

Inverailort into Rhu Arisaig

Letter dated 10 May 1842 from Major-General Sir Alexander Cameron of Inverailort to the Right Honourable Lord Cranstoun agreeing terms for the lease of Rhue Arisaig, formerly leased from the Clanranald estate by Iain Fraingeach MacDonald, his son Archibald ('Archie Rhue') and finally by Archie's son Gregor.

My Lord,

After considering your Factor's letter to me of the 4th Instant and in consequence of Mr Gregor Macdonald's offer not being entertained for the Farm of Rhue, I now hereby offer you the sum of Two Hundred and Twenty pounds Sterling of yearly rent for the Farm of Rhue, exclusive of the Meal Mill, Miller's House, the keep of one Cow for the Miller besides Potatoe Land and the Privilege of casting Peats, for a Lease of Fourteen years from Whitsunday next, with a break in my favour at the expiry of ten years. Entry to the Farm to be given at Whitsunday next and the rent to be payable half yearly at Martinmass [11 Nov.] and Whitsunday in each year beginning the first term's payment at Martinmass next for the first Moiety of Crop and year Eighteen Hundred and Forty two and the next term's payment at Whitsunday 1843 for the second and last Moiety of the said Crop and year and so on termly and yearly during the currency of the lease.

Subtenants and cotters and also assignies are to be expressly excluded and I hereby bind myself to observe, fulfill and implement the conditions and regulations established by your Lordship on the Estate of Arisaig of which a printed copy is [illeg.] to this offer will be Binding on me my Heirs and successors and if necessary a formal lease to be entered into.

The agreement was concluded - later than expected - on 14 September 1842 when Lord Cranstoun wrote: 'I accept of your offer for the ffarm of Rhu on the terms and conditions stated in said offer of which the annexed is a copy.' The delay seems to be associated with a letter 'said to have been written by Dr Coll MacDonald of Rhu' (Val Smith, Sydney) who was Gregor MacDonald's brother. It takes the form of a full apology to Lord Cranstoun, presumably to fend off legal action, and although all other evidence (and the letter itself) points to Gregor MacDonald having been tenant of Rhu, it is described in a copy document of the Cameron-Head family held at Inverness as 'Letter from Dr Coll MacDonald late tenant of the farm of Rhye [sic], Arasaig, now at Lochsheal'. The letter, written at Arisaig on 15 September 1842, was addressed to Patrick Rose, Writer (lawyer) Dingwall and Factor to the Right Honourable Lord Cranstoun:

'Sir, having in a written statement, sent to me by the Right Hon. Lord Cranstoun, stated "that you became bound to me that you would oblige the incoming the incoming tenant of the Farm of Rhue (in the event that my brother Gregor and myself should not get the farm) to take the sheep stock belonging to me on Rhue at valuation and that in consequence of that promise or obligation on your part not being fulfilled my brother and myself lost £300," and having stated in the same statement sent to his Lordship "that you persuaded my brother Gregor to give in an offer of £200 a year for Rhue and also persuaded him to ask for a new House." These statements having also been made to my Edinburgh Agents Mr MacCheyne, WS and "that further you contracted unnecessary expenses in the management of the Estate of Arasaig, against your Constituent Lord Cranstoun" and these statements being communicated by Mr MacCheyne to his Lordship's Edinburgh Agent Mr Patrick WS and by the latter to his Lordship, I now feel myself called upon in justice to you and your interests to state that the said statements are not true, and that they were made by me under feelings of irritation and disappointment, and as they were wantonly and without foundation communicated I am exceedingly sorry having made them: and in order so far as is in my power to repair the injury I shall immediately write to Lord Cranstoun, Mr MacCheyne and Mr Patrick contradicting these statements, and should you not consider this sufficient and the apology now made you are at liberty to make use of this letter as you please in satisfying these Gentlemen and the public that the statements I have made against you are erroneous.'

