

FROM CLANSHIP TO CROFTING: LANDOWNERSHIP, ECONOMY AND THE CHURCH IN THE PROVINCE OF STRATHNAVER

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INTRODUCTION

The history of Strathnaver from the period of the clans to the Clearances is the subject of the late Ian Grimble's well-known trilogy, *Chief of Mackay*, *The World of Rob Donn*, and *The Trial of Patrick Sellar*.¹ This study, which is intended to supplement Grimble's work, explores a number of topics grouped under the broad headings of:

- * landownership
- * economy
- * the church.

The process whereby, over a period of two hundred years, the house of Mackay was supplanted by the Sutherland interest, is central to the history of landownership in the north. However, the landed families were also deeply concerned with their status, standard of living and frequently their financial survival. Landlords were pivotal to the functioning of the Highland economy, although important roles were also played by the middlemen, the tacksmen, and the small but significant numbers of merchants. The central section of this essay deals with the main elements of the economy and aspects of landholding including the establishment of crofting and the impact of the clearances. The final section, a brief history of the church, examines the impact of the Reformation, the evolution of the parish structure, education, the role of the ministers in the clearances and the rise of evangelical presbyterianism.

The study is intended to be read in conjunction not only with Grimble's works but also with the Rev Angus Mackay's *The Book of Mackay*, which contains a good deal of basic genealogical information and valuable material on the general historical background.² As will be apparent, there is considerable scope for more detailed research on the various Mackay families and subjects such as kelp manufacture, fishing and the clearances.

There is a distinction to be made between the province of Strathnaver (which, at its widest extent, reached from the border with Caithness to the bounds of Assynt on the west), and the valley of the Naver. As befits modern usage, the former is referred to as the province of Strathnaver, while the latter is Strathnaver.

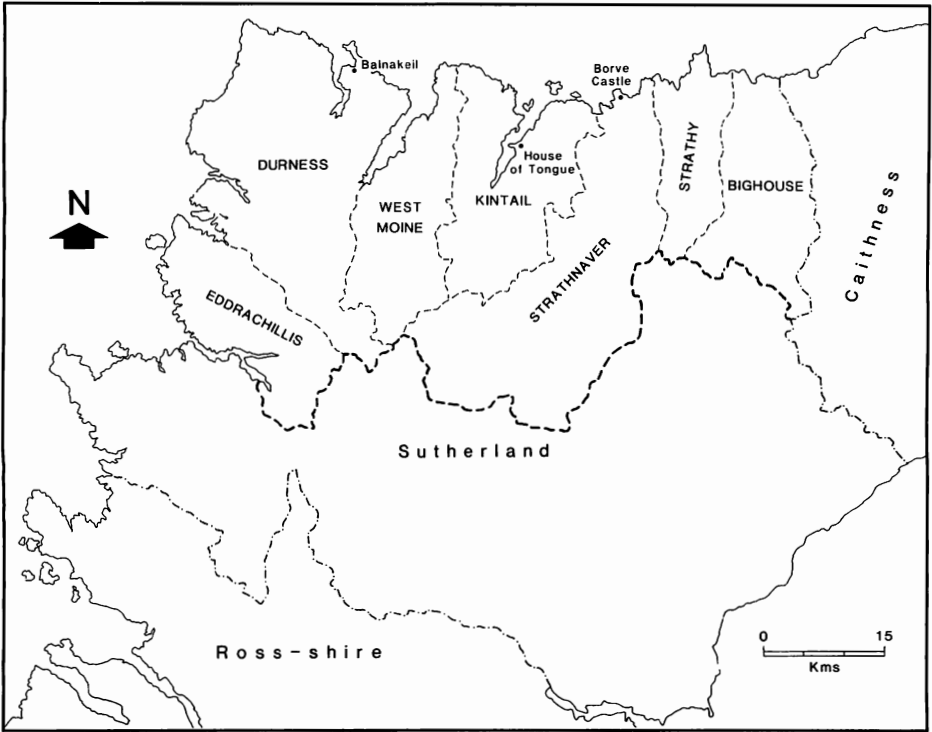


Fig. 4.1 Territorial divisions of the province of Strathnaver.

LANDOWNERSHIP

Origins of the Mackays and the Province of Strathnaver

The name Mackay derives from the Gaelic *Mac Aoidh* meaning son of Aodh. However the identity of Aodh, the eponymous ancestor of the Mackays is not known. It is generally stated that the clan came from Moray and was descended from the royal house of Moray which was driven out by the Scottish kings in the 12th century.³ The Mackays may have found protection in the north because of links between Moray and the Norse earldom of Caithness which included Caithness, Sutherland and the province of Strathnaver (see Crawford, this volume), although tradition asserts that the Mackays forcibly took possession from the Norse.⁴ The Moray origin is plausible although it is not supported by any documentation or early clan genealogy.

The first possible appearance of the Mackays in the documentary record

is a reference to one 'Iver MacEothe' who witnessed a charter of the Earl of Caithness in the late 13th century.⁵ Laying this aside, the first unequivocal reference is to Angus Mackay of Strathnaver in 1415. It is unclear, however, what the geographical extent of this 'Strathnaver' was; it may well have been limited to the area around Tongue and the valley of the Naver, and thus have been equivalent to the later parishes of Tongue and Farr. The wider province of Strathnaver which was to become associated with the clan was made up of a number of territories, Strathnaver, Kintail and West Moine, Durness, Eddrachillis and Strath Halladale [Fig. 4.1], each of which had its own history of landownership.

Strathnaver

In the 13th century, Strathnaver was in the possession of Lady Joanna, who also held half of the earldom of Caithness and was the wife of Freskin de Moravia, the nephew of William, the first earl of Sutherland. Joanna gifted upper Strathnaver to the Church of Moray which took the sensible course of feuing the lands while retaining the superiority.⁶ In the mid-14th century the lands of upper Strathnaver formed part of the holdings of the great Reginald Cheyne, or *Morar na Schein*.⁷ It is not known who owned Strathnaver between Cheyne and Angus Mackay in 1415.⁸ The Mackay stronghold was at Castle Borve (also known as Castle Farr) [Fig. 4.2].

Kintail and West Moine

Nothing is known of the landholding history of the districts of Kintail, the area on both sides of the Kyle of Tongue, and of West Moine (the lands on the east shore of Loch Eriboll). It may be assumed that they were among the earliest possessions of the Mackays. The stronghold at Tongue is first recorded in the late 16th century.

Durness

The district of Durness, between Loch Eriboll and Loch Laxford, belonged to the bishops of Caithness. There is no record as to when these lands were acquired by the church although the 17th-century historian of the house of Sutherland, Sir Robert Gordon, asserted that they were granted by Alexander III (1249-86) to Bishop Gilbert.⁹ The possibility that the lands were attached to an earlier Celtic monastery cannot be ruled out.¹⁰ It is likely that most of the district was let to tenants, probably Mackays. The castle at Balnakeil is traditionally held to have been a summer residence of the bishops of Caithness who may also have owned Castle Varrich [Fig. 4.3], which has no definite association with the Mackays and was situated on the churchlands of Ribigill.¹¹ At the time of the Reformation, Durness passed to the earls of Sutherland, and the Mackays were eventually confirmed as their feudal vassals.



Fig. 4.2 Castle Borve, near Farr.

Fig. 4.3 Castle Bharraich, a late medieval stronghold on the churchlands of Ribigill.



Eddrachillis

The lands of Eddrachillis reached from the River Laxford to Loch Glencoul on the borders of Assynt and appear to have formed part of the barony of Skelbo, owned by the Kinnairds as vassals of the earls of Sutherland. Whether Eddrachillis was part of the grant of Skelbo, Ferenbeuthlin in Creich and other unspecified lands to the west made by Hugh Freskin to Gilbert archdeacon of Moray in 1212 x 1214, is not clear.¹² Certainly Sir Robert Gordon and 19th-century historians friendly to the house of Sutherland were prepared to assert that Eddrachillis was formerly part of the parish of Lairg.¹³

In 1515 Kinnaird granted the lands to Mackay; a transfer which may have recognised Mackay claims to Eddrachillis. During the 16th century the lands were possessed by the MacLeods of Eddrachillis, a branch of the MacLeods of Lewis. Kinnaird's grant to the Mackays may, therefore, have been to further their claims against the MacLeods whom they were eventually able to oust (there were, however, MacLeod wadsetters in the province of Strathnaver until the late 17th century).¹⁴ Mackay ownership of Eddrachillis became absolute: a claim to the superiority of Eddrachillis by Sir Robert Gordon was unsuccessful.

Strath Halladale

Strath Halladale appears to have been held by the earls of Caithness and was probably acquired by the earls of Ross when they took control of Caithness in the mid-14th century. Through whatever route, Donald Lord of the Isles appears to have inherited rights to Strath Halladale because in 1415 he granted a charter of Strath Halladale and part of Creich to his brother-in-law, Angus Mackay of Strathnaver, and Neil his eldest son. The lands were possessed by Angus's cousin, Thomas Neilson Mackay, but were forfeited after he killed Mowat of Freswick in the chapel of St Duthac in Tain. Thomas Neilson was captured by his brothers, Morgan and Niel, at the instigation of their father-in-law, Angus Moray of Culbin. In 1430, as a reward for their service, James I granted the lands of 'Galvale and Balehegliss' (Golval and what is now Kirkton) to Morgan Mackay, and Spinningdale (in the parish of Creich), 'Byghosse', the two 'Tronculis' and the two 'Forssis' (Forsinain and Forsinard) to Angus Moray.¹⁵ Lower Strath Halladale was thus in the hands of the Mackays, while upper Strath Halladale was owned by the Morays.

However, in 1467 John earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles granted Strath Halladale to his brother, Celestine of Lochalsh. With presumably this in mind, it has been suggested that Strath Halladale became part of the Mackay lands at the turn of the 16th century. The grant appears, though, to have been ineffective as the Murrays of Spinningdale, who were descended from Angus Moray of Culbin, continued to possess their share of the lands and in 1579 obtained a decret against Donald McAngus McAlester of Glengarry as nearest heir to the family of Lochalsh. Disputes arose between the Murrays

and the Mackays which eventually led to the Mackay take-over of the whole of Strath Halladale and the establishment of the Mackays of Bighouse (see below; also Beaton, this volume).¹⁶

The Possessions of the Beatons of Melness

Mention must also be made of the landholdings of the Beatons of Melness, a branch of the renowned Gaelic kindred of physicians, who were given lands in Strathnaver as a reward for their faithful service to the Crown.¹⁷

In 1379, Robert II confirmed a grant of the lands of Melness and Hope by his son Alexander Stewart, Lord of Badenoch, to Fearchar 'Leich'; and in 1386, Fearchar received a grant from the king himself of the Little Isles of Strathnaver¹⁸ [Figs. 4.4; 4.5]. By the end of the 15th century the islands were apparently in the hands of the Mackays, and in 1511 Donald, son of Duncan of Melness, granted the lands of Melness and Hope to Aodh Mackay.¹⁹ Sir Donald Mackay of Strathnaver formally purchased the Little Isles from William Macallan in Tongue in 1624.²⁰ Traditions relating to Fearchar may still be heard around Melness²¹ (see Beith, this volume).

Mackays of Strathnaver

In 1539, Donald Mackay of Strathnaver received from James V a charter of his lands in Sutherland including of the lands between Eriboll and Strathy: all were included within the barony of Farr.²² The following year, Bishop Andrew of Caithness granted a charter to Donald of the churchlands of Durness, Ribigill and Skail, giving ownership of lands which the Mackays may well have possessed as the bishop's tenants.²³ The Mackays now had rights to lands from Dirlot in Caithness to the borders of Assynt on the west coast. However, the grant of Durness was to bring the clan into the extraordinary feuds between the Earls of Sutherland and Caithness in which they were to be a lesser but by no means an insignificant power. In 1544, when Bishop Andrew's successor, Robert Stewart, was absent, Donald and the Earl of Caithness seized the lands and rents of the bishopric. However, the Earls of Sutherland and Huntly intervened and restored the lands to Bishop Robert.²⁴ In 1559, Durness was included in the disposition of church lands in Caithness and Sutherland made by the bishop to the Earl of Sutherland on the eve of the Reformation.

The death of Donald in 1550 was the cause of further trouble. Despite the fact that he had been legitimated many years previously there apparently remained room for doubt and, on the grounds that he died without lawful heirs, Queen Mary granted the lands of Strathnaver to Robert Reid, the reforming bishop of Orkney.²⁵ Reid, who gave Donald's son, Aodh a title to his lands, may have wished to protect Strathnaver from the Gordon interest. However, the disputes between Sutherland and the Mackays continued, and when Aodh failed to appear before the Queen Regent, the Earl of Sutherland



Fig. 4.4 Eilean nan Ròn, from Farr, across Torrisdale Bay.

Fig. 4.5 Melness across the Kyle of Tongue.



was given a commission to proceed against him. In 1555, the Earl led a major expedition into Strathnaver, during which he besieged, captured and destroyed Castle Borge [Fig. 4.2]. Four years later, the Queen gave Strathnaver to the Earl of Huntly to whom Aodh submitted as his feudal vassal in 1570.²⁶

Hugh or Uisdean Mackay [Fig. 4.6] was faced with a difficult situation when he succeeded his father, Aodh in 1572: not only was he a minor but his elder brothers were the offspring of an irregular marriage. Furthermore the Abrach Mackays had effectively deserted their chief and fought for the Earl of Sutherland against the Gunns, their neighbours in the heights of Sutherland with whom they may well have had march disputes. In 1583, the Earl of Sutherland was given the superiority of Farr by Earl of Huntly. The Earl was thus feudal superior of both the former church lands of Durness and the remainder of Hugh's possessions. In 1588, Hugh, faced with an alliance between the Earls of Caithness and Sutherland, and as yet without a title to his lands, made his feudal submission to the Earl of Sutherland. The terms were complex and were significantly amended by a further agreement made the following year, when Hugh recognised the Earl as his feudal superior and was given the Earl's daughter in marriage. The Earl, on the other hand, remained entitled to pursue for substantial arrears of feu duty for which Hugh appears to have granted security over the lands of West Moine.²⁷

The Earl of Sutherland had indeed acquired a 'private army of Gaels' to use against the Earl of Caithness.²⁸ On the other hand, the Mackays continued in possession of the churchlands of Durness (which had been included within the earldom of Sutherland in 1601) and eventually, in about 1613, the Earl of Sutherland feued the lands to Hugh in return for his service to the family of Sutherland. The Earls of Sutherland continued as feudal superiors of Durness, known as the 'barony of Ardurness', with the Mackays holding the lands as their feudal vassals. In the meantime, Hugh had, in 1605, granted a wadset of the lands between Kylesku and Kinlochbervie, and also Eriboll, to his elder half brother, Donald.²⁹ Hugh and his son Donald granted another wadset to Murdoch Neilson of the Abrach Mackays in 1613 for £1,000 over the lands of Lochnaver. Whether these grants were in recognition of past claims or in return for financial help is not known. However, the grant to Murdoch Neilson was the first of various agreements which Hugh and Donald made with the Abrach Mackays and appears to qualify the assertion that Hugh failed to accommodate this branch of the clan.³⁰

Hugh was succeeded in 1614 by his son Donald, who had already married Barbara, daughter of Lord Mackenzie of Kintail and was thus related to two of the most powerful families in the north, the Mackenzies and the Gordons. Donald was knighted in 1616 through the influence of his uncle, Sir Robert Gordon, a very able man with access to the King. Sir Robert was tutor to the Earl of Sutherland and aimed to use his nephew as vassal to the house of Sutherland in its dealings with the Earl of Caithness. However, Sir Donald was, in Sir Robert's own words, 'a gentleman of a stirring spirit'. He had inherited something from his mother's family – as he said to his uncle,

he was 'an imp of that same stock' – and he grew to mistrust Sir Robert.

With rising expenditure and the burden of past claims on the estate, Sir Donald was soon hard put to meet his obligations. His wife's uncle, Sir Rorie Mackenzie of Coigach, was a cautioner in a bond of 5,000 merks granted in 1617 to Sir Robert Bruce of Clackmannan. Sir Rorie evidently settled the debt, but Sir Donald was unable to repay him and by the following year was trying to satisfy Sir Rorie by selling him Eddrachillis. However, although Sir Donald's nephew resigned his wadset of the lands, the sale did not go through.³¹ Sir Donald may have been counselled against the loss of part of the Mackay lands to another 'clan'; there was to be no such hesitation over handing over a part of the estate to his younger brother, John. In 1618 Sir Donald had granted a bond of £50,000 Scots to John, presumably in satisfaction of whatever provision their father had made. When payment was not forthcoming, John brought an inhibition against his brother and was given the lands of Dirlot in Caithness and Strathy in Sutherland.³²

Despite these difficulties, Sir Donald was clearly intent on territorial expansion, and in 1624 purchased the estate of Reay in Caithness from Lord Forbes.³³ The acquisition may have been paid for by the large loan which Sir Donald obtained from Mackenzie of Coigach and for which a number of Sutherland landowners acted as cautioners, including John Munro of Obsdale, Robert Munro of Assynt, Gilbert Gray of Swordale and John Gordon of Embo. Sir Donald, along with several leading Mackay families, granted them bonds of relief, thus relieving their neighbours of their cautionry.³⁴ The following year Sir Donald acquired the Little Isles of Strathnaver (see above). Sir Donald enjoyed strong support from the Mackay gentry and every effort was made to preserve unity within the clan. In 1621, a dispute which arose between Sir Donald and William Mackay alias Neilson, wadsetter of Achness and a leading member of the Abrach Mackays over some salmon fishings, threatened to get out of hand. On examination, 'diverse and sundrie calumnious and evill reports' were found to have been 'maliciose lies falslie inventit be weeked and evill dispoisit persones'. The parties came to an agreement whereby William undertook to 'love & s[e]rve ... Sir donald his cheife dureing all the dayis of his lyftyme as ane trustie & faithfull kinsman ought to doe his cheife', and Sir Donald in turn bound himself 'to discharge the duetie of ane cheife'. Even this did not bring hostilities to a close, for in 1623 William signed a bond of lawburrows in the presence of Kintail not to harm Sir Donald. The following year, however, William renounced all claim to the salmon fishings and there the matter appears to have ended.³⁵

In 1626, Sir Donald took the major step of raising, under a warrant from Charles I, a regiment to assist Count Mansfield in the Thirty Years War which was then raging in Europe. It was an opportunity to enhance his prestige and Sir Donald may have harboured ambitions towards the earldom of Orkney. Mackay's regiment served with the Danish king, Christian IV, and in 1628 Sir Donald was rewarded by being created Lord Reay. Thus encouraged, he sent his regiment to serve under the renowned Gustavus Adolphus of

Sweden. It is doubtful whether the regiment was a profitable venture. Its raising had been accomplished by several loans. In September 1626 an arrangement was entered into with Mackay's brother-in-law, Colin Earl of Seaforth, whereby Seaforth paid a total of 7,000 merks to satisfy the claims of an Edinburgh merchant and of Robert Munro, minister of Durness.³⁶ Wadsets were also granted to Duncan Forbes, provost of Inverness, (the lands were rented back to Mackay),³⁷ to Robert Farquhar, burgess of Aberdeen for 18,800 merks³⁸ and also to James and William Corbat for 1,100 merks.³⁹ All of these loans were still outstanding after Lord Reay's own involvement with the regiment was over, and it is probable that Charles I never paid all of Lord Reay's claims.⁴⁰

Lord Reay returned north in 1632, not in the best of financial circumstances, and with the obligation to enter into a settlement with the Earl of Sutherland, who had not only attained his majority but had also managed to get Sutherland, including Strathnaver and Assynt, erected into a separate sheriffdom (it had previously been part of the sheriffdom of Inverness). Agreement was reached and the Earl, who continued to be guided by his uncle, Sir Robert, granted Lord Reay a feu charter of the lands of Durness in 1633. In recognition of his status as a vassal, Lord Reay bound himself to accompany the Earl of Sutherland to all Parliaments. It appears that the Earl's dubious claim to the superiority of Strathnaver itself was for the moment laid aside (it was to be eventually abandoned).⁴¹

The 1630s were to be a period of growing financial difficulty. In 1634, Lord Reay entered into several land transactions. Farquhar's wadset was repaid,⁴² but the lands of Eddrachillis were wadsetted to Hugh Mackay (then designed of Eriboll), founder of the Mackays of Scourie.⁴³ Of greater significance, however, was the sale of the lands of Lochnaver and part of Mudale which were possessed by the Abrach Mackays to Sir John Gordon of Embo, who also received a wadset right to the salmon fishings.⁴⁴ This was the first alienation of clan lands to the Gordons, although Lochnaver was on the southernmost boundary of Strathnaver and Embo had at one time fallen out with the Earl of Sutherland. Over the following years, several small loans were raised from minor members of the clan. In 1635, Lord Reay and John Munro, the minister at Reay, with Murdo Mckay alias Neilson of Growbmoir (an Abrach Mackay) and 'Dod Mckconill iein of Dauchow' as cautioners granted a bond for 1,000 merks to 'dod mckolekeane' from [Farr?].⁴⁵ The next year a wadset of Rossal was granted to Iver McConill Mcallaster in Achinduich and his son William McIver (later referred to as William Mckay Iverson) who were under pressure from the Murrays to relinquish their possessions in the parish of Creich.⁴⁶ In 1637, Lord Reay was forced into several drastic measures: part of Reay was sold to Innes of Sandside,⁴⁷ a wadset of 24,000 merks over Durness was granted to John Gray, the dean of Caithness⁴⁸ and a huge bond for 52,000 merks over much of Strathnaver was granted to the Earl of Sutherland.⁴⁹ Some of the proceeds would have gone to redeeming the wadset held by the Earl of Seaforth, another financially hard-pressed Highland landlord.⁵⁰ The following year,

one David Dunbar was given a wadset right to the lands of Invernaver, then in the Master of Reay's own possession, for a loan of 3,000 merks.⁵¹ Against this background, Lord Reay could not afford the action brought against him by Rachel Harrison, a lady with whom he had had an association prior to 1630 (not the first of a series of extramarital affairs).⁵² The Privy Council found, largely on the basis of a document which may have been forged by Sir Robert Gordon, that she had been Lord Reay's wife and was therefore entitled to a very substantial sum for her maintenance. In 1638, Lord Reay was outlawed for non-payment.⁵³ The only comfort was that Robert Munro of Achness, a friend of the Mackays, had acquired several of the outstanding debts and obtained an apprising against the estate, thus affording Lord Reay a measure of protection from his other creditors.

