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## Arthur W. Pink's Lewis Friends

NORMAN CAMPBELL

January 2022 marked the hundredth anniversary of the first issue of *Studies in the Scripture*, a monthly magazine edited by Arthur W. Pink (1886–1952). July will be the seventieth anniversary of his death.

The last twelve years of Pink's life were spent in Stornoway on the island of Lewis in the Western Isles of Scotland.<sup>1</sup> This article provides biographical and other details about the islanders with whom Pink interacted, tentatively suggesting a possible impact on his writings.<sup>2</sup> It also examines some of the context to Pink's ecclesiastical isolation there.

### I. Brief biography

Born in Nottingham in 1886, Arthur Walkington Pink entered Moody Bible Institute in Chicago in June 1910 and six weeks later began his first pastorate in Colorado. In 1912 he left the congregation and preached in various places including California and Kentucky (where he married his wife Vera Hunt in 1916) after which he took up a pastorate in Spartanburg, South Carolina in 1917. There followed preaching in Pennsylvania, California, and Australia, then a spell in England in 1928, then again in

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<sup>1</sup> For a broad survey of the reformed faith in the wider Scottish Highland context, see Douglas Ansdell, *The People of the Great Faith: The Highland Church, 1690–1900* (Stornoway: Acair, 1988). See also Murdo Macaulay, *Aspects of the Religious History of Lewis up to the Disruption of 1843* (Carloway, 1985; reprinted Puritan Press, 2017). A useful history of the Lewis Free Church in Gaelic is Dòmhnall MacGilliosa, *An Eaglais Shaor ann an Leodhas, 1843–1900* (Edinburgh: Knox Press, 1981). For the most recent analysis, see John Macleod, *Banner in the West: A Spiritual History of Lewis and Harris* (Edinburgh, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> The writer owes a debt of gratitude to a number of people familiar with Stornoway in the 1940s and 1950s as well as to those who knew Pink's close friends. These include Mr Kenneth R. Morrison and Miss Sandra Gillanders of Stornoway, Mr Neil Mackay, Achmore, and others named in the footnotes. The writer has avoided questions of controversy.

the USA, and then in England from 1934 to 1940, with an interlude of one year in Scotland in 1935.<sup>3</sup>

Pink and his wife Vera first came to live in Scotland in March 1935 through contact with Wallace Bruce Nicholson (1903–1984).<sup>4</sup> When Pink moved to Glasgow in 1935, Mr Nicholson was a divinity student in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, undergoing pre-divinity university education in that city.<sup>5</sup> After Pink was disappointed in his hopes of securing preaching engagements with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and then of continuing engagements with Brethren Assemblies in Central Scotland, Pink moved back to England in March 1936. In 1922 he had begun to publish *Studies in the Scriptures*. By 1936 he believed that the public preaching ministry was no longer his role, but rather a written ministry. By the outbreak of war in 1939, the Pinks were resident in Hove, Brighton. This was an area which became badly affected by enemy bombing. It was again through Mr Nicholson's assistance that in October 1940 the Pinks moved to Stornoway. By this point Mr Nicholson was minister of the Free Presbyterian congregation in North Uist, an island further south in the Outer Hebrides. Pink and his wife Vera travelled to Lewis via the North Uist manse.<sup>6</sup>

In a letter, Pink described his and Vera's arrival in Stornoway: 'We received a most hearty welcome from the Presbyterian (sic) minister and his wife and we spent the night in their home. Next day she took us to the place where she had secured two furnished rooms for us in a godly home...'<sup>7</sup> The Free Presbyterian minister and his wife in Stornoway when the Pinks arrived were Rev. Malcolm Gillies and his wife Jessie (née Mackay). Recalled for warm preaching, kindness to the poor, patience under trying ecclesiastical situations, and exemplary good manners – even raising his hat to greet children – Mr Gillies was to pass away in 1945.

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<sup>3</sup> Iain H. Murray, *The Life of Arthur W. Pink* (revised and enlarged edition, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2004), pp. 1, 16, 18, 26, 34, 57, 62, 87, 124–247.

<sup>4</sup> Mr Nicholson was born on 9th March 1903, Skigersta, Ness. He studied in Glasgow University and was licensed on 3rd October 1939, and ordained and inducted on 22nd November 1939 to the Free Presbyterian congregation in North Uist, which he served until 30th November 1945. He died on 20th April 1984 and was buried in Habost cemetery in Ness, island of Lewis. For a full autobiographical account, see 'Rev. Wallace Bruce Nicholson (1903–1984): autobiographical reflections' in this volume of *SRSJH*, from which some of the information below is taken.

<sup>5</sup> The Church's Southern Presbytery received Nicholson as a divinity student on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1932. 'Church Notes', *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol 37:8 (December 1932), p. 358.

<sup>6</sup> Murray, *Life of Pink*, pp. 72, 157–165, 245–248.

<sup>7</sup> *Letters of Arthur W. Pink* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978), p. 106.

He campaigned on Lord's Day and Bible-versions issues alongside the Free Church pastor, Rev. Kenneth Macrae.<sup>8</sup> Mr Macrae called at the Free Presbyterian Manse soon after Mr Gillies' death. 'We were like two soldiers going into battle and today I feel as if I have lost my friend', he commented to his congregation the following Lord's Day.<sup>9</sup>

## II. Wallace Bruce Nicholson

Wallace Bruce Nicholson was one of the six children of Alexander Nicholson and Marion Mackay. Brought up in Skigersta in the Ness area of the island of Lewis (with a brief interlude in Vancouver), he was remembered by a schoolmate as a studious boy, noted for clear signs of 'common honesty' and 'common courage', and 'single-mindedness in making a clean breast of any misconduct' despite the knowledge that corporal punishment might await him.<sup>10</sup>

Mr Nicholson was a nephew of John Nicholson (1869–1933) who with his wife Nora made an important contribution to church life in Lewis, including the establishment of Stornoway's Open Brethren assembly.<sup>11</sup> They provided a great deal of practical aid to people in the Ness area, which was badly affected by loss of life in World War One and ongoing poverty. They held services there in a hall they built in the village of Adabrock.<sup>12</sup>

Wallace Bruce Nicholson studied in the Nicolson Institute secondary school in Stornoway for three years from 1913. His father, Alexander Morrison Nicholson, died in a car accident in Ness in 1915. His mother subsequently remarried and moved her family to Canada in 1924, Wallace Bruce following her in 1925. He served as a deckhand on the *SS Marloch* in 1925, including its voyage carrying hundreds of emigrants

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<sup>8</sup> Kenneth MacRae was minister of Stornoway from 1931 until 1963. As well as having a popular preaching role, he campaigned for Reformation values in the church and wider society and also took an interest in social issues of the day. See J. J. Murray, 'MacRae, Kenneth Alexander (1883–1964)', *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology*, ed. N. M. de S. Cameron (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. 537; Iain H. Murray (ed.), *The Diary of Kenneth A. MacRae* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1980).

<sup>9</sup> Neil R. Gillies (ed.), *Fragments and Sermons of the Late Rev. Malcolm Gillies, Stornoway* (Stornoway 1987), pp. 6-9. Mr and Mrs Gillies had one daughter and four sons.