The copied letter is signed 'Coll Macdonald'. Although Dr Coll, who practised medicine from Dalilea on Loch Shiel, was almost certainly never tenant of Rhu he seems to have had money invested in Gregor MacDonald's stock of sheep. It was common to dispose of stock 'at valuation' by local experts named by the two parties when a lease was ended, but Lord Cranstoun, on the advice of his lawyers at Edinburgh and Dingwall, seems to have declined to follow custom: Rhu passed to Sir Alexander Cameron without its sheep stock, and MacDonald brothers lost money. On the question of Gregor offering £200 and asking for his new landlord to build a better house, Cranstoun was always liable to favour Sir Alexander who had a good house at Inverailort and no intention of living in Rhu.

A printed document has survived headed 'Conditions and Regulations Established by the Right Honourable James Edward Lord Cranstoun, to be observed by the Tenants of the Estates of Rose Hall in Sutherlandshire, and Arisaig in Inverness-shire, whose Tacks or Missives shall be made to bear reference to them', and printed on two pages by Peter Brown of Edinburgh. Rosehall was an estate with a mansion, Glencassley Castle, in the parish of Creich. The mansion is seven miles south-west of Lairg, in Strathoykell, which would explain why Lord Cranstoun had a lawyer at Dingwall. Cranstoun's

original estate, before he became a Highland landowner, was centred on a mansion four miles east-south-east of Dalkeith, outside Edinburgh. He is remembered as something of an ogre in Arisaig, where the redoubtable parish priest William McIntosh is recalled as having 'made Lord Cranstoun open his barns' in a time of eviction. He appears in a more benign light in the following, taken from a draft paper on 'The Rev. Allan McLean and his Family in Scotland, Canada and Australia.

Margaret MacLellan, of a family associated with Bourblach, North Morar, and Gillean, Sleat, 'was highly cultured and only had the trees to talk to': very tall trees were a feature of the Gippsland valleys. Her father Captain MacLellan had been a friend of Lord Cranstoun long before the latter came into the possession of the Arisaig estate (through Clanranald's second wife Lady Ashburton) and Cranstoun took a kindly interest in MacLellan's oldest daughter. Margaret spent holidays as a child at the Cranstoun house outside Edinburgh and 'ended up living there altogether.' This was before the Captain moved into Bourblach (the MacLellans were away again, confined to Gillean, by 1841) and Margaret never lived there. Instead, Lord Cranston 'educated her and launched her into society.'

The parish of Cranstoun is south-east of Edinburgh beyond Dalkeith, and contains the 'beautiful parks of Oxenfoord and Prestonhall'. The line of barons came to an end with Cranstoun's grandson, and Margaret could have been an heiress: his lordship wished to adopt her, but Captain MacLellan declined the offer. By the time the eleventh Lord Cranstoun died in 1869, leaving 'four beautiful properties and all personal jewels etc. to the Crown', Margaret had been in Australia for twenty-seven years.

On the negative side, Cranstoun's actions with regard to Rhu were recalled (twice) in government papers by Eneas Ranald MacDonell, last laird of Morar, before that property was absorbed into the Arisaig estate in 1879. The following summary is a version of what appeared in my 2002 *TGSI* paper on 'The MacDonalds of Rhetland, South Morar, in Scotland and Canada'. There is repetition (but a fuller version) of MacDonell's two statements in the 'Archie Rhu' material which follows on from this.

Eneas was the oldest son of Lt. Col. Donald MacDonell HEICS (of the Scotus family in Knoydart) and Ann MacDonald, daughter of Archibald MacDonald of Lochshiel. Lord James Edward Cranston was bequeathed the Arisaig estate by Clanranald's second wife Lady Ashburton in 1835, and he evicted families from its Rhu peninsula in 1843. Forty years on MacDonell was a witness to the Napier Commission: 'In Lord Cranstoun's time the first clearances commenced in this country, and I was then a young boy almost; but I shall never forget the feelings of awe and fear that came over the people of the country when the last

occurred. All parties felt it, and my mother, who had then the farm of Traigh on South Morar, in her commiseration for some of the families, gave up Traigh for a year or two until they could get some other opening.'