In a sense, the Scottish revolution and civil war came none too soon for the Mackays. Lord Reay signed the National Covenant but was soon identified as not being true to the cause and indeed the clan was to adhere to the Royalist side throughout the civil war. Their position was probably less a matter of loyalty to the King or indeed of religious conviction, but rather a consequence of their desperate financial situation and the claims of the Earl of Sutherland who was a Covenanter.⁵⁴ The 1640s and 1650s were extremely difficult for many Highland families, partly because of the cost and devastation of war, but also because of the opportunities for creditors to seize possession of estates. There appear to have been few debts incurred by Lord Reay which may be directly attributed to the war apart from a sum owing in 1639 to John Lindsay, a gunmaker in Montrose.⁵⁵ However, by 1642 Lord Reay's finances had reached a critical point and he was forced to negotiate a sale of part of Strathnaver to the Earl of Sutherland. The Earl had received no interest on Lord Reay's bond of 52,000 merks, nor had been given possession of any land. In return for the cancellation of the original loan and outstanding interest of 16,640 merks, and for a further sum of 40,000 merks which the Earl undertook to pay to various creditors, Lord Reay sold him Invernaver and Borgiebeg and those parts of upper Strathnaver between Mudale and Langwell on the west and between Rossal and Skelpick on the east. The Earl also undertook to pay all Lord Reay's creditors in Sutherland, dispensed with the requirement that Lord Reay accompany him to Parliament, and instructed his factor not to collect any tax from Lord Reay nor to prosecute for arrears of feu duty for Durness.⁵⁶

Survival depended upon keeping creditors at bay, and this required the full assistance of the clan gentry. In 1644, for instance, a group of leading men comprising the Master of Reay, John Mackay of Dirlet, William Mackay of Bighouse, Hugh Mackay of Scourie and Hector Monro of Eriboll granted a bond to Sir Robert Farquhar for one of Lord Reay's debts.⁵⁷ Farquhar was one of the merchants who provided substantial financial support to the Covenanters' cause and was responsible for tax raising in the north. He was also allied to the Sutherland interest; Sir Robert Gordon's eldest son married a daughter and co-heiress of Sir Robert Farquhar. The same year, the Master of Reay wadsetted the district of Oldshores to Robert

Munro of Achness in return for 12,000 merks; these lands were held by the Munros until 1678.⁵⁸

In December 1646, Lord Reay and the leading Mackays were summoned to appear before the Commissioners of the General Assembly 'To ansr for ther complyance with the rebels and for ther uther malignant carriage, and to reseave such censure as ther offences sallbe found to deserue.'⁵⁹ Their support for the Royalist cause did not waver, and Mackay foot were even present at the Battle of Worcester under the command of William Mackay of Borley, though few returned.⁶⁰ After the death of the first Lord Reay in 1649, his son took part in Pluscarden's rising which ended with his capture at Balvenie.⁶¹ Tongue House was garrisoned by the Commonwealth interest and creditors began to take action to seize possession of the estate.

In 1649, Robert Gray of Ballone obtained an apprising,⁶² and the following year another apprising was obtained by Farquhar. The latter's claim rested on two bonds dating from 1639 and 1644 which had been acquired by Sir Robert Gordon of Embo and then transferred to the Earl of Sutherland.⁶³ In 1653 Alexander Gray of Creich obtained a further apprising.⁶⁴ The Gray families in Sutherland appear to have been making the most of the opportunities offered by the civil war period and were taking advantage of the financial problems of other families. Ballone, who was a younger brother of Creich, was a commissioner and became collector of cess for most of the northern Highlands and Isles.⁶⁵ The Earl of Sutherland paid for Gray's legal processes against Lord Reay: this may have been because the Earl was superior but it may indicate a deeper motive.⁶⁶ As might be expected, several minor families which had provided Lord Reay with financial assistance also suffered in the process. For instance, Hugh Mackay of Scourie's help to Lord Reay in the 1630s led to an apprising against him by Robert Gray of Skibo in 1654.⁶⁷ On the other hand, creditors who obtained apprisings did not necessarily gain possession of their victim's estates, or attempt to collect any rents, even after being granted a charter. Indeed, contrary to Grimble's interpretation, Farquhar did not obtain actual possession of any part of the estate.⁶⁸ Sometimes, an appriser did take matters a step further. In 1656-57, Alexander Gray of Creich obtained legal powers to eject the tenants of Torrisdaile, Skerray Torrisdale and Borgiemore. It is, however, very unlikely that any of the tenants were turned out of their holdings, but they may have been persuaded to pay Gray some rents.⁶⁹

In the meantime, Lord Reay had participated in the royalist uprising in 1653 known as Glencairn's Rising. He surrendered in May 1655 but Tongue House was destroyed, either by Cromwellian troops or possibly by Lord Reay himself.⁷⁰ Lord Reay was in dire financial straits, and in 1658 he was forced to enter into another agreement with the Earl of Sutherland. In return for 41,660 merks which the Earl had paid to his Lordship or to his creditors (the most substantial being John Forbes of Culloden who received 22,000 merks), Lord Reay sold the Earl the salmon fishings of Naver and Torrisdale. Various financial claims between the parties were settled and they agreed not to trouble each other's tenants. On behalf of his 'hail freinds tennantes and

followers', Lord Reay also undertook not to take any action for all 'horses kowes or uyr bestiall receivit or uplifted' by the Earl's tenants and vassals. The sale, which was ratified in 1664, brought a considerable reduction in the long-running disputes over the lands of upper Strathnaver.⁷¹

Although the Restoration protected the Mackays from unscrupulous claimants, it was not as advantageous as the family may well have hoped. Charles II, in time honoured fashion, decreed that Lord Reay should have reparation for his losses from Robert Gray of Arkboll (formerly of Ballone). It is doubtful whether Gray had, as Grimble claimed, made a fortune between 1645 and 1655⁷² and it is clear that by the Restoration he was in no position to pay the claims of the Mackays. However, the more settled times in the north brought an improvement to the family's status. Lord Reay's wife, Barbara, the daughter of Mackay of Scourie, was 'a great historian, a smart poet, and, for virtue and house keeping, few or non her paralell.' In 1669 Lord Lovat paid a visit to Lord Reay who was then living at Durness. Lovat was entertained 'sometimes out at sea in berges afishing, sometimes haukeing and hunting, sometimes arching at buts and bowmarks, jumping, wrestling, dancing', and the visit culminated in a grand deer hunt in the Reay Forest. When Lovat left after over a month's stay Lord Reay gave him:

a curious, curled, black, shely horse, severall excellent firelocks, bowes, and a sword ... and two deer greyhounds. My Lady gifted him a plaid all of silk, party colloured, her own work, and a pair of truse of the same, neatly knit, and a dublet of needlework ... [Lord Reay conveyed Lord Lovat] out of his own bounds with twenty gentlemen in train, and set him on Sutherland ground.⁷³

It was all the more remarkable as an illustration of the lavish hospitality which had obtained in a rapidly disappearing age.

Not a great deal was done to clear the burdens on the estate, although at least one debt was bought up by some of the clan gentry.⁷⁴ The family was saved, however, by Sir George Munro of Culrain, Commander in Chief of the Army in Scotland, whose daughter Anne married Donald, Master of Reay in 1677. Sir George bought up many of the debts affecting the estate, including an apprising which an Edinburgh merchant had obtained against the estate a few years previously, reduced some of the more questionable debts, and established a new title to the lands in his own person which he later settled on his grandson, the future Lord Reay.⁷⁵ Sir George also negotiated new agreements with some of the wadsetters on the estate. In 1678 he came to an agreement with Hugh Munro, wadsetter of Eriboll, who had assisted in the purchase of an apprising three years earlier. Munro not only agreed to restrict the amount on his wadset to 10,000 merks, but also accepted a 400 merks augmentation of the rents and made a further loan of 4,000 merks to the Master of Reay in return for a ratification of his wadset right.⁷⁶ This assistance allowed Lord Reay to move back into Tongue House which had been rebuilt.⁷⁷ However, he had only been there a year or two, when firstly the Master was killed in a hunting accident and then Lord Reay

himself died. Fortunately, there was an heir, George who was brought up by his grandfather, Sir George Munro and then by Mackays in Holland. Their combined influences ensured that Lord Reay was to be a staunch presbyterian and supporter of the Government.

After returning from the continent the young Lord Reay stayed for a time at Balnakeil.⁷⁸ In 1701 Lord Reay settled with George Munro of Culrain for his father, Sir George Munro's, 'intromissions with the rents & duties of my lands & estate within the shyre of Sutherland & elsewhere'.⁷⁹ The following year he married Margaret, daughter of General Hugh Mackay of Scourie. Contrary to most accounts, Lord Reay did not acquire the lands of Scourie with this marriage. As will be recalled, these lands had been held on wadset and while Captain Hugh Mackay of Borley did, as eldest son of General Mackay, assign a claim on the lands to Lord Reay in 1703, the lands were immediately re-wadsetted to him and he took the designation of Scourie which he held until 1722.⁸⁰ Lord Reay's financial position continued to be a severe constraint. Indeed, his ambition to reacquire lands in the parish of Reay, no doubt with a view to restoring dignity to his title, was unfulfilled: the settling of long-overdue debts took priority.⁸¹ A third marriage in 1713 may or may not have improved the position, and at the time of the Jacobite Rebellion in 1715, his letters to the Duke of Atholl 'breathed financial embarrassment'.⁸² His loyalty to the Government was rewarded with a pension which the house of Reay was to enjoy until 1831.⁸³ The gift, however, was insufficient, and in 1718 Lord Reay sold the remaining coastal lands of Strathnaver, comprising Farr (except the lands of Ardbeg which were then occupied as a glebe), Swordly and Kirtomy, to the Earl of Sutherland.⁸⁴

The sale appears to have brought a degree of financial stability, and Lord Reay was able to take a more active approach to the development of the estate. The surroundings of Tongue House were embellished with a terrace and bowling green to the front and kitchen garden (re-established?) to the rear, plantations were created and a new house was built at Balnakeil incorporating the remains of the old castle.⁸⁵ Lord Reay was an active member of the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland. He wrote various communications on his experiments with sown grasses, inclosures and water meadows, and was latterly the Society's President.⁸⁶ He was also very supportive of the church in its efforts to bring presbyterian worship to the north of Sutherland (see below).

In 1732, on the marriage of his eldest son, Donald, Lord Reay executed a strict entail laying down the succession to the estate under certain conditions.⁸⁷ But the entail was never registered and when, in 1741, and 'Contrary to the inclinations of his friends', Donald took Christian the daughter of Sutherland of Pronsie as his second wife, it was surreptitiously cancelled. This, it was later alleged, was to allow Lord Reay to create fictitious votes to further his political opposition to the Earl of Sutherland within the county. However, it was probably also because Lord Reay was aware that his son was a very easy going person with little inclination for

business or estate management. A new deed was executed, whereby the estate was placed under the management of trustees who were to settle the 'great Burdens' affecting the estate and pay the provisions for the children. Donald, who had under the previous arrangements been promised a liferent right to the whole estate, was only to enjoy possession of part of the lands of Durness, including the house of Balnakeil.⁸⁸

The trust came into operation after Lord Reay's death in 1748. Donald found himself heavily dependent upon the generosity of the trustees, and with most of the estate let to his half brother, Hugh Mackay of Bighouse.⁸⁹ Donald's other half brothers, George and Alexander, were trustees and played an active part in the management of the estate. George had qualified as an advocate in 1737, obtained through political influence an army commission, and was MP for Sutherland from 1747 until 1761. He enjoyed an unofficial 'pension' of £300 during the 1750s, until given the office of Master of the Scottish Mint. He was initially designated 'of Strathmore' in virtue of a wadset right over those lands, but he later acquired the estate of Skibo in the parish of Dornoch.⁹⁰ Alexander enjoyed a successful army career, rising to Major General as well as becoming MP for Sutherland from 1761-1768 and for Tain burghs from 1768-1773.⁹¹ A clearance with the trustees in 1755 revealed that the debts on the estate then amounted to about £5,700, including £3,600 in the form of wadsets and £700 incurred by Donald's father. The trustees recommended to Lord Reay and leading Mackay gentry that a renewal of Bighouse's tack 'would lead to the Interest and advantage of the Family and Estate'. Bighouse was subsequently given a 15-year tack of the estate from 1756 at an annual rent of £390.⁹² Donald Lord Reay died in 1761 of, as Grimble plausibly suggests, syphilis; a condition which may well have affected the health of his offspring.

Donald's son and successor, George, an able but impatient and abrasive person, had already attempted to wrest control of the estate from the trustees. However, when Donald had died, the trustees had taken over the lands of Durness as well, and George 'became entirely dependent on these Trustees for any Support out of his own estate to himself his Lady or his Family'. He quickly came to the conclusion that the estate had been 'grossly abused' by the trustees, particularly his uncles, George and Alexander, 'two of the most artful interested and abandoned men that perhaps ever existed'. During the many years that the trust had been in existence, none of the family debts had been cleared off, the trustees had given 'uncommon nay unprecedented large discounts to Bighouse their darling Tacksman in open defiance of the trust ... and have also Lavished away Considerable sums'. Indeed, it was later estimated that the estate lost over £3,500 by virtue of Bighouse's tack, which had commenced in 1748 and subsisted until 1761. George's father had apparently threatened to reduce the trust but it had been felt that it was more in George's interest if the estate remained under tack to Bighouse rather than the trust terminated and the estate exposed to whatever additional burdens Donald might place on it. George failed to persuade the trustees to relinquish voluntarily but he discovered that a copy of the marriage contract of 1732,

which had been kept secret from him, was in the hands of his uncle George of Skibo. He eventually succeeded in obtaining possession of the deeds and charter chest, and managed to overturn the trust in the Court of Session in November 1767. George had already begun to take an active interest in the estate and had begun to invest in new estate buildings at Tongue. He died, however, the following year.

He was succeeded by his mentally incapable younger brother Hugh, whose paternal uncles, Hugh of Bighouse, George of Skibo and Alexander were appointed as tutors and curators. Skibo was given the day-to-day management of the estate from 1768 until his death in June 1782 (after the death of Bighouse in 1770 he was heir to the estate). The sole surviving tutor and curator, General Alexander Mackay took over the management of the estate until his own death in June 1789. Although the General took decisions relating to the estate, most of the management was undertaken by his factor, Charles Gordon of Pulrossie (earlier of Skelpick). From 1789 until Lord Reay's death in 1797, the estate was managed by George Mackay of Bighouse in the capacity of factor *loco tutoris* to his Lordship.

After Skibo's death in 1782 in bankrupt circumstances, it was found almost impossible to disentangle the accounts relating to his management (following heroic efforts by a succession of accountants, a final state was eventually drawn up in 1829). On the whole, the tutors took a positive attitude to their responsibilities, arranging farm improvements at Balnakeil, developing fishing and kelp manufacture and also curbing the ability of the tacksmen to oppress their subtenants. Lord Reay lived in a modest manner with the Mackays of Skerryay. The considerable burdens on the estate, however, were equivalent to an annual interest of almost £800 in 1768. Provisions for the two dowager Lady Reays and three daughters amounted to £472 per annum.⁹³ Between 1768 and 1782 the estate was not paying its way, and the position cannot have improved significantly after that. In 1788 Lord Reay's two surviving sisters brought an action for payment of their provisions.⁹⁴ An analysis of the financial position in 1792 revealed that there were debts of over £7,000 secured on the estate, including £2,000 of provisions to Lord Reay's daughters. The gross rent was almost £1,300 per annum, but after taking account of wadsets, public burdens (taxes, and ministers' and schoolmasters' salaries) and expenses of management, the surplus available for the payment of the debts was just £230.⁹⁵ It is unlikely that, without the very low personal expenditure of Lord Reay, the estate would have survived intact until the turn of the 19th century.

Eric, second but eldest surviving son of George of Skibo, inherited the estate and title on the death of his cousin in 1797. It was not, as he admitted to Mrs Louisa Mackay of Bighouse in January 1799, an easy prospect, 'It was I may say my misfortune to succeed to a very extensive Estate producing little, besides many Incumbrances, at the same time giving me a Rank which I would wish to maintain with becoming dignity'.⁹⁶ This desire to maintain a certain grandeur was to have enormous consequences for the people on the estate. All existing leases, some of which had been granted for excessively

lengthy terms, were reduced – mainly by granting compositions, although court action was necessary in several cases.⁹⁷ This was the prelude to the reorganisation of the estate into sheepfarms and coastal townships for the resettlement of small tenants engaged in fishing or kelp manufacture. The process, which was spread over several years, brought an enormous increase in rental income. However, Lord Reay's lavish expenditure continued and by 1816 the debts on the estate amounted to £58,000; £17,100 represented annuities while the remainder was made up of bonds, bills and accounts. Almost £7,500 was owed to merchants as their share in the profits on kelp and fishing.⁹⁸ Lord Reay's financial circumstances worsened as the economic depression which followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars took effect. Not only did the proceeds from kelp manufacture collapse, but sheepfarming was also badly affected. Despite generous rent reductions, several sheepfarmers went bankrupt. In 1823, Lord Reay considered handing the estate over to trustees.⁹⁹ Two years later, £100,000 was borrowed from the Marquis and Marchioness of Stafford.¹⁰⁰ That same year, the House of Lords affirmed the judgement of the Court of Session freeing Lord Reay from any constraints to the sale of the estate.¹⁰¹ A new factor was appointed to manage the estate on stricter lines. However, the task proved insurmountable, and Lord Reay sold the estate to the Staffords for £300,000 in 1829.

Mackays of Bighouse

The Mackay of Bighouse family was founded in the late 16th century by William Mackay, younger brother of Uisdean Mackay of Strathnaver [Figs. 4.6; 4.7]. William held lands in Durness – he was initially designed 'of Galdwell of Durness' and lived at Balnakeil – but led the Mackay offensive against the Murrays of Bighouse for their share of Strath Halladale. According to Rory Murray of 'Biggouris', in September 1587 William came to Bighouse in upper Strath Halladale and seized his goods:

ejectit the said complenaris wyffe and bairnis furth of the saidis houssis; quhairthrou, thay being strangearis in that cuntrey, unacquented with ony of the cuntrey people, and wanting moyane to mak their awne provisioun, thay wer forceit to beg thair meitt, and at last miserable deit throu hunger in the montane. ... [Five years later William was still in possession, and Murray complained to the Privy Council that he] ... hes continuallie sensyne withaldin and possess the said complenaris said hous and rowme, and hes baneist himselff the cuntrey, swa that he dar nocht repair theirunto for feir of his lyffe.¹⁰²

Despite this seemingly horrific conduct, in 1597 the two parties entered into a contract whereby William, by then designed 'of Balnakeil', bought Strath Halladale. William was married to Isobel Mackenzie and the agreement appears to have been brokered by Rory Mackenzie of Ardafallie (Redcastle). William received a Great Seal charter of the lands the following year.¹⁰³

The Mackays of Bighouse

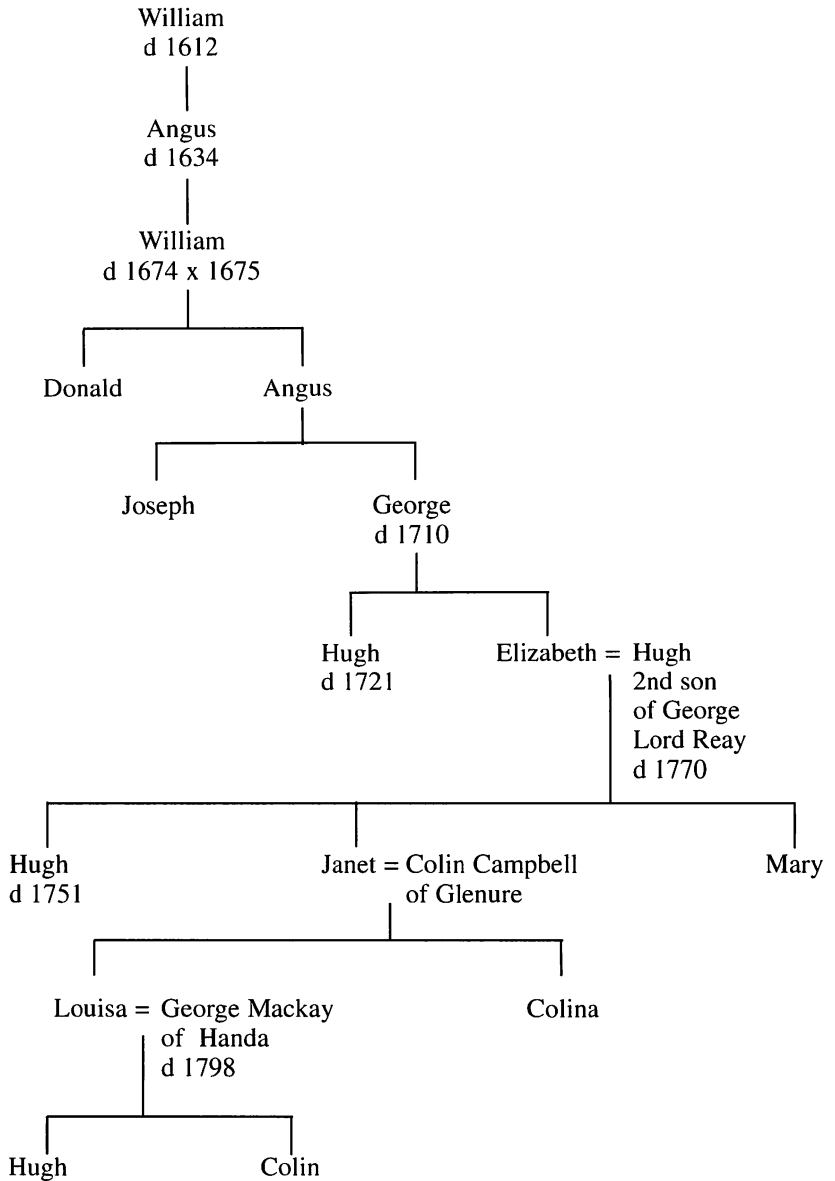


Fig. 4.7 The Mackays of Bighouse.

