a properly constituted Republic.' Addressing professing Christians and ministers particularly, he questioned:

If we are not to take up our deadly weapons and shoot every relentless factor and landlord from behind a hedge, are there no other weapons we can use as Christian men? The fact that we are the messengers of peace should not for a moment prevent us from turning every stone until our demands are satisfied. Neither does our high calling call upon us to be pusillanimous and cowards enough to quake before the great and those in favour, and allow the poor and the needy, the orphan and the widow, to be crushed and ground under the wheel of oppression.⁸⁶

At a public meeting held at the Inverness Music Hall in November 1880, MacMillan, accompanied on the platform by four other ministers, referred in his speech to the conflict between Pirie and the crofters at Leckmelm; he asserted boldly:

⁸⁵ Iain Fraser Grigor, *Mightier than a Lord* (Stornoway, 1979), p. 37.

⁸⁶ *Highlander*, 27th October 1880, cited in Allan MacColl, *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community: Christianity and Social Criticism in the Highlands of Scotland, 1843–1993* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 97.

I can confidently hope that a campaign has been inaugurated which shall not be abandoned until the cruel and ravaging foe is routed forever off the field – (Cheers) – and a yoke of iron which neither we nor our forefathers were able to bear, will be wrenched and snapped asunder – (Renewed cheers) – and removed from the necks of our peasantry, never more to be replaced.⁸⁷

Eric Richards has written that the 'Leckmelm episode was a focal point for the mobilisation of opinion in the Highlands, and it figured prominently in the attack on landlordism that erupted in the 1880s.'⁸⁸ Pirie's actions received widespread publicity and adverse criticism which became part of a national debate. Together with more violent incidents in Skye and elsewhere, this controversy helped fuel the 'Highland Land War' or the 'Crofters War' which led in March 1883 to the establishment of the Napier Commission to enquire into crofting grievances. The *Crofting Act 1886*, which resulted from the Commission, gave crofters certain rights including security of tenure and compensation for the outgoing tenants for improvements such as for buildings that they had erected or land they had reclaimed. However, despite the passing of the *Crofting Act 1886*, the Leckmelm crofters never got their land back. Some members of evicted families obtained assisted passages to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand where, though they were faced with considerable difficulties, it was generally true that they eventually prospered.⁸⁹

John MacMillan was the Free Church minister in 1900 when, under Robert Rainy's guidance, the Free Church joined with the United Presbyterian Church to form the United Free Church. MacMillan followed Rainy and became a minister of the united body until his retirement in March 1905. He died a year later on 14th April 1906.⁹⁰ George N. M. Collins commenting on MacMillan's ministry observed, he 'was a vigorous, lively preacher, but a man who lacked the sound judgment and mental balance of his predecessor. George Macleod's converts detected a new note which grated upon their ears. Reacting quickly to criticism, MacMillan threw out careless remarks from the pulpit, particularly when the 1892 Declaratory

⁸⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 18th November, 1880, cited in MacColl, *Land Faith and the Crofting Community*, p. 97.

⁸⁸ Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances: Agrarian Transformation and the Evictions, 1746–1886, Vol. 1* (London, 1982), p. 240

⁸⁹ For the Crofters' War, see MacColl, *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community*; I. M. M. MacPhail, *The Crofters' War* (Stornoway, 1989); Ewan A. Cameron, *Land for the People* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009); T. M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War: The social transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester University Press, 1994).

⁹⁰ Lamb, *The Fasti of the United Free Church of Scotland*, p. 488.

Act controversy was agitating the Church.⁹¹ This was one of several factors that resulted in 1893 in a considerable body of the Free Church congregation of Lochbroom joining the Free Presbyterian Church.

(c) Coigach Free Church

During George Macleod's ministry at Ullapool/Lochbroom a church was begun at Achiltibuie but in 1854 it still had no seating. This building was for the Coigach section of the congregation. The two congregations were, until Macleod's death in 1871, all part of the Lochbroom congregation. Coigach was disjoined from Lochbroom in 1872 and became a sanctioned charge in the Lochcarron Presbytery of the Free Church. In October of that year, Archibald Beaton was settled as the first minister of the Free Church in Coigach. Beaton was from Applecross and aged thirty when he was ordained at Coigach. He had studied at Glasgow University and then at the Free Church College in the same city. He married whilst he was at Coigach and was translated to Urray in the Dingwall Presbytery in 1880 after just eight years.

The next Coigach minister was John Finlayson who was born at Portree in 1847. Like his predecessor he had studied for the ministry at Glasgow, first at the University and then at the Free Church College. He was licensed by the Free Church Presbytery of Skye in June 1880 and ordained at Coigach in December of the same year. Coigach was also his first charge, and like Beaton he married whilst a minister of the congregation in 1884. His wife was Margaret Nicolson a daughter of Peter Nicolson a Raasay shopkeeper.⁹² Finlayson demitted his charge after just six years on medical advice and accepted an invitation to become the minister of the Brushgrove congregation in New South Wales, Australia.⁹³ He was encouraged to go to Brushgrove by Alexander Macdonald, a fellow Skye man and like him a staunch constitutionalist, who had attended the ministry of John MacRae in Greenock and had emigrated to Australia in 1886 due to the state of his health.⁹⁴ Finlayson succeeded William Grant, the first minister of the Brushgrove congregation, then an unattached congregation. When he

⁹¹ Collins, *Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, May 1970, p. 88.

⁹² Norma Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and its People* (Edinburgh, 2002), pp. 113, 146, 173, 252.

⁹³ In the decade from 1881 almost 340,000 people emigrated from the United Kingdom to Australia of which it is estimated that 13% were Scots. See Malcolm D. Prentis, *The Scots in Australia* (Sydney University Press, 1983), pp. 54-80.

⁹⁴ See the obituary of Alexander Macdonald in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 23 (April 1919), pp. 386-387. Macdonald acted as secretary and treasurer of the Brushgrove/Grafton congregation after it became part of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Macdonald's obituary speaks of John Finlayson as being a 'faithful and pious' minister.

arrived in January 1887 there was no presbyterial organisation by which he could be formally inducted. As a consequence of difficulties in the congregation he became a member of the Session of the nearby Maclean congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and acted as an ordained missionary at three locations around Brushgrove where he was highly respected. He also preached at Gaelic communions in New South Wales and Victoria and took a leading part, on the conservative side, in the issues which were disturbing the Presbyterian Church at that time. He died of internal bleeding on 8th October 1890 at the age of forty-three after less than four years ministry in Brushgrove and was buried in Maclean, New South Wales. The churches where he had preached gathered sufficient money to help his widow and infant son return to Raasay in Scotland where his widow became a member of the Free Presbyterian congregation of which Donald Macfarlane was the minister.⁹⁵

Five years after Finlayson's death Walter Scott became the minister of the Brushgrove congregation in 1895. Scott was born in Edinburgh and had connections first with the Free Church and then with the Original Secession Church. He resigned from the Brushgrove pastorate in 1909 and returned to Scotland where in 1911 he was received as a minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The following year, having received a call to the Chesley congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church in Ontario, Canada he was inducted to the charge in St Jude's Free Presbyterian Church in Glasgow on 11th October 1912. Scott ministered in Canada until his death in January 1916. He encouraged the Brushgrove people to seek for ministerial supply from the Free Presbyterian Church. Though the congregation was not unanimous, a petition was submitted by three elders and a number of members and adherents to the Synod seeking admission into Free Presbyterian Church. The petition was granted and they became the Church's Brushgrove-Grafton congregation.⁹⁶

After a vacancy of two years, the next minister of Coigach was Donald Macleod. He was born at Shawbost, Isle of Lewis in 1855. In company with