There was more than a general spirit of 'commiseration' in the widow's act of kindness, for her brother was involved in the Rhu evictions – on the evidence of Eneas MacDonell's testimony to the the Deer Forest Commission of 1892: 'In Lord Cranstoun's time my uncle, Gregor Macdonald, had to give a large increase of rent or be quit of it. Well he could not under the old system on which he held it afford to give more rent; the consequence was that the farm was taken over him; and the cruel thing was, that he was obliged to remove all the subtenants upon it who had been there generations before him or his ancestors. The only thing that he could do was to get his brother Macdonald of Loch Sheil to take the people over to Loch Sheil in Moidart.' Some years after his mother and uncles provided shelter for the evicted crofters, MacDonell wrote to Bishop Murdoch requesting that the Rev. Ranald Rankin should be allowed to follow Moidart's surplus population when potato blight caused starvation: 'The entire crop upon which the people depended failed in a most melancholy and complete manner last autumn. . . It is evident that emigration is the only remedy in the present situation of the Highlands.'

Next comes a draft paper (with no destination in mind) entitled 'Archie Rhu':

Archibald MacDonald of Rhu and Loch Shiel was the oldest son of Iain 'Fraingeach' MacDonald and Mary, daughter of Archibald MacDonell of Barisdale. Mary was sister to Coll, the last laird of Barisdale, according to Tearlach MacFarlane of Glenfinnan. I believe him, although she is not mentioned in Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, 'Minor Highland Septs – the MacDonells of Barisdale', *TGSI*, xiii (1886-7), 84-82. Her father Archibald Barisdale was imprisoned twice after Culloden, first in France then nine years in Edinburgh. After release he lived with his family at Inverie and died about 1790.

Archie Rhu's paternal grandfather was Angus MacDonald of Borrodale, who was the second son of John IV of Glenalladale. The MacDonalds of Rhu have a section in Iain MacKay's 'Clanranald's Tacksmen of the late 18th Century', *TGSI*, xlv (1964) pp. 76-79. In 1775 Iain Fraingeach added to his farm of Dubhchamus and Torrbeithe 'the greater part of Rudh' Arasaig'. His droving included cattle from the Small Isles, so that Archie's Rhu hospitality as described in *Moidart; Or Among the Clanranalds* was a continuation of his father's business arrangements. Iain planted daffodils from the Channel Islands as well as apple trees. Rhue House, having passed from MacDonald to MacVarish, is now in the best of order thanks to Lesley MacEachan and her husband Jeremy Benfield.

Iain Fraingeach died shortly before 1800. Archie Rhu married Ann, daughter of John McGregor of Corriearklet west of Loch Katrine. Her sister Catherine McGregor became the wife of Alasdair 'an Oir' MacDonald X of Glenalladale, and their only son built the Glenfinnan Monument. (He was a rake who died young. His illegitimate son farmed sheep at Meoble in the 1840s.) Ann McGregor is described as a half-sister of the ferocious Jacobite Raonal Mor a Chrolen in Fraser-Mackintosh, *Antiquarian Notes* (Second Series, 1897), 156. This is Ranald of Crowlin (sometimes called after his neighbouring property of Scammadale) in Knoydart, who is fully described in *Moidart*.

Archie continued as a cattle farmer on the Rhu peninsula and also leased Glenalladale for sheep: his manager was the father of the Rev. Duncan Black Blair, Gaelic scholar and minister of Barney's River in Nova Scotia. Archie inherited the Loch Shiel estate from his uncle Alasdair an Oir and with it the house of Dalilea, but remained at Rhu House. John MacDonald of Borrodale also moved over to sheep farming in a big way, and was teased for it by his cousin Captain John Glenalladale writing from North America: 'I also knew a time when the spirited Highland race would consider themselves unmanned forever by taking a tabban of wool in their hands.'