William was succeeded by his son Angus who incurred his chief's displeasure in 1618 when he and a number of his domestics shot 40 to 50 deer and fished for salmon in the water of Halladale.¹⁰⁴ As might be expected, Angus assisted with his chief's financial transactions in the 1620s.¹⁰⁵ In 1626, Angus granted a charter of upper Strath Halladale to his eldest son William, reserving his own liferent right as well as that of his mother who held at least half of the estate; this was confirmed by Charles II in 1633.¹⁰⁶ In 1631 Lord Reay granted a feu charter of lower Strath Halladale, of which he was superior, to Angus and to his son William who had married his Lordship's daughter Jean.¹⁰⁷ In 1632, following complaints to the Privy Council by the people of Caithness as to raids by one William Kennochbuyesoun and others, Bighouse became bound along with the Master of Reay and John Mackay of Dirlet, on behalf of the inhabitants of Strathnaver, to deliver up any stolen goods and to present a number of people who had supplied the rebels. William Sinclair of Berriedale, eldest son of the Earl of Caithness, and Sir Alexander Gordon of Navidale played a central role in ensuring that the dispute was settled at the local level without the intervention of the authorities in Edinburgh.¹⁰⁸ According to Gordon of Sallagh, Angus was 'a very active and able gentleman'. However, in 1634 'he was taken away by witchcraft. The witch was afterward apprehended and executed, who at her death confessed the crime.'¹⁰⁹

His successor, William, was a major figure within the clan Mackay during the troubles of the 1640s. He was one of the leading men who undertook in 1644 to settle the debt owing to Robert Farquhar, and was amongst those who in 1646 were summoned to appear before the General Assembly to answer for their actions.¹¹⁰ William was apparently involved in Pluscardine's rising, which for many Mackays ended with the 'incident' at Balveny in April 1649, although it is not known whether he was captured along with Lord Reay. It is against that background, however, and growing financial difficulties, that William settled the estate on his eldest son, Donald.¹¹¹ Several apprisings were led against the estate; by Robert Gray of Ballone in 1649,¹¹² by Robert Farquhar the following year¹¹³ and by Forbes of Culloden by virtue of William's involvement in another debt of Lord Reay's.¹¹⁴ William appears to have maintained two houses, one at Balnaheglis (which became known as Kirkton) and another at Forsinaird where he was to be found in 1646.¹¹⁵ He survived until the spring of 1659 when the livestock on the estate were struck down by a 'grievous murrain or hastie death'; the tenants were not able to labour their lands or pay their rents.¹¹⁶ Robert Gray, by then of Arbol, brought a process of removing against the tenants of Bighouse¹¹⁷ and appears to have gained actual possession of part of the estate. An undated valuation roll of the period confirms William's difficulties: the wadset of Golval accounted for £151 of valued rent, Arbol's possession was worth £517 which left only £235, including Balnaheglis, in William's own hands.¹¹⁸ In 1660, an apprising was obtained by Colin Mackenzie of Redcastle¹¹⁹ and the following year a wadset of Torinver was granted to one James Grant there.¹²⁰ Times had changed, however, and men such as Gray of

Arboll were no longer able to take advantage of political upheavals to gain personal advantage. From 1664, despite continuing distractions of having to assist Lord Reay,¹²¹ the Mackays of Bighouse began a slow a but steady recovery. The rescue operation was largely undertaken by William's son, Angus who had succeeded his brother as heir to the estate.¹²² With the assistance of Angus's father-in-law, Patrick Sinclair of Ulbster, and Angus Mackay of Melness, the debts were paid off. By the time of William's death in 1674 x 75, the estate was largely free from apprisings and Angus was finally served heir to his brother in 1681.¹²³

Having managed to avoid the worst possible consequences of their financial problems, the family suffered a series of natural catastrophes which brought the direct male line to an end. Joseph, who succeeded his father Angus, only possessed the estate for a few years before dying without issue.¹²⁴ He was succeeded by his brother George who died in January 1710 leaving 'considerable debts affecting the real estate, and also certain personal debts, which fell to be paid out of the executry'. George's only son Hugh died in April 1721 while still a minor, and the estate passed to his eldest daughter, Elizabeth, who was brought up in Tongue House. Lord Reay, who had been appointed Elizabeth's curator, proceeded to register an entail which George had made in 1709, providing that the eldest heir female should succeed to the estate without division:

and the descandants of her body of the samen line being always bound and oblidged to marry ane Husband of the name of Macky or who and the Descendants of his and her body succeeding ... shall be ... bound ... to assume the name stile and Designation and wear use and bear the armes of Macky of Bighouse.

In accordance with these provisions, Elizabeth was married to Lord Reay's second son, Hugh in 1728.¹²⁵

The previous year, Elizabeth's younger sister, Janet, had married William Mackay of Melness, a descendant of the first Lord Reay and who had recently returned from Dutch military service. Melness felt that his wife had been unfairly treated: he later claimed that Lord Reay, 'taking advantage of the infancy of these two daughters, and of a false report industriously propagated, that the eldest daughter was alone entitled to the succession of the heritable estate, formed a scheme to secure that estate to his family' by marrying Elizabeth off to Hugh. Melness was, of course, mistaken over the succession to the estate, although Elizabeth's marriage would certainly have assisted his Lordship in providing for Hugh.¹²⁶ Melness, however, was very unhappy at the arrangements, went to the House of Tongue, and with a loaded pistol demanded that Lord Reay should hand over the title deeds to the Bighouse estate. But Lord Reay managed to escape and Melness was forced to retire.¹²⁷ In 1733, it was agreed by the two sisters that Elizabeth and her husband should have the estate, subject to the debts affecting it, while Janet should have the whole executry of their brother Hugh and their father George, relieved of various debts which Hugh Mackay proceeded to pay.¹²⁸

Elizabeth and Hugh then took legal steps, using John Mackay of Clashneach as a trustee, to establish a new and secure title to the estate in the name of Hugh.¹²⁹ A good deal of the estate was liferented by George's widow, Katherine Ross, but in 1737 she surrendered possession of Kirkton to Hugh.¹³⁰ She lived at Trantlemore from sometime after the death of her second husband in 1742 until her own demise in 1757.¹³¹ The whole episode provides a very good illustration of the considerable complexity of executry, minorities, succession and the liferent rights enjoyed by a widow.

Possession of Kirkton allowed Hugh and his wife to establish themselves there (see Beaton, this volume). The rental of the estate, however, was not large – in 1744 it amounted to only £129.¹³² But Hugh played a major and very profitable role in the management of the Reay estate in the 1740s and 1750s (see above). He was actively involved in the cattle trade, attending the markets at Crieff, and was even experimenting with Tweeddale sheep. According to Rob Donn, he was a keen businessman. The poet's reference to Bighouse and the tacksman Iain Mac Eachainn is revealing:

Surely their conscience is stifled
When they are selling cattle to the Lowlanders.

There is a suggestion too, that this keenness was also applied to the tenantry. When commenting on a new suit worn by Bighouse, Rob Donn claimed that:

There is not a button nor a button-hole in it
That hasn't taken money off a poor man.¹³³

During the '45 Rebellion, Hugh commanded one of the Independent Companies and, like his brothers, awarded himself prize money of £700 from the French gold captured from the Prince Charles (see below).¹³⁴ From about 1748 until 1758, the family lived in the House of Tongue.¹³⁵ In 1752, he asked his son-in-law to send various items north from Edinburgh, including some glasses, frames of 'Walnutetrie, or mohogny', grates for his room and the dining room, chairs, 'something gen[tee] and to be covered', and a dozen prints including 'our Present King, ye Duke, Late & Present Dukes of Argyle, Lord Stair, Mr Pope, Prince of Orange, his Princess, her moyr the late Queen'.¹³⁶

His children were to bring mixed blessings. In 1749, his eldest daughter, Janet, married Colin Campbell of Glenure in northern Argyllshire, who was half-brother to Campbell of Barcaldine and was to become famous as the Red Fox in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, although he was generally known as *Cailean Ruadh* or Red Colin. Like many a daughter of a Highland laird at this period, Janet had probably enjoyed a season in Edinburgh.¹³⁷ She was about 18 or 19 years of age: Glenure was twenty years older with at least three illegitimate daughters.¹³⁸ Marriage for any landed family was a weighty concern and, as was customary, there were protracted negotiations between Bighouse and the Campbells. Hugh had already made enquiries through his

lawyer into the financial standing of the prospective son-in-law: Glenure had an income of about £400 per annum which 'should afford a reasonable & Genteel settlement for Jenny and her children'. Glenure and his brother-in-law, Campbell of Achallader, paid a visit to Bighouse to discuss the terms of the marriage contract. The Campbells accepted some of the articles which Bighouse, on the advice of friends, had proposed, but considered that the level of provision for heiresses rather excessive. When agreement could not be reached, both parties agreed to submit their differences to lawyers. According to Achallader:

Bighouse appeard extremely diffident of himself He is a man of exceeding good parts, and capable of much greater affairs, very frank and Jocose, a good deall of the Highlander ... and values his clan more than any chief I ever knew.¹³⁹

Bighouse though had formed a favourable impression of Glenure who:

from a two Days Acquaintance was very agreeable to me, and what might lessen his esteem wt oys raised it wt me, vitz that he does not want of the Highlandman in him; as I must do Jennie Mackay the Justice that she has acted her Part in this affair wt great Submission to my will, So I have remitted Glenure back to her, so as she may determine for or against him; as she sees most to her taste. I have no objection to the man himself takeing him in the Generall view, or to his Family & Circumstances, if equal to the Accounts I have So if Mr Campbell is Jenney Mackay's Choice for a Companion in Life, I approve and consent frankly And if she Loves the man, it would be imprudent to reject the proposal ... it would be cruell to take any advantage of Mr Campbell for the great regard he has for my Daughter, yet on the other hand, Affairs of this nature cannot be too minutely and Circumspectly gone about

In Glenure, Bighouse gained a like-minded son-in-law who shared a keen interest in livestock farming. In 1751, however, Bighouse's eldest and only surviving son, Hugh, died while still relatively young, greatly mourned in the Reay country and the subject of one of Rob Donn's elegies.¹⁴⁰ At about this time, Mary, Bighouse's second daughter, became the second wife of William Baillie of Rosehall, who was probably in his forties and was to become a close family friend of Bighouse. Her portion was 5,000 merks.¹⁴¹ In May 1752, Glenure, who was factoring for the Forfeited Estates Commissioners, was murdered, victim of the Appin Murder.¹⁴² He left two daughters, but there was still the prospect of a male heir as Janet was pregnant. However, to her great disappointment, the child which was born the following February turned out to be another girl – who was named Colin or Colina in memory of her father. Janet reported to her brother-in-law Duncan, who had succeeded to Glenure, that she had 'been Luckie in getting a fine Nurse, wife to the famous Robb done the Poet, if you ever heard of such a man.'¹⁴³ In July, Janet made a 'Private Marriage' to her sister's stepson Charles, the eldest son of William Baillie of Rosehall. It was done,

Bighouse complained, 'wtout askeing me a single Question, till I found it out by ye mearest accident, on her way wt me to Tongue'. He was very fond of his daughter but:

she has forfeit all that is dear to her for a young unexperienced boy that might have turned out well, had he followed out his Education. The moment I knew of her fate, I turned her of, & would not agree to our being under one roof.

He went to Achfary in the Reay Forest, to be 'in ye midst of ye hills a hunting ... to drive away sorrow'.¹⁴⁴ However, Janet's children stayed with him for several years, and he arranged for them to be inoculated for smallpox 'with great success' by Dr William Sinclair of Thurso.¹⁴⁵ Duncan Campbell of Glenure, however, was reluctant to pay for the upbringing and education of his nieces, and relations between the two families deteriorated.¹⁴⁶

Bighouse and his family returned to live at Bighouse in the winter of 1758/59. Thereafter, Bighouse appears to have built a new and much larger mansion house at Tor (formerly Torinver) of Bighouse (see Beaton, this volume) – quite possibly using the timber which he had taken from the plantations at Tongue.¹⁴⁷ In 1767, the naturalist James Robertson found that Bighouse had 'a genteel dwelling house, adorned by a garden, which, for it's size, is the best & most elegant I have seen in the North'. Colonel Mackay had also 'enriched his moors with plantations of Forest-trees & is annually increasing their number.'¹⁴⁸

Although appointed one of the tutors and curators for Lord Reay in 1768 (he was heir to the estate), Bighouse took no part in the administration as he was not in good health. However, in 1770, after the death of his wife, he married Isabella, daughter of Mackenzie of Lentron and 'a fine lively girl'. The marriage, almost certainly made with the aim of producing a male heir, would not have been welcomed either by his brother, Colonel Alexander Mackay, or by the heirs to his own estate. Unfortunately, Bighouse's health did not improve and he died at Bath later that year.¹⁴⁹ In 1767, he had made a settlement in favour of his brothers, George of Skibo and Colonel Alexander, which included various provisions to his descendants.¹⁵⁰ The settlement of his affairs in 1771 led to the sale of the 'mostly new' household furniture in the mansion-house of Bighouse along with the livestock – including 'The different species of cattle [which were] of a superior quality, being the stockings of the extensive grazings occupied by Col. Mackay'.¹⁵¹

The Bighouse estate passed to his daughters or their heirs. Colonel Campbell reported to Barcaldine that 'they will have good Plucking amongst them', although he feared that Hugh's widow would not 'come in for the share she ought Considering the Sacrifice she made, and the care she took of him': in the event she was to enjoy a substantial life interest annuity of £115.¹⁵² Bighouse's grand-daughter Louisa (or Lucia), inherited a quarter share of Lower Halladale and the whole of Upper Halladale, and her husband, George Mackay of Island Handa, purchased the other shares and took the designation

Fig. 4.8 Memorial to George Mackay of Bighouse, died 1798, in Reay churchyard.



Fig. 4.9 Memorial to the Mackays of Bighouse, Reay churchyard.



'of Bighouse'.¹⁵³ He had inherited a heritable security over Island Handa and also held other parts of the Reay estate on lease, including the lands of Scourie, Glendhu and later the Parph.¹⁵⁴ The late Bighouse's brother, Alexander, had 'tooth and nail opposed the marriage', but soon came to give a 'very good character' of Island Handa.¹⁵⁵ Between 1789 and 1797 George was responsible for the management the Reay estate (see above).¹⁵⁶ Like many of his contemporaries he served in the army: firstly as captain of the Bighouse company in the Duke of Gordon's Fencibles in 1778, and then as Lieutenant Colonel of the Reay Fencibles. Indeed, he played a major role in raising the regiment in 1794/95 but died while on active service in 1798¹⁵⁷ [Figs. 4.8]. He had placed his affairs in the hands of trustees who were to pay his debts, although his widow, Louisa, was sole accepting trustee. The entire stocking on the various farms he had held was roused at Bighouse in June 1799.¹⁵⁸

It had been the Colonel's wish that his eldest son, Hugh, should have the opportunity to buy his father's three-quarter share of Lower Halladale under burden of £4,000 to provide for other members of the family. Hugh, the eldest of a large family, was a merchant in Antigua and transferred this right to his mother who had liferent possession of the estate.¹⁵⁹ Louisa had already apparently moved to Edinburgh. Her portrait was painted by Raeburn and she made an impression on the social scene: 'Few ladies of her time displayed more grace and dignity in supporting her rank, or was more distinguished for her hospitality and benevolence in private life.'¹⁶⁰ The management of the estate was largely in the hands of her Edinburgh legal agent, James Horne of Langwell and her son-in-law, Gabriel Reid, who was a sheep-farmer in Sutherland. There was only a limited engagement with sheep-farming: one large farm was created in the upper parts of the estate (see below) which brought a substantial increase in rent, but it is clear that much higher rents were also levied on the small tenants. The gross rental of the estate rose from £232 in 1795 to a probable peak of £1,567 prior to 1819. Rents, particularly those of the small tenants, were quickly reduced with the onset of economic depression, and by 1822 the gross rental stood at £1,175.¹⁶¹

In the meantime, Hugh had died on Antigua in 1818. He was succeeded as heir by his brother Colin, a courageous army officer, who had initially served as a captain in the Reay Fencibles until disbanded in 1802, who formed the Bighouse Company of the Northern Battalion of the Sutherland Volunteers the following year, and in 1805 raised men from the estate to serve in the 78th Highlanders.¹⁶² In 1829, his mother settled the estate on him, but he sold Bighouse to the Sutherland family only a year later for £51,650.¹⁶³ Not long afterwards, Colin bought an estate in Berwickshire and then a property in Arisaig – both of which he renamed Bighouse.¹⁶⁴ Louisa, who latterly appears to have lived in London, died in 1834. The family had effectively severed all links with Strathnaver [Fig. 4.9], although a descendant contemplated claiming the title of Lord Reay in 1875.¹⁶⁵

Mackays of Strathy

The Mackays of Strathy were descended from John, a younger son of Hugh of Strathnaver [Figs. 4.6; 4.10]. John's education had included a spell in Saumur, and he received the lands of Dirlot (known as Dilret) in Caithness and Strathy in Sutherland from his elder brother, Sir Donald, possibly in 1619. He became known as Mackay of Dirlot.¹⁶⁶ From the 1620s to the early 1640s he assisted Lord Reay by becoming cautioner in several bonds,¹⁶⁷ and was also involved in dealing with the border disputes between Strathnaver and Caithness in 1632.¹⁶⁸ John settled his estates on his eldest son, Hugh, in 1633; his younger sons both became wadsetters on the Reay estate.¹⁶⁹ His eldest daughter married Patrick Sinclair of Ulbster, and in 1640 John promised them a liferent right to Dirlot.¹⁷⁰ His financial position was evidently becoming precarious, and in 1644 an attempt was made to sell the

The Mackays of Strathy

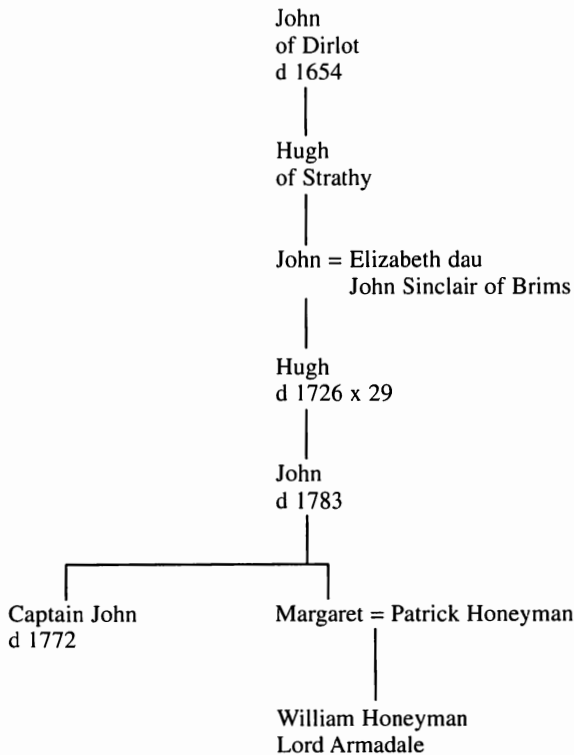


Fig. 4.10 The Mackays of Strathy.

lands of Dirlot for 10,000 merks to John's 'cousin', Colonel Sir William Gunn, Gentleman of HM Privy Chamber and brother of Donald Gunn in Dirlot. John, however, refused to sign an agreement to transfer the superiority of the lands to the Earl of Sutherland which his uncle, Sir Robert Gordon, had proposed, and the sale fell through.¹⁷¹

After his father's death in 1645, Hugh was in reduced circumstances. Ulbster was apparently given a wadset of Dirlot; Hugh lived at Strathy, which he adopted as his designation rather than Dirlot, even though his mother possessed half the family lands in Sutherland in virtue of her liferent right.¹⁷² Between 1669 and 1674 four apprisings were led against the estate, forcing a rescue operation to be put in hand. In 1679, Hugh and his eldest son, John handed over Strathy and the reversion to Dirlot to John's father-in-law, John Sinclair of Brims, who proceeded to buy up three apprisings. In 1681, John Sinclair of Ulbster, one of the apprisers, was sold the lands of Braegael in Halkirk. In 1690, after Hugh's death, Brims disposed the estate of Strathy to his daughter Elizabeth and her eldest son, Hugh. It was a rescue operation which was similar to that performed by Sir George Munro for the Reay estate, although relatively more expensive since it involved the loss of all the family's lands in Caithness.¹⁷³

The experience of the family in the 18th century typified that of a small Highland laird. Two of Hugh's sons emigrated to Georgia in the 1730s: James, who once fought alongside Washington, acquired an estate which he named Strathy Hall; and Hugh, who ended up in Jamaica.¹⁷⁴ Hugh of Strathy's successor, John, borrowed 4,000 merks on the security of the estate in 1751.¹⁷⁵ This may have been to pay for some improvements. In 1760 Bishop Pococke found, on the east bank of the Strathy river, 'a good house and offices, and I was received with great politeness by Lady Strathy', and seven years later it was reported that Strathy 'has begun to plant his moors with forest-trees, which seem to thrive extremely well.'¹⁷⁶

Following the death in 1772 of his only surviving son and heir, Captain John Mackay of the Sutherland Fencibles, John of Strathy settled the estate on his grandson, William Honeyman, the son of his daughter Margaret and Patrick Honeyman of Graemsay, a prominent landowner in Orkney. Honeyman entered upon a legal career, became an advocate in 1777 and, through his political support for Henry Dundas and marriage to the eldest daughter of Robert MacQueen, Lord Braxfield, was made about twenty years later a Court of Session judge. He took the legal title of Lord Armadale and was made a baronet in 1804 as Honeyman of Armadale.¹⁷⁷ He had succeeded to Strathy in 1783, but appears to have channelled his energies into lands which he bought in the central Lowlands.¹⁷⁸ A sheepfarm was created in the early 1790s, and by 1807 the 'old mansion house, and offices, [were] in a ruinous state'.¹⁷⁹ His second son, Robert, however, was major in the Reay Fencibles and afterwards served in the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders.¹⁸⁰ By early 1812, if not before, the Sutherland estate management was looking to buy the estate and use it as a resettlement area for people cleared from Kildonan and Strathnaver. Sir William's own circumstances necessitated a

sale, but he wanted a proper valuation of the estate. A report, drawn up under the supervision of Robert Brown, a well-known estate manager and consultant, drew attention to the potential for the creation of large farms and the establishment of fishermen's holdings at Ports Kerrera. His views coincided with the policies being pursued on the Sutherland estate but the estate management was reluctant to pay too high a price. However, in January 1813, Sir William who was faced with debts of about £75,000, handed over his estates to trustees who promptly sold Strathy to the Sutherland family for £25,000.¹⁸¹ Sir William retired from the bench and was given a pension of £150. He died at his seat near Lanark in 1825.¹⁸²

