

An Gleann's robh mi og

When I was a child my great grandmother Christina MacLachlan lived alone in a tiny cottage in Tobermory which consisted of just two rooms, a bedroom and a living room which also served as the kitchen. There was a stone sink with single cold water tap that was used for all purposes and a tiny 'Baby Belling' electric stove for cooking and heating water. It was all in stark contrast to my parents' home on the edge of London. What I didn't realize was that with electricity and mains water this represented luxury compared with the life she had known at Glendrian where she had raised her six children who would be the last of the many MacLachlan generations to have lived at the tiny township.

Chrissie, the youngest of her children wrote a description of Glendryen in a school exercise book / diary when she was in Senior 1, Class IV, at the Achosnich Public School, Ardnamurchan in 1924. It contains perfect handwriting, arithmetic, and drawings, etc. In a piece entitled '*An Gleann's robh mi og.*' which means something like 'Historic Glendryen' she stated: "The generation of MacLachlans now in Glendryen is the 10th or 11th generation of that clan to have lived there" and went on to give the numbers of Stock, i.e. cows, horses, calves, etc. at both Glendrian and Plocaig.

It is difficult to put a precise time to the period of occupation by our family in that men folk often married later rather than earlier in life. Even at a conservative estimate the MacLachlans would have been working the land at Glendrian for at least three hundred years or since the 1600s according to Chrissie's account. Exactly when a farming settlement was first established at Glendrian is impossible to say, possibly as early as 1400 AD but the *Garbh Chrichan a' Deas* project¹ has found documented evidence of there being 8 tenants in 1618 so its history certainly extends back into the 1500s at least and records from 1737 actually name a John MacLachlan amongst the six tenants at that time, in his case holding tenancy of an eighth of the site. It would therefore seem that Chrissie's account appears to be both plausible and probably accurate.

The size of Glendrian is difficult to judge from early records in that it was the custom to refer to this in terms of annual rental value to the estate. The system used in the western highlands was of Norse origin and was based on the *Tir-unga* or 'ounce land' i.e. being valued at an ounce of silver. In 1667 Glendrian was described as a '2½ merk² land', the merk being 50% silver and containing a tenth of an ounce meant that Glendrian was valued at a quarter of an ounce of silver per annum. In 1723 it was recorded as a '5 penny land' there being 20 'pennylands' to an ounce land which equates to the same valuation over 50 years later. The first record to give its actual size was made in 1806 where it was described as being '2047.52 acres with 53.83 arable, 34.85 cultivated with the spade and 1958.84 moor & pasture'.

¹ The '*Garbh Chrichan a' Deas*' project headed by was established to research the lost place names of the Ardgour, Sunart, Morvern, Ardnamurchan and Moidart regions.

² Merk - a Scottish silver coin in circulation during the 17th century and worth about a pound in today's money

The township was located within the natural dyke formed by the inner ring of a volcano and takes its name from the Gaelic *Gleann Droighinn* meaning 'Glen of the thorn'. 'Glendrian' has become the standard English spelling used on modern maps but my family always spelt it 'Glendryen'. In censuses and earlier documents it is also recorded as 'Glendrain', 'Glendreane', 'Glenindryane', 'Glendraen', and 'Glendryan', all of which are of course attempts to spell the spoken Gaelic *Gleann Droighinn* phonetically in English. According to my grandmother, the place owed its Gaelic name to an ancient curse placed on a man who lived there, that brambles would always grow on his grave.