MacKay devotes a separate section (pp. 63-69) to the MacDonalds of Dalilea. Alexander MacDonald, son of Allan (who was nephew to Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair) succeeded to Dalilea in 1790. He was the banker of the cattle-dealing MacDonalds and lived, strategically, at Callendar. He built the present Dalilea House, incorporating some of the old building. Alexander's brother Angus, known as Aonghas Cinn a' Chreagain, lived at Kincreggan, otherwise Inverailort Castle, as a subtenant of Colin MacDonald of Boisdale. Colin was the South Uist 'apostate' and persecuting landlord who was the cause of Catholics leaving the island with John MacDonald of Glenalladale's 1772 emigration to Prince Edward Island. Alexander the Banker died about 1830 without a son (there were three daughters) and he is buried on Eilean Fhianain. [More than half of MacKay's Dalilea section is about the descendants of Alasdair the Bard. He died at Sanndaig in Rhu and was buried at Kilmory, Arisaig.]

Archie Rhu stood up to Ranald George MacDonald of Clanranald, the spendthrift superior who was (as the Banker put it) 'very coolly and quietly playing the Devil in London.' In a letter of 1823 Archie discussed 'a rumour through the County that Clan is to deprive us of the Chaple. . . I am quite distressed at the idea and to crown the business they say we will not even get the old house. I am very willing to keep possession even by the strong hand until we are otherways accommodated.' Clanranald did not persist in his eviction plan, but never finished the chapel which he had paid to have erected in Arisaig village. In 1840 the priest William McIntosh said the building was only fit to be pulled down, but it still serves the Presbyterians of the area, facing

the other way. The 'old house', also still in use, became an SPCK school for the Society for the Promotion of (Protestant) Christian Knowledge.

MacKay finishes with a pleasing image (to confirm the idea of the convivial host at Rhu House, and the peacemaker who danced on the table at Portree) of Archie putting down his pen 'with two nightcaps on my head'. The date was 30 December, so close to Hogmanay, and he was heading for bed, in MacKay's phrase, 'with two good drams in him'. He is buried on Eilean Fhianain. In fact Archie Rhu was first buried at Arisaig in 1828 and reburied on the Green Isle after 'the rest of the family came over to Moidart and took possession of Dalilea.' MacDonalld, *Moidart*, p. 260 – or p. 218 in the 1997 edition brought out by Birlinn and edited by John Watts. This has useful notes and family trees, although the Borrodale one mentions only the heir of Rhu and Lochshiel.

Archie and Mary's oldest son Alexander is mentioned in Fraser-Mackintosh, *Antiquarian Notes*, p. 158, in connection with a near fatal accident of 1815: 'It was on his way to attend Ranald [of Crowlin/Scammadale]'s funeral that the late Lochshiel (Alexander, nephew of Ranald) was nearly lost off the coast of Morar. The boat was struck by a sudden squall, capsized and, filling rapidly, went down, the whole crew, three in number, going down with it. It was almost by a miracle that the survivor after a hard struggle reached the shore, but throughout the rest of his life, which was a long one, he never fully recovered from the effects of the shock received in this lamentable occasion.' That funeral was in 1815. Described by the Rev. Charles MacDonalld as lacking 'the business habits of his father', Alexander finally sold the Lochshiel estate to James Hope-Scott of Abbotsford in 1855.

Alexander Lochshiel (who never married) would have been hard pressed to find a businesslike solution to an incursion of evicted tenants from Rhu, followed by the potato blight which brought starvation to Moidart, and finally the emigration of many to Geelong in South Australia. His brother Gregor and his sister Ann Isabella were both involved in the Rhu evictions (below) and there was a third brother, Dr Coll, who lived at Dalilea and practised medicine in Moidart. The only brother (in an otherwise unidentified 'large family of sons and daughters') who married was John, 'who was an officer in the British army, and who went through the whole of the Peninsular War. . . He died at Gibraltar without leaving any surviving issue.' – *Moidart*, Watts, p. 218.