The Lands of Lochnaver under the Gordons of Embo and the Sutherlands of Duffus

In 1634, Lord Reay had sold the lands of Lochnaver to Sir John Gordon of Embo. Sir John's involvement in Lord Reay's affairs led to an apprising being obtained against his estate in 1647 by Duncan Forbes of Culloden. John Sutherland of Kellas (later in Skelbo) obtained a further apprising,¹⁸³ and in 1654 Robert Gray of Arbol obtained an apprising against his successor, Sir Robert Gordon on the basis of a contract made in 1648.¹⁸⁴ Embo entered into a submission with Arbol. Embo owed 44,800 merks and the arbiters decreed that Arbol should have possession of Lochnaver and of various lands in Ross-shire. However, Embo was given the opportunity to 'find out a merchand' for Lochnaver for 16,000 merks. Embo apparently managed to do this and as a consequence undertook Gray's side of the agreement. This included granting a wadset of Achness to William Munro of Achness and his brother, George Munro of Teaninver, for 5,000 merks. Two thousand merks was later repaid, and the remaining debt was assigned to William Sutherland of Rearquhar in 1664.¹⁸⁵

In the meantime, Kellas's brother and heir, Alexander Sutherland of Torboll, had disposed the earliest apprisings to James Sutherland, son of Lord Duffus, the owner of Skelbo in east Sutherland as well as an estate in Morayshire.¹⁸⁶ In 1668, Embo sold the lands of Lochnaver to Lord Duffus.¹⁸⁷ Lord Duffus subsequently faced growing financial trouble – exacerbated by his murder of William Ross of Little Kindeace – and was forced to flee to London. He raised loans by granting a number of wadsets over Skelbo, as well as a heritable bond to Munro of Culrain over Lochnaver which later came into hands of Captain Hugh Mackay younger of Borley.¹⁸⁸ In 1692, the lands of Lochnaver were let to Alexander Sutherland of Pronsie and Hugh Sutherland of Kinauld, wadsetters on the Skelbo estate. An attempt by them to institute removals in June 1693 met with armed resistance from the possessors, who were joined by some of Lord Strathnaver's tenants from nearby farms. In 1694, Duffus entered into a contract to sell the lands to Lord Strathnaver for 20,000 merks, subject to the burdens secured over the lands. If Duffus could not persuade Pronsie and Kinauld to renounce their tack, he

was to pay 300 merks per year until their right expired. The difficulties with the possessors continued, however, and it was not until 1700 that Lord Strathnaver became owner of Lochnaver.¹⁸⁹

Sutherland Take-Over

A full assessment of the effects of the Sutherland take-over of Farr has not been attempted here; the task is, of course, complicated by the fact that the acquisition of Farr took place in three stages – in 1642, 1700 and 1718. Initially some Mackays were dispossessed, but this policy does not appear to have endured. For instance, William Mackay Iverson's wadset of Rossal was formally terminated and the lands given to one John Gordon. However, in 1653, Iverson was granted a five-year tack on condition that he 'benefeitt & acknowledge the ... Earle his hous Tuyce ilk yeir' as other possessors of Strathnaver did, and also that he and his fencible men followed and accompanied the Earl in all 'hoistingis hunteings & waponschawes' whenever required.¹⁹⁰

The marriage between Lord Strathnaver's brother, Robert Gordon and Lord Reay's daughter Jean was made to further good relations between the families. Robert was given a long-term wadset for 18,000 merks over the lands of Grummore, Grumbeg, Syre and Langwell, and took the designation 'of Langdale'. However, from 1659 until 1665 he had run up a number of debts living in some comfort in Edinburgh. He died soon after his marriage from drinking to excess after a Dutch ship had been wrecked on the north coast. One of his creditors gained right to the rents of his lands until Lord Strathnaver settled the claims.¹⁹¹

When Lord Strathnaver acquired Lochnaver in 1700, he appears to have been successful in bringing legal proceedings against the possessors for the rents they had withheld from the previous owner, Lord Duffus; but it is significant that in 1708 a nine-year tack of the lands was given to Donald Mackay of Sandwood, possessor of Eriboll.¹⁹² A list of tenants in lower Strathnaver in 1700 contains a mixture of Gordons, Mackays and others; a balance appears to have been struck between introducing Gordon families and accommodating the existing possessors.¹⁹³

After the acquisition of the coastal lands of Farr in 1718, there were no more opportunities for the Sutherland family to buy lands in the province of Strathnaver until the early 19th century. The inheritance of the Bridgewater Canal fortune changed the family's financial position completely. The purchase of Strathy, in 1813, fitted in with the reorganisation of the Sutherland estate and provided vital resettlement areas to accommodate people cleared from inland farms. It was a good investment, and it is not surprising that thoughts were had of buying Bighouse as well.¹⁹⁴ Some tidying up was achieved by the purchases from Lord Reay of Ardbeg in 1813 and Borgiemore in 1820. The acquisition of the Reay and Bighouse estates in 1829 and 1830 was of a different order, however. James Loch, the commissioner for the Sutherland estates, largely justified them on the

grounds of family aggrandisement or looked for connections with the ancient earldom of Sutherland.

SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

Landholding

Although the Reay estate was quite extensive, its value was only a third to a half that of the Sutherland estate – which included richer agricultural lands in the east of the county. Lord Reay was a substantial landowner, however, and, even after the sale of Farr to the Earls of Sutherland, the province of Strathnaver continued to be dominated by the greater landlords. By comparison, the Mackays of Bighouse and Strathy, the only cadet branches of the clan Mackay to own land in Sutherland, were but lairds. Indeed, Mackay wadsetters formed a significant part of the Mackay interest.

Most wadsets were granted to assist needy landlords, but some were granted to promote the various political interests by the creation of 'fictitious' votes. The endurance of these rights over many years often meant that wadsetters such as the Mackays of Scourie could be regarded as landlords. There were very few wadsetters, however, who made the transition to full ownership; many were effectively tacksmen and resided on their wadset lands. Some resided elsewhere; James Maclean of Capernoch, who held a wadset of Skail and other lands from 1744 until 1764, lived in east Sutherland.¹⁹⁵ On the other hand, a good number of wadsetters, particularly on the Sutherland estate in the 18th century, were absentee and their lands were managed by the estate factors. Examples are Captain, later Sir Harry Erskine, who held a wadset of Grummore from 1745 to 1757 and Lord Duffus, who held a wadset of Farr from 1757 to 1763. A wadset of Grummore and Grumbeg was held by Dugald Gilchrist, factor on the Sutherland estate, tacksmen of Loth and later owner of Ospisdale, from 1757 until 1767, when it was transferred to Sir Adam Fergusson of Kilkerran who held it until 1794.¹⁹⁶

By far the main source of income for Sutherland landowners were estate rents. Most landlords, however, also farmed on their own account. On the Reay estate there were mains or home farms at Tongue, Balnakeil and, prior to 1642, at Invernaver, which had probably been formerly attached to Castle Borve. The mains on the Bighouse estate was at Kirkton although there appears to have also been a home farm at Forsinaird in the 17th century.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, the landlords often also possessed extensive grazings for their large herds of cattle, which could be very profitable.

The rights to hunting and hawking were restricted to landlords, and the province of Strathnaver contained several well-known forests or reserves including Ben Clibrig, Ben Loyal and Ben Hope, the Diri Mor (also known as the Reay Forest) and the Parff. The tradition of grand hunts in August in the Reay Forest lasted well into the 18th century.¹⁹⁸ These were activities reserved for the clan gentry; others were only allowed to hunt with a licence,

although the tacksman of Scourie was generally allowed to take 12 deer from 'Hills of Arkle & Stack' and their bounds.¹⁹⁹

The majority of farms in the province of Strathnaver were held by tacksmen, who occupied an intermediate position between the leading members of the clan gentry and their subtenants. It follows that most of the population were subtenants living on tacksman farms, although there were some tenants holding directly of the landlord. Tacksmen and tenants paid rents in money and in kind, especially sheep, butter and cheese. Most were liable to various services including providing peats, working on the mains farm (particularly at shearing and harvesting), wintering the landlord's cattle and assisting with the maintenance of the mills and salmon fishings.²⁰⁰ With growing absenteeism, there was a tendency for landlords to convert rents in kind and services into money payments. However, 'arbitrary and oppressive services' were mentioned as a factor behind the emigration of the early 1770s, and there were still services performed on the mains of Tongue as late as the 1790s.²⁰¹

Trade and Economy

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Sutherland exhibited a contrast between the more upland areas (where rents were paid in money mainly from the proceeds of cattle), and the lowland areas in the east (where rents were paid in grain).

Arable Crops and Livestock

In the early 17th century, Strathnaver was described as 'a Countrey full of Bestial and Cattel, fitter for Pasturage and Store than for corns, by reason there is little manured land there'.²⁰² This does not mean that the economy was wholly pastoral – the arable land was important, as years of poor harvest proved, although Strathnaver generally imported grain, particularly from Caithness. Problems could arise after a poor harvest and when sources of money income failed. The very bad harvest of 1740 meant that supplies of grain had run out by the summer of 1741. People starved and tried to exist on fish and milk, with the result that dysentery became rife and many, possibly as much as a tenth of the population, died. The presbytery of Tongue appointed the ministers 'to take some effectual course to get their poor provided within the bounds of their respective parishes'. Poor persons transgressing the regulations concerning vagrants would lose their right to a share in any collection. The presbytery wrote to neighbouring presbyteries 'intreating them to take some effectual method to keep their poor from us'. Fortunately the following harvest was plentiful.²⁰³

However, not only were there difficulties in the early 1770s, but in 1783 there was a 'universal failure of crop ... [and] ... many Families were in danger of dying'. The kirk session of Tongue 'appointed an Elder in every District of the parish, to collect some meal and Barley, or Money; which

when done, there was a meeting for distributing the same. They collected several Bolls.' General Mackay sent 20 bolls of mixed meal for the poor on the Reay estate, half of which was distributed in the parish of Tongue and the parish also received 20 bolls of Government meal.²⁰⁴

Most tenants kept a variety of stock: cattle, horses, sheep and goats. In the early 17th century, great numbers of cattle were sold at fairs on the north and east coasts, along with young horses. But there was also an important trade in animal products or deadstock, and many cattle were sold in the form of barrelled beef shipped to lowland ports along with their hides and the skins of deer. A contract made in 1634 between Lord Reay and Duncan Forbes, a merchant in Inverness, included a quantity of 'ky slaughter marts gud & sufficient full laidin ky, haveing ane stone taloue at least in ilk ane of yr bellies' and 'slaughter mart and deir hyds hartt & hynd'.²⁰⁵ The trade was superseded by the droving of cattle to southern markets, either in lowland Scotland or in England.²⁰⁶ It is not known when the droving of cattle from Sutherland took off, but it was certainly established by the mid-17th century and expanded after the Union of 1707. All levels of society, from landlord to small tenant, relied on the cattle trade as a source of money income although, in the long term, the nature of the trade benefited the larger farmers the most.

The business of cattle droving required capital, and was dominated by tacksmen farmers such as Charles Gordon of Skelpick and Donald Mackay of Eriboll. It was financially hazardous and many failed. Angus Mackay, a drover from Syre in Strathnaver, went bankrupt in 1807 owing money to a number of local tacksmen and tenants. He was a cottar without any land, and his principal means of livelihood had been as a cattle dealer and drover. He appears to have been back in business by 1818.²⁰⁷ Not only did the drovers buy from tenants all over the north but they also entered into contracts to take the Reay drove of cattle handed directly over to the landlord as payment for rent. The usual place for delivery was at Mudale in Strathnaver. In 1792 several new cattle fairs were established on the Bighouse, Reay and Sutherland estates.²⁰⁸

Fisheries and Kelp

The province of Strathnaver contained a number of fine salmon rivers, and the fishing rights were zealously guarded by their owners as the earnings from fishings could make a significant contribution to estate income. The salmon were caught using a variety of methods: principally cruives, a form of trap using wooden chests set into stone dykes across the rivers; netting with cobbles in the mouths of rivers or pools; and yairs, wattle fences in the estuaries which trapped the fish with the falling tide. Bag-nets were introduced in the first half of the 19th century. Once caught, the salmon were placed in large vats, with salt, prior to being packed in barrels with more salt. New methods of preserving, using ice or boiling and processing the fish with vinegar, were introduced in the 19th century. The fishings were sometimes managed directly by the landlord with the fish being sold to a merchant, or

they were let to a merchant to operate. Salmon fishing required investment in equipment and processing materials, and also a seasonal labour force; very often land near to the estuaries was reserved for salmon fishermen.²⁰⁹

The herring, cod and ling fisheries were important for many coastal communities, not only for their subsistence but also as sources of money income. Not surprisingly, the right of having a fishing boat at a recognised creek was included within the landlord's title to many coastal lands. A 1668 wadset of the lands of Kirtomie included the 'freedom of ane fish boat ane or more at the ordinar port of kirtomie'.²¹⁰ Commercial exploitation of the fisheries, however, required capital for equipment and access to markets, and tended to be dominated by merchants. In 1650, for instance, Oliver Mowat and Robert Pettin, merchants in Thurso, contracted to supply Alexander Johnston, an Edinburgh merchant, with herring, 'keilling' (cod) and ling from the Western Isles, Orkney, Caithness and Strathnaver. The Thurso merchants were to provide 'sufficient boattis with skeiled men nettis lynes huikis' and other necessary materials.²¹¹

For many centuries, ships from the Lowlands of Scotland and from Europe had followed the erratic visits of the herring shoals to the Western Highlands. The expansion of the Scottish fleet of herring busses (large fishing vessels) in the 18th century, brought sometimes hundreds of ships from the Clyde and eastern ports to the coastal lochs of north-west Sutherland. In general, local effort was organised by the landlords who bought fish from their tenants, cured it onshore and then supplied it barrelled to merchants. In 1724, Lord Reay contracted to sell herring, salmon and other produce to Messrs Falls, merchants in Dunbar.²¹² In the 1730s, Lord Reay sold herrings caught by his tenants, ready-cured, to merchants from Glasgow, Renfrew and Dunbar, who sent vessels to take them away at a fixed price agreed by contract. During the 1740s the herring deserted the north-west coast.²¹³ However, they later returned, and in 1775 the tutors of Lord Reay gave a 21-year lease of the salmon fishings to Thomas and James Arbuthnot, merchants from Peterhead, and their local manager, James Anderson, who had received a lease of various coastal farms and a storehouse on Island Rannich, near Kylesku, to pursue the herring and cod fisheries. Island Rannich was found to be inconvenient and, under a new lease granted in 1787, the merchant partnership built a fishing station at Rispond (Loch Eriboll) including a harbour, houses for the manager and ship-master, cooper's shed, salt cellar, sail-loft, net room and two store houses [Fig. 4.11]. Another storehouse was maintained at Laxford.²¹⁴ For the inhabitants, there were opportunities for supplying the merchants and visiting herring busses with fish, as well as employment in gutting and packing.

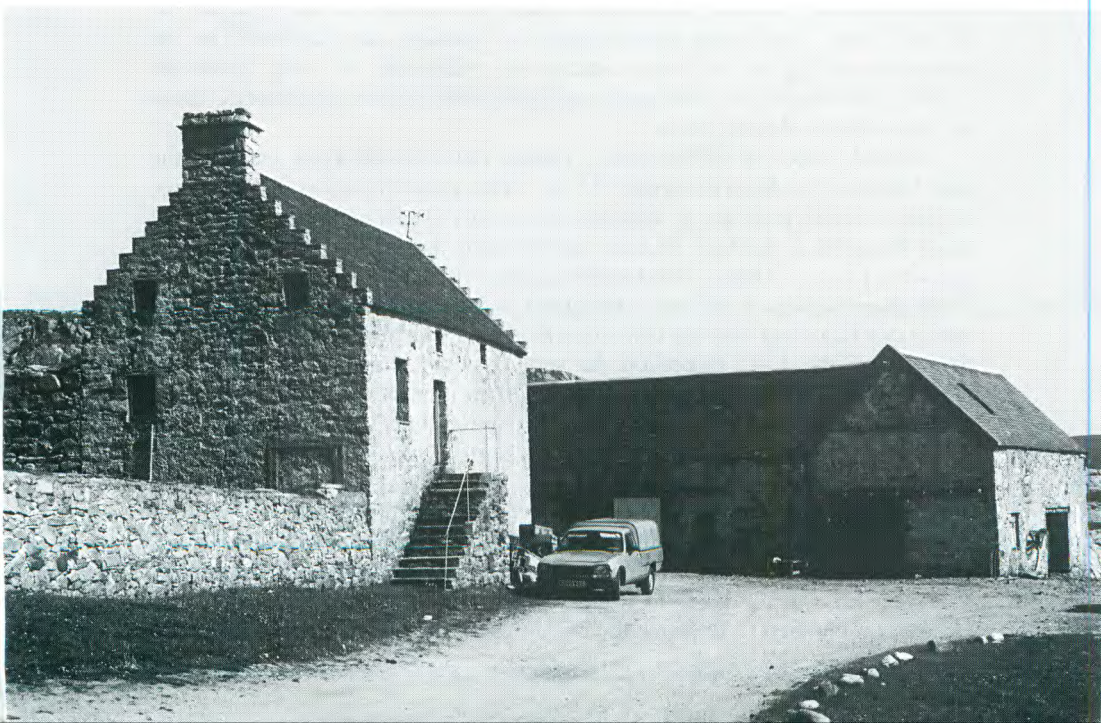
Another potential source of income was to be provided by kelp manufacture. In about 1735 kelp was made on the Reay estate by Alexander Mackay, who came from Orkney, one of the earliest kelping areas. Hugh Mackay, who was later the tenant of the first sheep-farm on the Reay estate in the 1770s, after returning from America, manufactured kelp in 1739 and

possibly 1740. There then appears to have been a period of inactivity until Hugh Mackay of Bighouse recommenced kelp manufacture in the early 1750s. Initially, Alexander Morrison from Skye was the organiser, but in 1754 Bighouse placed kelp manufacture in the hands of Donald Forbes, tacksman of Ribigill.²¹⁵ In 1764, Forbes took over the manufacture of kelp himself under a 10-year lease of the:

whole ware and Tang ... in the Parishes of Edderachillis and Durness ... excepting that ware and Tang as will be indispensibly necessary for manuring the Arable Lands of the respective Inhabitants of the said Shoars.

Lord Reay undertook not only to encourage the possessors of the coastal farms to manufacture kelp, but also promised to gain the consent of the tacksmen to the cutting of ware and burning of kelp. Forbes was to provide meal and iron to the kelp-makers, and to pay an agreed levy to Lord Reay for each ton of kelp.²¹⁶ Forbes continued to manufacture kelp until a dispute arose with Lord Reay's curators in 1773 and his lease was not renewed.²¹⁷ The kelp shores were afterwards let to the merchant partnership who were later based at Rispond.²¹⁸ The Reay estate, particularly in the parishes of Eddrachillis and Durness, became one of the main centres for kelp manufacture on the mainland. Direct involvement by the landlord was limited as the lead was

Fig. 4.11 Fishing station at Rispond, Loch Eriboll.



taken by merchants or local tacksmen, but kelp manufacture was central to the resettlement policy pursued during the Clearances and continued into the 1830s.

Tacksmen, Tenants and Subtenants

Many of the tacksmen on the Reay estate were related, if distantly, to their chief. John Mackay, Iain Mac Eachainn 'Ic Iain, well-known through the songs of Rob Donn, was a younger son of Mackay of Strathy (and thus a third cousin of Lord Reay).²¹⁹ Robert Mackay, known as the tutor of Farr, was a grandson of Donald 1st Lord Reay, held extensive tacks, and acted as one of the estate factors. However, a number of other families, such as Sutherlands, Forbes, Scobies and Clarkes, rose to prominence in the 18th century. Although there were still Mackay tacksmen on the Sutherland lands of Farr at the end of the 18th century, there were also several Gordon families who had been introduced by the Earls of Sutherland.

As befitted their traditional role, many tacksmen served as officers in the armed forces raised in the north, particularly the Independent Companies of the '45, the Reay and Sutherland Fencibles, and the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders. They also organised the various militia and volunteer companies during the Napoleonic Wars. Many, however, were involved in the cattle trade and took an increasingly commercial attitude to their farming operations. Some looked for better opportunities abroad, and several Mackay tacksmen/gentry led an emigration from Strathnaver to Georgia in the 1730s.²²⁰ But those who stayed began to emulate the landlords in the enjoyment of higher, and more ostentatious, standards of living. From the 1760s a number of tacksmen built new and better houses, and several made the transition to sheepfarmers.