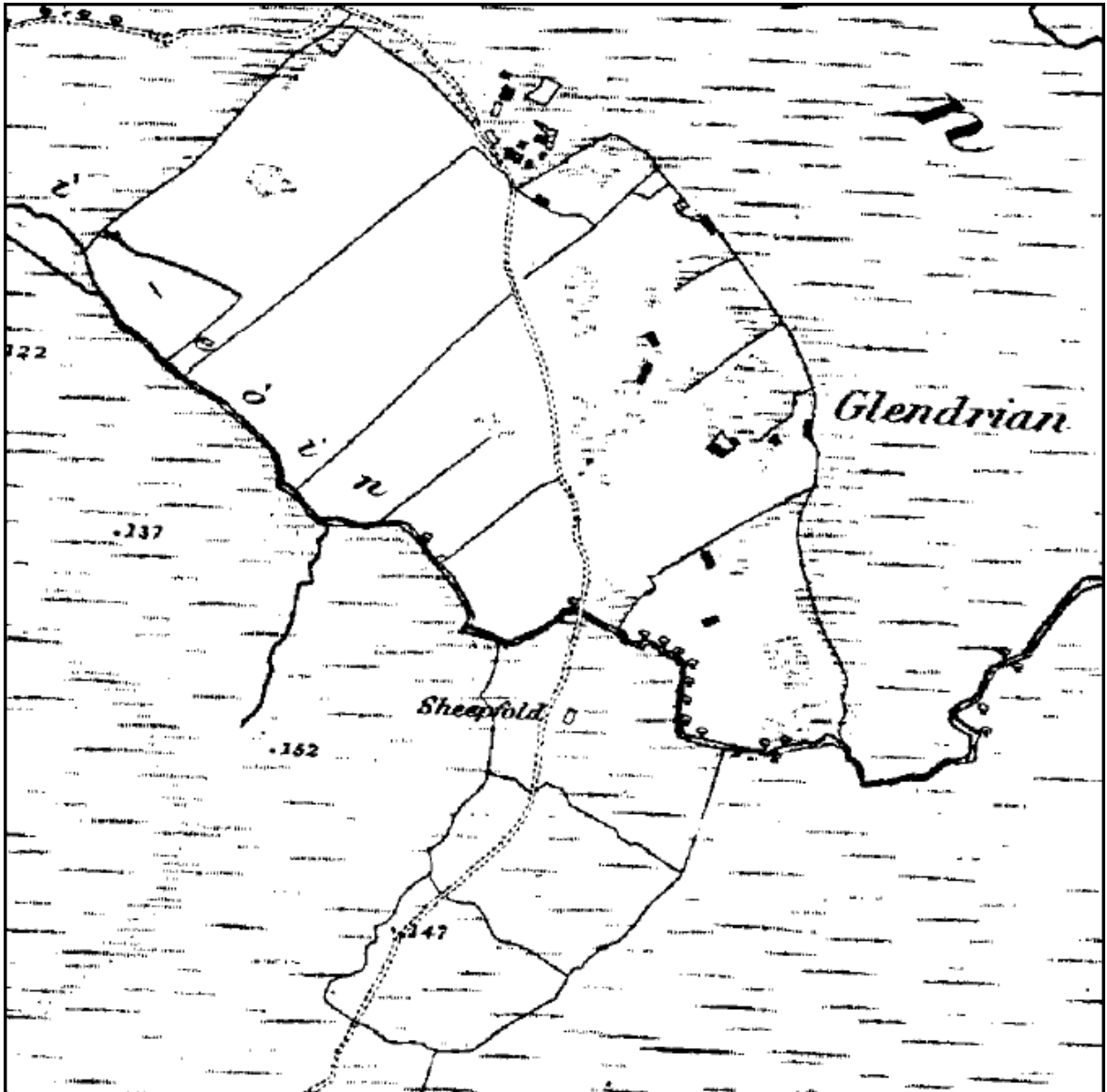
Records as far back as 1618 show that Glendrian was a multi tenanted affair with one would assume a degree of communal farming. From the early 1700s it comprised about seven or so discrete allotments or crofts together with some common grazing land. To the North of a stream passing through the site the land was cultivated to grow crops and dwellings and outbuildings erected which were constructed with dry stone walls and roofs which would have been thatched with bracken or heather. To the South the land was suitable for cattle or sheep to graze within a perimeter stone wall following the natural inner ring of volcanic rocks which surround the inner site; sheep would also have been grazed on the surrounding hillside within hills formed by the outer volcanic ring.

The 1841 census recorded seven households at Glendrian with a 'farmer' at the head of each. The households included three McGillivray families, two MacLachlan families a McMillan family and a McColl family. The term 'farmer' was again used in 1851 but became more specific by 1861 i.e. 'farmer in common', which was certainly a better description of how the community would have operated. An understanding of this can be gained from evidence given to the Napier Commission in 1883. The following extract is from the book 'Go Listen to the Crofters' by A.D. Cameron.