<sup>10</sup> Murdina D. MacDonald (ed.), *Blackhouse God's House: A Lewisman Recalls the World He Left Behind* (Christian Faith Publishing Inc, Meadville, PA, USA, 2019), pp. 233-234. This book contains the written recollections of Angus MacDonald, Skigersta (1903–1990), who emigrated on the *SS Marloch* from Lewis to Canada in 1924.

<sup>11</sup> Neil T. R. Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland, 1838–2000* (Paternoster, 2002), p. 413.

<sup>12</sup> *Adabroc* (Comunn Eachdraidh Nis, Ness, 2021), pp. 15-16. For a new biography of Nicholson, see *John 'An Fiosaich Nicholson* (Published by Comunn Eachdraidh Nis, Ness, 2021), 27pp.

from Lewis. He spent several years as a seaman in Canada and the USA but in 1931, when 29 years old, he returned to Britain. He studied at Skerry's College in Glasgow and Glasgow University, followed by a short time at the University of Edinburgh. He married Ann Macleod of Aird Dell, Ness, in December 1937.<sup>13</sup>

Mr Nicholson became a Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland minister but left the denomination in late 1945.<sup>14</sup> He joined the Free Church of Scotland in May 1946, serving in its Vancouver congregation from 1948 until autumn 1954. He was then minister of Scalpay Free Church in Scotland from 1955. He accepted a call to the Plockton and Kyle congregation in 1961 and retired in 1970.<sup>15</sup> Before retirement, he had often preached five times every Lord's Day and once or twice during the week. His last Lord's Day in Plockton was 27<sup>th</sup> September 1970. He retired to a house in the village of Aird, South Dell in his native district of Ness. Despite illness he helped supply the Free Church congregations in Lewis, much of this in the Free Church Seminary, Stornoway, between 1971 and 1972.

A glimpse of Mr Nicholson's pastoral abilities is seen in the following tribute by the Scalpay correspondent for the *Stornoway Gazette* weekly newspaper:

Mr Nicholson, who was well-known in Scalpay where he had been minister for many years, was a Christian who was well liked here, especially by the young. Now grown up, they reminisce of his fine qualities and the way he attracted their attention which gained their total respect for him.

He was a learned gentleman, not only in the doctrines of the Scriptures but in secular matters pertaining to the good of the community. He was a man of understanding and ability, ever ready to help whenever his assistance was required. He also enjoyed teaching Gaelic psalm tunes

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<sup>13</sup> National Records of Scotland, Statutory registers, Marriages 685/7 288, 1937: Marriages in the District of Morningside in the City of Edinburgh, p. 144.

<sup>14</sup> Mr Nicholson left in sympathy with the Rev. Roderick Mackenzie whose status as a minister of the denomination had been ended following a canon-law dispute. A note in the denomination's magazine in January 1946 stated that Mr Nicholson had 'severed his connection from the church' but gave no explanation. 'Church Notes', *The Free Presbyterian Magazine and Monthly Record*, January 1946, p. 179. Mr Mackenzie (1893–1972) was a Lewis man who served in the Gairloch congregation from 1923 to 1932. He then pastored the Glasgow FP congregation from 1932 until 1944. After October 1945 he preached by invitation to a congregation of sympathisers in the city. See A. McPherson (ed.), *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1893–1970* (Inverness, n.d.), pp. 185–186.

<sup>15</sup> Rev. Murdo Macaulay, *Free Church Ministers in Lewis (Presbytery), 1843–1993* (Stornoway, n.d.), p. 42. This incorrectly states that Nicholson served Vancouver until 1955.

in Scalpay and many of these, including 'Free Church', are still sung on the island.

After leaving Scalpay, Mr Nicholson preached in Plockton. During his retirement, Mr Nicholson, his wife and family visited the island whenever possible and called on as many households as time would allow.<sup>16</sup>

Young children found they could retain some of his preaching as he told stories that captured their attention, drew analogies, and used word pictures. The tale of Gulliver in Lilliput<sup>17</sup> was given as an example of a man who was not vigilant. He lay down in an unsafe place. As a result, he woke up to find himself pinned down firmly to the spot by thousands of strings in enemy territory. A hearer recalls a sermon from childhood using this illustration, which 'hit the right note' and then 'issued the warning, never in a manner to frighten children, but completely natural'. Another story he used was of a pedlar who had been offered shelter on condition he left his baggage outside, and so perished in the snow beside his most precious bag which contained his livelihood. The hearer remembers that the children 'were all thinking deeply about the story which he then connected to the spiritual picture'.<sup>18</sup>

Mr Nicholson must also have been a stimulating friend and correspondent to Pink. A tribute by the Lochcarron Presbytery of the Free Church stated: 'His gifts and graces were far above the average. With a penetrating, analytical mind and a robust intellect, he was an industrious student of Divine Revelation until compelled by illness to relinquish his work.'

Mr Nicholson studied for a year at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia from September 1954. The Presbytery tribute added that Westminster Theological Seminary awarded him an M. Theol. for his studies into the tabernacle and the sacrificial system.<sup>19</sup> His earlier study of the topic had been published in 1951 under the title *The Hebrew Sanctuary: A Study in Typology*.<sup>20</sup> At Westminster, he had been befriended by Professor John Murray; their common background and shared love of theology no doubt being important. Mr Murray had assisted Mr and Mrs

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<sup>16</sup> *Stornoway Gazette*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1984. Scalpay column, Butt to Barra section. The tribute concluded: 'Scalpay was represented at the funeral service, and islanders followed the remains to Habost cemetery. The people of Scalpay send sympathy to Mrs Nicholson and the family, as well as to relatives, in their sad loss.'

<sup>17</sup> *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift was first published in 1726, remains in print, and is a classic of English literature.

<sup>18</sup> I am grateful to Mrs Peggy Flora Matheson for these anecdotes.

<sup>19</sup> J. M., 'The Late Reverend Wallace Bruce Nicholson', *The Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, September 1984, p. 202.

<sup>20</sup> Baker Book House, 1951. Paperback, 67 pages.





Rev. Wallace Bruce Nicholson at the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, with his wife Ann and younger daughter, Sandra. He studied in the city's Westminster Theological Seminary from 1953 to 1954.

COURTESY: MARGARET NICHOLSON.

Nicholson and family to reach the North Philadelphia railway station in late May 1955 with a large amount of baggage as they prepared to travel back to Scotland.<sup>21</sup>

The Presbytery tribute continued by saying that Mr Nicholson's sermons 'were interesting, edifying and stimulating and he possessed a good grasp of Hebrew, Greek, Classical English and unadulterated Gaelic. A winsome personality together with an amusing sense of sanctified humour made him popular among pastors and people. Fellowship with him during communion seasons and on other occasions was most delightful. He endeared himself to his flock. In the

Long Island this self-effacing humble minister will be greatly missed by many who are thankful to the Lord for even the least acquaintance with him.'<sup>22</sup>

Mr Nicholson's theological writings have been described as 'perhaps the most notable' of general works of theology written by those of his denomination in the post-Second World War period. His *Evangelical Theology* (1969) was dubbed 'a useful compendium ... a small systematic theology'.<sup>23</sup> In addition to *The Hebrew Sanctuary* (1951), Mr Nicholson was also author of *The Old Testament Church* (Plockton, 1968), a Gaelic sermons anthology, *Searmonan* (Stornoway, 1974), and *Smuaintean Mu Bheatha Chrìosd* (Isle of Lewis, 1979).