Ann Isabella married Lt. Col. Donald MacDonell, a younger son of Scotus in Knoydart, and it is from their oldest son Eneas Ranald MacDonell (who bought the Morar estate in 1857, taking up residence in the house at Traigh where he was born) that we hear about the Rhu evictions, first in his evidence to the 1883 Napier Commission at p. 2107: 'In Lord Cranstoun's time the first [Rhu] clearances commenced in this country, and I was then a young boy almost; but I shall never forget the feelings of awe and fear that came over the people of the country when the last occurred. All parties felt it, and my mother, who then had the farm of Traigh on South Morar, in her commiseration for

some of the families, gave up Traigh for a year or two until they could get an opening.' MacKay confirms this at p. 77: Fraser-Mackintosh visited Morar in 1849 and 'saw there the small tenants of Rhue Arisaig camping around Traigh House.' When Ann's son was laird of Morar in 1861, there were 261 people living in Bunnacaimbe, Traigh and Cross, including seventeen unmarried servants (indoor and out) in 24-roomed Morar House. The MacDonell family lived mostly at 37 York Place in Edinburgh, where Eneas styled himself 'Advocate (not in practice) and Landholder'. He gave a fuller account to the Deer Forest Commission of 1892 (p. 1228) when he argued that the new owners of Arisaig should bring crofters back to Rhu. Eneas described his family's involvement:

'First I should mention that these people occupied Rhu as cottars, and they had land for which they apparently paid no rent, but worked the land, of which Mr Macdonald of Rudha cropped a portion. They paid rent for grazing, a small nominal sum, and he himself paid a very small rental to the then proprietor, Macdonald of Clanranald. . . But it so came to pass that in Lord Cranston's time my uncle, Gregor Macdonald, who then occupied Rudha, had to give a large increase of rent, or be quit of it. Well, he could not under the old system on which he held it afford to give more rent; the consequence was that the farm was taken over him; and the cruel thing was, that he was obliged to remove all the subtenants upon it who had been there for generations before him or his ancestors. The only thing that he could do was to get his brother Macdonald of Loch Shiel to take the people over to Loch Shiel in Moidart.' Gregor MacDonald did not keep the best of health. In a letter of 29 November 1840 the Rev. William McIntosh told Bishop Scott that his acquaintances and friends in Arisaig were all well 'except Gregor Rhue who is suffering under a severe and, I am afraid, dangerous attack of rheumatism.'

Eneas MacDonell (who bought the Morar estate in 1857 and sold it in 1878 except for the 70 acres of Camusdarach) asked Bishop Murdoch to allow Moidart's priest, Ranald Rankine, to leave with his people. The letter from Morar House (Traigh) on 26 July 1851, deserves to be quoted at length: 'I received a letter from the Revd. Mr Rankine of Moidart some days ago requesting that I would expose to your Lordship the deplorable conditions of the population under his ministration, and impress the urgent necessity for a considerable emigration to Upper Canada as the only probable means of preserving human life threatened by famine and want in that impoverished and overpopulated district of the Highlands.' Glengarry County on the Ottawa River had been settled by West Highlanders, but in the event the distressed Moidart people (including some, no doubt, from Rhu) went to South Australia.

'When I tell your Lordship that the entire crop upon which the people depended failed in a most melancholy and complete manner last autumn, that there are no resources in the District to feed the population, that remunerative occupation is not to be constantly obtained, that there is not sufficient arable

land to support so large a population, that for these and many other reasons it is evident that emigration alone is the only remedy in the present situation of the Highlands. The accounts that have been sent home by a few families who emigrated to Upper Canada last summer are in the highest degree satisfactory. Plenty and industry is there instead of poverty and idleness at home. There are several families at this moment anxious to follow there if they had the means. There are many also who would cheerfully emigrate if there were any one to head them in whom they had confidence.' Ranald Rankine, the popular and hard-working priest of Moidart was eventually given permission to follow those of his people who went to Australia, but it took an appeal from the Papal Nuncio in Britain.