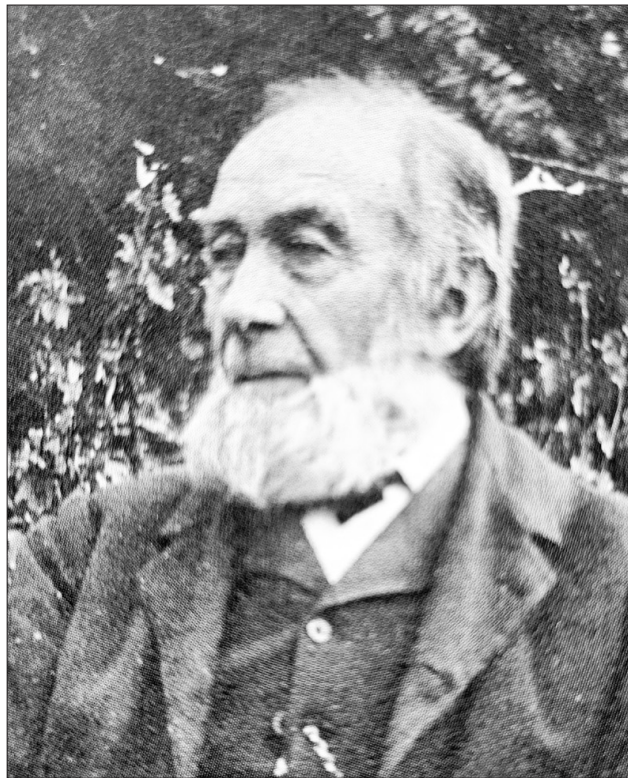
⁹⁵ For biographical details of Finlayson, see W. Ewing (ed.), *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1843–1900* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1914), Vol. 1, p. 155; *Free Church Quarterly*, Geelong, Australia, Vol. 1 (1889–1891), pp. 254–255, 293; J. Campbell Robinson, *The Free Presbyterian Church of Australia* (Melbourne, 1947), p. 151; Rowland S. Ward, *The Bush Still Burns: The Presbyterian and Reformed Faith in Australia, 1788–1988* (Wantirna, 1989), p. 547.

⁹⁶ For Scott and the admission of the Grafton congregation, see William Maclean, *In the Footsteps of the Flock: A Memorial to the Rev. Walter Scott* (Westminster Standard Publications, Gisborne, New Zealand, undated); *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 20, pp. 102–103; Vol. 21, pp. 19–24; Vol. 55, pp. 82–88; Ward, *The Bush Still Burns*, pp. 478–480.

the two preceding ministers he had studied at Glasgow University, then at the Free Church College in the same city. Coigach was his first charge and he married shortly after becoming the minister of the congregation. Macleod was ordained at Coigach on 19th September 1888 and like Finlayson was a Free Church constitutionalist who opposed to the ecclesiastical policy of Robert Rainy, the leader in the General Assembly. He refused to enter the 1900 union of the Free Church with the United Presbyterian Church which resulted in the formation of the United Free Church.

(d) Little Loch Broom Free Church

Two meeting houses were built in the Little Loch Broom area during the ministry of John MacMillan. The first was a meeting house on the Scoraig peninsula that was erected around 1876 and was paid for by a John MacIver, a Free Church elder. MacIver was born at Dundonnell, at the head of Little Loch Broom in the year 1827. At around the age of thirty he was convinced by the Holy Spirit of his guilty, sinful condition. So terrible was the experience that he had of the wrath of God against his sins that he was twelve days and nights without sleep. Neil Cameron, who wrote his obituary in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*,⁹⁷ then added, ‘But the Lord,



John Maciver.

by His own voice, said to the awful storm that raged in his soul, and the billows that were going over his head: “Peace, be still, and there was a great calm.” Peace with God through the blood of Christ reigned in his conscience, and he then sang like the children of Israel on the eastern shore

⁹⁷ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 32 (March 1928), pp. 427-432; the account is reprinted in Neil Cameron, *Ministers and Men of the Free Presbyterian Church* (2nd edn., Glasgow, 2011), pp. 89-93. In addition to Cameron’s account of his life, there is an informative obituary in the *Stornoway Gazette*, 11th March 1927, p. 3, that focuses on his family connections and his business life.

of the Red Sea. He spoke in after life of these things with great awe.’ At the time of his conversion George Macleod was the minister of the Free Church at Lochbroom and was assisted by his catechist, Finlay Matheson. MacIver esteemed both minister and catechist. Cameron, who knew MacIver well says, ‘The love and esteem John had for his minister and catechist must have been warm and very deep-rooted, for up to the last day of his life one could not be long in his company without observing it.’⁹⁸ After his marriage, he lived at Scoraig where the whole of the people of that district used to go on the Lord’s Day by boats to the Free Church at Ullapool.

John MacIver and Kenneth, his brother, married to two sisters. The two families lived each in their own house, a double-roofed property, having a passage within from the one to the other. They acted toward each other as one family, but each family kept worship by themselves. It was said that Scoraig House (*Tigh Scoraig*) was famed for its hospitality over the whole of the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland. MacIver told Neil Cameron that George Macleod refused to give him baptism until he would fulfil his duty by becoming a member in full communion with the Church. MacIver, like many in the Highlands, hesitated in making a public profession of faith, and when Macleod saw that he could not prevail, he baptized his child. Cameron adds, ‘Macleod was right in putting pressure on him to do what was clearly John’s duty, and from the way he spoke of it, he seemed to regret that he did not take that important and serious step then.’ After Macleod’s death he decided to become a member in full communion.

During the time that communion tokens were being distributed to existing members in full communion, MacIver and Alexander Ross went outside to pray. By the time they had concluded the Kirk Session had left the church. MacIver then went to John MacMillan to consult him about becoming a communicant member, whereupon the minister did not ask him any questions, but simply handed him a token. In consequence of his not being examined by a Session for membership, John MacIver for a long time was subject to temptation that he had not been admitted properly into membership. He told Neil Cameron that every time he went to the Lord’s table, the enemy harassed him by suggesting that he was never properly received by a Session of the Church.

In MacIver’s obituary, Cameron explains that when he and several elders were gathered at a Laide communion they endeavoured to put an end to the trouble that Satan was giving him about the way he had been received

⁹⁸ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 32, p. 427.

to Church membership. So when everyone had left the room in which they were sitting except MacIver and some other elders, Cameron said to them that they would have a prayer, and after that he began to examine John. When he was done examining, he asked the elders: 'If John MacIver had not been a member till now would you be quite satisfied that he should be received tonight by us to full membership?' They all answered in the affirmative, and the writer concurred. A year later MacIver met Cameron again at the Laide communion, when he said to the Glasgow minister, 'I did not understand at all what you meant by examining me here last year, but I fully realised it since, for Satan has ceased to harass me at the Lord's table.'⁹⁹ He became an elder in the Ullapool Free Church congregation not long after he was received as a member which must have been in the mid-1870s.

Before the Scoraig meeting house was built in 1876, some services were held in the open-air near the shore. The meeting house was a substantial building with a gallery. The Scoraig people constructed and paid for the building themselves. They gave their labour free, whilst MacIver paid for the materials. Cameron has provided us with the story of how the decision was made with regard to the location of the meeting house. MacIver went from his own house at Scoraig on the Little Loch Broom side of the peninsula to the house of Roderick Mackenzie¹⁰⁰ who lived at Achmore, on the Loch Broom side. He counted every step of the way, which would be fully two miles, he then divided the number of steps by two. On his way back he counted up to the half way point and set up a few stones to mark the place, so that he and Mackenzie should have the same distance to walk to the meeting house. It was also equidistant from Rhireabhach. The meeting house at Carnoch was therefore easily reached from the three main settlements on the peninsula. Other than occasional ministerial supply, services were conducted by the elders, MacIver having the main responsibility.

The second Free Church building that was erected through the enthusiasm of MacIver was on the south side of Little Loch Broom at Badcaul. It was completed in 1887 and was the first church building in

⁹⁹ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 32 (March 1928), p. 431.