Mr Nicholson opened doors for Pink in Scotland. He also gave him insights that might nuance any potential early naive notions of the Scottish nation as still being a Reformed stronghold. More importantly, the correspondence between them provided Pink with a contact inside the Presbyterian and Calvinistic tradition. This contact was anxious to

<sup>21</sup> Iain H. Murray, *The Life of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2007 paperback edition), pp. 140-141.

<sup>22</sup> J. M., 'The Late Reverend Wallace Bruce Nicholson', p. 202.

<sup>23</sup> John W. Keddie, *Preserving a Reformed Heritage: The Free Church of Scotland in the 20th Century* (Kirkhill, 2017), p. 172.

learn from him but already well-grounded in a spiritual hinterland where doctrine and experience mattered. Extracts from Pink's letters to Mr Nicholson have been published. One, on the subject of hospital visitation, appeared in a 1978 collection of his letters; several were also published in Iain H. Murray's biography of Pink. A number are archived in the Banner of Truth headquarters in Edinburgh.<sup>24</sup>

### III. The Stornoway home

The Pinks came to lodge with George and Mary Ann Maciver at 27 Lewis Street, Stornoway, a semi-detached building, only moving in 1952 to the other end of the building at no 29.<sup>25</sup> Mr Maciver had been tenant of number 27 in 1935 but by 1941 was the owner of both it and number 29.<sup>26</sup> The Macivers ran George's family's general merchants' store at the Granite House building in Stornoway's Cromwell Street. This sold drapery, household linen, Harris Tweed, boots, and shoes. In common with many similar shops of the period, it also had a grocery counter. A fish-curing yard associated with the business was to be found on Cromwell Street Quay.<sup>27</sup>

Mary Ann – better known in the island by her patronymic *Màiri Dhùghaill* – had been born on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1892 in Newvalley. Her parents were Dugald and Catherine née Morrison. Dugald was a stone-mason.<sup>28</sup> The family home was no. 12 Newvalley. Mary Ann was the youngest of six siblings. In order of seniority the others were Alexander, John, Angus, Dougal, and Elizabeth. The parents and children were all bilingual. Mary's paternal grandmother Annie – a monoglot Gaelic speaker – lived with them at the time of the 1901 census.<sup>29</sup> By 1911 Alexander was working as a general labourer and Elizabeth as a student teacher.<sup>30</sup> Angus became a well-known stone mason, going on to build the Free Presbyterian Church in Achmore

<sup>24</sup> *Letters of Arthur W. Pink*, pp. 26-27; Murray, *Life of Pink*, pp. 152-158, 330.

<sup>25</sup> Murray, *Life of Pink*, p. 247.

<sup>26</sup> Valuation Roll of the County of Ross and Cromarty for Year 1935–1936 – Parish of Stornoway, p. 120. Valuation Roll of the County of Ross and Cromarty for Year 1940–1941 – Parish of Stornoway, p. 116. In the latter year Mr Maciver acted as 'Proprietor for Mrs Jessie Maciver' in connection with no. 29.

<sup>27</sup> The shop, on the corner of Cromwell Street and the entrance to Perceval square car park, was later used as Kenneth Maclennan's Superstore, and later as a Scottish Hydro-electric store. *Old Stornoway Revisited* (Stornoway Historical Society, 2001), p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers Births, 088/104, 1892, Births in the Parish of Stornoway in the County of Ross, p. 35. The writer thanks Alex Morrison, Newvalley.

<sup>29</sup> National Records of Scotland, Census 1901 088/13/13, Civil Parish and Parish Ward Stornoway central, p. 18.

<sup>30</sup> National Records of Scotland, Census 1911 088/13/7, Civil Parish and Parish Ward of Stornoway central, p. 7.

alongside joiner John MacAskill (1880–1958). They had been aided by a massive community effort in the village to carry sand from the loch shore and stone from a small quarry at Creag Bhàn on the adjacent hillside.<sup>31</sup>

Mary Ann's husband George Maciver was the son of Alexander and Jessie Anne Maciver, his father being a general merchant. Alexander and Jessie Anne (née Mackay) had been married in June 1895 in Kames, Argyllshire.<sup>32</sup> George was born on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1897, at 48 Keith Street in Stornoway.<sup>33</sup> Alexander owned no 27 and 29 Lewis Street. In 1920 the latter was rented by William Grant the founder of the *Stornoway Gazette* newspaper<sup>34</sup> but by 1925 it was being used by the Maciver family themselves while no. 27 was rented by a salesman, Alexander Maclennan.<sup>35</sup>

George and Mary Ann Maciver had been married on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1930 in Oban by the Rev. Donald A. Macfarlane, the local Free Presbyterian minister at the time. This took place, as was normal in those days, in a hotel – the Argyll Hotel.<sup>36</sup>

The Pinks' association with the Macivers is framed by older Lewis people who remember them, in terms of Mary Ann being their landlady rather than George being their landlord. Locals remember her as a formidable and forthright communicant member of the Free Presbyterian congregation. She nevertheless forged a strong and enduring relationship with the Pinks, despite their not attending any church, far less her own. She helped Vera and Arthur Pink maintain a large vegetable garden, and the Pinks never moved away from being under her roof. Indeed, she nursed Vera at no. 29 after she became seriously ill. A Stornoway friend wrote

<sup>31</sup> The writer owes this to Miss Sandra Gillanders and to Neil Mackay, Achmore.

<sup>32</sup> The marriage was conducted by Rev. Alexander Macrae (1867–1919), the local Free Presbyterian minister. Kames was on the popular Clyde steamer routes from Glasgow. National Records of Scotland, Statutory registers Marriages 518/8, 1895, Marriages in the Parish of Kilfinan in the County of Argyll, p. 4. Mr Macrae was minister of Kames from 1894 to 1899 when he was translated to Portree, where he served as pastor until joining the Free Church of Scotland in 1918.

<sup>33</sup> National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers Births 088/107, 1897, Births in the Parish of Stornoway in the County of Ross, p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> Mr Grant (1873–1932) was Lewis reporter for the *Highland News* but in 1917 set up the *Stornoway Gazette*. His son James Shaw Grant (1910–1999) took over the editorship on William's death.

<sup>35</sup> National Records of Scotland, 1920, Valuations Rolls 011500065/93, Valuation Roll of the County of Ross and Cromarty for 1920–1921, Parish of Stornoway, p. 93. National Records of Scotland, 1925, Valuation Rolls 011500070/102, Valuation Roll of the County of Ross and Cromarty for 1925–1926, Parish of Stornoway, p. 102.

<sup>36</sup> National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers Marriages 523/4, Marriages in the District of Kilmore and Kilbride, in the County of Argyll, 1930, p. 2.



of Vera: 'The room in Lewis Street remained her home, where she was "mothered" by Mrs MacIver, until it was necessary, after a second cerebral haemorrhage to remove her to hospital.'<sup>37</sup>

Mary Ann was very concerned to have the curtains opened on the morning of the Lord's Day on which she herself died; this in case the impression be given that the day was not being respectfully observed.<sup>38</sup>

Given their heavy workload, the Pinks did not encourage readers of the *Studies in the Scriptures* to arrive at their home without warning.<sup>39</sup> However, they did sometimes provide hospitality. Pink had regular visits from a Free Church minister based on the island of Lewis, Rev. William Campbell of Knock (Point).<sup>40</sup> Born in Bragar on the island, Mr Campbell (1893–1967) was moderator of his denomination's General Assembly in 1947 and served his congregation for thirty-six years.<sup>41</sup> His preaching as an assistant at a communion season in Carloway was described in a poem published in 1935 about the revival going on in the district. There had been a beauty and ability in the way he administered the Lord's Supper, the poet Hector Martin of Portvoller recalled. Mr Campbell had spoken of the women who attended the empty tomb on the Resurrection morning, stressing the motivating power of their love for Christ and also giving 'marks' of those who love the Saviour.<sup>42</sup> In late 1949, Mr Campbell's own congregation experienced revival.<sup>43</sup> He retired to Inverness in 1962.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4. The week-day circuit

Stornoway was and remains a small town serving a large rural hinterland. The town-centre streets through which Pink walked or passed were densely populated.<sup>45</sup> The war saw a massive influx of military and other personnel.