Donald Forbes of Ribigill was a central figure on the Reay estate in the mid-18th century. Born in about 1713, he set up, probably under the patronage of Lord Reay, as a lawyer in Tongue when hardly 20 years of age. For several years he lived at Kinloch and in addition held the lands of Dheruemeadie (between Loch an Dherue and Loch Meadie).²²¹ In 1744, he stated that he had 'been these sixteen years past concerned in adjusting the factors accounts with Lord Reay and dureing that space kept his Lordships rental Book'.²²² At the time of the 1745 Rebellion, he served as a Lieutenant in one of the Government's militia companies and played an important part in the capture of French troops who had been forced to land near Melness with, it was claimed, £12,000 in gold for Prince Charles. According to traditional accounts, the French scattered the money, throwing some into Loch Hakel near Ribigill, and Forbes is said to have laid hands on £1,000 for himself. However, he was officially given £100 in prize money and later made strong complaints about how the money was shared out.²²³ In 1747, Forbes obtained a 19-year lease of the lands of Ribigill, then in the hands of several tenants. He was encouraged to improve the buildings on the understanding that Lord

Reay would pay for any improvements not exceeding 200 merks. The lease, and another relating to his possession of Dhirumeadie, may well have been granted at the time of his marriage to Jane, the daughter of Robert Mackay, the tutor of Farr.²²⁴ In 1751 he had prospered sufficiently to be able to lend 4,000 merks on a heritable bond to Mackay of Strathy.²²⁵

In 1752, Forbes obtained a lease of the salmon fishings of Inchard and the district of Oldshores (which reached from Sandwood to the River Laxford). Forbes was given leave to graze 'yell' or non-milking cattle on part of the Parph, and was also allowed a deduction of rent for damage done by blowing sand. The rent included a large entry payment of £50. In 1764, he was given a lease of all the salmon fishings on the rivers and coasts of Durness and Eddrachillis. As has been noted, he was involved in kelp manufacture for almost twenty years and also traded as a merchant, importing raw materials and luxuries. He supplied Lord Reay with coal, meal and iron and a variety of more exotic goods such as rum, port, brandy, sugar, cinnamon, currants and breakfast and evening tea. Like many of his contemporaries Forbes was engaged in both legal trading and smuggling.²²⁶ In 1766 Forbes renewed his lease of Ribigill, albeit at a slightly higher rent. Five years later he made a new agreement with Lord Reay's tutors. The house at Ribigill had become ruinous and Forbes was allowed £35 for repairs, although his rents were further increased. It would appear that Forbes built himself a new house, probably a three-bay one-and-a-half storey house of stone and lime construction.²²⁷ Despite all these activities, he had continued with his legal work and in 1765 he had been made sheriff-substitute within the bounds of Strathnaver.²²⁸ The devious Forbes – he was apparently known as Donald of the quirks – and his sharp-tongued wife appear in the works of the Gaelic poet Rob Donn; he provides a good illustration of the numerous activities and varied life of a successful tacksman.²²⁹

Donald Mackay, tacksman of Eriboll, combined the traditional role of the tacksman as a respected figure in the local community with a successful career as a drover. He served in the Duke of Gordon's North Fencibles, and in the 1770s built a new house and made various improvements at Eriboll. The renowned Dr John Kennedy, whose father served as missionary at Eriboll, described Mackay as 'A gentleman, a soldier, a Highlander, and a Christian at once', who was 'loved and respected' by the people. His daughter, Barbara, married Captain Mackay John Scobie in the East India Company Service, who became tacksman of Melness and later of Keoldale sheep-farm. The Scobie family were all descended from a minister who came to Assynt in the late 1720s, and Captain Scobie's father had taken over the farm of Melness in 1770 after the death of the bankrupt wadsetter, William Mackay 'of Melness'. Barbara Scobie, 'generally regarded as the model of a Christian Highland gentlewoman', was well-known for her knowledge of traditional Gaelic songs. James Loch was greatly impressed by 'the most talented Highlander I ever saw ... she and her daughters singing some of Rob Dons songs was very wild and beautiful'.²³⁰

The onerous services which many tacksmen exacted from their

subtenants were socially divisive. During the early 1750s, the Sutherland estate management was concerned at the 'poor peoples usage in time past under a tacksmen', and the subtenants of Lochnaver petitioned to be given their own possessions.²³¹ A rising tide of complaint culminated in the emigrations of the early 1770s; as commercial opportunities grew the people found such services irksome. Unlike other areas of the Highlands where the tacksmen led their followers to new lands,²³² in Sutherland these emigrations were organised by the tacksmen for profit. Both the Reay and Sutherland estate managements took steps to curb the power of the tacksmen; restrictions were placed on the number of subtenants who could be removed and on the rent increases which tacksmen could impose. Many of the tacks which were granted in 1787 on the Reay estate only allowed the tacksmen to charge their subtenants 5% on top of their own rents for 'trouble and risk'. The tacksmen of Duartmore, was given particular warning: 'This clause never to be forgot by David Nicol'.²³³ At the same time, the tacksmen greatly assisted the landlords by taking on the burden of managing a growing and relatively poor tenantry.

While there is some evidence that population was growing from the earlier part of the 18th century, it was certainly expanding in the second half of the century. In Durness, the number of registered births rose from 25 per annum in the 1760s to 45 per annum in the 1790s when recruitment for the Napoleonic Wars and farm reorganisation reduced it considerably.²³⁴ A number of factors were involved in the growth of population: the colonisation of new land through the transformation of shielings into permanent settlements; the development of the cattle trade; and the opportunities for earning income through fishing, kelp manufacture, seasonal work in the south and military service. These factors, along with the introduction of the potato, meant that less land was required to set up a family. The creation of a crofting population reliant on by-employment was not solely the result of people being resettled in crowded townships during the clearances; population expansion and the growth of money income in the 18th century played a part as well.

Sheep and the Clearances

Apart from some early experiments with 'southern' sheep in the 1740s and 1750s, the first sheepfarm in Sutherland appears to have been established on the Parph peninsula in the mid-1760s by Lord Reay.²³⁵ It was not until the early 1790s that Armadale on the Strathy estate was let to the Kerrs from Northumberland. A good deal of the initiative was taken by local tacksmen who, in introducing sheep and displacing subtenants, acted independently of the various estate managements. One example would be William Munro of Achany, a small landowner with extensive farming interests, who took a lease of Auldinriny in 1787. On the other hand, wholesale clearances did not take place until the early 19th century.

On the Reay estate a number of sheepfarms were established in 1801, but

were further extended between 1805 and 1809 and again after new leases were granted in 1815. This, along with the fact that many former possessors were allowed to remain as subtenants for varying periods, led to a rather complex pattern of clearances. On the Bighouse estate, a sheepfarm was created at Forsinain and Forsinaird on the early 1800s; 18 families were removed and rents rose from £185 to £400 per annum. But a subsequent attempt to establish sheepfarms over the remainder of the estate was not pursued.²³⁶ Broadly speaking, the clearance of Strathnaver, which was subject to the wholesale programme of reorganisation pursued on the Sutherland estate, took place in three phases. The first phase commenced in 1807 with the creation of the Great Sheep Tenement, which reached from the south shore of Loch Naver to near Lairg and also included the detached lands of Letterbeg. The second phase centred around the farm of Rhiloisk, let to Patrick Sellar, and which was cleared between 1814 and 1816. The third phase lasted from 1819 to 1822 and saw the establishment of the farms of Langdale, also let to Sellar [Fig. 4.12], and Skelpick. Several 'Southern Graziers' moved into the region, but a few of the local tacksmen, such as the Clarkes of Keoldale and Eriboll, became sheepfarmers. However, during the severe depression of the 1820s, a number went bankrupt, including Munro of Achany and Forbes of Melness (previously of Ribigill); and in their wake came incomers such as Mitchell of Ribigill.

Fig. 4.12 The farmhouse at Syre, Strathnaver, said to have been used by Patrick Sellar. 1984.



There were further clearances and sheepfarm reorganisations after the purchase of the Reay and Bighouse estates by the Sutherland family. Rearrangement of the Bighouse estate in 1831 included the clearance of 126 people to the coast.²³⁷ The most well-known clearances of this period were instigated by James Anderson, the fish merchant at Rispond, who had decided to turn his attention to sheepfarming. Between 1839 and 1841 he cleared 32 families from various farms, but met with strong resistance when he attempted to clear another 31 families in 1841. The military were called in but, following arbitration by the local minister, the people were given a respite until the next year. The whole episode was extensively reported in the newspapers and was highly embarrassing to the Duke of Sutherland. This was unfortunate as the estate management considered that the people were partly justified in their response to a rapacious middleman.²³⁸ In 1848, various lands, including the Isle of Handa, were cleared and added to Scourie sheepfarm for Evander MacIver, factor for the Scourie district, and the township of Shegra was also cleared and made into a small sheepfarm.

In the early 19th century, the complete clearance of the population was not sought as, under the prevailing economic conditions, it was financially advantageous to landlords to resettle the bulk of the population on the coast, either in existing townships or in new settlements. Holdings were deliberately made small in order that the people would be forced by necessity to look for earnings from kelp manufacture or the fishing. The main areas of resettlement were around Scourie, on the north shore of Loch Laxford, around Durness, and on the coasts of Tongue and Farr. Resettlement, combined with continuing population increase, saw townships grow enormously.

In the parish of Farr, the resettlement of families cleared from the interior was accomplished through the laying out of a large number of crofts; individual holdings in contrast to the centuries old runrig system of intermixed strips.²³⁹ The experience there exemplifies the close relationship between the clearances and the creation of crofts.²⁴⁰ However, in Tongue, Durness and Eddrachillis the crofts were largely created in the early 1830s (though not without some resistance from the people), well after the main clearances were over.²⁴¹ The prosperity promised by kelp manufacture and fishing failed to materialise and the landlord was faced with a 'redundant population'. Emigration was subsidised, but fishing remained a priority, although the main response of the Sutherland estate management was to encourage the crofters to make the most of their arable land.

THE CHURCH

From the Reformation to 1690

In the medieval period, the province of Strathnaver was divided into three parishes – Durness, Farr and Reay (straddling the border between

Sutherland and Caithness).²⁴² The whole province was thus effectively served by only two churches, Farr and Durness, although there was a considerable number of chapels, including Kirkiboll near Tongue, Skail (where the priest for the parish of Farr resided), Strathy, and Balnaheglish or Kirkton near Bighouse.²⁴³ All of the revenues of the parishes were devoted to supporting the bishops and other dignitaries at the cathedral in Dornoch.²⁴⁴ The precise boundary between Farr and Durness is not known.

Not only did the churchlands of Durness feature in the feuds between the Earls of Caithness and Sutherland, but in 1549 the Earl of Caithness was accused by the bishop of invading the 'kirk and sanctuarii of Far', seizing the 'chalice chrissumstok Eucharest and ornamentis of the altaris', and violating the sanctuary by taking away 18 persons 'agit and decrepit men and bairnis onder colour of saifty'. The sacraments could not be ministered, and the bishop demanded the Earl to cause 'Marie Geolachis sone callit Johne Sutherland in Barredale restoir the messe buik of the kirk of Far, and other Cathenes men the ornamentis of the altar thairof'.²⁴⁵ Robert Stewart was one of the three bishops in Scotland who supported the Reformation, and although he had handed over the church lands of Durness to his brother-in-law, the Earl of Sutherland, he continued to take an active interest in his diocese. Within a decade of 1560 most of the parishes were supplied, if not with ministers, then with exhorters or readers who were allowed to read prayers and sermons. Further progress, however, was gradual, and it was not until the early 17th century that the majority of parishes were supplied with ministers.²⁴⁶ The three northern parishes of Durness, Farr and Reay appear to have been included within the presbytery of Caithness.²⁴⁷

Even in the 17th century, there were to be continuing problems over the shortage of qualified ministers. Eventually a new church was built at Durness in 1619 [see Fig. 3.2], and the chapel at Kirkiboll was later repaired. These may be taken as signs of local confidence in the new church, though the example of Sir Robert Gordon, who was repairing churches throughout eastern Sutherland, may well have been influential.²⁴⁸ It is, of course, very difficult to gauge the impact of the Reformation on people's beliefs, although the work of Alexander Munro, who became minister of Durness in 1634 and who translated a good deal of the Bible into Gaelic verse – known as Sandy Munro's verses – suggests that the new religion could make a strong appeal to the local people.²⁴⁹

The pre-Reformation parishes continued to provide the framework of ecclesiastical administration, although there was an attempt in 1638 by the largely absentee John Abernethy, bishop of Caithness, to reorganise Durness and Farr into three parishes. The chapel at Kirkiboll had already been transformed into a church, but no additional minister was provided and the minister of Durness continued to serve both Durness and Kirkiboll (for some time known as the parish or parishes of Durness and Kintail).²⁵⁰ The political troubles of the mid-17th century set back the progress of the reformed church, and by the 1650s there were no ministers in the parishes of Durness, Farr and Reay. The parish of Reay was the first to be provided: initially by a

preacher who served both Halkirk and Reay, and then by the admission of David Munro in 1657. Gaelic-speaking ministers were in short supply. However, the presbytery of Caithness responded to pleas from Lord Reay, and sent ministers to Strathnaver to preach and to exercise discipline.²⁵¹

The Restoration of the king also saw the reintroduction of bishops acting in concert with synods and presbyteries. In Caithness, as opposed to Easter Ross, opposition to the episcopal settlement was subdued.²⁵² In line with colleagues elsewhere, the bishop of Caithness was keen to accelerate the presentation of ministers to parishes, although there is little evidence that this brought in ministers of poor quality.²⁵³ Durness was provided with a minister in 1663, and Farr the following year. The minister of Reay was actively involved in presbytery business, the minister of Farr much less so, and the minister of Durness hardly attended any meetings of presbytery.

In imposing church discipline, the presbytery of Caithness dealt with cases of sabbath breaking, piping at lykewakes and superstitious customs. It concentrated, however, on sexual misbehaviour and a great deal of its time and energy was expended on investigating unmarried pregnancies.²⁵⁴ In view of the distance involved in bringing delinquents to the presbytery at its normal meeting place in Thurso, in 1665 the synod of Caithness and Sutherland ordered some ministers to go to Strathnaver and, in concert with the ministers there, to exercise discipline against fornicators, adulterers and other delinquents. The ministers subsequently reported that they had convened at Farr and 'went about discipline w[i]t[h] all possible diligence and zeal'.²⁵⁵ The establishment of an active kirk session appears to have brought such expeditions to an end, although weightier cases continued to be remitted to the presbytery. One such case concerned William, brother to Mackay of Bighouse, and Margaret, daughter of Mackay of Strathy. When brought before the session of Farr in 1676, William had confessed to the sin of fornication but denied being the father of Margaret's child, 'because as he alledged the child was born ane moneth & five weeks within the nine moneth after his being guilty with her.' The presbytery was persuaded to invite the minister to search for another man who had been 'scandalously conversing' with Margaret.²⁵⁶

Presbyterianism Re-Established

When presbyterianism was re-established in 1690, there was a severe shortage of suitably qualified ministers in the presbytery of Caithness; it was not until 1697 that there were four ministers and a presbytery could be formally established. A minister for Farr was ordained that year. Although the province of Strathnaver appears to have been mainly presbyterian territory, there were problems with the minister of Durness, Hugh Munro, and in 1699 the presbytery considered instituting proceedings against him. However, Lord Reay found that the parishioners were so violently set against the

presbytery's suspension of the minister of Latheron, that he advised 'if the presbytry had a suitable and well qualified person ... they might proceed against Mr Hugh Monro ... otherwise the paroch would be redacted to great straits in baptiseing their children and in their marriages'.²⁵⁷ His Lordship's view prevailed, and Durness remained under an episcopalian incumbent for a few more years. In 1701 the presbytery, minded of the 'clamant condition' of the parish, decided to investigate the parishioners' 'Inclination to have a presbyterian minister'.²⁵⁸ However, the parish was vacant until 1707, when John Mackay (who was related to Lord Reay) was ordained at Kirkiboll. Mackay, however, left after it became evident that promises to divide up the huge parish were not going to be fulfilled.

Kirk sessions and the presbytery continued their struggle to deal with fornicating and adulterous parishioners, and abolish such practices as promiscuous dancing at weddings. In 1715, Hugh Mackay of Strathy was hauled before the presbytery accused of adultery with one Margaret Bain. Lord Reay took a personal interest and removed Margaret from Strathy's estate to his own. She was disallowed from going to Strathy without her husband's permission and, if she had to go, he was to 'send one with her to watch her carriage'.²⁵⁹ Lord Reay's support contrasted with the behaviour of the Caithness lairds who ignored the presbytery's censure of their sexual adventures.²⁶⁰ Less evident is the effect of the new church on the traditional tales, the Fingalian legends which were still a part of the local folklore in the 1730s.²⁶¹

The difficulties of administering to a large parish were particularly acute in the case of Durness. In the 1720s, there were already 2,500 catechisable inhabitants in the parish. Although there were five places of public worship, yet both the minister and the people were:

under great hardships and inconveniences in travelling It being impracticable to travell on Horseback ... often endangers their lives ... and the Minister is frequently seven or eight weeks at once absent from his house on goeing about his ministeriall work, and not only many children dye in his absence without Baptisme, but people come to age, dye without haveing the benefite of a Minister to visite them when most earnest for the same.

In 1721, after Lord Reay had petitioned the General Assembly, an act was passed ordering a collection to be made throughout Scotland, the proceeds of which were to be used in supporting new ministers. Three years later, the General Assembly authorised both the splitting of Durness into three parishes (Tongue, Durness and Eddrachillis) and the creation of a new presbytery of Tongue which was to contain the parishes of Farr, Tongue, Durness, Eddrachillis and, for a few years, Assynt. The kirks at Tongue and Durness were largely rebuilt, and a completely new church was built at Badcall.²⁶²

The parish of Reay, however, was not so well provided for and Alexander Pope, who became minister in 1734, had to strive hard to obtain a decent stipend and persuade the heritors to build a church and manse. The church

consisted only of bare walls which were ready to fall, and there had apparently not been a manse since the Reformation. Pope complained that he had been forced to live in a little barn belonging to a brewer, and had been chased out every morning before he had time to put on his clothes. The heritors tried to play down his responsibilities but, as Pope pointed out, Reay was a sizeable parish with over 500 catechisable persons within the sound of the church bell. Moreover, Strath Halladale itself, was 'a Glen of 12 miles in lenth, besides the shellings at 3 miles distance therefrom, having therein 500 Catechisable persons whereof only 13 can read, and the minister is obliged to preach once every 5th or 6th Sabath there'.²⁶³

Of the ministers, none was to be more conscientious than Murdo Macdonald, the minister of Durness, an evangelical whose sternness was moderated by his deep and sincere compassion.²⁶⁴ Not all ministers were to command the people's respect. The worst was John Skeldoch, appointed to Farr by the Earl of Sutherland in direct opposition to the wishes of the congregation. In 1732, some of the parishioners of Farr had presented a petition to the presbytery against the call and claiming that:

upon a Sabbath after he had preach'd at Keankyle he had a long Conversation upon the Method of improveing Land and Grass in the Highlands and concerning the manly feats of some Highlanders in his own Country; and that this Conversation continu'd from two oclock in the afternoon till Sunset in a June day.

Influence was brought to bear through the synod, and Skeldoch was admitted in 1734. However, he was very inattentive to his duties, preferring to concentrate on his farming interests, and was the subject of various proceedings for oppressing his subtenants. He was eventually suspended in 1748.²⁶⁵ His parishioners did not attend his services, instead they held their own fellowship meetings.

The Reay estate, on the other hand, tended not to exercise the right of presentation but its views were sought by the presbytery. In 1769 there was some opposition to the choice of William Mackenzie, missionary in the heights of Farr, for the parish of Tongue. A number of parishioners dissented and presented a petition asking to hear two other preachers. The presbytery refused – there 'would be no end to such work' – and indeed the subsequent call to Mackenzie revealed that the protesters were in a minority.²⁶⁶ The opposition to certain ministers should be considered alongside the lengthy controversy over 'the mens' day', or fellowship meetings held on the Friday of the Communion season which, between 1737 and 1758, the synod tried unsuccessfully to suppress.²⁶⁷

All parishes appear to have had active kirk sessions. The records have not always survived and were sometimes irregularly kept. One of the earliest surviving entries in the session book of Tongue relates to Hugh Ross, the former parochial schoolmaster and session clerk, whose unpaid salary on his death for services to the session was 'something considerable'. The session took a hard line, and on the grounds that there could be no legal claim, gave

his son a guinea.²⁶⁸ The sessions tended to be filled by parish schoolmasters and tacksmen, although small tenants served as well. The session of Durness included assessors who attended meetings without taking part in the proceedings. In 1767, four 'promising young men of grave and decent Deportment' were selected to 'assist the Elders who are some of them tender and elderly men'. Seven years later these assessors were appointed as elders.²⁶⁹ There can be no doubt that this was a grounding for future leaders within the crofting community.

The kirk sessions continued to concentrate on matters of discipline, particularly sexual ones. The usual punishments were applied: appearing before the congregation in sackcloth, fines and excommunication. A man who falsely accused another of indecent familiarities was 'ordered to stand in Sackcloth next sabbath before the Congregation, to lay his hand on his Mouth and own that he told a lye'.²⁷⁰ The Durness session exercised discretion in levying fines. A married man found guilty in 1765 of fathering a bastard was excused: he was 'in low Circumstances and that it would be doing a manifest Injury to his weak throug helpless Family to exact his Fine'.²⁷¹ The session also allowed a young lad, Donald Mackay alias MacEnicalister Roy in Balnakiell, to marry Mary Down, daughter of a certain 'Robert Down Poet in Balnaceill' and who was visibly pregnant, despite the objections of the boy's father.²⁷² The more difficult cases, especially when the charge was denied, were remitted to the presbytery. These included a number of cases involving tacksmen who resisted the church's authority (maidservants of tacksmen often suffered from the attentions of their masters or their sons).²⁷³ Occasionally, something of the tone of the presbytery's proceedings is revealed. One case from 1770 concerned a young unmarried girl who killed her baby and then absconded. The father, who was a married man, was summoned before the presbytery which:

spent long time in laying before him both the Nature, & awful Consequence of his gross deviation from the divine Law, if unpardoned, and unrepented of: therefore, urging him importunately by faith & prayer, to apply to the Merits of a Saviour for remission of Sin, & that repentance, which is unto Life – exhorting him, for the future, to be more watchful, & circumspect – abstaining from Fleshly Lusts which war against the Soul.