"When in Salen on Mull the Commission heard evidence which was out of the ordinary for them. It concerned "club farming" which was a concept they had not encountered before when attending hearings at which crofters described their tenure and conditions, prior to the land reform acts which followed (The Crofting Acts). Charles Cameron, who was 65 and one of five crofters of Acharacle in Ardnamurchan explained to the Commission that each of them could keep four cows and a horse on his own lot and that they had 100 sheep which they held in common on the hill. It had been a club farm ever since he could remember: 'There is one mark for all the sheep which belong to all the tenants in common. One of us is chosen to go and sell the stock, and whatever he gets we are all agreeable to it. We get as much for the wool as pays for the smearing of the sheep, and sometimes a little over, and we sell perhaps thirty or forty lambs and a few aged sheep at the end of the season'. The Acharacle crofters found the club system worked well for them but it did not make them rich. Because their rents were high, £18 a year, they had to take any work they could, such as ploughing for smaller crofters. Charles Cameron also relied on his grown up daughter's earnings in England - 'What she is able to give me helps to pay my rent and,' he added 'support me.'"

It would seem more than likely that Glendrian had traditionally operated along similar lines.

A plan of the township at Glendrian appears on the first edition of the OS 6-inch map of Argyllshire published in 1876 and shows three unroofed and seventeen roofed buildings, field systems with no buildings, plots or crofts which include a dwelling and some animal enclosures.



To the North-East are the three fields, with concentration of associated dwellings and stores / shelters and a further very small plot with a dwelling, probably for a farm worker or shepherd. To the South-East of this are four discrete crofting plots the walls between three of which have been opened up to create a single area leaving just the fourth croft as a single unit. To the South of the stream are four further animal enclosures which include one specifically mentioned as the sheepfold. One can roughly see from this how the seven households of 1841 had been accommodated on the site though not exactly who was actually living where at the time including the MacLachlan families who occupied two of the crofting plots.

A likely reason as to why three of the crofts are shown opened together on the 1876 map can be drawn from the 1851 census. A rationalization into three larger tenancies appears to have taken place resulting in just McGillivrays and MacLachlans as tenants at Glendrian. Angus McGillivray is recorded as a farmer of 8 acres (NE plot), the MacLachlans have taken on the tenancy of the centre section consisting of three original crofts, and a Donald McGillivray has taken on the tenancy of the far SE plot where he is now the 'farmer of 2 acres'. Of the previous tenants, the McMillans, in view of their ages had probably given up and the McColls were perhaps forced to moved on.

As a result Alexander MacLachlan at the ripe old age of 84 and head of the family is recorded as a farmer of 8 acres, though in reality the daily work would have been in the hands of his sons Donald (45), Hugh (36), Duncan (30) and Allan (25). Hugh and Donald had both married so one would assume that the dwellings at all three plots were occupied even though the 1851 census lists the Glendrian households as just three family groups according to the new tenancy agreements. One can only guess at why the walls were partially removed between the MacLachlan crofts but it must have resulted in some way from the new arrangement and I'm sure the stones were put to good use in constructing or repairing buildings and walls elsewhere.

A further piece of information that can be gleaned from the 1876 map concerns the footpath which leads past the concentration of buildings at the top of the site rather than past the individual croft dwellings. This tends to indicate that Glendrian had originally been a single, albeit collective, farm rather than the crofts it had become. A possible date for the first division of the farm into smaller units is 1725, a date which appears on a stone gate pillar by the buildings at the top of the MacLachlan plot. The inscription appears at first sight to be somewhat cryptic and took a while to decipher. What appears to be a backwards 'S' is in fact a classical '2'. The inscription therefore reads 2CG 1725, or 2 Croite Gleann Droighinn (No. 2 Croft Glendrian).



Changes to a crofting system that had operated on the Ardnamurchan Estate since at least 1725 were clearly under way and moving towards single tenant farms where townships like Glendrian had previously been farmed by a number of tenants in common.

The Ardnamurchan Estate comprised Glenborrodale to the East, Ardslnignish in the centre, and Mingary, of which Glendrian was part, to the West, and had been in the hands of Sir James Miles Riddell since the early part of the century. In 1828 Riddell had cleared the townships of Coire-mhuilinn, Skinid, Buarblaig, and Tornamonafour (about 26 families in all) in order to add the land to the adjacent sheep farm of Mingary. Of those evicted a few were given small patches of waste land, some were given holdings in various townships on the estate, the crofts of which were sub-divided for their accommodation, and some were forced to emigrate.