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<sup>37</sup> Murray, *Life of Pink*, pp. 253-254, 283-284. Vera appears to have been in charge of the garden more than her husband, although he did help in the effort.

<sup>38</sup> The writer acknowledges the help of several older Lewis residents on these points; he also owes assistance from Rev. John Macleod, former Free Presbyterian minister of Stornoway (1969–2004) and London (2004–2020) congregations, on her care for the Lord's Day.

<sup>39</sup> Murray, *Life of Pink*, pp. 251-257.

<sup>40</sup> Mr Campbell's son, Angus I. Campbell is the source for this.

<sup>41</sup> Macaulay, *Free Church Ministers in Lewis (Presbytery)*, 1843–1993, p. 28.

<sup>42</sup> The original Gaelic poem is published in Donald John MacAulay, *Memories of My Father: A Biography of Rev. Murdo Macaulay* (Carloway, 2019), pp. 360-361.

<sup>43</sup> Rev. Kenneth A. Macrae, *The Resurgence of Arminianism* (Stornoway, 1954), p. 28.

<sup>44</sup> *Press and Journal*, Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> April 1967, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Allan Campbell, 'Reminiscences of a Community', *SY Gone By*, Winter/Spring 2016–17 (Stornoway Historical Society, 2017), pp. 4-7.

The local aerodrome became the base for two squadrons of Handley Page Halifax bombers tasked with anti-shipping patrols off Norway. At its peak, RAF manpower in Stornoway reached 2,480 officers, airmen, and airwomen.<sup>46</sup> Royal Navy motor launches and Air Sea Rescue (RAF) launches were based in the harbour.<sup>47</sup>

When Pink came to Stornoway in 1940, wartime rationing meant that paper was scarce. People remember that almost every square millimetre of paper Pink used had writing on it. In later years, Pink would sit in the Lews Castle Grounds to study, on the rare occasions when weather permitted.<sup>48</sup> The post-war years on Lewis saw economic growth in herring fishing, fish-processing including kippering yards, Harris Tweed production, and large-scale house building projects by Stornoway Town Council. Scheduled commercial air services began in 1944.<sup>49</sup> Stornoway and its harbour, hospitals, and shops hosted or served the people involved in this upsurge.

The town through which Pink walked every weekday was thus extremely busy whether in war or peace. Pink had a regular circuit. He would leave his Lewis Street home and go down Scotland Street, emerging onto Cromwell Street from the end of Kenneth Street, walk along the harbour front, and then visit shops. The older generation alive today can remember the sight of Pink – one described him as being of ‘average height and build’ and another described him as ‘physically upright’ in posture – going round the streets of Stornoway. Young people in 1940s Stornoway knew that he was a writer and now believe him to have been an unusual but gracious man.

Pink’s daily circuit around Stornoway was spiritually significant. He would speak with friends on the street ‘or at their place of business’, wrote one of them. ‘The conversation was always centred on the Scriptures.’<sup>50</sup>

Mr Pink’s first stop after buying his daily newspaper was usually D. G. Mackenzie’s shop on Cromwell Street. This was a Draper’s and Ladies and

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<sup>46</sup> Malcolm Macdonald ‘Handley Page Halifax Operations out of Stornoway in the Second World War’, *SY Gone By*, Winter/Spring 2019–20 (Stornoway Historical Society, 2020), pp. 30–37. A number of aircraft were shot down and crews lost.

<sup>47</sup> Picture caption, *SY Gone By*, Winter/Spring 2016–17 (Stornoway Historical Society, 2017), pp. 24–25.

<sup>48</sup> The writer’s source is Rev. John Macleod, retired minister of Stornoway and London FP congregations.

<sup>49</sup> See Sandy Matheson, *Reflections on the History of Stornoway and Lewis* (Islands Book Trust, 2007), pp. 24–30.

<sup>50</sup> Murray, *Life of Pink*, p. 268. Murray quotes from information he received from James Maclean.

Gents Outfitter, assuring potential clients in local newspaper advertisements that 'A Visit Will be Appreciated'.<sup>51</sup> The owner, Donald George Mackenzie, was an elder in the Free Presbyterian congregation in the town. The original business had been housed on the east side of Cromwell Street. Before, during, and after World War Two, he occupied premises in Perceval Square across the road and settled finally at no. 26 Cromwell Street. In recent years no. 26 has been the Tourist Information office.<sup>52</sup>

Mr Mackenzie had been born on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1884, in Auchendrean, Lochbroom in Ross-shire.<sup>53</sup> He and his wife Johanna (née Macleod) had been married in Glasgow on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1912.<sup>54</sup> They stayed on Matheson Road in Stornoway. Mr Mackenzie died on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1953 in the Lewis Hospital.<sup>55</sup>

Mr Mackenzie had come to Stornoway from Wester Ross at the age of 14. Following marriage, he had moved to Glasgow where the preaching of Rev. Neil Cameron<sup>56</sup> on the verse 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee' (Heb. 13:5) had proved a particular blessing. A move to London saw him elected to the eldership and he then returned to Stornoway. Eldership and Sabbath School superintendent duties there were carried out with 'diligence...sometimes at considerable self-denial', and he was an active precentor and lay-preacher.<sup>57</sup>

Shops in small towns were social hubs at that time. D. G. Mackenzie's, yards from the then bus station, was also a meeting-place for believers.

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<sup>51</sup> See for example *Stornoway Gazette and West Coast Advertiser*, Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> February 1950, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> *Old Stornoway Revisited*, pp. 50-51, 70.

<sup>53</sup> National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers, Births 075/1 64, 1884, Births in the District of Lochbroom in the County of Ross, p. 22.

<sup>54</sup> The ceremony took place in the Alexandra Hotel in the city. Johanna had worked as a Post Office telegraphist. Her father George was a retired prison governor. Her mother's name was Lillian née Maciver. The wedding was conducted by Rev. Neil Cameron of the city's St Jude's Free Presbyterian congregation. National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers, Marriages 644/10 1353, 1912, Marriages in the District of Blythswood in the Burgh of Glasgow, p. 677.

<sup>55</sup> National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers, Deaths 088/179, 1953, Deaths in the District of Stornoway in the County of Ross and Cromarty, p. 60. The cause of death was coronary thrombosis.

<sup>56</sup> Rev. Neil Cameron (1854–1932) was born in Kilninver near Oban. He was educated in Kilchoan Public School, Ardnamurchan, and then in Onich in Lochaber. He helped rally the people to support the Free Presbyterian separation of 1893. After divinity training he served as minister of the St Jude's (Glasgow) congregation from 1896 until 1932.