He was then remitted back to the session to satisfy discipline in the usual manner.²⁷⁴

The kirk session of Durness raised a modest income, mainly from fines, but also from church collections, the interest on a bond granted by Lord Reay and from lending out the mortcloth. This was spent on the wages of the clerk and kirk officer, minor repairs to the kirk and schoolhouse, and meal for the poor. The session also provided limited assistance to the indigent: in 1771 it paid a surgeon for 'Curing 2 poor men', and the following year gave money to Barbara Munro [probably a widow] 'to help her son going to a Trade'.²⁷⁵ The session of Tongue distributed the limited funds from the poor box to needy parishioners, including two 'reduced and superannuate' elders.²⁷⁶

Education and Missionary Activity

The Reformation ideal was for every parish to have a school. Although this was enshrined in various Acts of the Scottish Parliament during the 17th century, which placed an obligation on heritors to pay for a schoolmaster, educational provision in the Highlands remained poor. It has been suggested, however, that there were more schools than has been realised,²⁷⁷ and a search of the records has revealed the names of several schoolmasters on the north coast: 'Mr Androw Morisone school Maister at Rhae' in 1635;²⁷⁸ James Taillor schoolmaster there in 1666;²⁷⁹ Donald McMarcus in Farr in 1681;²⁸⁰ and John Fullartone in Strathy in 1705, who was probably employed by the Mackays of Strathy.²⁸¹ Regular provision of parochial schools was not achieved until the 18th century when Lord Reay took an interest, although even then provision could be patchy; there was, for instance, no school in Tongue in 1755.²⁸²

The insufficient coverage afforded by parochial schools attracted the attention of the SSPCK (Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge), and the Society's sixth school was established at Durness in 1712. Two years later, the school had 67 pupils 'reading the Bible, writeing, learning arithmetick & musick &c'. The Society's schools tended to be moved about: in 1720 the Durness school was transferred to Ribigill, in 1721 to Langwell in Strathnaver and in 1725 to Strath Halladale. In the meantime, a new school had been established in the parish of Eddrachillis. By the 1730s, the Society was maintaining two schools: one in the parish of Tongue and another in the parish of Durness.²⁸³ Considerable emphasis was placed on religious education and the 'rooting out' of the Gaelic language; and until 1767, the Society had a policy of only teaching in English.²⁸⁴

There had been considerable concern over the religious state of the Highlands, and in 1725 a Committee for the Reformation of the Highlands, otherwise known as the Royal Bounty Committee, was established to assist with the supply of Gaelic-speaking ministers and catechists. Joint-funding by the SSPCK and the Committee of schoolmaster/catechists who would also visit and pray with the sick, became common.²⁸⁵ In 1736, for instance, these organisations funded the following posts: John Macdonald, schoolmaster and catechist at Knockbreck, Durness; Robert Mackay, schoolmaster and catechist at Grumbeg; Aeneas Mackay, catechist in Eddrachillis; Donald Sutherland also known as Donald Happie, catechist in Tongue; and Mr William Henderson, itinerant preacher or missionary in the parish of Farr.²⁸⁶

Most schoolmasters intended to train for the ministry, but the shortage of qualified Gaelic speakers could lead to unsuitable appointments. Although John Ewing, appointed schoolmaster and catechist at Knockbreck, Durness, ca 1740, was able to read the scriptures in church and translate them from English into Gaelic, what he had of the Gaelic was 'very unintelligible'. He was unable to sing the church tunes or to teach them. Moreover, he refused to teach children who only turned up for part of the day, which was hard on tenants who did not have servants and relied on their children to perform

many household and agricultural tasks. The few children who did go to his school were made to translate from English to Gaelic. He was advised to leave, and when he did not, the people stole his peats leaving him not 'one dry peat to put on the fire, my wife & I are obliged to go a mile, & pull heather, & carry it home on our backs.' As Ewing himself admitted, he was 'useless to the people indeed, because they do not keep yr children at ye school'. His shortcomings, which included an 'unmanageable Temper', were brought to the attention of the SSPCK and Lord Reay, who suggested Donald Mackay, son of the late catechist William Mackay, as a suitable replacement. Donald was a 'sober pious lad and has taught this parish school here with success for several years it's true he cannot sing but that deficiency can be made up.' Ewing's employment was terminated in 1741.²⁸⁷

Private schoolmasters continued to be employed by tacksmen in the more remote districts. For instance, Patrick Ross, who taught at Achness in 1773, was probably employed by Robert Gordon of Achness.²⁸⁸ Although there is some evidence of increasing literacy, the provision of schools did not match the growth of population. In 1811, it was reported that there was no society school in upper Strathnaver and the children were very deficient in learning; less than 40 persons out of a population of about 900 could read the Bible in Gaelic.²⁸⁹ However, a number of charitable societies were established to further Gaelic education, and although the Gaelic School Society schools placed considerable emphasis on religious education, they appear to have had a significant effect on the general level of literacy. The schools moved around, enabling old as well as young to learn to read. In 1825, the parish of Eddrachillis contained three society schools in addition to the parochial school: an SSPCK school at Oldshores established ca 1800; an Edinburgh Gaelic Society school at Kinlochbervie dating from 1821; and a Glasgow Gaelic Society school at Achrisgill established in 1823 (both of the Gaelic Society establishments were circulating schools).²⁹⁰ By 1826, there were only 1,413 people over the age of 20 in the province of Strathnaver who could not read either English or Gaelic, out of a total population of 5,487. As yet, about one in ten families were without someone who could read. As people acquired the ability to read Gaelic, their desire grew to learn and understand English.²⁹¹

In 1755, there were 3 preaching places in the parish of Farr: the church at Clachan; Achness, where the minister preached every fourth sabbath; and Strath where the minister preached but once a quarter.²⁹² By the 1760s, there was a missionary minister permanently based in the heights of Strathnaver who spent one third of his time administering to Strath Halladale.²⁹³ A generous donation allowed the SSPCK to set up missions, and in 1794 one was established at Eriboll to serve the districts of West Moine, Melness and Oldshores. The missionary preached at 'Cambusnadun' near Eriboll and Melness in winter and spring, and preached 12 sabbaths in summer and autumn at Kinlochbervie.²⁹⁴ A new mission church [Fig. 4.13] was built at Eriboll in 1804.²⁹⁵ In 1797, the presbytery greatly disapproved of the government move to prevent the erection of chapels of ease as it would

prevent the 'spread and furtherance of the Gospel – since population is rapidly increasing'.²⁹⁶ Population growth and the movement of people associated with the clearances created considerable pressure for additional places of worship. Eventually, in the late 1820s, the government funded a number of 'Parliamentary' churches in the Highlands – including Strathy and Kinlochbervie²⁹⁷ [Fig. 4.14]. The Eriboll missionary was then restricted to West Moine, Eriboll and Melness. Provision continued to be poor in some districts. Until a new building was built in the mid 1830s, services in Talmine took place in the schoolhouse, with people 'standing upon the windows and about the doors'.²⁹⁸ Another missionary minister, who also worked in Watten and Halkirk in Caithness, took care of Strath Halladale – where ca 1830 near Comgill, a thatched church was built by the people, with assistance from the Sutherland family.²⁹⁹

The Role of the Ministers During the Clearances

The ministers of Sutherland have been extensively criticised for siding with the landlords during the clearances, and none more so than the Rev David Mackenzie of Farr.³⁰⁰ Recent years have seen a re-assessment of that role. It has been pointed out that Mackenzie refused to deny the circumstances leading to Sellar's trial, on the grounds that there was some foundation to the allegations made against the factor. Moreover, it has been argued that the letter which the minister wrote to James Loch in 1818, criticising the resettlement arrangements, 'was probably the most comprehensive rejection

Fig. 4.13 Mission church at Loch Eriboll.



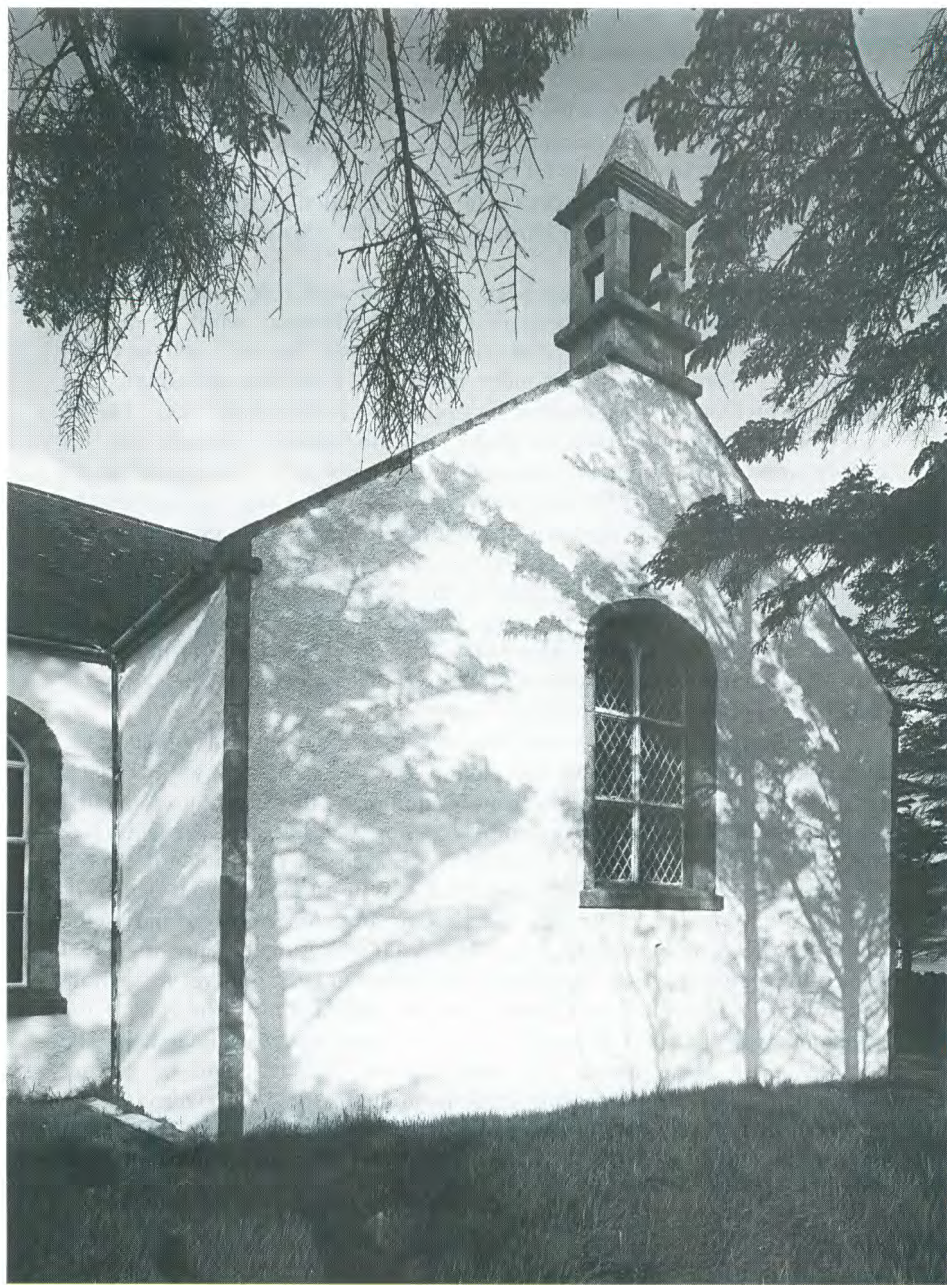


Fig. 4.14 The T-plan 'Parliamentary' church at Kinlochbervie (now the Free Presbyterian Church), built in 1829.

of the assumptions of the Sutherland policy uttered during these years'.³⁰¹ One study has emphasised the diversity of actions and attitudes among the clergy, but suggested that the Sutherland estate papers corroborated Donald MacLeod of Gloomy Memories' account of the very poor opinion enjoyed by the ministers during the clearances. Mackenzie was not an active opponent of the clearances, but was critical of the way in which the policy was carried out. Attention has also been drawn to the ambivalent position adopted by William Findlater, minister of Durness, during the riots which took place in 1841.³⁰²

Mackenzie's behaviour has been contrasted with that of Donald Sage, missionary minister at Achness in Upper Strathnaver, who left a very influential account of the 1819 clearances and has enjoyed a better reputation.³⁰³ Sage's father, Alexander, minister of Kildonan, was singled out for praise by Donald MacLeod for his opposition to the clearances.³⁰⁴ On the other hand, although Donald Sage had undoubted concern for his congregation, his position as a missionary minister was precarious and he did not protest. Indeed, in 1818, the Sutherland estate factor wrote to him that he was pleased that the people were preparing to leave their possessions: 'I never doubted their regular behaviour and I am sensible much of that regularity & good order is in part owing to the constant advice of their minister'.³⁰⁵ Sage appears to have followed the line adopted by his predecessor, the Rev Duncan MacAulay, whose induction to Assynt in 1813 was highly unpopular as the people thought that he had acted as a spy for Sellar when missionary at Achness.³⁰⁶

In a thorough examination of Mackenzie's case, Paton has argued that, even though the influence of the church was not as pervasive as it later became, Mackenzie faced no threat to his authority: there were no separatist movements in his parish and he led his congregation into the Free Church at the Disruption. Mackenzie's position was based on the standard church doctrine of the time, which accepted Divine Will no matter what degree of suffering this entailed.³⁰⁷ The lack of action by individual ministers during the clearances is to be expected, given the church's uncritical stance on social issues in general.³⁰⁸ As has been pointed out, the move by whole congregations into the Free Church was not attributable to the role of the ministers during the Clearances.³⁰⁹ It is important to understand the complexity of these issues. The ministers of Tongue could be sincere evangelicals capable of passing critical comment on the poverty of the people following the clearances, while at the same time taking an evident interest in the improvement of their glebe and displacing some of their neighbours.³¹⁰

The Rise of Evangelical Protestantism

Like many other parts of the Highlands during the first half of the 19th century, evangelical protestantism came to play a central role in many

people's lives in north-west Sutherland. In part, this was the culmination of the efforts of evangelical ministers, missionaries and the influence of the 'Men', *na daoine*, lay preachers renowned for their religious intensity. The availability of a Gaelic Bible in the early 19th century, and the assistance provided by organisations such as the Reay and Strathnaver Auxiliary Bible Society in distributing bibles, combined with the work of the Gaelic School movement which enabled people to read the Bible for themselves.³¹¹ The strength of evangelicalism in the 19th century suggests that the social and psychological consequences of the collapse of the old order in the Highlands were important factors. The evangelical faith gave people a sense of purpose and a way of coping with the immense changes sweeping the Highlands.³¹²

Something of the strength of this faith – and the landlord reaction – is gained from James Loch's astonishment when, in 1835, he came across a crowd of 3,000 people on a rain-drenched hillside in north-west Sutherland, 'to hear preaching; the rain pouring incessantly. The English service in the Church was attended by about 12 individuals.'³¹³ People walked great distances to hear well-known preachers, and individuals such as Margaret Macdiarmid (Mrs Mackay of Shegra) were renowned and long remembered for the intensity of their beliefs and devout way of life.³¹⁴ However, poverty, seasonal work elsewhere and inaccessibility continued to affect church attendance; in the 1830s it was reported that 'all the parishioners occasionally attend, though many of them are, from circumstances, very irregular.' Much worship took place outwith normal church services. In Tongue, the minister infrequently went to remote districts and either preached 'in the open air or in some large byre or barn'; and in Eddrachillis, there were meetings on the sabbath for prayer and readings 'conducted by pious persons' in distant parts of the parish. Similar meetings were taking place in the Skerry district but 'it is not under the superintendance of any person officially connected with the congregation, and he [the minister] considers it irregular' (such activity could well foster separatism – the breakaway of people from the established church). In Durness and Tongue, most townships held meetings on Sabbath evenings for readings from the Bible and religious works.³¹⁵

There were still individuals who disregarded church discipline. Activities which were so important to peoples' livelihoods such as fishing tempted some to sabbath breaking – although it was said that most fishermen who broke the sabbath were not local. Cases coming before the presbytery appear to have been restricted to the likes of Alexander Bain, the ground officer and Thomas Mackay, merchant in Torrisdale who got drunk in Kirkiboll inn on the sabbath; and two servants of the sheepfarmer at Ribigill, who were found guilty of fornication sometime after the July Heisbreacky market. The impression is gained that the level of indiscipline had not only diminished since the mid-18th century, but that censorious behaviour was more prevalent outwith the crofting community.³¹⁶ Ironically, the presbytery faced most trouble from two of its own members. The case of the Rev John Mackenzie of Eddrachillis first came to official light at a

meeting of the synod in 1822, when 'there appeared an apprehension of Great irregularity, and frequent want of Church ordinances'. The presbytery, which appears to have been aware of the situation (possibly for some time), managed to persuade Mackenzie to agree to the appointment of an assistant. Mackenzie did not co-operate, and in 1824 a complaint was made by certain elders and heads of families accusing their minister of drunkenness and neglect of duties for several years, to such an extent that the 'whole discipline of the parish [was] come into confusion'. They also accused him of frustrating the efforts of his assistant. Mackenzie eventually agreed to the continuance of the assistant and the parishioners dropped their complaint. The problems resurfaced when the assistant moved to another parish, and in 1831 the congregation petitioned presbytery that, 'in a population of about 600 Souls, at no great distance from the Parish Church [at Badcall], scarcely above a score are found entering its walls on Sabbath days'. Faced with a visitation by the presbytery, and with the Sutherland family's agreement, Mackenzie accepted the appointment of an assistant and successor.³¹⁷ These arrangements were hardly in place when the presbytery had to deal with the *Fama Clamosa* surrounding the minister of the Parliamentary Church at Kinlochbervie. Donald Mackenzie, who had suddenly dismissed his servant maid in October 1830, then returned with her as his wife eight months later, having married at the Gaelic Chapel in Greenock. Many members of the congregation had deserted the church, and the presbytery commenced an investigation to decide whether Mackenzie was guilty of antinuptial fornication. No-one had personal knowledge of any indecent behaviour prior to the marriage, apart from Mackenzie's 'unbecoming and indecorous habit, of letting her sit with him at meals'. However, Mackenzie was unable to supply any references as to his wife's whereabouts in the months prior to her marriage and eventually emigrated to Canada.³¹⁸

A major aspect to evangelicalism was the strength of feeling against patronage which was shared by ministers and people alike. In 1825, the presbytery of Tongue made an overture to the General Assembly on the evils of patronage.³¹⁹ Two years later, however, the presbytery had to deal with John McIntosh, catechist and elder of Farr, who had withdrawn from the church because 'it was a matter of Conscience with him, to separate from a Church in which there were so many things contrary to the Word of God, especially forcing Ministers on Congregations'. A sympathetic presbytery eventually persuaded him to repent.³²⁰ Such sentiments, however, led to two patronage disputes: firstly in 1828, when there was opposition to Stafford's choice of minister for the Parliamentary Church of Strathy;³²¹ and then in 1834, when Kinlochbervie fell vacant. A Royal Presentation to Kinlochbervie was received in favour of one Robert Clarke, then a minister in Glasgow, but the inhabitants petitioned in favour of Archibald Cook. The congregation was aware that Cook had been represented to the Sutherland family as 'deficient in ministerial qualifications', but hoped that the presbytery alone would judge whether 'he is not by his principles and habits of life peculiarly fitted for the people of Kenlochberuie, among whom there

are none of a higher rank, than schoolmasters and Fishers.’ Despite its evangelical character, the presbytery recognised the legal right of the Crown as patron and refused the petition. When the call to Clarke was administered, ‘a leading individual in the Parish did repeatedly attack the public & private character of those who came forth to sign the call, while in the act of signing’. Only the factor and ten heads of families signed, but nevertheless Clarke’s admission went ahead. The presbytery afterwards expressed its hope to the General Assembly for ‘measures to restore to the Christian people that voice in the settlement of their ministers which originally belonged to them by the constitution of the church.’³²² Against this background, it is not surprising that, at the Disruption of 1843, most of the ministers and the bulk of the population in north-west Sutherland left the established church for the Free Church. It was said that the church bell of Durness was muffled with an old sock and that a dead dog was left hanging over the pulpit in Farr church.³²³

CONCLUSION

The rise of the Mackays to become a significant force in the northern Highlands invites comparisons with other expanding clans such as the Mackenzies of Ross-shire. However, the competition faced by the Mackays from the Sutherland/Gordon interest and the earls of Caithness, effectively blocked the advances of the Mackays, leaving them without a permanent presence in the richer arable lands of eastern Sutherland or the Caithness plain.

The period of the civil war and interregnum was particularly disruptive to the fortunes of the Mackay clan, but this must be seen against the changes taking place before the 1640s.³²⁴ Although sales of land were made from the 1630s, the assistance of the clan gentry, especially in providing loans in return for wadsets, made a significant contribution to the survival of the house of Mackay.³²⁵

The rise of indebtedness was a central feature in the history of the Mackay gentry and largely explains the various land transactions. It is tempting to attribute the financial difficulties to the predatory actions of Sir Robert Gordon and the house of Sutherland. But more general causes should also be sought. We do not know so much of the daily lives of the Mackay families as we do of their Caithness counterparts, whose lavish entertainments and often riotous living is well documented.³²⁶ However, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the cultural integration of the Mackay gentry into Lowland ways was obvious by the early 18th century. The concerns of the Mackays of Bighouse over marriage provisions, the management of the family debts and their interest in estate improvements are typical of landlords throughout Scotland. Attention should also be drawn to the search for opportunities outwith the Highlands; a quest which was shared by the younger sons of the gentry and the smaller lairds alike.

Landlords, including the most traditional of clan chiefs, had always adopted a commercial attitude towards their estates and had been alert to trading opportunities.³²⁷ Indeed, attention is now being drawn to the penetration of economic forces into the Western Highlands in the 16th century, and the evidence would suggest that this is true of northern Sutherland as well.³²⁸ This does not mean that we should lose sight of the continuing importance of kinship and military strength. However, the ground was well prepared for a quickening of the commercial impulses in the 18th century with the development of the fishing and kelp industries and the expansion of the cattle trade.³²⁹ In this process, the role of the Sutherland tacksmen, not as reactionaries, but as commercial middlemen, was to be crucial. The climax to this transformation came with the introduction of sheepfarming, the clearances, and the creation of the crowded crofting townships of the coastal margins.

Accounts of the religious history of the Highlands in the 18th century have tended to paint a picture of a church dominated by lukewarm ministers. In fact, most ministers of northern Sutherland were conscientious, and all parishes had functioning kirk sessions. The opposition to Skeldoch's induction and the controversy over the fellowship meetings suggests that the church had put down strong roots. Of course, there was still much superstition and an enduring tradition of practices which harked back to the pre-Reformation period and which may have drawn upon an even older pagan past. Moreover, the incident known as the 'lapse of Halmadary', when a prayer meeting went out of control and came close to sacrificing a man's son, presents an intriguing insight into religious beliefs.³³⁰ However, the foundations had been laid for evangelical presbyterianism to take a firm hold in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and to play a part in nurturing leadership within the crofting community.

The process of change, however, was to be long drawn-out and complex; commercial pressures coincided for a considerable period with both kinship-based and feudal relationships. Grimble's assessment of Rob Donn's world as having preserved its immemorial way of life, unaffected by external influences, cannot be sustained.³³¹ On the other hand, the century after 1750 was to bring about a radically different set of social and economic relationships.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Hugh Cheape, Dr Barbara Crawford and Elizabeth Beaton for their helpful comments; John Ballantyne for supplying many useful references; R.W. Munro for sight of an unpublished paper on the Munros in Strathnaver. I am particularly grateful to the staffs of the National Library of Scotland and Scottish Record Office for their assistance over many years. Figure 4.3 was kindly provided by Dr. J. Close-Brooks and Figure 4.12 by J.A. Johnston, Bettyhill. Figure 4.14 is Crown copyright, courtesy of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland.