Other minor clearances to make way for sheep are known to have taken place at Laga (8 tenants) and Tarbert (4 tenants) but perhaps the best known of his clearances took place in 1853 on the Ardslnignish Estate at Swordle-chaol, Swordlemhor, and Swordle-chorrach. Where, five years earlier, crofters had been placed under a written obligation to build new dwelling houses of a modern design³ prescribed by Riddell. They apparently complied, employing tradesmen at a cost to each crofter of £45 to £50 per dwelling and had completed the task by the end of 1851.

However, in 1853 at the end of what appears to have been a five year tenancy they were all evicted without compensation and relocated to 1 acre plots on very poor land at Sanna an Portuairc to make way for a single sheep farm of about 3000 acres. A similar fate may well have been waiting in the wings for other townships had it not been for the sale of the Estate.

MAGNIFICENT PROPERTY IN THE WEST HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND FOR SALE.

To be Sold, by Public Auction, on a day to be afterwards fixed, **THE ESTATE** of ARDNAMURCHAN, forming the Promontory of that name, and extending about twenty miles in length by eight in breadth.

It is bounded nearly throughout either by sea or river, and is one of the most beautiful Estates in the West Highlands. The south coast, which is to a considerable extent finely wooded, looks partly upon Loch Sunart and partly on the Sound and Island of Mull.

The Rental of the portion proposed to be Sold is about £3500 a-year, a considerable part of which is paid by extensive south country sheep farmers.

There is all the usual Highland Game upon the Estate, comprising Grouse, Black-Game, Roe-Deer, &c., &c.; and a portion of the property is well suited for a Deer Forest, which might be stocked at a small expense, thereby greatly increasing the value of the Property.

There are a great many Fresh Water Lakes, which abound in large Trout, and Sea and Shell Fish of all kinds abound in the surrounding seas and in Loch Sunart.

The access to the Estate is very convenient, by steam-boats daily to Fort-William through the summer, which pass the Corran-Ferry, whence there is a good road leading for several miles into the estate; and steam-boats from Glasgow and Oban call at Salen twice a-week, sailing up Loch Sunart. A daily coach runs in summer from Glasgow via Loch Lomond and Glencoe, by Corran Ferry, in about 12 hours, through the most magnificent scenery in Scotland.

Should a purchaser not desire the whole of this fine Estate, or if it be found more advantageous to divide it, it may be sold in Lots to suit purchasers, or divided into three portions, thus:—
1. GLENBORRODALE ESTATE, comprising CAMISINES, GORSTENEORN, OCKLE, &c., rented at about £1000, forming the Eastern Portion.

2. ARDSLIGNISH ESTATE, or Middle Portion, comprising GLENMORE, SWORDLES, KILMORY, ACHATENY, &c. Rental about £1150.

3. MINGARY ESTATE, or Western Portion, comprising GIRGADLE, KILCHOAN, ORMSAIGS, &c. Rental about £1400.

Upon Mingary there are the ruins of an old Castle, and a fine site is afforded for a Mansion House, looking down the Sound of Mull, and upon the Mountains of Morven. A RIGHT OF SALMON FISHING will be attached to each Lot on its coasts and streams; and upon each Lot there are Fresh Water Lochs.

For particulars, application may be made to Wm. Robertson, Esq. of Kinloch Moidart, Local Factor; to Messrs. Smith and Kinnear, W.S.; or to C. M. Barstow, Accountant in Edinburgh; and Mr. Ralston, Strontian, will show the Lands.

Edinburgh, 32 India Street, August, 1853.

³ The walls were to be of stone and lime, 40 ft. long, 17½ ft. wide, and 7 ft. high. The houses, two-gabled, were to have each two rooms and a kitchen, with wooden ceiling and floors, the kitchen alone to be floored with flags.

Neither the whole nor any of the parts of the estate were sold at the first auction (advertised in the Glasgow Herald) that was held in November, probably because the reserves were not reached. It was again advertised for sale by auction in August the following year with upset⁴ prices attached to each lot being made known in advance; Glenborrodale (£23,500), Ardslyghnish (£25,500) and Mingary (£32,000). It would appear that again no buyers could be found at the prices being asked.

In the event it was not until March 1856 that the Caledonian Mercury reported that a James Dalgleish had purchased the complete estate at auction for the upset price of £82,000.