<sup>57</sup> J.A.T., 'The late D. G. Mackenzie, Elder, Stornoway', *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 58:11 (March 1954), pp. 339-341.

‘Many of the Lord’s people travelling to and from communions were entertained and offered hospitality in a little room behind the shop’, noted a minister familiar with the generation who had enjoyed the opportunity.<sup>58</sup>

One such regular was a Free Church lady, Annie Macleod. She and her husband Angus, a crofter and general labourer, had raised a family on his family croft at 12 Benside, Laxdale on the edge of Stornoway.<sup>59</sup> Angus was an elder in the Stornoway Free Church congregation during the ministry of Rev. Kenneth Macrae, and was a noted precentor.<sup>60</sup> Angus died on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1941.<sup>61</sup> Some of Annie’s Gaelic spiritual poetry was published in the Free Church *Monthly Record* using her local byname *Bean Aonghais Choinnich* as a pen-name. This has been the subject of recent scholarly analysis.<sup>62</sup>

She would visit the shop and speak feelingly of the remarks made by the ministers and men at the communion seasons<sup>63</sup> especially the Friday Fellowship meeting.<sup>64</sup> On one occasion she told those gathered in the shop her memory of comments made by the layman Norman ‘Tormod Sona’ MacDonald<sup>65</sup> at one such meeting. The text – ‘Question’

<sup>58</sup> Rev. John Macleod, ‘Miss Isabel Murray, North Tolsta’, *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 108:1 (January 2003), p. 25.

<sup>59</sup> There appear from the 1901 census to have been six children. National Records of Scotland, Census 1901, Civil Parish of Stornoway, Parish Ward of Stornoway Central, Village or Hamlet of Newmarket or Benside, 088/14/08, p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> He and fellow-elders were described in a Gaelic hymn composed by the Rev. Kenneth John Nicolson. ‘Rainn do Mhaighstir MhicRath Caomh agus do dh’ eildearan Steornabhaigh’, Peigi F. Nic Dhomhnaill (ed.), *Deatach: Rannan leis an t-Urr Coinneach I MacNeacail* (Stornoway, 2011), p. 56.

<sup>61</sup> National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers 088/16, 1941, Deaths in the District of Stornoway in the County of Ross and Cromarty, p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> Anne Macleod Hill, ‘The Pelican in the Wilderness: Symbolism and Allegory in women’s evangelical songs of the Gàidhealtachd’ (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2016), pp. 5, 102, 123, appendix pp. 95, 102, 209, 210, 214.

<sup>63</sup> The communion season is made up of preparatory services running from Thursday to Saturday, followed by the sacrament dispensed on Sabbath morning, a service with a gospel message in the evening, and concluding with the thanksgiving service(s) on the Monday.

<sup>64</sup> This meeting focusses on discussion of a text from the Bible illustrating or suggesting signs of conversion – ‘the question’. An elder suggests the text; a minister then provides guidance on the text (‘opening the question’); several communicant men ‘speak to the question’ when asked to by the presiding minister; and another minister summarises (and corrects if necessary) the points made (‘closes the question’).

<sup>65</sup> Norman (1853–1945) belonged to Melbost (Borve) but when three years old was cleared to Shader. The nickname means ‘Laid-back Norman’ although it is sometimes translated as ‘Happy Norman’. He was a respected elder and esteemed visitor to communion seasons. Rev. Murdoch Campbell, *The King’s Friend: Memorial of Norman MacDonald Or ‘Tormod*

– for discussion had been, ‘She hath done what she could’ (Mark 14:8). Norman had faced the congregation and said: ‘I give my oath that she never said it, but the Tongue of Truth said it for her’. He had then turned to the pulpit and said to the presiding minister: ‘I give my oath to you also that she never said it.’ The minister summarising the day’s discussion had stated that Norman had opened, spoken to, and closed, the Question.<sup>66</sup>

A streak of practical humility ran through the spirituality of such Lewis Christians. Annie recalled in old age how many years before, she and another young woman had agreed together to help dry peats (used as fuel) for a lady with a very young family whose husband was working away from home. They had done so anonymously, rising at 4am to do the work so as not to attract attention.<sup>67</sup>

One employee in D. G. Mackenzie’s, was a Miss ‘Bella’ Murray from Tolsta who had survived tuberculosis in childhood. Her obituarist noted of the shop: ‘It was there that Isabel came to know many of the worthies of the past and had sweet fellowship with them. Bella Murray was a most intelligent Christian and was ever a most attentive hearer, receiving the Word with all readiness of mind from the lips of others. Nevertheless, Berean-like and for her own benefit, she searched the Scriptures daily in order to be assured that the things that she heard were indeed so.’<sup>68</sup> Miss Murray was a well-known Free Presbyterian who valued fellowship with believers of other denominations.<sup>69</sup>

## V. Pink’s main Stornoway friendship

After the paper shop and D. G. Mackenzie’s, a bicycle shop at 24-26 Point Street in Stornoway was usually the next main port of call for Pink. The proprietor was James Maclean who later provided material for Iain H. Murray’s biography. Mr Maclean’s local byname was Jimmy ‘Clean’. Owned by the Pier and Harbour Commission, his premises included a shop, workshop, and two rooms.<sup>70</sup> He had been established in business as

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*Sona*’ (1965). See also Rev. John Macleod, *Am Measg nan Lili, Tormod Sona a Bha ‘N Siadar Bharabhais* (Inverness, 1948).

<sup>66</sup> *Nuair a Bha an Diadhachd Fo Bhlath ann an Tolastadh anns Na Laithean a Dh’fhalbh* (Tolsta, 2020), pp. 53-54.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>68</sup> Macleod, ‘Miss Isabel Murray, North Tolsta’, p. 25.

<sup>69</sup> The writer was told this by a person who knew her well.

<sup>70</sup> Valuation Roll of the County of Ross and Cromarty for Year 1940–1941 – Burgh of Stornoway, p. 128.



a cycle dealer by the late 1920s.<sup>71</sup> Later, Mr Maclean's cycle shop was in Cromwell Street. He also employed his brother-in-law as a bicycle mechanic who operated a repair workshop on his behalf near the junction of Church Street and Kenneth Street.

The range of goods that Mr Maclean sold in his 'Cycle Depot' was large and a great attraction for the public. By the 1930s it included games, model aeroplanes, cowboy outfits, footballs, building sets, mouth organs, table-tennis equipment, toy sewing-machines, wheelbarrows, trailers, 'toddle cars', scooters, pedal cars, torches, gramophones and records including Gaelic music, as well as children's and adult bicycles.<sup>72</sup>

James Maclean had been born on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1901 at 7 Castle Street in Stornoway.<sup>73</sup> His father John was a railway agent and his mother Elizabeth née Mackay was from Watten in Caithness. The couple had married on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1895 in West Watten village in the parish of Watten, Caithness.<sup>74</sup> John Maclean's parents were from Wester Ross, his father being from Coast of Inverasdale and his mother from Boor near Poolewe in the parish of Gairloch.<sup>75</sup>

James spent his childhood at first on Castle Street and (by 1911) at 23 Keith Street. There were by that point eight children in the family, four girls and four boys. James was the fourth oldest child.<sup>76</sup> The Watten and Inverasdale roots were reflected in the names of property that James Maclean went on to own in Stornoway. In 1935 he owned a house called Inverasdale on Goathill Road.<sup>77</sup> By the 1940s James appeared to have sold 'Inverasdale' to the coal merchant William Alexander Bruce,<sup>78</sup> and bought

<sup>71</sup> Valuation Roll of the County of Ross and Cromarty for Year 1930–1931 – Parish of Stornoway, p. 122.