References and Abbreviations

Manuscript:

Highland Council Archive, Inverness (HCA):

Sutherland 1/1/7 Sutherland Book of Disjunctions

National Library of Scotland (NLS):

Acc.10824	Cumming-Gordon Accession
Adv. MS 37.2.4	John Philip Wood Legal Biographies
Dep.175	Cumming-Gordon Deposit
Dep.313	Sutherland Papers
MS 1149, 1483	Delvine Papers
MS 3430	Lee Papers

Scottish Record Office (SRO):

CH1/2	Church of Scotland General Assembly Papers
CH2/47	Presbytery of Caithness
CH2/508	Presbytery of Tongue
CH2/509	Kirk Session of Tongue
CH2/876	Kirk Session of Durness
CS	Court of Session Records (Warrants and Processes)
D163	Particular Registers of Inhibitions, Inverness
E326	Exchequer Records: Assessed Tax Schedules
GD84	Reay Papers
GD87	Mackay of Bighouse Muniments
GD95	SSPCK Records
GD136	Sinclair of Freswick Papers
GD170	Campbell of Barcaldine Muniments
GD214	Professor Robert Kerr Hannay's Papers
GD268	Loch Muniments
RD	Registers of Deeds (Registers and Warrants)
RH6	Register House Charters
RH15	Register House Papers
RS37, 38	Particular Registers of Sasines, Inverness
RT	Register of Tailzies
SC9	Dornoch Sheriff Court Records
SC14	Wick Sheriff Court Records
SC34	Tain Sheriff Court Records
TE	Teind Court Records

Printed:

<i>OPS</i>	Origines Parochiales Scotiae (Bannatyne Club, 1851-55).
<i>SAS</i>	Sutherland Abbreviated Sasines.
<i>RMS</i>	Thomson, J.M. et al (eds) Registrum Magni Sigilii Regum Scotorum. 1882-1914.
<i>RPC</i>	Burton, J.H. et al (eds) The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland. 1877-.
<i>RRS</i>	Barrow, G.W.S. et al (eds) Regesta Regum Scotorum. 1960-.

Notes

1. Grimble, I. *Chief of Mackay*. 1965 (reprinted 1993); *The World of Rob Donn*. 1979; *The Trial of Patrick Sellar*. 1962 (reprinted with additions 1993). The latter work has been highly influential although the other volumes are perhaps more distinguished works of scholarship.
2. Mackay, A. *The Book of Mackay*. 1906. An essential contribution to the history of the province of Strathnaver which appeared too late to be taken account of is Mackay, W.R.

- 'Early Evangelical Religion in the Far North: a *Kulturkampf*', in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*. 1996. vol 26.
3. See eg Cheape, H. 'Caisteal Bharraich, Dun Varrich and the Wider Tradition', in *Northern Studies* 30. 1993: 56.
 4. Pope, A. 'Of Caithness, Strathnaver, and Sutherland', in Pennant, T. *A Tour in Scotland 1769*. 1774: 320, 323.
 5. Crawford, B.E. 'Scots and Scandinavians in Medieval Caithness: A Study of the Period 1266-1375', in Baldwin, J.R. (ed) *Caithness: A Cultural Crossroads*. 1982: 65.
 6. NLS Dep.313/35/101/12 for an example of the payment of feu duty to the Bishop of Moray in the 17th century.
 7. Crawford, B.E. 'The Earldom of Caithness and the Kingdom of Scotland 1150-1266', in Stringer, K.J. (ed) *Essays on the Nobility of Medieval Scotland*. 1985: 34-36. The gift of 4 davochs in Strathnaver by William Federeth to Reginald Cheyne suggests that the lands in Strathnaver were split between Joanna's daughters, and were thus subject to the same rules of inheritance as the remainder of the Caithness earldom.
 8. Crawford, B.E. 1982: 65.
 9. Gordon, R. *A Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*. 1813: 32.
 10. Traditional accounts of the 'red priest' point to the presence of St Maelrubha and it is noteworthy that the monastery he founded at Applecross appears to have enjoyed lands of similar extent to Durness.
 11. Cheape, on the other hand, argues that Castle Varrich should be associated with Angus Dubh Mackay: Cheape, H. 1995.
 12. *RMS* II. no.520.
 13. Fraser, W. *The Sutherland Book*. 1892. I: 71-2, 86, 140; *OPS* II ii 697.
 14. Morrison, A. *The MacLeods – The Genealogy of a Clan*. V. c1977; SRO GD84/1/23/1-3. Donald MacMurdo, the wild man of Hope, buried at Durness, is claimed to be one of the MacLeods of Eddrachillis by MacLeod historians, and as a Mackay by the Mackays: Morrison, A. ca 1977; Mackay, A. 1906: 280-82.
 15. Crawford, B.E. 1982: 69-71; Mackay, A. 1906: 57-59; Munro, J. & Munro, R.W. (eds) *Acts of the Lords of the Isles* (Scottish History Society). 1986: 30-31, 45-47, 141-43; *RMS*. II. nos. 148, 149.
 16. Munro, J. & Munro, R.W. (eds) 1986: 141-43; NLS Dep.313/462 Inventory; *OPS* II ii 744-45. The Mackays of Strathnaver obtained the superiority of lower Strath Halladale in 1570 and retained it after the lands were acquired by the Mackays of Bighouse.
 17. Bannerman, J. *The Beatons: A Medical Kindred in the Classical Gaelic Tradition*. 1986: 62-64.
 19. SRO RH6/772.
 21. Mary Beith. 'Making the Cure', in *West Highland Free Press*. 5 May - 30 June 1995.
 22. SRO RH6/1213, 1218; *RMS* III 2048.
 23. SRO RH6/1240, 1241.
 24. Donaldson, G. *Reformed by Bishops*. 1987: 56.
 25. This would apparently explain why there were investigations in the 1640s into lands in Strathnaver belonging to the bishopric of Orkney; Peterkin, A. *Rentals of the Ancient Earldom and Bishoprick of Orkney*. 1820. iii 11; Anderson, P.D. *Black Patie: The Life and Times of Patrick Stewart Earl of Orkney, Lord of Shetland*. 1992: 28. The Queen also made Reid tenant of the churchlands of Durness: *OPS* II ii 703.
 26. Fraser, W. 1892. I: 140-41, 145; Wormald, J. *Lords and Men in Scotland: Bonds of Manrent 1442-1603*. 1985: 20, 63, 289.
 27. Fraser, W. 1892. I: 156-161; NLS Dep.313/32/41, 45.
 28. Grimble, I. 1965: 44-45.
 29. SRO GD84/1/11/4; Mackay, A. 1906: 108. This was not, as Mackay states, an outright disposition.
 30. NLS Dep.313/35/101/1-11; Mackay, A. 1906: 122.
 32. SRO D163/3 ff.9v-10v; Grimble, I. 1993. 71-72, 94-95. GD84/2/128.
 33. Mackay, A. 1906: 131; Grimble, I. 1993: 63-64, 78-79.
 34. SRO GD84/1/8/12; GD84/1/12/1B, 12/2B, 12/4B. Sir Rorie soon afterwards assigned the bond to Alexander Corbat.
 35. NLS Dep.313/35/101/6-8.
 36. SRO RS37/3 f.290; RS37/6 ff.63-64; GD84/1/28/2B. This was a wadset right which subsisted until 1637 but Seaforth did not possess the lands: he was merely paid interest: SRO GD84/1/28/3B(2).
 37. SRO RS37/3 ff.290-91.
 38. SRO GD84/1/12/1; RS37/3 ff.291-92.

39. SRO GD84/1/9/1.
40. Grimble, I. 1993: 124.
41. NLS Dep.313/35/103.
42. SRO RS37/5 ff.171-72.
43. SRO GD84/1/12/1.
44. NLS Dep.313/35/105; Dep.313/40.
45. SC14/50/1 ff.25r-26r.
46. NLS Dep.313/50/273-278.
47. Grimble, I. 1993: 123.
48. SRO RS37/6 ff.85-86.
49. SRO GD84/2/6; NLS Dep.313/35/107 (1642). The lands of Invernaver and Borgiebeg, along with Embo's salmon fishings, appear to have been excepted.
50. SRO RS37/6 ff.63-64.
51. SRO RS37/6 ff.268-69.
52. His behaviour was evidence for the survival of what Sellar has termed Celtic secular marriage and which appears to have been practised by Mackay's forebears – although it must be said that extramarital sex was a pastime among the Mackay family well into the 18th century: Sellar, W.D.H. 'Marriage, Divorce and Concubinage in Gaelic Scotland', in *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*. 1978. LI: 482-84.
53. Grimble, I. 1993: 124-27; SRO GD84/1/3/2-2B.
54. Stevenson, D. *Alasdair MacColla and the Highland Problem in the Seventeenth Century*. 1980: 269.
55. NLS Dep.313/36/papers associated with 115.
56. NLS Dep.313/35/102, 103, 106, 107; Dep.175/48/111 The Earl of Sutherlands Memorandum for Alexander Linton.
57. NLS Dep.313/36/papers associated with 115; GD84/1/9/3.
58. SRO GD84/1/17/1B, 7B. It is clear that this was a wadset and not, as Grimble states, an outright sale: Grimble, I. 1965: 144.
59. NLS MS3430 f.73.
60. Furgol, E.M. 'The Northern Highland Covenanter Clans', in *Northern Scotland* 7.1987: 123.
61. According to James Fraser, the minister of Wardlaw, Lord Reay and Mackenzie of Pluscarden were chosen joint leaders over the more experienced Colonel Hugh Fraser. 'The shame and disaster of this defeat at Balvany filled most mens mouths with scorn, so that songs and satyres were vented up and down the country upon that expedition': Mackay, W. (ed) *Chronicles of the Frasers* (Scottish History Society). 1950: 340.
62. SRO GD84/1/6/13.
63. NLS Dep.313/36/115-20.
64. SRO GD84/1/5/6.
65. Furgol, EM. 1987. 125.
66. NLS Acc.10824 box 1, bundle 1631-40, My Lord Sutherland Compt.
67. The apprising came into the hands of Sir Ludovick Gordon of Gordonstoun in 1673, who brought an action against the tenants. Captain William Mackay of Borley and others granted bond to Gordonstoun for 2,000 merks, and Gordon subsequently brought an action against them for non-payment. However, in 1680 Colonel Hugh Mackay bought back his right to the wadset lands from Skibo's son and Gordonstoun: SRO GD84/1/12/1B-14/4; NLS Dep.175/35/64.
68. Grimble, I. 1993: 156-62.
69. SRO GD84/1/5/10; NLS Dep.313/37/145 Ejection Gray v Lord Reay.
70. Dow, F.D. *Cromwellian Scotland 1651-1660*. 1979: 138-140; Grimble, I. 1993: 167-68.
71. NLS Dep.313/37/141, 142; Dep.313/38/154. The last major conflict was between the Mackays and the men of Caithness: Mackay, A. 1906: 154-55.
72. Grimble, I. 1993: 171-74.
73. Mackay, W. (ed) 1905: 450, 483.
74. SRO GD84/1/18/8B.
75. SRO GD84/1/10/9-10. Sir George assigned rights, for instance the apprising of Munro of Achness, to the Earl of Sutherland: SRO GD84/1/18/8B; NLS Dep.313/39/173.
76. SRO GD84/1/18/8B & 9B. Munro later assigned the wadset to Captain Hugh Mackay of Borley and moved to Rogart: SRO GD84/1/19/16; NLS Dep.313/49 wadset of Mudale 1694.
77. For the recovery in aristocratic building at this period: Brown, K.M. *Kingdom or Province? Scotland and the Regal Union 1603-1707*. 1992: 161.
78. SRO CS29/12 January 1773, 1764 proof p.116.

79. SRO RD2/86/1 Discharge Lord Reay to Munro 19 Jan 1702.
80. SRO GD84/1/14, GD84/1/16/1, 7.
81. Mackay, A. 1906: 176.
82. Lenman, B. *The Jacobite Clans of the Great Glen 1650-1784*. 1984: 76.
83. Kemp, D.W. (ed) *Tours in Scotland 1747, 1750, 1760 by Richard Pococke* (Scottish History Society). 1887: 128.
84. SRO GD84/1/32/6, 13, 16, GD84/1/33/5. In 1715 Lord Reay had entered into an agreement to sell the lands within 3 years.
85. Kemp, D.W. (ed) 1887: 130.
86. Maxwell, R. *Select Transactions of the Honourable The Society of Improvers In the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland*. 1743.
87. The succession to the estate between 1732 and 1767 may be traced in SRO CS26/579 28 November 1767; GD84/2/15A various memorials; RD15/182; Wilson, J. & Shaw, P. *Cases Decided in the House of Lords on Appeal from the Courts of Scotland 1825*. I: 306-314.
88. SRO RD2/152 17 July 1752 Disp. Lord Reay & to Lord Dromore.
89. SRO RD12/24 March 1749 Tack to Bighouse.
90. SRO GD84/2/26; Sedgewick, R. *The House of Commons 1715-1754*. 1970. II: 235; Namier, L. & Brooke, J. *The House of Commons 1754-1790*. 1964. III: 85.
91. Namier, L. & Brooke, J. 1964. III: 83-85.
92. SRO GD84/2/43.
93. SRO GD84/2/84 volume. This includes wadsets, heritable bonds and annuities.
94. Session Papers, Campbell Collection, March 1790.
95. SRO GD84/2/15A Copy View of the Situation of the Reay Estate 1792.
96. SRO GD84/2/53/14.
97. SRO CS238/R/5/27; GD84/2/53; Highland Council Library, Fraser Mackintosh Collection 1814.
98. SRO GD84/2/15A State of Debts due by Lord Reay 1816.
99. SRO GD84/2/101.
100. SAS. 1821-1830. no. 43.
101. Wilson, J. & Shaw, P. *Cases Decided in the House of Lords on Appeal from the Courts of Scotland 1825*. I: 306-314.
103. NLS Dep.313/462 Inventory; RMS VI 812; Mitchell, A. (ed) *Macfarlane's Geographical Collections* (Scottish History Society). 1906. II: 560. The purchase was completed in 1612: SRO GD214/486-88.
104. SRO DI63/3 ff.26v-27v.
105. In 1624 he was a party in a bond of relief and in 1626 he was cautioner for Sir Donald: SRO GD84/1/12/4B; GD84/1/9/1.
106. RMS. VIII. no. 2230; SRO SC14/50/1 ff.150r-150v where Angus and his mother are described as 'subtaxman and subtaxwoman' to Sir Donald Mackay of Strathnaver of the teinds of 'Strathhallowdell'.
107. Gordon, R. 1813: 451; SRO GD23/4/8; SRO GD214/489. Mackay appears to be mistaken as to William's wife: Mackay, A. 1906: 305.
108. SRO SC14/52/1 bundle 1632.
109. Gordon, R. 1813: 452.
110. NLS Dep.313/36/papers associated with 115; SRO GD84/1/9/3; NLS MS3430 f.73. See also Grimble, I. 1965: 144, 150.
111. Grimble, I. 1965: 157-58; Stevenson, D. *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Scotland, 1644-1651*. 1977: 145-48; Mackay, A. 1906: 305; SRO GD214/489. It is possible that the Donald Mackay listed amongst those captured was Bighouse's son.
112. SRO GD84/1/6/13.
113. NLS Dep.313/36/115-20. This was on the strength of bonds granted in 1639 and 1644 and affecting both the Reay and Bighouse estates which had been acquired by Sir Robert Gordon of Embo and then handed on to the Earl of Sutherland.
114. NLS Dep.313/464.
115. NLS Dep.313/464/6; MS3430 f.74.
116. SRO GD84/2/219.
117. NLS Dep.313/463/12.
118. NLS Dep.175/60/166 The Rentall of Sutherland. The entries are rather cryptic.
119. NLS Dep.313/465/1-4.
120. NLS Dep.313/466/1.
121. SRO SC14/52/3 bundle 1665.
122. NLS Dep.313/466/1.
123. There is some uncertainty as to when Angus succeeded to the estate. He designed himself

- 'younger' of Bighouse in December 1673 and January 1674 but was 'of Bighouse' by March 1675: NLS Dep.313/465/5 & 6; Dep.313/464/11. However, there are references to Angus 'of Bighouse' from May 1673: NLS Dep.313/464/15; SRO SC14/50/3 17 June 1704. Ulbster acquired right to Gray's and part of Forbes' apprising in 1664 – the other part being acquired by Melness: NLS Dep.313/463/11; Dep.313/464/10, 13. The wadset of Torinver was redeemed in 1675 and that of Golval in 1679: NLS Dep.313/462 & 466/3. Mackay has followed the Blackcastle MS in erroneously taking Angus' retour (NLS Dep.313/467/1) to mark the death of Donald: SRO GD84/2/246; Mackay, A. 1906: 303-305.
124. Angus was alive in January 1688: SRO GD84/1/19/14.
 125. NLS Dep.313/471/1; SRO GD87/2/20; SRO RT/1/6 ff.35v-38v. The entail was registered in 1722 and Elizabeth and Hugh's marriage contract was signed in July 1728.
 126. SRO GD87/2/20.
 127. Sage, D. *Memorabilia Domestica; A Parish Life in the North of Scotland*. 1889 (1975 edition): 27; Grimble, I. 1979: 5-7.
 128. SRO GD87/2/20; NLS Dep.313/471/3. In 1765, Janet and her husband re-opened a legal action on the grounds that they had received nothing from her father's executry.
 129. Firstly Janet's disposition was assigned to Clashneach who proceeded to obtain an adjudication against her on the grounds of non-performance. Secondly Clashneach obtained an adjudication against Elizabeth on a bond of £40,000 Scots (the bond was fictitious in that no actual debt existed). The two adjudications were assigned to Hugh in 1743, and the whole process was re-enacted in 1754-55: NLS Dep.313/471-72. An action was brought by Hugh of Bighouse's heirs against Clashneach's heir, Hugh Mackay in Durness (formerly of Jamaica) in 1773, to adjudge from him any title he might derive from his father: NLS Dep.313/445/8.
 130. SRO CH1/2/75 f.125; SRO GD87/2/10. The agreement allowed Hugh to retain possession of Kirkton rent free, on condition that he relieved his mother-in-law of the public burdens of her lands and allowed her to cut 20 merks of hay in the 'Linn of Golval' [Lon of Golval?].
 131. SRO GD87/2/13, 14. She also enjoyed some income from the estate of Giese in Caithness, in virtue of her second marriage to Robert Sinclair of Giese which lasted from 1712 until the latter's death in 1742. When her son, George Sinclair of Giese, engaged in the '45 Rebellion and was carried prisoner to London, his creditors attempted to seize the estate. Katherine, however, obtained an adjudication. When George and his wife heard that Katherine was dying, they battled through the snowstorms to Trantlemore and after sleeping with the corpse, broke into Katherine's sealed chest of papers. George later proceeded against his step-sisters for the balance owing to Katherine from the costs in bringing up her children and Hugh's funeral charges: SRO GD87/2/20; GD214/490/5. He also claimed for sums which his mother had uplifted but never accounted for during her second marriage: SRO RD4/185/2 12 June 1759 Discharge Sinclair to Mackay. Katherine's moveables were shared amongst the 5 daughters from her two marriages: she was owed £523 in rents and livestock at the time of her death: SRO RD4/185/2 8 June 1759 Mutual discharge.
 132. HCA Sutherland 1/1/7 pp.19-20.
 133. Grimble, I. 1979: 46.96-97.
 134. MacLeod, R.H. 'The Independent Companies of the 1745 Rebellion', in *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*. 1984. LIII: 336-38.
 135. NLS MS1483 ff.234-35. Rob Donn's poem 'Bighouse's Farewell to the Forest' was probably composed after 1758, rather than as Grimble states in the early 1740s: Grimble, I. 1979: 53-56; Morrison, H. (ed) *Orain le Rob Donn: Songs and Poems in the Gaelic Language by Rob Donn*. 1899: 87-93.
 136. SRO GD170/972 ff.74-75.
 137. Janet's younger sister, known in the family as Mallie, spent a season in Edinburgh in 1750: GD170/972 f.48.
 138. SRO GD170/391/8; Fraser, A.C. *The Book of Barcaldine*. 1936: 63, 145; MacDonald, C.M. 'Colin Campbell of Glenure, the Victim of the 'Appin' Murder', in *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*. 1953-59. XLII: 352.
 139. SRO GD87/1/38; GD170/972 f.30
 140. 'ye Dr little Capt' Hugh died at Tongue of a 'Pleuresick fever' on 14 April 1751: SRO GD170/972 f.65; Morrison, H. (ed). 1899: 40-42. In a letter to his brother-in-law, William Baillie, Glenure wrote that 'Dr Hughies Death is a heave stroke to us all. God pittie the father and mother their Load [letter torn] heavie to bear. whatever their outward appearance is [th]eir grief must be Immence': SRO SC34/28/50.

141. Session Papers, Campbell Collection, 44.
142. MacArthur, W. *The Appin Murder*. 1960. 16; Stewart, A. 'A memorial and opinion of 1762 given by Robert McQueen, later Lord Braxfield', in *Miscellany Three* (The Stair Society). 1992: 200-201. Janet and her daughters were named in the indictment of James Stewart as private prosecutors: Mackay, D.N. (ed) *Trial of James Stewart* (Notable British Trials). 1931: 41.
143. SRO GD170/1129/3. Grimble argued that the poem 'Oh! I sleep ...' was composed between 1742 and 1744, but this reference proves that it was composed ten years later: Grimble, I. 1979: 27, 40-41, 56 note; Morrison, H. (ed) 1899: 260-65.
144. SRO GD170/1313/4, 5. Both Mackay and Bulloch simply state that William Baillie married a daughter of Bighouse: he was in fact twice married. The marriage may not have been approved of, but Janet did not marry her nephew! Bulloch, J.G.B. *A History and Genealogy of the Family of Baillie of Dunain, Dochfour and Lamington*. 1898: 34-35; Mackay, A. 1906: 307. Janet, who received an annuity of 2,000 merks from her brother-in-law, and her young husband spent several years in Yorkshire until he was given a loan to raise a company in Colonel Simon Fraser's Regiment. Charles Baillie was killed at the siege of Louisburgh in 1758. Janet subsequently married ca 1760 Alexander Hart, a merchant in Edinburgh, and apparently resumed the upbringing of her children: SRO GD170/391/7; Session Papers, Campbell Collection, 44.
145. SRO GD170/1129/2, 3; GD170/1313/3, 6. Dr Sinclair, who had recently begun to inoculate for small pox, was married to Elizabeth's step-sister Barbara Sinclair: SRO RD4/185/2 8 June 1759 mutual discharge.
146. SRO GD170/1097/36, 39; GD170/1313/6-8. It was several years before Duncan Campbell registered an inventory of their estate. Even his relations cautioned him against disputing matters with Janet: Fraser, A.C. 1936: 101-102.
147. SRO GD84/2/15A Memoriall for Lord Reay 1762.
148. Henderson, D.M. & Dickson, J.H. (eds) *A Naturalist in the Highlands: James Robertson His Life and Travels in Scotland*. 1994: 50. It is probable that Bighouse was advised by Alexander Sangster, land surveyor and gardener in Ross-shire: SRO GD170/972 ff.69, 71.
149. NLS MS1485 f.168.
150. SRO GD84/2/53/4. The provisions included £500 to Mary, wife of William Baillie of Rosehall; £1,000 to Mackay Hugh Baillie, her eldest son; £500 to Katherine Baillie; and £200 each to remaining 5 children. Louisa and Colin Campbells each received £500.
151. *Caledonian Mercury* 22 April 1771.
152. SRO GD87/1/101. Her right was corroborated in 1788: SAS. 1781-1820. no. 64.
153. In 1774/75 George purchased the shares of the estate held by other members of the family: £1,376 to Mary, the wife of William Baillie of Rosehall who had a half-share of Lower Halladale and £688 to Colin or Colina, the wife of James Baillie, who held a quarter share of these lands: NLS Dep.313/445/8.
154. SRO RD14/105/9 Feb 1765 Tack Lord Reay to Lieut George Mackay; SRO GD84/2/53/26; NLS Dep.313/3326.
155. SRO GD87/1/103.
156. His accounts were not settled until 1829, when a payment of £271 was made to his widow: SRO GD84/2/53/25, GD84/2/84.
157. The headquarters of the Bighouse company, which was the first to be formed, were in the vicinity of Bighouse, near to the township of Melvich: Scobie, I.H.M. *An Old Highland Fencible Corps*. 1914.
158. NLS Dep.313/445/11-13; *Caledonian Mercury* 20 April 1799.
159. SAS. 1781-1820. no. 221; NLS Dep.313/445/13.
160. SRO GD84/2/246 p.98; *Caledonian Mercury* 15 March 1810; Henderson, J. *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sutherland*. 1812: 40-41.
161. SRO GD87/2/31/1 & 2; TE19/182, 1 July 1795, Mackay of Bighouse. The figure of £1,076 quoted in a list of gross rentals for 1815 may refer to a few years earlier: NLS Dep.313/1469 p.106.
162. Scobie, I.H.M. 1914: 33-34.
163. NLS Dep.313/447/36; SAS, 1821-1830, nos. 78, 87. Bighouse had asked for £70,000: Dep.313/1196. The total price including furniture and stock amounted to £58,000: SRO GD268/251 p.87. The sale of the Reay estate enabled Lord Reay to pay off both the Bighouse family bond for £500 over Scourie and the wadset for £4,000 Scots over Torrisdale originally granted to Arthur Forbes in 1653: SAS, 1821-1830, nos. 72, 79.
164. In 1831 he bought the barony of Allanbank in the parish of Edrom, Berwickshire which, according to the disposition, was to be thereafter called Bighouse: *Berwickshire Abbreviated Sasines*. 1831-1840: no. 76.