¹⁰⁰ Roderick Mackenzie (1837-1906) was converted under the preaching of George Macleod. He became an elder and missionary in the Free Presbyterian Church. The first minute in the Ullapool Session Records sets the date for the ordination of four elders, one of whom was Mackenzie. His obituary, written by John R. Mackay, is in *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 11 (January 1907), pp. 354-356. Mackay says of him that 'he was one of the heaviest grains of heaven's wheat to be met with in these last years on the west coast of Ross-shire'.

that area. The land was provided free of charge by the Mackenzie family of Dundonnell. John MacIver had the contract for its construction and his brother Kenneth MacIver, who was a joiner, very probably did the interior joinery work. Local people were employed in the building work. There was no road to the shore on the south side of the loch at that time and stones had to be barrowed up from the shore of the loch for its construction. John MacMillan was an enthusiastic supporter of the project and in April 1891, a deputation from Little Loch Broom consisting of John MacIver and Donald MacGregor from Badcaul called on MacMillan at Ullapool. They presented him with a gold watch and a Double Albert gold chain as a token of the people's gratitude for his efforts in having the Badcaul church built. The *Inverness Courier* recorded the occasion, stating that the gift was given for his efforts in the building of this substantial place of worship. MacMillan responded by expressing their kindness to him adding, 'that valuable as the gift was, he valued still more the spirit that prompted it.'¹⁰¹

From this presentation to MacMillan, it seems clear that whilst it was true that the 'new note' in his preaching 'grated upon their ears', some of his most conservative members, who would leave his ministry in 1893, were still willing to acknowledge that they appreciated his efforts in helping to provide a place of worship for those living on the south side of Little Loch Broom.

V. The Free Presbyterian Movement in Lochbroom

In 1879, the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church passed a Declaratory Act, the purpose of which was to 'declare' or 'explain' the Confession in those sections where it had been 'misunderstood'. In reality, the Act contradicted the Confession and was designed to dilute the Synod's commitment to Calvinism. Worldwide Presbyterianism soon followed the lead given by the Scottish United Presbyterians. In the 1880s the Australian and the English Presbyterians introduced either a Declaratory Act or a new confession. In the early 1890s the Free Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand, and the American Presbyterian Church in the north were each considering Declaratory Act legislation. In 1889 the Free Church of Scotland set up a committee to report on ways of 'providing relief' for those unable to give an unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession.¹⁰² Two years later, a Declaratory Act

¹⁰¹ *Inverness Courier*, 1st May 1891, p. 6.

¹⁰² In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, worldwide Presbyterianism was loosening its attachment to Calvinism and to the Westminster Confession of Faith. In Scotland, men

was approved by the General Assembly and sent down to Presbyteries, under the Barrier Act, for their consideration. A majority of Presbyteries approved the Act and it became effective at the next Assembly in 1892.¹⁰³

After the failure of an attempt to rescind the Act at the 1893 General Assembly, Donald Macfarlane, the Free Church minister of Raasay, tabled a Protest part of which stated: 'I, the undersigned minister of the Free Church, in my own name, and in the name of all who may adhere to me, declare that, whatever I may subsequently do, neither my conscience nor my ordination vows allow me to act under what has been made law in this Church.'¹⁰⁴ Two months later, on 27th July 1893, Macfarlane along with Donald Macdonald of Shieldaig and a Free Church elder, Raasay schoolmaster Alexander Macfarlane, met in conference at Raasay and 'resolved to meet next day, and, in the name of the Head of the Church, form themselves into a separate Presbytery, not owning the jurisdiction of the courts of the presently subsisting Church, calling herself the Free Church of Scotland.'¹⁰⁵ This was done on 28th July and then at its next meeting in Portree, on 14th August 1893, the Presbytery adopted a Deed of Separation. With this document the formation of the Church, later to be called the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, was completed.

Though John MacMillan was considered the crofters' voice, he was unsympathetic to the voice of his Lochbroom parishioners who opposed the Declaratory Act. The men who formed the congregations of the Free Presbyterian Church were elders and members of the Free Church who had been present at some of the great Highland communion seasons and valued the ministries of men like John Kennedy of Dingwall and Alexander MacColl of Lochalsh and were determined to maintain the Calvinism of Westminster Confession and the piety associated with it. Whilst MacMillan had no intention of identifying himself with the stand taken by Macfarlane and Macdonald, there were men in Lochbroom who were. The group of men who formed the Free Presbyterian congregation

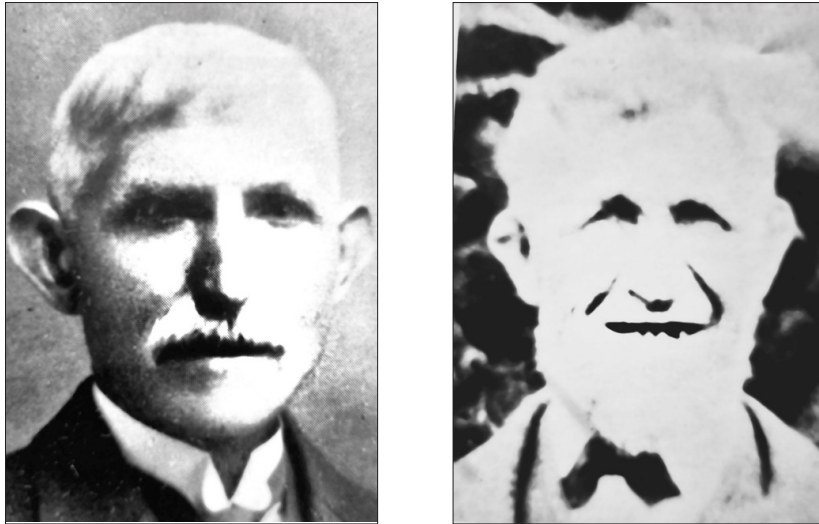
professing to have been converted in the Arminian atmosphere of the '1859 Revival' or the 'Moody campaigns' were either already in the ministry or studying to become ministers. In addition, the rising generation of students in the Free Church was being taught by men who had embraced critical views of the Bible. It was inevitable that the Free Church's adherence to the Westminster Confession would come under scrutiny.

¹⁰³ See Roy Middleton, 'Neil Cameron and the Formation of the Free Presbyterian Church', in Neil Cameron, *Ministers and Men of the Free Presbyterian Church*, pp. ix-xl, esp. p. xx.

¹⁰⁴ *Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Presbytery Minutes* (July 1893-June 1896) – (cited afterwards as *FPC Presbytery Minutes*), p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ *FPC Presbytery Minutes* (27th July 1893), p. 2.

of Lochbroom included John MacIver, Roderick Mackenzie, John Munro, Roderick Macleod, Alexander Ross, and William Matheson. The congregation was centered at Ullapool with two preaching stations, one at Achiltibuie on the Coigach peninsula, and John MacIver's congregation on the Scoraig peninsula between Loch Broom and Little Loch Broom.¹⁰⁶ All of the group had been communicant members in the Free Church, and MacIver was an elder in the Disruption Free Church as were very probably



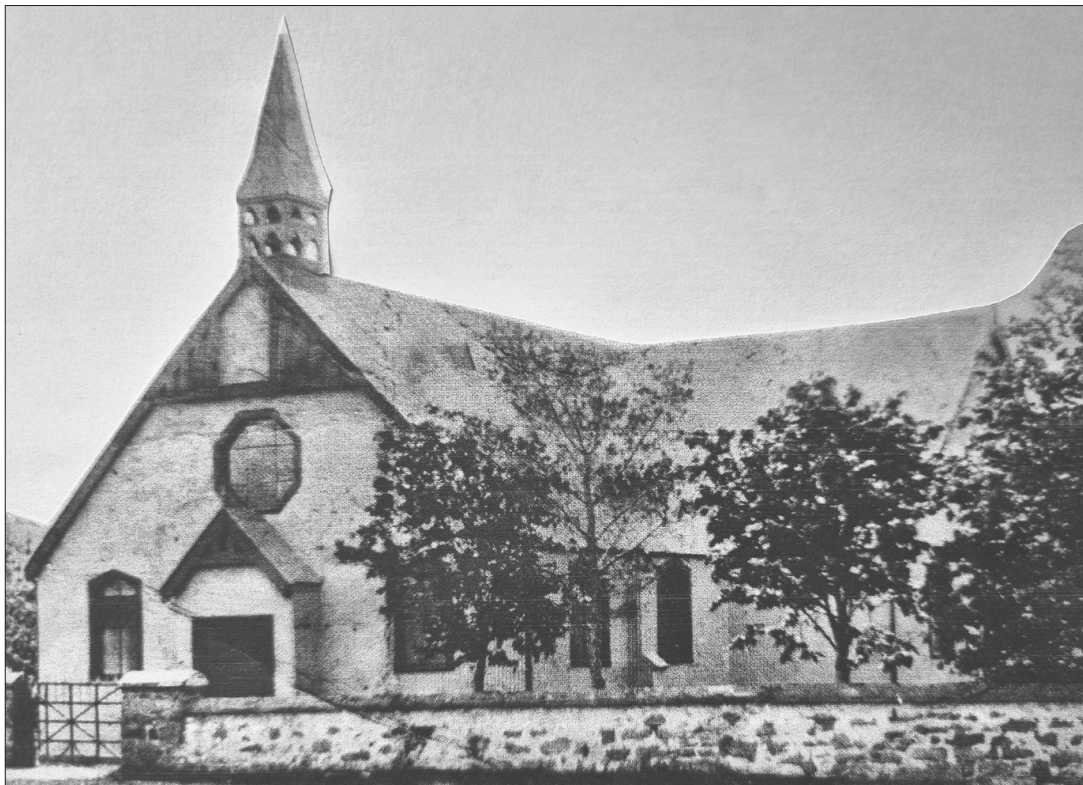
Two Lochbroom Free Presbyterian elders, John Munro (left), Alexander Ross (right).