<sup>72</sup> Advert in *Stornoway Gazette*, 1935, no date but aimed at 'Xmas Gifts' market. Courtesy Sandy Matheson, Stornoway.

<sup>73</sup> National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers, Births 088/189, 1901, Births in the Parish of Stornoway in the County of Ross and Cromarty, p. 63.

<sup>74</sup> National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers, Marriages 042/7, 1895, Marriages in the Parish of Watten in the County of Caithness, p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> John's parents Kenneth Maclean a fisherman, and Peggy (later Margaret) Mackenzie, a domestic servant, were married on 19th January 1860, in Poolewe. National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers, Marriages 06/22, 1860, Marriages in the South District of Gairloch in the County of Ross and Cromarty, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> In order of birth, the children were Kenneth, Ellen Catherine, Margaret, James, Murdina, Jessie, John and Duncan. National Records of Scotland, 1911, Census 088/5/1, Enumeration Book, Civil Parish and Parish Ward of Stornoway Burgh, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup> Valuation Roll of the County of Ross and Cromarty for Year 1935–1936 – Parish of Stornoway, p. 111.

<sup>78</sup> Mr Bruce, who was also a fish salesman, died on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1966, aged 94.



Pink's close friend James Maclean (second from right) with business friends in Stornoway, around 1939. The picture was taken at Colin Mackenzie's engineering yard on Esplanade Road where the Fishery Office now stands. (L-R): Colin Mackenzie; Bob Scott, motor engineer (Kenneth Street beside current County Hotel); Jimmy Florence, fish merchant (South Beach Street, site now the Kitchen Centre); Jimmy Mackenzie, coal merchant; James Maclean; John Macdonald, chemist (Point Street). COURTESY: SANDY MATHESON, STORNOWAY.

a house which he named 'Watten', also on Goathill Road.<sup>79</sup> 'Inverasdale' still stands, between the junctions with Nicolson Road and Anderson Road.

He had married a nurse, Chrissie née Macleod, in December 1935 in Inverness.<sup>80</sup> Mr Maclean had been brought up in the Free Presbyterian Church but moved to the Free Church; it is believed that he had left after his marriage.<sup>81</sup> Chrissie was brought up in Flesherin in the Point area of Lewis.<sup>82</sup> Both her parents were from the district, her father John belonging to 28 Swordale and her mother Murdina née Graham to 33 Portnaguran.<sup>83</sup> Chrissie was one of a group of four women who regularly attended communion seasons on the island, sharing in hospitality in the

<sup>79</sup> Valuation Roll of the County of Ross and Cromarty, Burgh of Stornoway 1940–1941 – Burgh of Stornoway, p. 106.

<sup>80</sup> The ceremony was performed on 4th December 1935 at the Queensgate Hotel, Inverness. The officiating minister was Rev. William Fraser of St Columba's Free Church, Govan in Glasgow. Chrissie's normal residence at the time of their wedding had been 41 South Beach Street, Stornoway, and James's had been 'Inverasdale', Goathill Road, Stornoway. National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers, Marriages 098/A267, Marriages in the District of Inverness in the County of Inverness, p. 134.

<sup>81</sup> This is recalled by Angus I. Campbell, Inverness, and Miss Sandra Gillanders.

<sup>82</sup> The source for this is Angus I. Campbell, Inverness.

<sup>83</sup> The couple had married on 18th October 1898 at Garrabost Free Church. National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers, Marriages 088/64, 1898, Marriages in the Parish of Stornoway in the County of Ross and Cromarty, p. 32.

areas where the sacrament was being administered.<sup>84</sup> Chrissie and James's daughter, Elizabeth, became a teacher in Tong on the island of Lewis, and then in Beaully. Her career was completed in Inverness and she attended the Free North congregation there.<sup>85</sup>

Mr Maclean became an English precentor in the Free Church congregation in Stornoway and taught in the Sabbath School, where he was remembered for being kind.<sup>86</sup> He was an encourager of young believers and supportive of the stances taken by his minister, Rev. Kenneth Macrae.<sup>87</sup> He was noted for his support for organised youth fellowships at an early stage of their emergence in Lewis church life, and for involvement in Psalmody classes.<sup>88</sup> One islander still alive described him as 'a thorough gentleman'. Another who knew him added that he was 'a quiet man who would not trouble anyone, and diligent in his work'. In later life he retired to Inverness, where he was an active office-bearer in the Free North congregation.<sup>89</sup> He died there on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1988.<sup>90</sup>

James's sister Margaret, a schoolteacher, helped in the Sabbath School of the Free Presbyterian congregation.<sup>91</sup> She is recalled as being 'a real lady'. When Sabbath School pupils were unable to repeat the Bible verse set for memorisation, she would help and prompt them to complete it rather than criticise them.<sup>92</sup> Her witness in her day-school role was remembered fondly by a former pupil as 'gentle Christian understanding and encouragement'.<sup>93</sup> Another former pupil recalled her willingness to delegate care and responsibility to young children.<sup>94</sup>

It cannot have passed Pink's notice that a revival movement had taken place on Lewis in the decade before his arrival. Beginning in Carloway in 1934, it spread to neighbouring Breasclete and the Lochs

<sup>84</sup> This information was provided by a native of South Lochs and another person from Stornoway.

<sup>85</sup> Angus I. Campbell and a native of Stornoway provided these details.

<sup>86</sup> The writer is grateful to Rev. Donald A. Macdonald (retired of Kilmuir and Kinloch Free Church congregations) for these recollections from his Stornoway youth.

<sup>87</sup> Rev. Donald MacDonald (retired minister of Carloway Free Church) kindly provided these memories.

<sup>88</sup> Stornoway native, Dr Charles L. Crichton, provided this information.

<sup>89</sup> Angus I. Campbell, Inverness.

<sup>90</sup> Extract of an entry from the Register of Deaths in Scotland. Death Registered in the District of Inverness, District No. 240, Year 1988, Entry No. 397.

<sup>91</sup> The writer is grateful to Miss Sandra Gillanders for these details.

<sup>92</sup> The writer owes this anecdote to one of her Sabbath School pupils.

<sup>93</sup> W. M. Wilson, 'Reflections on a Stornoway Childhood', *SY Gone By*, Winter/Spring 2019/2020 (Stornoway Historical Society, 2020), pp. 26-29.