165. SRO GD87/2/32/3. This was after the death of Eric, Lord Reay.
166. Grimble, I. 1993:71-72. 94-95; (see above).
167. SRO GD84/1/9/1; GD84/1/12/4B; GD84/1/28/1 & 3B; SC14/50/1 f.173r.
168. SRO SC14/52/1 bundle 1632.
169. SRO GD84/1/17/1B; GD84/2/128.
170. SRO GD84/2/130.
171. NLS Dep.175/box 25/bundle 28, minute of a contract 164[?]; Dep.175/box 66, no.496.
172. NLS MS3430 ff.73-74; Dep.175/60/166 The Rentall of Sutherland; SRO SC14/50/1 f.173r; SC14/52/3 bundle 1665.
173. The apprisings bought by Brims were led by William Dundas, advocate, James Sinclair, second son of David Sinclair of Southdun and Alexander McCulloch, merchant burges of Tain: NLS Dep.313/41/192, 195, 203; SRO GD84/2/132, 141.
174. Gray, A.P. 'Some Gentlemen of Sutherland in Colonial Georgia', in *The Scottish Genealogist*. 1994. XLI: 15-19.
175. SAS. 1781-1820. no. 3.
176. Kemp, D.W. (ed) 1887: 132; Henderson, D.M. & Dickson, J.H. (eds.). 1994: 50.
177. Fereday, R.P. *The Orkney Balfours 1747-99*. 1990; NLS Adv.MS 37.2.4 f.137.
178. Although he took his title from his estate in Sutherland, he also bought property in the central Lowlands. The village of Armadale, near Bathgate, was a planned village which he established on the lands of Barbachlaw: *Linlithgow Abbreviated Registers of Sasines*, 1781-1820, nos. 952 and 1553; NLS Dep.313/41/209.
179. Henderson, J. 1812: 27.
180. Scobie, I.H.M. 1914: 32.
181. NLS Dep.313/41/209, 210, 214. The total cost of the purchase came to £25,690. Adam, R.J. (ed) *Papers on Sutherland Estate Management 1802-1816* (Scottish History Society). 1972. II: 160-61, 168, 174, 257.
182. NLS Adv.Ms 37.2.4 f.137; SRO GD84/2/246 f.115v-116r.
183. NLS Dep.313/36/121, 122, 133.
184. NLS Dep.313/36/123, 124, 128.
185. NLS Dep.313/37/140; Dep.313/38/163.
186. NLS Dep.313/36/130, 133 & 139.
187. NLS Dep.313/38/161, 162, 166. Lord Duffus subsequently acquired Rearquhar's wadset; NLS Dep.313/37/172.
188. NLS Dep.313/39/180; Dep.313/47.
189. NLS Dep.313/39/177, 181; Dep.313/67.
190. NLS Dep.313/50/278.
191. NLS Dep.313/37/147, Dep.313/38/148-153; Dep.313/39/169; Dep.313/51/281; SRO SC14/50/3 14 Feb 1680; Grimble, I. 1993: 177-78.
192. NLS Dep.313/67.
193. NLS Dep.313/67 execution of warning 1700. See also Grimble's comments: Grimble, I. 1993: 137-38.
194. Adam, R.J. (ed) 1972. I, xiii, II, 189.
195. NLS Dep.313/54.
196. NLS Dep.313/46 (Duffus), 52 (Erskine), 60 (Gilchrist/Fergusson).
197. NLS Dep.313/36/115.
198. Kemp, D.W. (ed) 1887. 121.
199. SRO RD2/135 22 April 1734; RD13/17 March 1737 Tack to Robert Mackay, tutor of Farr; RD14/9 Feb 1765 tack to George Mackay of Island Handa.
200. See for example SRO GD84/2/66/1; GD87/2/14; NLS Dep.313/53/286. The goat and sheep cheeses were delivered in 'creels crubands or casies': SRO GD84/2/52.
201. Richards, E. 1982: 143; NLS Dep.313/3477 p.68.
202. Mitchell, A. & Clark, J.T. (eds.) *Geographical Collections relating to Scotland made by Walter Macfarlane* (Scottish History Society). 1908. III: 108.
203. Mackay, M.M. "A Highland Minister's Diary", in *Cornhill Magazine*. 1935. 152: 572-73; Richards, E. 1982: 89-90; SRO CH2/508/1 pp.283-85, 288.
204. SRO CH2/509/3 p.8.
205. NLS Dep.313/37/145 contract 11 September 1634.
206. For a general account of livestock husbandry and the trade in cattle and horses in Ross and Cromarty and Sutherland, see Baldwin, J.R. 'The Long Trek: Agricultural Change and the Great Northern Drove', in Baldwin, J.R. (ed) *Firthlands of Ross and Sutherland*. 1986.
207. SRO CS234/Seqns/M/2/27; SC14/4/160 Writs in depositories of dec George Innes tacksman of Isauld; *Edinburgh Gazette* 17 April 1807.
208. *Caledonian Mercury* 12. 24 May 1792.

209. For the accounts of the Strathnaver fishings for 1558-59 when the Mackay lands were in the possession of the crown: Murray A.L. 'The Salmon Fishings of Strathnaver, 1558-1559', in *Review of Scottish Culture*. 1993. 8: 77-83.
210. SRO GD84/1/23/1B.
211. SRO SC14/52/2 bundle 1650.
212. SRO RD2/134 4 July 1733 Discharge Lord Reay & Falls.
213. Knox, J. *A Tour through the Highlands of Scotland and the Hebride Isles in 1786*. 1787 (reprinted 1975): 262.
214. Highland Council Library, Fraser-Mackintosh Collection FM 1814; NLS Dep.313/3326.
215. Session Papers, Campbell Collection, 10 July 1781.
216. SRO RD14/105/24 June 1765 Tack Lord Reay to Forbes.
217. SRO CS237/R/2/31/2.
218. Highland Council Library, Fraser-Mackintosh Collection FM1814; NLS Dep.313/3326.
219. Grimble, I. 1979: 8.
220. Gray, A.P. 1994: 7-21, 76-83.
221. SRO CH2/508/1 p.356; CS101/261; GD84/1/29/12; GD84/1/30/2, 3; GD84/2/26; Dep.313/470/2.
222. HCA Sutherland 1/1/7 pp. 17-18.
223. MacLeod, R.H. 1984. LIII: 336-38; Maclean, C.I. *The Highlands*. 1959: 176; Gibson, JS. *Ships of the '45*. 1967: 2-5.
224. SRO SC9/29/1 (1748-49). See SC9/29/2 (1750) for further agreement in 1750.
225. SAS, 1781-1820, no. 3.
226. SRO RH15/182/7, 1 2, 5; Grimble, I. 1979: 43.
227. SRO GD84/2/59; E326/1/120.
228. SRO SC9/29/1 (1769).
229. Morrison, H. 'Notices of the Ministers of the Presbytery of Tongue from 1726 to 1763', in *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*. 1884-85. XI; Grimble, I. 1979: 42, 75.
230. Kennedy, J. *The Days of the Fathers In Ross-shire* [1861] quoted in Cowper, A.S. & Ross, I. (eds) *Pre-1855 Tombstone Inscriptions in Sutherland Burial Grounds*. 1989: 148, 201; Session 231. NLS MS1149 f.154.
232. Hunter, J. *A Dance called America*. 1994.
233. SRO GD84/2/65, 67, 70 & 71.
234. Morrison, H. (ed) *Parish Register of Durness, 1764-1814* (Scottish Record Society). 1911.
235. For this section see: Bangor-Jones, M. 'The Strathnaver Clearances', in *North Sutherland Studies* (Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group). 1987; Bangor-Jones, M. 'The coming of the great sheep', in *The Northern Times* 4 March 1988. For the essential background to the clearances on the Sutherland estate as a whole, see Richards, E. *A History of the Highland Clearances*. 1982. 284-362. For Patrick Sellar's background, trial and reputation see Richards, E. *A History of the Highland Clearances*. 1985. 373-408.
236. SRO GD87/2/31/1; Henderson, J. 1812: 28; *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 October 1802, 15 March 1810.
237. Richards, E. *The Leviathan of Wealth*. 1973: 237.
238. Richards, E 1982: 441-44; 1985: 323-325, 403; Mearns, A.B. 'The Durness Riots 1841', in *Am Bratach*. 37, November 1994.
239. Bangor-Jones, M. 1987.
240. Hunter, J. *The Making of the Crofting Community*. 1976.
241. Caird, J.B. 'The making of the North Sutherland crofting landscape in the Skerray district', in *North Sutherland Studies* (Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group). 1987; Bangor-Jones, M. 'The establishment of crofting in North West Sutherland', in *Am Bratach* 20-21, June-July 1993. Oldshoremore and Oldshorebeg were not reorganised into crofts until 1847.
242. There is some evidence that the lands of Glencoul lay in the parish of Lairg or even Creich.
243. The lands of Ribigill and Skail were churchlands: *OPS* II ii 708, 717. Pont's late 16th century map marks a number of chapels and many are listed by Pope: Pope, A. 1776: 341-49.
244. Cowan, I.B. *The Medieval Church in Scotland*. 1995: 92, 149.
245. Stuart, J. 'Articles by Robert, Bishop of Caithness, against George, Earl of Caithness', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*. 1876. XI: 87-102.
246. Donaldson, G. 1987: 53-67; Kirk, J. *Patterns of Reform*. 1989: particularly 312-18, 458, 462-65.
247. In the early 17th century, Caithness was divided into Wick and Dornoch presbyteries: Kirk, J. 1989: 483. The surviving minutes of the Presbytery of Caithness commence in 1654: SRO CH2/47/1.

248. *New Statistical Account*. XV: 102; *OPS* II ii 702; Kirk, J. 1989: 476.
250. SRO GD84/1/29/3. Kirk is misleading; Kirk, J. 1989: 475.
251. SRO CH2/47/1 pp.1, 20, 42, 51; Bangor-Jones, M. "'Abounding with people of dyvers languages": the Church and Gaelic in the Presbytery of Caithness in the second half of the 17th Century', in *Northern Studies*. 33. 1998.
252. Cowan, I.B. *The Scottish Covenanters 1660-1688*. 1976: 54, 85, 114.
253. Foster, W.R. *Bishop and Presbytery: The Church of Scotland 1661-1688*. 1958: 5.
254. For church discipline in general see Mitchison, R. & Leneman, L. *Sexuality and Social Control: Scotland 1660-1780*. 1989.
255. SRO CH2/47/1 pp.94, 97.
256. SRO CH2/47/1 p.173.
257. SRO CH2/47/2 p.32. The minister, Neil Beaton of Latheron, was only suspended for a time.
258. SRO CH2/47/2 p.68.
259. SRO CH2/47/2 ff.43v-54r.
260. SRO CH2/47/2; Mitchison, R. & Leneman, L. 1989: 224-25. It is noteworthy that the presbytery continued to call upon the sheriff for some years after the Toleration Act of 1712 deprived the church of that power.
261. Grimble, I. 1979: 22-23.
262. SRO CH1/2/25/3 f.291; CH1/2/26/2 f.151; CH1/2/66 ff.124-69; GD84/1/29/11, 12.
263. SRO CH1/2/75 ff.103, 127; CH2/47/2 p.189.
264. Grimble, I. 1979: 32-37, 182-85, 213-17.
265. SRO CH2/508/1 pp.167-70, 179, 190, 347-, 381. The proceedings take up a considerable proportion of the presbytery minutes during this period. Skeldoch had been forced to flee from Lochaber after he had outbid a local family for a farm: Macdonald, S. *Back to Lochaber*. 1994. 191.
266. SRO CH2/508/2 pp.27, 33-38, 43.
267. Beaton, D. 'Fast-Day and Friday Fellowship Meeting Controversy in the Synod of Sutherland and Caithness (1737-1758)', in *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*. 1917. XXIX; Grimble, I. 1979: 35; Mackay, W.R. 1996.
268. SRO CH2/509/3. Although the minutes start in 1744 there is only a single entry for that year. More extensive records commence in the 1780s. But even then it is noticeable that the account of the session's role in the famine of 1783 was not written up for 5 years.
269. SRO CH2/876/1 pp.13, 23.
270. SRO CH2/876/1 p.5.
271. SRO CH2/876/1 p.3.
272. SRO CH2/876/1 pp.39-40.
273. The case of Colonel Hugh Mackay at Balnakeil, who intimidated the kirk officer and witnesses executing the summons charging his maidservant to appear before the session, is a good example: SRO CH2/876/1 pp.24-33.
274. SRO CH2/508/2 p.49.
275. SRO CH2/876/2.
276. SRO CH2/867/2.
277. Withrington, D. 'Education in the 17th Century Highlands', in *The Seventeenth Century in the Highlands* (Inverness Field Club). 1986.
278. SRO SC14/50/1 f.26r. He was dead by July 1640: ff.50r-51v.
279. SRO SC14/52/3 bundle 1667 translation Margaret Macleod to William Manson reg 17 June.
280. SRO GD84/1/22/6B.
281. SRO GD84/1/27/5.
282. SRO GD95/1/1/5 section 22(1).
283. SRO GD95/9/1 pp.51-53, 218, 441.
284. See Withers' comments on the Society's advice to William Mackay, the teacher at Durness: Withers, C.W.J. *Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1981*. 1984: 122.
285. SRO GD84/2/140 letter Nicol Spence to Lord Reay 20 Sept 1729.
286. SRO CH2/508/1 pp.251-52, 257.
287. SRO CH1/2/78 ff.194-96, 212, 215; CH2/508/1 p.281. Withers, C.W.J. 1984: 171.
288. SRO CH2/508/2 pp.53, 55.
289. *Moral Statistics of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Inverness Society for the Education of the Poor in the Highlands). 1826: Appendix p.vi.
290. An Account showing the State of the Establishment for Parochial Education in Scotland. *Parliamentary Papers*. 1826. XVIII: 952-53.
291. Inverness Society for the Education of the Poor in the Highlands. 1826: 56, Appendix pp. xi, xxiv.

292. SRO GD95/11/5 section 22(2).
293. SRO CH1/2/116 f.386; CH2/508/2 pp.12, 18.
294. SRO CH2/508/2 pp.161-64.
295. Gifford, J. *Buildings of Scotland: Highlands and Islands*. 1992. 579. By 1835 the building was in very bad repair. There were 'two square seats' belonging to the neighbouring tacksmen; the majority of the congregation (as many as 100 in summer) sat on planks: Fourth report by the Commissioners of Religious Instruction, Scotland. *Parliamentary Papers*. 1837-38. XXXIII: 516-17.
296. SRO CH2/508/2 pp.176-77.
297. Bardgett, F. *North Coast Parish: Strathy and Halladale*. 1990: 15-17. Although the Parliamentary churches and manses are often attributed to Thomas Telford, it appears that the main responsibility for the standard design belonged to William Thomson, one of Telford's surveyors: Gifford, J. 1992: 37, 127, 587.
298. *Parliamentary Papers*. 1837-38. XXXIII: 525.
299. *Parliamentary Papers*. 1837-38. XXXIII: 526-27. The average congregation was 550 out of a total population in Strath Halladale of 1125.
300. Grimble, I. *The Trial of Patrick Sellar*. 1993: 46-47; Prebble, J. *The Highland Clearances*. 1963: 81-86. This line has been followed by Temperley, A. *Tales of the North Coast*. 1977.
301. Richards, E. *The Leviathan of Wealth*. 1973: 189; Richards, E. 1982: 320-21; MacLeod, D. *Gloomy Memories*. 1892: 18.
302. Mearns, A.B. 'The Minister and the Bailiff: A Study of Presbyterian Clergy in the Northern Highlands During The Clearances', in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*. 1990: 24. 53-75.
303. Sage, D. 1899 (1975 edition): 214-18. Temperley states that Sage 'supported people as he could during the clearances': Temperley, A. 1977: 214. See also Grimble, I. 1993: 126-140.
304. MacLeod, D. 1892: 21.
305. NLS Dep.313/1468 p.149 Suther to Sage 28 April 1818; Mearns, A.B. 1990: 60-61.
306. Logue, K.J. *Popular Disturbances in Scotland 1780-1815*. 1979: 173-74.
307. Paton, D.M.M. 'Brought to a Wilderness: The Rev. David Mackenzie of Farr and the Sutherland Clearances', in *Northern Scotland*. 1993. 13: 75-101.
308. Smith, D.C. *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest: Social Criticism in the Scottish Church 1830-1945*. 1987: 135.
309. Hillis, J. 'The Sociology of the Disruption', in Brown, S.J. & Fry, M. (eds) *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*. 1993: 50.
310. Inverness Society for the Education of the Poor in the Highlands. 1826. Appendix p. xxiii; SRO GD136/524/252; MacLeod, D. 1892: 21, 37.
311. Inverness Society for the Education of the Poor in the Highlands. 1826. Appendix p. xxiii.
312. Hunter, J. 'The Emergence of the Crofting Community: The Religious Contribution 1798-1843', in *Scottish Studies* 18. 1974; Hunter, J. 1976: 94-103; Brown, C. *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730*. 1987: 115-25; Macinnes, A. 'Evangelical Protestantism in the nineteenth-century Highlands', in Walker, G. & Gallagher, T. (eds) *Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Popular Culture in Modern Scotland*. 1990; Devine, T.M. *Clanship to Crofters' War*. 1994: 100-109. A recent study of the Disruption on the Isle of Lewis stresses the leadership of the evangelicals and the lack of any sustainable alternative; Ansdell, D.B.A. 'The 1843 Disruption of the Church of Scotland in the Isle of Lewis', in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*. 1991: XXIV.
313. Richards, E. 1985: 359.
314. Macrae, A. *Margaret Macdiarmid (Bean a Chreidimh Mhoir) or Mrs Mackay of Sheiggira and of Melness*. nd.
315. *Parliamentary Papers*. 1837-38. XXXIII: 508-29.
316. SRO CH2/509/3 p.42.
317. SRO CH2/508/2 pp.318-19, 324-28; CH2/508/3 pp.2, 7-8, 11, 13, 44-45, 55, 57-58.
318. SRO CH2/508/3 pp. 59-61, 80-81, 83-84, 86-88, 94-95, 111-113. Mackenzie was formally deposed by the presbytery in September 1833.
319. SRO CH2/508/3 p.8.
320. SRO CH2/508/3 pp.22-25, 27.
321. SRO CH2/508/3 pp.32-37; Bardgett, F. 1990: 17.
322. SRO CH2/508/3 pp.101-105, 107-111. For a revealing pen-portrait of the Rev Cook see Sage, D. 1899 (1975 edition): 324, 326-27.
323. Macrae, A. *Kinlochberrie: Being the story and traditions of a remote Highland parish and its people*. 1932: 51. Hillis has used the baptismal registers of various Scottish parishes, including Durness, to assess the completeness of the move into the Free Church: Hillis 1993.

324. For comparative accounts, see: Macinnes, A.I. 'The Impact of the Civil Wars and Interregnum: Political Disruption and Social Change within Scottish Gaeldom', in Mitchison, R. & Roebuck, P. (eds) *Economy and Society in Scotland and Ireland 1500-1939*. 1988; Bangor-Jones, M. 'Mackenzie Families of the Barony of Lochbroom', in Baldwin, J.R. (ed) *Peoples & Settlement in North-West Ross*. 1994.
325. Compare: Shaw, F.J. 1980: 43-46.
326. Donaldson, J.E. *Caithness in the 18th century*. 1938.
327. Brown, K.M. 1992: 38-39.
328. Dawson, J.E.A. 'The origins of the "Road to the Isles": Trade, Communications and Campbell Power in early Modern Scotland', in Mason, R. & Macdougall, N. (eds) *People and Power in Scotland*. 1992.
329. This is similar to what Macinnes has found for Argyllshire: Macinnes, A.I. 'Landownership, Land Use and Elite Enterprise in Scottish Gaeldom: from Clanship to Clearance in Argyllshire, 1688-1858', in Devine, T.M. (ed) *Scottish Elites*. 1994.
330. Further details of this extraordinary event are provided by Mackay who suggests that the 'shame' of Halmidary was an example of 'popular enthusiasm running far in advance of ministerial direction'. Mackay, W.R. 1996. 127-8.
331. Grimble, I. 1979: 2.