several of the others. Alexander Ross had been, from 1890, a colporteur with the Religious Tract Society, and both he and Roderick Mackenzie were appointed by the Free Presbyterian Church as missionaries to the infant congregations in the Highlands and Islands which had been formed in a similar way to the one in Lochbroom.

If any one man took the lead in Lochbroom, it could well have been MacIver. This can be seen in the comment of MacMillan recorded in the following incident in which he gives prominence to MacIver for the Free Presbyterian secession in Lochbroom. After the separation had taken place, when Alexander Macrae, then a Free Presbyterian student for the ministry, 'was conducting services for the Free Presbyterian Church in Ullapool, John Munro and two other men came by boat to convey Mr. Macrae to Scoraig. Going up the road from the pier, they saw MacMillan

¹⁰⁶ As the Scoraig meeting house had been built and paid for by the people who had now joined the Free Presbyterian Church, the Free Church could not claim ownership. This was a rare instance of a building previously used in connection with the Free Church passing into Free Presbyterian ownership. See MacGregor, *Scoraig: A Peninsula and its People*, p. 253.

approaching, and Munro's companions proposed to turn aside to avoid a meeting. Munro refused. MacMillan asked them why they were in Ullapool, and was told. He began to show them that they acted wrongly, and finished by saying, 'John MacIver, Scoraig, is a very wise man, but I am wiser.' Munro immediately replied, 'The truth says, "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."' (2 Corinthians. 10:18).¹⁰⁷



The original corrugated iron Free Presbyterian Church in Ullapool of 1895 on Market Street. In the 1950s the building was significantly modified by removing some of the structure and cladding it with composite stonework.

It is not entirely clear how the first Free Presbyterian congregations were formally constituted and whether existing Free Church elders were formally inducted as office-bearers in the new congregations. The first reference to Lochbroom or Ullapool in the minutes of the Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland is at a meeting held at Lochinver on 1st October 1894 when Allan Mackenzie was appointed the interim moderator of the congregation.¹⁰⁸ Mackenzie was the

¹⁰⁷ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 55 (February 1951), p. 219.

¹⁰⁸ *FPC Presbytery Minutes* (1st October 1894), p. 60. Allan Mackenzie (1857–1926) was born in Poolewe and educated at Edinburgh University and New College Edinburgh. He was licensed on 14th August 1893 and ordained and inducted in November 1893 as

moderator of the Session for less than three months; on 26th December at a Presbytery meeting at Broadford, in Skye, John R. Mackay was appointed in his place.¹⁰⁹ The probable reason for the change was the growing number of congregations that needed interim moderators and the small number of ministers able to fulfil the task. Mackenzie was minister in Inverness whilst Mackay was minister in nearby Gairloch. The first extant minute of the Ullapool Session, however, is almost two years later on 9th June 1896 and has reference to the ordination of additional elders.¹¹⁰ The Session was made up of John R. Mackay, the Moderator *pro tempore*, with William Matheson (Tanera), John MacIver, and John Munro. The additional elders to be ordained were George Ross, Farquhar MacRae, Alex MacDonald, and Roderick Mackenzie. In addition the Session appointed a congregational meeting with a view to the election of a minister.¹¹¹

The elder who seems to have taken a leading role in organising the Coigach section was William Matheson; born on the island of Tanera, he was sixty-one when the Free Presbyterian Church was formed and was the local postman.¹¹² The Lochbroom minister at the time of his death wrote of him, ‘When the Free Presbyterian Church was being organised in Lochbroom, William Matheson took a leading part. He conducted divine services in Coigach.’¹¹³ The Free Presbyterians in the Coigach section of the congregation met for seventeen years in the Achiltibuie Public School until in 1911 they decided to erect a corrugated iron building which was opened on 9th April 1912 by Alexander Macrae, minister of Portree. The debt on the building was cleared in a very short period due to both the generosity of the Coigach people and the assistance of young people brought up in the congregation who had emigrated.¹¹⁴

the first minister of the Inverness congregation. He and John R. Mackay were the two witness signators to the Free Presbyterian Deed of Separation. He ceased to be a Free Presbyterian minister in November 1897 and was admitted as minister in the Church of Scotland in May 1900. See Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 99. For a detailed account of the circumstances surrounding Allan Mackenzie’s leaving the Free Presbyterian Church, see *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 2, pp. 124-125 (August 1897), 301-314 (December 1897).

¹⁰⁹ *FPC Presbytery Minutes* (26th December 1894), p. 73.

¹¹⁰ It seems unlikely that there was no meeting of the Session between October 1894 and June 1896. It is, therefore, possible that an earlier minute book has been lost.

¹¹¹ *Lochbroom Free Presbyterian Kirk Session Records*, Minute of Kirk Session, 9th June 1896.

¹¹² MacGregor, *Scoraig: A Peninsula and its People*, p. 250.

¹¹³ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 16 (January 1912), p. 357.

¹¹⁴ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 18 (March 1914), p. 439.



The former corrugated iron Free Presbyterian Church building in Achiltibuie built in 1911. It was latterly a craft workshop, gallery, and hay store.

(a) John Macleod – The first Free Presbyterian minister

A year later, on 15th June 1896, MacIver appeared before the Presbytery requesting them to appoint a day when they would moderate in a call to a minister. John R. Mackay, the interim moderator of the congregation, reported ‘that there was a unanimous desire in the congregation to proceed to the calling of a minister and that there was every likelihood of there being perfect unanimity in their choice of a pastor. The Presbytery concluded that they were not in circumstances as yet to fix a particular day; but would do so as early as circumstances would allow.’¹¹⁵

At the Presbytery meeting on 15th June 1896, at which MacIver requested the Presbytery to moderate in a call, it was agreed to divide the Presbytery. This was in consequence of the growing number of congregations and of students being ordained to fill the pastorates of the newly formed congregations. Donald Macfarlane moved that a second Presbytery should be formed in the South comprising the three ministers, Neil Cameron, James S. Sinclair, and Alexander Macrae, together

¹¹⁵ *FPC Presbytery Minutes* (15th June 1896), p. 143.



John Macleod.

Princeton Theological Seminary. Macleod was an outstanding student; in the examinations set by his Presbytery he had been given 100% marks in both Church History and New Testament Greek.¹¹⁸ Just days before

with their Presbytery elders. The remaining members of the Presbytery would become the Northern Presbytery.¹¹⁶ It was another year before this Northern Presbytery would meet at Ullapool to moderate in a call. The man that the congregation desired as their minister was the probationer, John Macleod, M.A., who had undertaken his ministerial training along with several other Free Presbyterian students at the Irish Presbyterian Assembly's College in Belfast under Robert Watts.¹¹⁷

The Irish theologian had been taught by Charles Hodge at

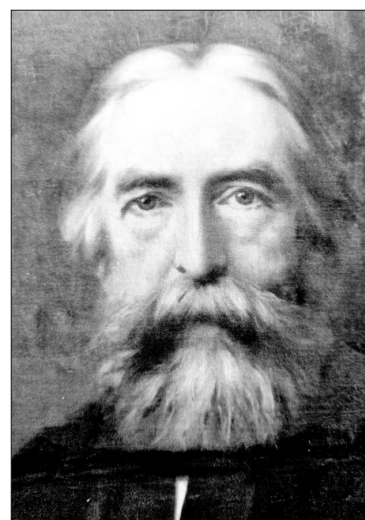
¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 144.