When Alexander MacLachlan died at Glendrian his eight acres appear to have been divided up between his sons. The 1861 census shows that Donald lived with his wife Mary and family on one croft, Duncan, his wife Mary and family lived on another, while Hugh and Allan, neither of whom had married, lived on the third croft together with their sister Mary McEachern who had married, hence McEachern, but was now a widow.

Whilst it would have certainly formed part of Alexander MacLachlan's plan in taking up the 8 acres it was not exactly the outcome that Riddell or his Factor had intended. Along with the McGillivrays and now a McKenzie family each head of family was recorded as 'a farmer in common' indicating that some kind of collective farming was still in operation. This could perhaps have been a case of opportunism during a period of uncertainty or perhaps simply the census enumerator's take on the situation but whatever the explanation change would soon be on the agenda again at Glendrian.

James Dalgleish, unlike the previous Proprietor, had money and was prepared to speculate in order to accumulate. It is clear that he still saw the future of agriculture in terms of farms of a viable size rather than crofts and set about making a rolling program of improvements to townships on the Estate. Where a farm did not have a 'good modern farm house' as he put it, investment was made on his part in building a new one. On occasions, e.g. Upper Ockle, the forthcoming tenancy was advertised along with the promise that a Dwelling House would be erected by the time of occupancy of the farm.

By the census of 1871, it becomes apparent that the new strategy was already in place at Glendrian as the tenancy of the a farm as a whole was now in the hands of just one person and a new dwelling had been or was about to be constructed alongside the original building on the smallest plot. The design was similar to the specification James Riddell had forced crofters at the Swordle townships to construct but with an upper floor under the tin and felt roof. .

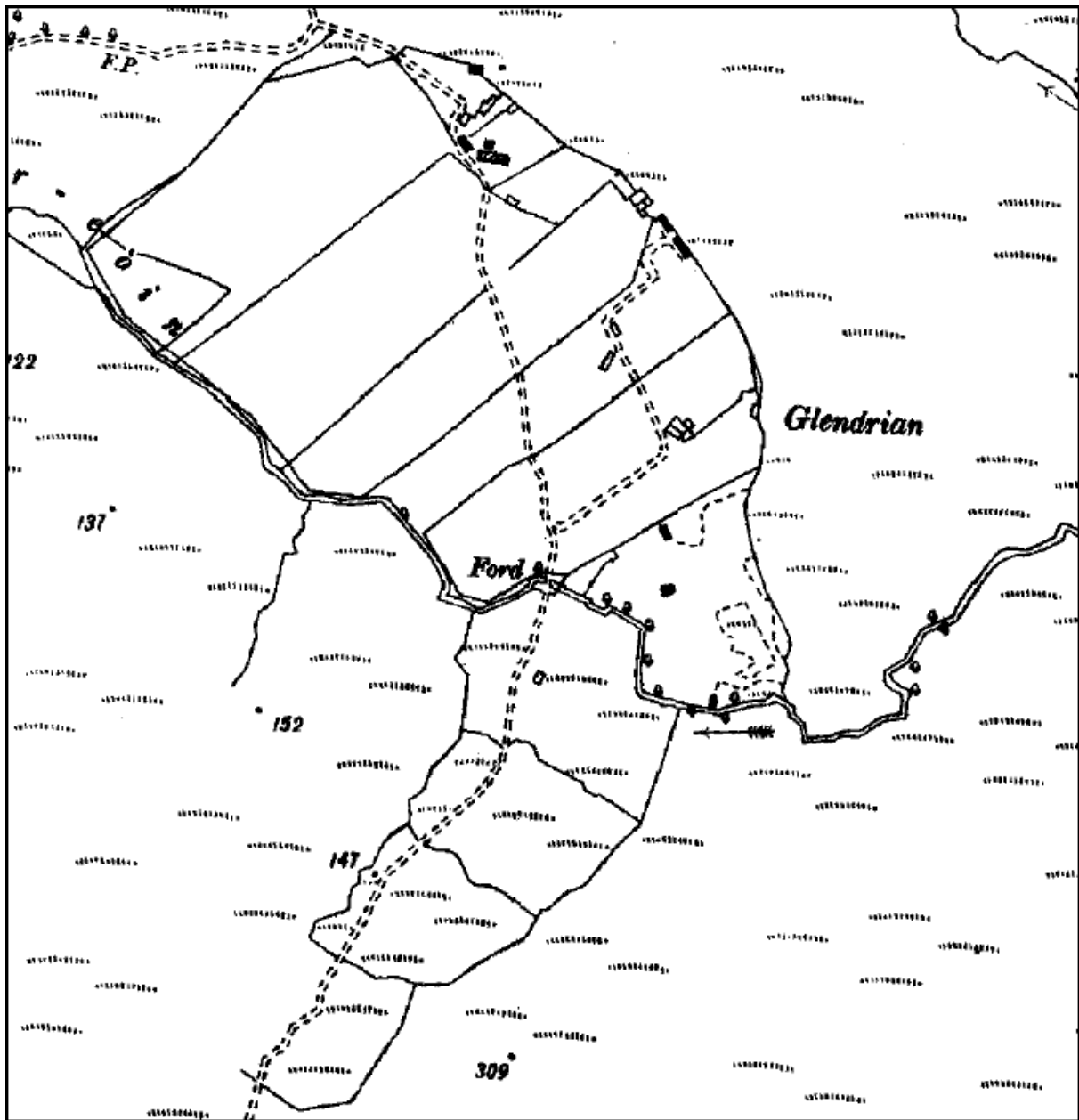
⁴ The minimum price at which the seller of property will entertain bids.