<sup>94</sup> I am grateful to her former pupil Sandy Matheson for this specific memory.

and Point districts.<sup>95</sup> Bernera and Barvas were also affected, as was Cross. Localised movements in single districts or even villages had not been unknown.<sup>96</sup> Pink would also have been aware of the movement which later became known as 'The Lewis Awakening'; lasting between 1949 and 1953 it had involved the mainland-based evangelistic agency, the Faith Mission.<sup>97</sup>

Pink died on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1952. The last issue of *Studies in the Scriptures* was issued in December 1953. His widow Vera used material that he had prepared in his last few months of life and re-used some key articles from the past. That writing career of thirty-one years had been sustained by her love and support, often in dire financial and personal circumstances.<sup>98</sup>

The range of Pink's writing while in Stornoway had been wide. *Studies in the Scriptures* saw a series on the Ten Commandments in 1941, followed in 1942–1944 by articles on the perseverance of the saints, overlapping with the 1943–1945 material on Elisha. Series on spiritual growth and on the doctrine of reconciliation spanned 1944–1946, while the history of Joshua up to chapter 22 was published in the *Studies* from 1945–1953. Massive studies on other topics appeared in its pages in his Lewis period.<sup>99</sup>

Vera stayed in Stornoway after her husband's death. She is recalled as wearing long clothing. A young woman who 'did messages' for her recalls Vera as being 'very kind'.<sup>100</sup> One young man who had left the island in 1960 met her shortly afterwards. Rev. John Tallach recalls: 'During a visit to Stornoway in the early sixties, a friend took me to the hospital where Mrs Pink was being cared for. This visit was the only contact that I had with her. However, I have never forgotten the impression I received of the atmosphere of grace in which she lived. Things were not easy for her, but she showed remarkable submission to God's sovereign will. Rather than being taken up with her circumstances,

<sup>95</sup> For an eye-witness report, see Macaulay, *Memories of My Father*, pp. 46–61.

<sup>96</sup> Rev. Norman Macleod, *Lewis Revivals of the 20th Century* (Hebridean Press Service, c. 1988), p. 13. See also Macleod, *Banner in the West*, pp. 256–258.

<sup>97</sup> There have been differing views of the Lewis Awakening. A critique of the contemporary publicity and claims was provided in Macrae, *Resurgence of Arminianism*, pp. 24–29. For a recent positive approach including eye-witness accounts, see Colin & Mary Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven: The Revival on the Isle of Lewis, 1949–1952* (Christian Focus, 2004). For a subsequent analysis, see Macleod, *Banner in the West*, pp. 261–267.

<sup>98</sup> Murray, *Life of Pink*, pp. 271–283.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 340–342.

<sup>100</sup> The lady involved wishes to remain anonymous.

she seemed to be entirely focused on the gospel of God's grace.<sup>101</sup> She passed to glory in 1962.<sup>102</sup>

Pink's daily tour of Stornoway kept him grounded in the pressures and problems of war, peacetime daily life, bereavement, and poverty experienced by islanders. Albeit briefly, but daily, he was interacting with dense interlocking networks of people involved in church life who visited the shops he frequented. The spiritually-minded conversations which he sought to encourage were familiar to island believers and these cannot but have been beneficial to Pink. It is beyond the scope of this article to suggest what, if any, cross-fertilisation effect these times of fellowship had on his writings. It is certainly true that Pink believed in mutual support and had a high view of verbal Christian fellowship and encouragement. During his time in Stornoway he had written: 'It may only be the quoting of a single precept or promise, but often that means much to a fellow pilgrim ... Only the day to come will reveal how many a traveller on life's highway went forth with renewed courage and strength after receiving an uplifting word from a humble Christian.'<sup>103</sup>

## VI. Aspects of the Pinks' isolation

Much is made in online biographies of the Pinks' ignorance of the Gaelic language as a barrier to their attending public worship on their arrival on the island of Lewis in 1940. Iain H. Murray does point out that Lord's Day afternoon English services existed in the Free and Free Presbyterian churches in Stornoway at the time.<sup>104</sup>

It is worth teasing this issue out further. The Free Church Seminary on Frances Street – four minutes' walk from the Pinks' home – hosted an English service every Lord's Day afternoon. From 5<sup>th</sup> June 1932 the Lord's Day evening service in the congregation's main Kenneth Street building had been in English once a month. Rev. Kenneth Macrae was also to introduce a Wednesday evening lecture in English during the winter months.<sup>105</sup> A 2pm service in English took place round the corner from the Pinks' lodgings, every Lord's Day, in the Free Presbyterian Church. This

<sup>101</sup> Rev. John Tallach, email to writer, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021.

<sup>102</sup> Murray, *Life of Pink*, p. 284.

<sup>103</sup> 'Spiritual Converse', *Studies in the Scripture*, Vol. 26:3 (March 1947), pp. 71-72.

<sup>104</sup> Murray, *Life of Pink*, p. 248.

<sup>105</sup> Attendances at the monthly Kenneth Street Lord's Day evening English service were 800 and remained consistent. The Gaelic evening service moved to the Seminary. Murray, *The Diary of Kenneth A. Macrae*, pp. 232, 248, 262.



dated to the island ministry of Rev. Neil Macintyre, which ended in 1923 on his move to Edinburgh.<sup>106</sup>

By 1940, the town was bilingual: even its more conservative churches were in transition from Gaelic to English, and there was a growing cultural emphasis towards the latter among its people. In fact, services in English were common in Stornoway long before then. A separate Free Church specifically for public worship in the English language had opened as far back as 1875 – Martin's Memorial was a Church of Scotland charge by the time of the Pinks' arrival in the town, via the 1900 and 1929 unions.<sup>107</sup> As far back as 1907, there had been regular English services in the strongly Gaelic-speaking High Church of Scotland – at that time still part of the United Free Church. There had been Lord's Day afternoon and evening services as well as a Tuesday evening prayer meeting in English.<sup>108</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this article to explore in detail many other factors affecting the Pinks' decision, after three months' residence in the town, to cease attending public worship. A lack of welcome seems unlikely. Congregations were used to strangers at church in the 1939–1945 war. Older people recall hospitality being extended in people's homes (despite the pressures of wartime rationing) to servicemen and women who had attended public worship. The Pinks were not in the military but were resident tenants of a well-known shopkeeper, which made them different to the 'usual' kind of stranger. Permanent English residents were still unusual at this point. However, many islanders had worked in the herring industry along the east coast of Britain, or in domestic service, nursing, or the Merchant and Royal Navies: meeting an Englishman of Baptist persuasion married to an American lady was hardly a culture shock, or a barrier to welcoming them.

Nor was the Pinks' decision to withdraw from public worship entirely alien to islanders. The Scripture injunction, 'Not forsaking the assembling

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<sup>106</sup> The writer owes this to Miss Sandra Gillanders. Mr Macintyre (1867–1953) was minister of Stornoway from 1908 until 1923. See 'Tribute to the late Rev. Neil Macintyre', *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 58:9 (January, 1954), pp. 275–276. See also D. Campbell, 'The late Rev. Neil Macintyre', *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol 59:1 (May, 1954), pp. 1–9.

<sup>107</sup> Macleod, *Banner in the West*, p. 180. In 1913 Martin's had absorbed the other United Free charge in Stornoway which had descended from the United Presbyterian cause in the town dating to 1841 (and whose building stands at the corner of Lewis Street and James Street). This seems to have been an English-speaking congregation from its inception. Rev. Robert Small, DD, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1733–1900* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1904), Vol. 2, pp. 167–168. The old UP manse was later used by the St Columba Church of Scotland congregation.

<sup>108</sup> Rev. Walter Calder, *After Seventy Years: A Historical Sketch of the United Free High Congregation, Stornoway* (Stornoway, c. 1911–1916), p. 37.

of ourselves together, as the manner of some is' was the widely and deeply held viewpoint but not universally practised.<sup>109</sup> This was true of the general population and of a tiny minority of those professing saving faith.