¹¹⁷ Robert Watts (1820–1895) was a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. In 1848 he went to America where he graduated at Washington College (now Washington and Lee University), Lexington, Virginia, in 1849 and studied theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. He was elected in 1866 to the Chair of Systematic Theology in the Assembly's College, Belfast. Watts was an able theologian whose literary output was extensive. His works often addressed the new forms of criticism and other theological and doctrinal issues. These include *The New Apologetic* (1879), *The Rule of Faith and the Doctrine of Inspiration* (1885), and *The Sovereignty of God* (1894). His writings were in some measure successful in combating the new theological views coming into the Irish Presbyterian Church. He helped to give the College a reputation for vigorous Calvinism. However, in matters where he considered that no theological interest was involved, he was not so conservative; he advocated the use of instrumental music in public worship, though this was against the general sentiment of Irish Presbyterians. For biographical information, see Robert E. L. Rodgers, *The Life and Work of Robert Watts* (Christian Focus Publications, Tain, 1989); David B. Calhoun, 'Robert Watts (1820–1895), Belfast and Princeton' in Kent Matthews (ed.), *Not Omitting the Weightier Matters; Essays in honour of Robert E. L. Rodgers* (Belfast, 2002), pp. 138–152; entry by Alexander Gordon in *Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)*, Vol. 20, p. 984; and the revised entry in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*, online edition.

¹¹⁸ *Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Minute Book of the Northern Presbytery*, Vol. 1 (July 1896–June 1902), p. 7 (cited afterwards as *Northern Presbytery Minutes*, Volume and page number).

the meeting of the Northern Presbytery, the Synod had met in Inverness on 6th July 1897 and Macleod, whilst still a probationer, had, along with J. R. Mackay, had been entrusted with the task of training its students for the ministry. He was appointed the Church's tutor in Church History and New Testament Exegesis.¹¹⁹ The Northern Presbytery had licensed him to preach the Gospel nine months earlier on 30th September 1896.¹²⁰

The Presbytery met at Ullapool on 8th July 1897 to moderate in a call to Macleod, following an election in the congregation. The call was signed by five elders, five deacons, thirty-four members and one hundred and twenty-four adherents – a total of one hundred and sixty-eight. The Presbytery, however, did not at that stage sustain the call though it had been signed by a large majority of the members in the Ullapool and Scoraig districts. The reason for not sustaining the call was that, due to inclement weather, there were no members from the Coigach district present. Accordingly, the Session was given until 22nd July to allow the Coigach people and others who were unable to be present an opportunity to sign the call; the Presbytery would then return to the matter of its being sustained. At the next meeting of the Presbytery, the numbers that had signed the call had increased to eight elders, seven deacons, fifty-nine members and four hundred and one adherents – a total of four hundred and seventy-five. The call was sustained.¹²¹ Due to the weather conditions, the difference between the two totals of three hundred and seven cannot be allocated entirely to the Coigach section of the congregation; however, this does indicate that the Coigach Free Presbyterians were a significant portion of the Lochbroom congregation. The *Free Presbyterian Magazine* contains only seventeen obituaries of the generation that formed the initial congregation at Lochbroom; it is striking that six of these state that it was under the ministry of George Macleod, the first Free Church minister after the



Robert Watts, Professor of Systematic Theology at the Assembly's College, Belfast.

¹¹⁹ *Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Synod Minutes*, Vol. 1 (July 1896–July 1904), pp. 37-39 (cited afterwards as *Synod Minutes*, Volume and page number); *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 2 (August 1897), p. 124.

¹²⁰ *Northern Presbytery Minutes*, Vol. 1, pp. 21-22.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 52-56.

Disruption, that they came under concern of soul or were brought to the day of salvation.¹²²

John Macleod was ordained at Ullapool as its first minister. The account in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* is brief; it reads:

On Tuesday, 14th September [1897], the Rev. John Macleod, M.A., was ordained to the pastorate of the congregation of Lochbroom. The members of Presbytery present were Rev. Donald Macfarlane, Raasay, Rev. Roderick Mackenzie, Portree, and Mr. John Mackenzie, elder, Gairloch. Rev. Mr. Mackenzie, Portree, preached and presided. After the sermon, Mr. Mackenzie put the questions to the pastor-elect, who, having signed the formula, was ordained to the office of pastor over the congregation of Lochbroom. Mr. Mackenzie then addressed the newly ordained pastor as to his duties, and Mr. Macfarlane the congregation as to theirs. There was a large congregation.

Macleod's pastorate at Lochbroom was short; he was translated to Kames, near Tighnabruaich after little more than three years in January 1901.¹²³ He left the Free Presbyterian Church along with two other ministers, Alexander Stewart and George Mackay, in 1905. All three ministers joined the Free Church of Scotland. Macleod was appointed to the Chair of New Testament in Free Church College, a position he held from 1906 to 1913. He then became the minister of the Free North Church, Inverness from 1913 to 1930, after which he returned to the Free Church College following his appointment to the Chair of Apologetics and Homiletics, a position he held until his retirement in 1942. He was also Principal of the College from 1927 to

¹²² The *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, in an introduction to one of these obituaries, begins in this way: 'Many of the servants of Christ have been discouraged with the apparent unsuccessfulness of their ministry. On one occasion the late Rev. George Macleod of Ullapool, preaching in Coigach, remarked that he feared he spent his labour in vain. One of his elders afterwards reproved him gently for such an utterance, and added that it might be, when he was no more, the fruit would appear.' *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 18 (May 1913), p. 34.

¹²³ For biographical information on John Macleod (1872–1948), see G. N. M. Collins, *Principal John Macleod, D.D.* (Edinburgh, 1951). He was the author of *Evangelical Traditions of Lochaber* (Inverness, 1920); *The North Country Separatists* (Inverness, 1930) (these two titles were later issued as a single volume edited by G. N. M. Collins, *Byways of Highland Church History* (Edinburgh, 1965)); *Donald Munro, D.D., of Ferintosh and Rogart* (Inverness, 1939); and *Scottish Theology: in relation to Church History since the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1943). The latter volume originated as a series of lectures at Westminster Theological Seminary, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Macleod was also a consulting editor of *The Evangelical Quarterly* from its inception in 1929 and contributed significantly to its pages.

1942. He received a D.D. from Aberdeen University in 1927 having studied classics there from 1887 to 1890.

(b) Andrew Sutherland

After Macleod left, there was a vacancy in the Ullapool congregation of almost a decade when the task of maintaining the Free Presbyterian witness in Ullapool and its two preaching stations would have fallen largely on the elders. The next minister to be settled was a Dornoch man, Andrew Sutherland (1881–1963). He was twenty-nine when he became the pastor of the congregation; it was his first charge. His call was signed by five hundred and ninety-four members and adherents, an increase of one hundred and nineteen over those who signed John Macleod’s call thirteen years earlier. Alexander Macrae presided and addressed the young minister and Donald Graham of Shieldaig addressed the congregation.¹²⁴



Andrew Sutherland as a chaplain in World War I.

The First World War occurred during the time of Sutherland’s pastorate at Ullapool.

The Free Presbyterian ministry played an active part in the war; thirteen of its seventeen ministers in 1917 were involved in preaching to servicemen based in the South of England prior to their departure to the continent, while two, Ewen Macqueen and the Ullapool minister, Andrew Sutherland, served for a time as official chaplains.¹²⁵ This would eventually cause difficulty for Sutherland. Although Free Presbyterian ministers served the men of all denominations through their visits to Portsmouth and Chatham right up to the end of the war, the compromise implicit in the war-time ecumenism spelled an early end of their contribution as official chaplains.

The Free Presbyterian Synod met on Wednesday 23rd May 1917 in Glasgow. At that meeting the Synod heard reports from Macqueen and

¹²⁴ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 15 (November 1910), p. 283. For details of the call, see *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 15 (October 1910), p. 244.