The new house, although extremely basic by today's standards, was, one can imagine, much more luxurious than the other croft dwellings on the site. At one end it had a fireplace on each floor to provide warmth in winter, at the other a fireplace on the ground floor for cooking. One can also imagine that with a corrugated iron roof it must have been extremely hot in summer and very cold in winter or did they perhaps think of using sheep wool as insulation?

Whether by choice or perhaps as a result of drawing straws, the responsibility of the tenancy of Glendrian as a whole was taken on by Allan MacLachlan who was recorded in 1871 as the farmer of 210 acres, 20 of which arable. One can understand the Proprietor's strategy in that rental income was now guaranteed by legal agreement with a single tenant who would be responsible for subletting any smaller units thereby effectively becoming their agent. A similar house also stands alongside the original croft dwellings at the township of Plocaig a few miles away. The 1871 census also provides the first documentary listing of the overall size of the farm at Glendrian including the surrounding grazing for sheep.

A revised OS map of Ardnamurchan was drawn towards the end of the century and published in 1900. It shows the new farm house and at first sight it looks as though the walls between the MacLachlan crofts have been re-established but look more carefully and you will see that an alteration has taken place apparently reducing the size of the MacLachlan holding.



One effect of Allan MacLachlan taking on the overall tenancy can be seen in the way that the boundary walls were re-established with a slight difference that effectively adjoined the upper of the three MacLachlan plots to the new house leaving two distinct MacLachlan dwellings in the lower plots served by a new access path. The overall strategy also appears to have worked from the Proprietor's perspective in that the 1871 census shows the site once again fully occupied by a total of seven households. The MacLachlans and McGillivrays had been joined by McKenzie and Henderson families.

Allan MacLachlan appears to have held the overall tenancy of the farm until his death at Glendrian in 1883 which was recorded at Kilchoan by his nephew Duncan. The cause was noted by the registrar as 'supposed inflammation of the ear - 4 weeks' as it would appear that no physician was ever summoned and the death was never

certified. Whatever the ailment had actually been, it was obviously far more serious than anyone at the farm had imagined and of course in those days summoning a physician would have been costly. By the time of his death the number of households at Glendrian had fallen to five and a total of just seventeen people. It is hardly surprising then that none of the other aging resident crofters was prepared to take on the overall tenancy which was actually taken up by a newcomer, a certain James Cameron (my g-g grandfather) and his family.

He was from a farming family at Tarbert on the Ardnamurchan Estate but had left home at an early age to become a shepherd initially taking him to Morven before moving on to Tyree where he married Christina McLean in 1866 and they started raising a family. They subsequently returned to Ardnamurchan where he continued to work as a shepherd on farms at Ardslyghnish where my great grandmother was born and then Grigadale, which is not far from Glendrian.