In the 1920s and 1930s, rural Lewis youngsters would often not attend church on Lord's Day mornings, even if one or both parents were communicants.<sup>110</sup> Nonagenarians alive today remember little or no pressure to attend Lord's Day morning services as youngsters.<sup>111</sup> It is estimated by one writer that 1940s church attendance in Lewis and Harris 'probably exceeded 50 per cent of the entire able-bodied population.'<sup>112</sup> Church-going levels could vary widely from area to area. Prior to the 1930s spiritual revival, there were 'very few non-churchgoers' in Carloway. However, in the village of Garyvard in the Park district of Lewis, there had been 'such apathy to religion that only four or five people from that village attended church services' and only two residents were communicant members of the church, out of a population of around seventy.<sup>113</sup> Prayer meeting attendance in Lewis was (and remains) largely a rite of spiritual passage, perceived as only being appropriate for those under sustained concern of soul or who felt they were converted.<sup>114</sup>

It was rare but not entirely unknown for professing Christians to cease attending public worship for reasons other than their own or their dependents' health. A post-war elder in one area of the island did so having adopted adult-Baptist principles.<sup>115</sup> Another elder would attend communion seasons but not attend his own minister's preaching in his own home congregation.<sup>116</sup> Personality clashes, and disquiet at decisions of church courts locally and nationally, could trigger individual short-term boycotts of one's own congregation. While such actions were generally

<sup>109</sup> Hebrews 10:25. The full verse reads: 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.'

<sup>110</sup> The writer was told this by his late father who grew up in Lionel in Ness area of Lewis in the 1920s and 1930s.

<sup>111</sup> The writer owes this to friends.

<sup>112</sup> Macleod, *Banner in the West*, p. 264. Mr Macleod cites Rev. Kenneth Macrae's 1954 statistics that there were between 200 and 250 people in the main prayer meeting in the Stornoway Free Church congregation, and that eleven such meetings took place every week within its bounds.

<sup>113</sup> Macleod, *Lewis Revivals of the 20th Century*, pp. 10, 13-14.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10. The exception to this in the 1940s and 1950s was the Free Presbyterians who saw it as simply another service open to all.

<sup>115</sup> The writer owes this to a retired minister familiar with the area.

<sup>116</sup> Donald Macleod, *The Living Past* (Stornoway: Acair, 2006), p. 179.

frowned on, even by those in general sympathy with the underlying sentiments, such people were to be found in 1940s Lewis.

Islanders were also aware of the tradition of Separatism in the mainland Highlands, where respected older individual believers concerned at unscriptural aspects of the Established Church had withdrawn from stated Lord's Day services and commented on the Scriptures in their own homes for those prepared to gather with them. Awareness of this practice was renewed with the 1930 publication of *The North Country Separatists* by Principal John Macleod. The booklet also underlined the loyalty of Lewis fishermen to the Free Church while interacting with separatist leaders such as Sandy Gair during the seasonal herring fishery at Caithness.<sup>117</sup>

As described in the 2018 issue of *SRSIJ*, a number of individuals in Caithness remained aloof from church services in the late nineteenth century but did not hold services in their homes as the Separatists tended to do.<sup>118</sup> Islanders in Pink's time were aware of several families in Achmore on Lewis who boycotted Free Presbyterian Church services, reading their Bibles at home at the stated times of worship. This movement was in support of Rev. Peter Chisholm (1884–1957). It lasted until the 1980s. Another sympathiser concerned to hear him preach more often on his native island booked the Stornoway Town Hall and Achmore school to allow him to do so. These rallies were timed to not clash with stated services of the local churches and large numbers would gather.<sup>119</sup>

A similar but much larger and extant tradition exists on the fringes of Reformed circles in Holland. Known as 'Thuislevers' (literally, 'people who read at home') they spend their lives in isolation from public church activity. Instead, they read sermons or listen to recordings of specific ministers of whom they approve, in their own homes. A recent estimate puts

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<sup>117</sup> Rev. John Macleod, DD, *The North Country Separatists* (Inverness, 1930), pp. 56-57. The material, with some editing and additional material, was republished as *By-paths of Highland Church History* (Edinburgh: Knox Press, 1965).

<sup>118</sup> Norman Campbell, 'Caithness religious conservatism: an individualist or corporate phenomenon?', *SRSIJ*, Vol. 8 (2018), pp. 240-283. This article analysed the book by William Mill, *The Despised Fathers of Caithness* (Inverness, 1884).

<sup>119</sup> Mr Chisholm's name had been removed from the list of Free Presbyterian divinity students. This followed comments he made against the practice of elders exhorting the people in the absence of a minister or divinity student. He also sought a ban on pianos and photographs in the homes of communicants, a proposal which the FP Synod described as 'absurd'. After holding separate services, Mr Chisholm joined the Free Church where he exercised a ministry marked by powerful preaching and spiritual blessing but occasional eccentricity. Norman Campbell, 'The Chisholmites of Achmore', *SRSIJ*, Vol. 2 (2012), pp. 275-291.



Arthur and Vera Pink's grave in Sandwick Cemetery, Stornoway has no gravestone, reportedly at Pink's own wish. Today a small urn is used as a marker for enquirers.

the number of people involved as between 3,000 and 5,000. One strong section of worshippers in this house-readers tradition read sermons by the Rev. Jan Pieter Paauwe (1872–1956), a minister expelled from the Dutch Reformed Church over his handling of admission to church membership. Ds Paauwe continued to preach but remained in complete ecclesiastical isolation and urged his followers to do likewise.<sup>120</sup> Another significant section apparently strongly favours adult baptism of believers and therefore avoids the Reformed denominations which practise infant baptism.

Pink himself wrote from Stornoway in 1951: 'One reason for our remaining in this "out-of-the-way" (but delightful)

place is that we may prosecute our study and work in quietness without interruption ... We desire neither to be unsociable nor to live the life of a hermit and are resolved by grace to devote the whole of our energy in an endeavour to feed Christ's lambs and sheep ... Not that we urge anyone else to follow our example. Others must take place on the firing line, and each soul should seek to perform his or her duty in whatever position Providence has assigned them.'<sup>121</sup>

Another balancing factor is Pink's vast correspondence with people across the world, in addition to writing articles for *Studies in the Scriptures*. Friendships such as these provided the Pinks with another field of spiritual fellowship in addition to friends on the island of Lewis.<sup>122</sup> People on the

<sup>120</sup> Huib de Vries, *Eredienst aan Huis* (Apeldoorn, 2012). I acknowledge the assistance of Dr Robert J. Dickie, Stornoway, on this point.

<sup>121</sup> *Letters of Arthur W. Pink*, p. 133.

<sup>122</sup> Murray, *Life of Pink*, pp. 214–238, particularly pp. 235–236. One such contact was a couple, Lowell and Evelyn Green, who belonged to Georgia in the USA. The Greens had

island subscribed to *Studies in the Scriptures* and subsequent generations read his books. He continues to attract new readers world-wide. Until the Covid pandemic, every summer saw holidaymakers on the island find their way to Sandwick cemetery in Stornoway to visit his and Vera's graves.<sup>123</sup> This may yet resume.

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become custodians of some of Pink's library when he left Hove for Stornoway in 1940. It is thought that Mrs Green visited Stornoway in 1984.

<sup>123</sup> Arthur and Vera Pink are buried at plots 3037 and 3038, a small urn recently marking the site.