¹²⁵ See James Lachlan MacLeod, “Its own little share of service to the National Cause”: The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland’s Chaplains in the First World War’, *Northern Scotland*, Vol. 21, (2001), pp. 79-97. Macqueen served for a time as a chaplain in France. See *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 20 (April 1916), pp. 456-45. Sutherland was appointed by the War Office as the official chaplain at Ripon to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 21 (July 1916), p. 118. See also his ‘Report of the Mission to the Forces at Ripon’, *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 21 (June 1916), pp. 70-73.

Sutherland, both of whom emphasised the difficulties that they had in connection with the mode of worship. Their particular problem was over the use of hymns in public worship. The Free Presbyterian Church had always rejected the use of hymns, and insisted on the exclusive use of Psalms in public worship. Macqueen explained that, as an official chaplain, and given the fact that ‘the great majority of those he came in contact with were accustomed to uninspired hymns,’ he had had to use ‘a hymn or two... chosen by the Commanding Officer.’¹²⁶ Sutherland was in exactly the same position. He reported that, ‘for several weeks he had chosen Psalms only out of the book of praise in use, but owing to diminishing congregations, complaints that had come from the men, and the urgent arguments of the Senior Chaplain, who pointed out that he would greatly lessen his usefulness by not using some of the hymns, he felt it his duty in the extraordinary circumstances in which he was placed to comply, taking care at the same time to select a few of the most Scriptural hymns. Such a step he would never have dreamt of taking, or in any way have felt justified in taking, if the circumstances had not been altogether out of the ordinary.’¹²⁷ Sutherland concluded that he felt ‘deeply attached’ to the soldiers, to whom he had ‘endeavoured to preach the whole counsel of God’. He added, however, that despite the fact that he would consider it a ‘sore wrench’ to leave these young men, if the Synod considered it right to disapprove of his mode of conducting things, he would resign and give up the work. The Synod did not hesitate. The following motion, submitted by Donald Beaton and seconded by Alexander Macrae, was agreed: ‘This Synod wishes it to be clearly understood that it objects to any of its ministers acting as chaplains, unless they are permitted to conduct the worship according to the public testimony of this Church.’¹²⁸ Sutherland resigned immediately and there is no more reference to the position of official chaplains.

Like his predecessor, Sutherland’s ministry was short; he left after just eight years and like Macleod he did so in order to join the Free Church of Scotland.¹²⁹ He was one of three ministers who left the Free Presbyterian Church following an unsuccessful attempt by John R. Mackay to unite the

¹²⁶ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 22 (July 1917), p. 92. See also James Lachlan Macleod, “Its own little share of service to the National Cause”, pp. 79-97, esp. pp. 87-88.

¹²⁷ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 22 (July 1917), p. 92.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Andrew Sutherland was inducted to the Free Church of Scotland congregation in Lairg 1919. He was translated to Duke Street, Glasgow in 1922 where he served until 1941. He then became the Free Church minister of Tobermory from 1941–1945. His final ministry was at Glenshiel from 1945 to 1951.



Group of Free Church Students circa 1892 contains the first minister of Lochbroom Free Presbyterian Church, John Macleod (back row, second from the left) and two of the congregation's interim moderators, Alexander Macrae (back row, third from the right) and John R. Mackay (front row, second from the left).

Free Presbyterian Church with the Free Church in 1918.¹³⁰ The other minister who joined the Free Church besides Mackay and Sutherland was Alexander Macrae. A fourth minister, Norman Matheson of Halkirk in Caithness, who had supported their contendings in the Synod, left a year later. James L. MacLeod, reflecting on the chaplaincies and the four ministers leaving the Free Presbyterian Church, comments, 'It is perhaps fair to say that the split represented the climax of a division within the Church between two camps, one of which was more conservative and stricter than the other... It is, perhaps, not a coincidence that all four had been among the most active of the Free Presbyterian chaplains during the Great War.'¹³¹

¹³⁰ Mackay was then the minister in Inverness, having been translated from Gairloch in 1900. As we noted, whilst in Gairloch he had been the interim moderator of the Ullapool Session. For details of this Second Union Controversy (the first being in 1905 in which John Macleod took a leading part), see A. McPherson (ed.), *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (1893-1970)* (Inverness, 1974), pp. 121-131; Duncan R. MacSween (ed.), *One Hundred Years of Witness* (Glasgow, 1993), pp. 64-71. The case for union was detailed in an extensive pamphlet by John R. Mackay, *The Free Church and the Free Presbyterian Church: The Question of their Union Discussed* (Inverness, 1918). A response to Mackay was penned by Neil Cameron of St Jude's, Glasgow and Alexander Mackay of Oban under the pen name – Lovers of Truth, *A Reply to Rev. J. R. Mackay's Pamphlet on Union with the Free Church* (Glasgow, 1918).

¹³¹ James Lachlan MacLeod, "Its own little share of service to the National Cause", p. 89. See a similar observation in James Lachlan MacLeod, "The Mighty Hand of God": The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Great War', *Bridges*, Vol. 12:1-2 (2005), p. 31.

It is a testimony to the commitment of the elders and the people in the three Lochbroom congregations to the witness of the Free Presbyterian Church that they held fast to the stance of 1893 when their first two ministers along with three men who had been interim-moderators whilst the charge was vacant – Allan Mackenzie, John R. Mackay, and Alexander Macrae all left the Free Presbyterian Church.

(c) Donald N. MacLeod

Though the Lochbroom congregation in its three branches had stability in its eldership, it was not until Donald Norman MacLeod became the minister in 1924 that there was ministerial stability. MacLeod was born



Donald N. Macleod.

at Eval in North Uist in 1872, and educated at Edinburgh University. He was licensed by the Southern Presbytery in 1908 and ordained the same evening as a missionary to Canada. The Presbytery met at St Jude's in Glasgow with Neil Cameron as the moderator who preached from 2 Timothy 4:1-4.¹³² The *Free Presbyterian Magazine* contains a number of most informative letters and reports by MacLeod of the work in Canada in the first decade of the twentieth century.¹³³ After

three years in that role, he was called to the Tarbert, Harris congregation and inducted there in August 1911. Eleven hundred people signed his call. Donald Graham of Shieldaig addressed both the minister and the congregation.¹³⁴ Following thirteen years in Harris, in his fifty-first year

¹³² *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 13 (July 1908), p. 119.

¹³³ See the following letters, news, and reports in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 13, pp. 215-216, 298-303, 386-389; Vol. 14, pp. 137-139, 296-300.

¹³⁴ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 16 (September 1911), p. 182.

he was called to Lochbroom where he remained their pastor for forty-three years until his death in April 1967 at the age of ninety-four.

John MacLeod, the Free Presbyterian minister of Stornoway and then of London, whilst a young man, was a close friend of D. N. MacLeod in his old age, and following his death he wrote a valuable series of articles on his life and ministry. The second paragraph of the first article begins by stating, 'With his death in 1967 the last male member of the Free Presbyterian Church who was also a member of the pre-Declaratory Act Free Church passed away.'¹³⁵ MacLeod had stately disposition both in his manner and his speech; John MacLeod writes, 'an observant visitor to Ullapool might well have taken note of the tall erect figure of a man, easily recognisable as a minister, making his way with measured tread to the church in the centre of that picturesque village...one whose dignified bearing commanded the respect and attention of his hearers before one word was uttered by him...It is not just what he said, his hearers will tell you, but the way that he said it. The reverence with which he approached the particular portion of Scripture to be expounded was most marked and every word seemed to be carefully weighed, as it were beforehand.'¹³⁶ He was a committed Free Presbyterian; the Synod tribute after his death made this comment on his theology and preaching: 'His theology was of the Puritan type, delivered in a deliberate manner, with every statement advanced supported by Scripture accompanied by a dignity which became his office. His sermons were eminently suitable for alarming those who were at ease in Zion, encouraging those who were seeking, refreshing the soul of the weary, upholding those who were cast down, guiding the perplexed, and reviving the souls of the poor and needy.'¹³⁷

VI. Free Church – Post 1900

(a) Ullapool (Lochbroom)