James and Christina Cameron's ninth child, Hugh, was born at Grigadale in June 1882 but sadly Christina died soon afterwards. Taking up the tenancy of Glendrian in 1883 would have offered James both a new challenge and chance to move on in his life. Initially he would have had a housekeeper but he married a Catherine (Kate) Cameron from Achosnich in 1885 and a final addition to the family, Mary Anne Cameron, was born at Glendrian in 1886.

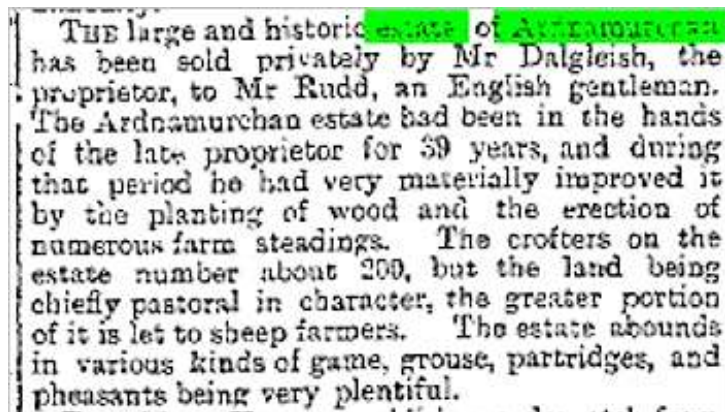
The arrival of the Camerons at Glendrian with a large but relatively young family would have the effect of breathing some vitality back into the farm that had been slowly dwindling away with the growing ages of the other crofters. The 1891 census shows James Cameron as 'farmer and employer' as opposed his sub-tenant 'crofters' who were 'working on their own account'. With the Camerons now living in the new house, Allan MacLachlan's nephew and niece had moved out to the lower 'MacLachlan' plot formerly occupied by his sister. Between them and now living 'next door' to the Camerons was my branch of the MacLachlan family: Mary now aged 60 was still running the croft, living with her were her sons; Alexander (35), a joiner, Allan (28), an unemployed railway porter, John (20), a shepherd, and daughter Catherine (17), a servant who kept house. When Mary MacLachlan died in 1894 at the age of 65 her son Alexander took over running the croft and during the time that followed a romance obviously flourished between him and James Cameron's daughter Christina 'the girl in the big house next door'.

My great grandparents Christina Cameron and Alexander MacLachlan were married at the nearby town of Kilchoan in 1898, he was 39 at the time and she just 21, the age difference being quite common within farming communities in those days. The wedding reception was held back at Glendrian in the Cameron house, a fact passed on to me by a relative who was taken to visit Glendrian as a young girl by her uncle Hugh Cameron some time after the house was finally abandoned in the 1950s. She recalls that the upper floor was accessed by a ladder rather than staircase and sitting with him on the upper floor he described remembering how all the food was laid out ready for the guests on the ground floor below. The structure of the house was still pretty much complete when visited in 2009 though much of the upper flooring had obviously recently gone. According to the present manager of the Ardnamurchan Estate, the roof only finally came down during a storm in 1994.

Crofting had been very much in decline towards the end of the 19th Century and, like many others of their age, a Maclachlan generation had sought other employment. It was then, perhaps an unusual decision for Alexander to take on his mother's croft though additional income from his skills as a joiner would obviously have helped to support the family that he and Christina raised at Glendrian.

By 1901 there were just three families left at Glendrian. James Cameron's youngest daughter was still at school, and he had become a successful sheep farmer in his own right along with his sons Duncan, Donald and Hugh. Alexander and Christina MacLachlan had started a family with a first daughter Chrissie Ann but Angus and Donald McGillivray had finally given up or died of old age leaving just an unmarried 57 year old Niece to continue alone on one of their crofts. Exactly why the Camerons moved from Glendrian to take up the tenancy of Grigadale is not known but it is likely to have come about as the result of a further change of ownership of the Ardnamurchan Estate in 1895 following the death of James Dalgleish and opportunities that resulted under the new owner.

The sale of the Ardnamurchan Estate to Mr. Charles Dunell Rudd was reported in the Glasgow Herald on 2nd September 1895, the piece giving a brief but useful overview of the developments that had taken place under James Dalgleish's stewardship of the previous 39 years. The Herald also went on to report on the new owner's plans for the Estate in an article published on 27th September 1899.