'In their depressed and impoverished condition, there is a great deal of moral indifference which an improved state would tend to enliven by gratitude to God and the education of their children.' This is reminiscent of the Rev. Charles MacDonald's later account of the whisky smuggling era: 'The effects on the character of the people may be judged from the fact, that on Sundays, when coming to church, it was not an unusual practice for some of the congregations to bring bottles of whiskey with them, which they drank, in small groups, while sitting outside waiting for the service to begin. . .' As emigrants, 'many of them had not the moral courage to shake off certain habits which the smuggling days had instilled, and continuing to indulge these under the burning climate of Australia proved a deplorable bar to any real improvement.'

Eneas MacDonell had just passed at the bar as an advocate (Edinburgh's equivalent of a barrister) at the time of writing this letter. He later told the 1892 Commissioners: 'It is a source of grief to me that I had anything to do with that emigration. . . God knows, I cannot understand how it could have been averted.' MacDonell provided the names of twelve settlements in the Rhu known to his uncle, grandfather and (no doubt) great-grandfather Iain Fraingeach: Dubh-chamus, Rhu, Tirnadrish, Torbae, Rhubrec, Tormor, Rhumoch, Claggan, Portavullin, Bal-ur, Ardgaserie and Achagarrailt. Tirnadrish or Doire na Drise is the most easily identifiable site today. Sanndaig, where the MacDonald bard Alasdair Mac Mhaistir Alasdair lived in old age, was not part of the Rhu farm.

MacDonell also passed on names of thirty-seven heads of family in four of the townships from his grandfather's rental book. In 1794 *Ardgaserich* had twelve households sharing the names Mackinnon, Macinnes, Macintyre, Maccormack, Macdonald and Macvarish. *Torbea's* four were Smith, Macdonald, Mackinnon and Macisaac. Ten cottars at *Dubh-chamus* all had different surnames: Kinnaird, Macisaac, Mackellaig, Macfarlane, Macdonald, Maceachan, Grant, Mackinnon, Macpherson and Maclean. Finally eleven family heads at *Rudha* were named either Macdonald, Macinnes, Mackinnon, Maccormack, Smith, Macfarlane, Gillies, Macleod or Maceachan. Family

members, from children to dotards, would have been known by first name, by-name and lineage by Archie Rhu.

Lord Cranstoun features in my paper (published in the Spring 2004 issue of *Recusant History*) 'Education and Faith in the Catholic Highlands of Scotland'. When the Arisaig estate came into new ownership in the 1830s, the Rev. William McIntosh sought to obtain advantage. On 26 August 1841 he wrote to Bishop Andrew Scott in Greenock: 'Lord Cranstoun is to give the feu of the chapel, but there is a proposal just now, to which he is inclined to listen in order to get rid of the expences of the parson's house and school house, and that is that we purchase both these houses with an acre of land. Would you be willing to give £300 or thereabouts for all, besides 7/- yearly feu duty?' Scott promptly agreed, and on 26 November told his other vicar general (the Rev. John Chisholm in South Uist) that the matter was settled. The question had been under discussion since 1839, however, and McIntosh expressed the problem in metaphor: 'We have sad work keeping his Lordship on his horse just now.' Clanranald's successor had learned that his intention to sell the buildings was controversial: 'Very serious accusations have been lodged against us collectively and individually so that we are becoming every day more anxious about the feu. We are surrounded by bitter and bigotted and unprincipled enemies.' As a result, McIntosh's tenure over his house and land at Keppoch, outside the village, was under threat.

Bishop Scott looked to the future: 'The Minister must remove at Whitesunday first and give up his manse to the priest. To prevent too great an eclat I mean to let the School and Schoolhouse to the present Teacher for a trifling rent on condition that he does not interfere in the slightest degree with the Religious principles of the Catholic children or oblige them to learn anything by heart in the school which the Catholic Clergyman does not approve of. The purchase is making at present some noise among the Bigots and will no doubt irritate the Ministers a good deal. But it renders for ever the Catholic Clergyman at Arisaig independent of any Landlord. He might to be sure deprive him of a small farm but he could never deprive him of his Chapel or of his House or School or School House or of his garden behind them. Would to god we could get such permanent situations in every mission we have in the Highlands. Arisaig, Glencoe, Fort William and Glengarry are now secured for ever, and so I hope North Morar will be.'