As already mentioned, the Disruption minister, George Macleod, was succeeded by John MacMillan, a native of Kilmallie. MacMillan was the Free Church minister in 1900 when the Free Church amalgamated with the United Presbyterian Church to form the United Free Church. When the Free Church General Assembly met in October 1900 and Principal

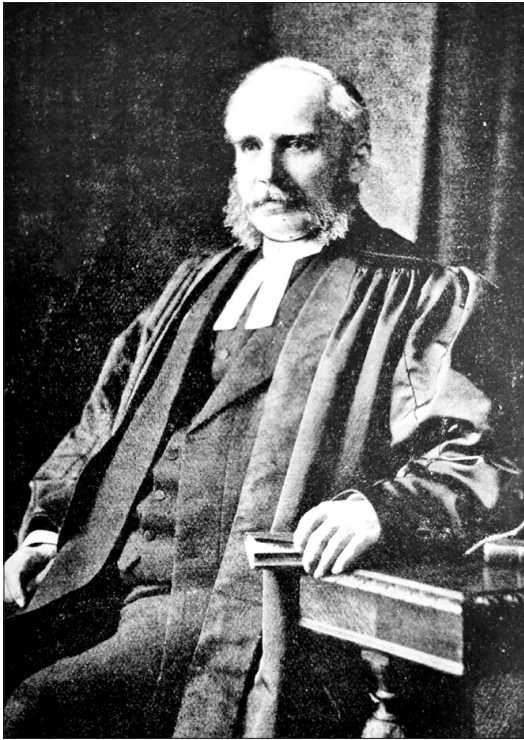
¹³⁵ John MacLeod's articles are entitled, 'A Minister of God: The late Rev. D. N. MacLeod', *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 79, pp. 246-249, 269-272, 310-312, 329-332, 362-365.

¹³⁶ *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 79 (August and September 1974), pp. 246, 271.

¹³⁷ *Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Proceedings of Synod, May 1967* (Dumbarton, 1967), p. 43.

Rainy moved the adoption of the Uniting Act an amendment on behalf of the Constitutionalist minority was moved by Colin A. Bannatyne of Coulter. The amendment set out the position of the ministers who objected to the merger with the United Presbyterians. Bannatyne's amendment concluded:

So far as the Free Church of Scotland is concerned, no terms of union can be accepted as satisfactory which fail to make clear, adequate, specific



Colin A. Bannatyne of Coulter (1849–1920) – one of the leading ministers in the post 1900 Free Church. He was moderator of the General Assembly in 1901 and was appointed Professor of Church History and Church Principles in the Free Church College in 1906.

and unequivocal provision for the maintaining in their entirety the constitution of the Free Church of Scotland, and those distinctive views of truth, in regard to matters of faith and doctrine, which, at her separation from the Establishment in 1843, were deliberately adopted, and have been, and still are, maintained as the distinctive testimony of the Church, and especially for maintaining inviolate (1) the whole superior and secondary standards of the Church in their entirety, and (2) the special testimony of the Church in regard to the right and duty of the civil magistrate to maintain and support an establishment of religion, in accordance with God's Word, as the same is contained and set forth in the Claim, Declaration, and Protest forming Act 19 of 1842, the Protest by Commissioners to the Assembly, forming Act 1 of 1843, and

the other Acts confirming the same; and having fully considered the terms of the Act of Union with the United Presbyterian Church now reported upon, declines to pass the said Act and relative declarations in respect they do not contain provisions as aforesaid.¹³⁸

Thirteen ministers and fourteen elders voted against the union, as over against six hundred and forty-three who voted for the union. Three of the

¹³⁸ G. N. M. Collins, *Whose Faith Follow* (Edinburgh, 1945), p. 74. The position of the 1900 Free Church is detailed extensively in Alexander Stewart and J. Kennedy Cameron, *The Free Church of Scotland, 1843–1910* (Edinburgh, 1910) and more recently in John W. Keddie, *Preserving a Reformed Heritage* (Kirkhill, 2017).

ministers who voted with the thirteen subsequently went into the United Free Church.¹³⁹

MacMillan supported Robert Rainy and became a United Free Church minister.¹⁴⁰ As there were no United Presbyterian churches in Lochbroom, the change to many local people, unaware of the wider theological and ecclesiastical issues, would have seemed little more than a change of name. Both MacMillan's Ullapool and Badcaul congregations became United Free Church congregations. The Badcaul building that Free Presbyterian, John MacIver, had worked to erect and had the contract for its construction, for which his brother Kenneth MacIver did the interior joinery work, became the property of the United Free Church in 1900. Following the 1929 union of the United Free Church with the Church of Scotland it became the place of weekly worship for the Dundonnell congregation of the Church of Scotland.

Collins says that following the 1900 Free Church separation, people who were sympathetic to the minority in Ullapool were a mere fragment of the former congregation.¹⁴¹ At a national level the minority raised a case in law against the United Church and a House of Lords decision of August 1904 found in their favour.¹⁴² The judgement had huge implications; it seemingly deprived the Free Church part of the United Free Church of all its assets, its churches, manses, colleges, missions, and even provision for elderly clergy. It handed large amounts of property to the minority. The United Church under Rainy's leadership sought the intervention of Parliament. This resulted in a parliamentary commission being appointed, consisting of Lord Elgin, Lord Kinnear, and Sir Ralph Anstruther. The commission sat in public, and after hearing both sides, issued their report in April 1905. They concluded that the minority Free Church was in many respects unable to carry out the purposes of the trusts, which, under the ruling of the House of Lords, was a condition of their holding the property. They recommended that an executive commission should be set up by Act of Parliament, in which the whole property of the Free Church, as at the date of the union, should be vested, and which should allocate it to the United Free

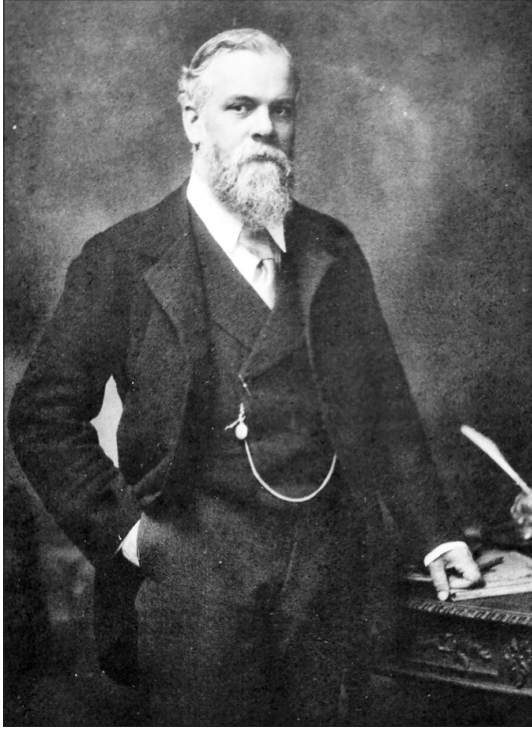
¹³⁹ Keddie, *Preserving a Reformed Heritage*, p. 88.

¹⁴⁰ Lamb, *The Fasti of the United Free Church of Scotland*, p. 488.

¹⁴¹ Collins, *Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, May 1970, p. 89.

¹⁴² The Authorised Report of the case is, Robert Low Orr (ed.), *The Free Church of Scotland Appeals* (Edinburgh, 1904). See also Allan M'Neil (ed.), *The Free Church Case* (Glasgow, 1904); John B. Orr, *Scotch Church Crisis* (Glasgow, 1905); Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, *The Courts, the Church and the Constitution: Aspects of the Disruption of 1843* (Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 91-137.

Church, where the Free Church was unable to carry out the trust purposes. The question of interim possession was referred to Sir John Cheyne.¹⁴³ The *Churches (Scotland) Act 1905*, which gave effect to these



Lord Elgin, Chairman of the Royal Commission.

recommendations, was passed in August. The Executive Commission was comprised of the same three members as the previous Royal Commission with the addition of a further two commissioners, and was again under the Chairmanship of the Earl of Elgin.¹⁴⁴ The allocation of churches and manses by the commission proceeded rather slowly; however, by 1908 over a hundred churches had been assigned to the Free Church. Some of the dispossessed United Free Church congregations, most in the Highlands, found shelter for a time in the parish churches.

In the difficult circumstances in which the Ullapool Free Church minority found themselves, and possibly due to their lack of organisation, the Elgin Commission allocated to the United Free Church both their 1844 church building on Mill Street and the old Manse. However, a vigorous

¹⁴³ Sir John Cheyne of Tangwick (1841–1907) was a Scottish judge. Educated at Trinity College, Oxford, where he studied Law, he became an advocate at the Scottish bar in 1865. From 1891 he was also Procurator to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and Vice Dean of the Faculty of Advocates. He was knighted by Queen Victoria at Balmoral Castle in 1897. He was a member of the Kirk Session under Rev. Archibald Scott at St George's Church on Charlotte Square. See the references to Cheyne in C. N Johnston (Lord Sands), *Dr. Archibald Scott of St George's, Edinburgh and His Times* (Edinburgh, 1919).

¹⁴⁴ Stewart and Cameron, *The Free Church of Scotland, 1843–1910*, pp. 313–314. Victor Alexander Bruce, the 9th Earl of Elgin, was a British Liberal politician who served as Viceroy of India from 1894 to 1899. He was appointed by Prime Minister Arthur Balfour to hold an investigative enquiry, in 1902 to 1903, into the conduct of the Boer War, which was the first of its kind in the British Empire. Between 1905 and 1908 he was Secretary of State for the Colonies. Stewart and Cameron state regarding Elgin 'that his conduct of the proceedings was throughout beyond reproach for dignity and courtesy, and that his decisions manifested a desire to be absolutely impartial between the two sides' (p. 314). For biographical details of Lord Elgin, see S. Checkland, *The Elgins, 1766–1917: A tale of aristocrats, proconsuls and their wives* (Edinburgh, 1988); ODNB.

work of rehabilitation ensued, and within a few years the Free Church congregation was again suitably equipped with buildings. A replacement building was opened on Quay Street in 1909.¹⁴⁵ In 1910, James Macdonald was ordained and inducted to the charge and the Free Church of Lochbroom began to recover. After nine years in Ullapool, Macdonald accepted a call to Killearnan and the congregation of Lochbroom was then vacant



The Post 1900 Free Church of Scotland church on Quay Street.

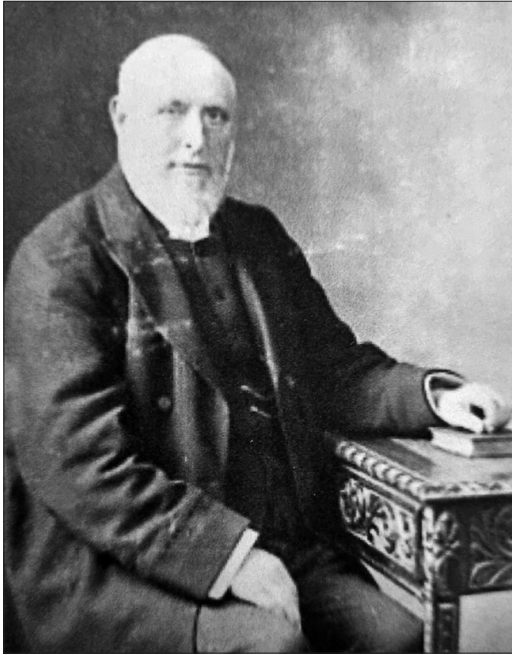
until 1921 when Ranald Fraser was ordained and inducted to the pastorate. He ministered there for just five years until 1926 when he accepted a call from Lochcarron Free Church. There was then a thirteen-year vacancy until 1939. The Ullapool congregation then obtained its next minister, John A. Newall, who was translated from Coll.¹⁴⁶

(b) Coigach Free Church

The Coigach congregation had been disjoined from the Ullapool/Lochbroom congregation in 1872 and became a sanctioned charge in the Lochcarron Presbytery of the Free Church. The minister from September 1888 was Donald Macleod. Though he was a Free Church constitutionalist, he was not sympathetic to the stand taken by Free Presbyterians in 1893. However, unlike MacMillan, who went into the United Free Church, Macleod was opposed to the ecclesiastical policy of Robert Rainy and was one of the twenty-seven ministers who refused to enter the 1900 union of the Free Church with the United Presbyterian Church. Macleod and

¹⁴⁵ MacGregor, *Scoraig: A Peninsula and its People*, p. 370.

¹⁴⁶ Collins, *Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, May 1970, p. 89.



Donald Macleod, Coigach.

his congregation were able to retain their property at the time of the Elgin Commission. There was, however, a division in Coigach Free Church. The majority stayed with their minister and retained the property. A minority supported the union and formed a congregation of the United Free Church in Achiltibuie. Hence for a short time there were three congregations in the village – Post 1900 Free Church, United Free Church, and Free Presbyterian. The United Free Church was reduced to a preaching station in 1907 and the congregation

was dissolved in 1909.¹⁴⁷ Donald Macleod was translated to Carloway in 1914 where he remained until 1920. After Macleod had moved to Carloway there was a vacancy of six years when Norman Matheson who left the Free Presbyterian Church in 1918 along with John R. Mackay, Andrew Sutherland, and Alexander Macrae, became the Free Church minister in Achiltibuie. He remained the Coigach minister until 1925 when he was translated to Kilmorack and Strathglass.¹⁴⁸

Appendix

Ministers of the congregations in Lochbroom 1725 to 1929¹⁴⁹

Church of Scotland – Clachan

Archibald Bannatyne 1725–1730

Donald Ross..... 1731–1742

Roderick Mackenzie.... 1742 reversed by General Assembly

¹⁴⁷ Lamb, *The Fasti of the United Free Church of Scotland*, p. 487.

¹⁴⁸ G. N. M. Collins, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1900–1986* (Edinburgh, undated), p. 33.

¹⁴⁹ Sources: Church of Scotland – Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7; Free Church of Scotland – Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1843–1900*; United Free Church of Scotland – Lamb, *The Fasti of the United Free Church of Scotland*; Free Church of Scotland, Post 1900 – G. N. M. Collins, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1900–1986*; Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland – *Free Presbyterian Magazine*.

James Robertson 1745–1776

Robertson was an assistant to Donald Ross 1734–1740

Alexander Stronach 1776–1807

Thomas Ross..... 1808–1843

John Macleod

Macleod presented by John Hay Mackenzie of Cromartie, but after preaching at Lochbroom he was so disappointed with the congregation that he returned his presentation.

William Cameron..... 1844–1895

William Sutherland 1895–1927

Duncan MacArthur..... 1927

Church of Scotland – Ullapool

The parliamentary church completed in 1829 and declared a parish *quoad sacra* by Act of Assembly 25th May 1833.

Alexander Ross..... 1829–1855

Had been missionary there since 1819

Charles Maclean..... 1856–1868

Peter Robertson..... 1869–1871

James Grant 1871–1878

Joseph McInnes..... 1878–1883

Angus Macdonald..... 1884–1890

Angus Macdonald..... 1891–1913

This is a different person from the earlier minister

James A. D. J. Macdonald 1913–1919

William U. McNab 1920

Free Church of Scotland

Lochbroom

Thomas Ross..... 1843

George Macleod 1844–1871

John MacMillan 1872–1900

Coigach

Archibald Beaton 1872–1880

John Finlayson 1880–1886

Donald Macleod..... 1888–1900

Free Church of Scotland – Post 1900

Ullapool

James Macdonald 1910–1919
 Ranald Fraser 1921–1926

Coigach

Donald Macleod..... 1900–1914
 Norman Matheson..... 1920–1925
 Alexander Macleod..... 1929

United Free Church of Scotland

Lochbroom

John MacMillan 1900–1905
 Alexander Shaw 1905–1913
 Malcolm Macleod 1914–1926
 Donald John MacInnes 1927

Little Loch Broom

Charles E. Mackenzie 1900–1907
 Ordained as missionary
 Duncan Mackintosh..... 1911–1915
 Finlay Angus MacInnes 1916

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

John Macleod 1897–1901
 Andrew Sutherland..... 1911–1918
 Donald N. MacLeod 1924