Lord Cranstoun's hold on Arisaig was brief, however, and he sold the estate to George Mackay of Bighouse on the Pentland Firth. (There is a further local connection in that Mackay's daughter Louisa Campbell Christian was the first wife of Duncan Cameron of Inverailort, the son of Sir Alexander.) McIntosh's consternation was palpable: 'You must have seen in the public papers that Arisaig is to be let to the highest bidder. But that is not all. Lord Cranstoun in a letter to Glenaladale, which arrived this day, has declared that

he wishes and desires to annul the whole transaction relating to the feu and has insinuated that he was imposed upon regarding it. . . In the event then that this design be persisted in, am I to keep violent possession of my farm of Keppoch? . . . There never was such a consternation in Arisaig. That God may avert the impending danger we beg your earnest supplications, and also [that] those of your neighbouring clergy may be offered up, at this time of mercy, to the throne of grace.' Masses offered in the Glasgow area would be more effective, McIntosh believed, during the fasting weeks of Lent. The vicar general ended with a formal statement of obedience, followed by a shrewd afterthought (changed handwriting) from the man of action: 'In the midst of my afflictions you will not withdraw your consoling advice, and whatever you recommend will be implicitly obeyed by your Lordship's humble and obt. Servant in Christ. P.S. Query: Would it not be better to give up the houses on condition he granted a feu on the chapel alone, or even a feu elsewhere, say on the farm at Keppoch?'

The latter possibility duly came into effect. It was on Keppoch land, north of the village, that an imposing church rose beside the ruined chapel of St Malrubha and was opened in 1849. Twenty years later McIntosh set up beside it 'a commodious School and Schoolmaster's house', leaving a few children to be educated in the principles of the Shorter Catechism. By 1891 the average attendance at Arisaig's village school had fallen to nine, with accommodation for 68, while 53 attended the school in the grounds of the Catholic church. In modern times the two schools have become one in a new building, but a press report of the early 20th century underlines the segregated nature of schooling in Arisaig: 'Monday was held throughout Arisaig and district as Empire Day. Through the kindness of Mr Nicholson of Arisaig, permanent flag-staffs reaching to a height of about 36 feet, with Union Jacks and tackle, were erected respectively in the vicinity of both the Catholic and Protestant schools.'

Partly because I was under the mistaken impression that the sale of Arisaig to Mackay of Bighouse took place in 1842, the following letter from Lord Cranstoun to Sir Alexander Cameron, dated at Arisaig 17 September 1845, is very helpful. It shows Cranstoun on the point of departure for Oban by the steamer which called at Dubhchamus in Rhu – apparently for the last time:

My dear General

I must write and say goodbye to you as I have been prevented by the weather from coming up as I intended to say goodbye in propria persona [in person]. I must thank you for the kind and liberal manner in which you assisted me in providing for some of the poor at our late meeting at the Inn of Arisaig. And I am sure that at any future meetings convened for the purposes of taking into consideration the system to be adopted for permanently providing for the poor of the Parish you will be good enough to state my views

which are that each proprietor should be charged with the care of the poor on his own estate. I have made [the Rev.?] McCallum my representative during my absence to vote according to this opinion but I think he will be all the better for your support. I was sorry to hear the other day that you were not quite as well as usual – a slight attack of cold I heard. I hope you are all right again now.

Believe me my dear General
Very Sincerely Yours
Cranstoun

Sir Alexander died in 1850 at the age of 72. It is not known whether his son Duncan Cameron of Inverailort renewed the lease of Rhu Farm in Arisaig. By 1892 it had been a deer forest some time, and was probably turned into one soon after the Lancashire colliery owner Frederick Dukinfield Astley became the owner of Arisaig, George Mackay of Bighouse having quickly sold on.