THE large and historic estate of Ardnamurchan has been sold privately by Mr Dalgleish, the proprietor, to Mr Rudd, an English gentleman. The Ardnamurchan estate had been in the hands of the late proprietor for 39 years, and during that period he had very materially improved it by the planting of wood and the erection of numerous farm steadings. The crofters on the estate number about 200, but the land being chiefly pastoral in character, the greater portion of it is let to sheep farmers. The estate abounds in various kinds of game, grouse, partridges, and pheasants being very plentiful.



The house once occupied by Allan Maclachlan then James Cameron as it is today



MR RUDD OF ARDNAMURCHAN AND HIS CROFTERS.

Upwards of three years ago the estate of **Ardnamurchan**, Argyllshire, was purchased by Mr Charles D. Rudd, of the South African Chartered Company. Ardnamurchan is one of the largest estates in the county of Argyll, extending to nearly 200 square miles. Since the estate passed into the hands of Mr Rudd great and important improvements are in course of execution, affording employment to all the available local workpeople. There are a large number of crofters on the estate, the majority of them dwelling in small thatched houses of a somewhat primitive style of architecture. Mr Rudd has repeatedly intimated his desire of seeing his small tenants provided with comfortable and suitable dwellings, and has now issued a memorandum on the subject to all the crofters on his estate. In this memorandum he announces that he is willing to advance on loan to any crofter the money that may be necessary to build a house or offices. Some of the houses, Mr Rudd proceeds to state, are old and dilapidated, and hardly worth attempting to alter or repair. His original idea was that, rather than patch away at the present buildings, it would be better to make an effort to get new and improved houses erected, neatly roofed with iron over felt. To do this might require a sum of, say, £125 per house. Such a sum as this, or any lesser sum where such would have been sufficient, he had thought of advancing to such crofters as desired it; but, as going over all the crofts requiring renewal or repairs in this way (some 150 in number) meant a large sum in the aggregate, he had proposed to stipulate that the principal sum would be repayable in twenty-one equal yearly instalments, and, so far as not repaid, would bear interest at $3\frac{1}{2}$ or 4 per cent. In order to encourage the crofters to co-operate with him in his proposal, and make the burden of the repayments as easy and light as possible, he had contemplated to hold out the promise that work would almost certainly be provided on the estate whereby many of the crofters would be in receipt of steady wages. He had had the hope that, in view of the end to be gained by themselves and their families, the crofters would have been willing, with his own assistance, of making a special effort, and even some sacrifice, to carry so commendable a project. Before finally deciding, however, on what was best to be done he had deemed it advisable to lay his proposals before the Crofter Commissioners for their advice and assistance, and the Commissioners duly furnished their views, which are briefly as follow:—

(1) That on the west side, at all events, of the estate a well-built dwelling-house of the type now prevailing there is possibly better suited to the locality than a more pretentious structure of stone and lime; and that their experience leads them to discourage slated or iron-roofed houses, as being too hot in summer and too cold in winter and inconvenient otherwise, and to recommend that instead the houses be thatched with heather or bracken.

(2) That their experience leads them to be hostile to any scheme for lending such a large sum as £125 to crofters for the erection of a house at $3\frac{1}{2}$ or 4 per cent. for 21 years and the like period; and that an advance of, say, about £50 at the utmost, at a low rate of interest, should be made to suffice.

(3) That no condition or stipulation as to work or labour should be allowed to form a substantive portion of any agreement between him (Mr Rudd) and his tenants, and that he should not bring himself under any guarantee to provide such work.

(4) That if he (Mr Rudd) could see his way to do so, he should provide a fund of, say, £3000, from which loans free of interest could be obtained to a maximum of not exceeding two-thirds of the entire expenditure by the crofter, structurally to repair or rebuild his own dwelling, at the sight and to the satisfaction of the estate management; that the loans should be repayable by yearly instalments in a period not exceeding seven years; and that the fund should be available for a certain fixed period. The Commissioners confidently inclined to the opinion that a sum of £3000 would suffice for all the crofters on the estate, as within two or three years the monies paid out to the first borrowers would be coming in as repayments.

Mr Rudd continues to say that, after very carefully considering the whole matter, he has decided that he must provisionally give up his own idea, and be guided in the matter by the advice and experience of the Crofters Commissioners. He has therefore determined to set aside a sum of £3000 as a revolving building fund out of which to make advances to his crofters free of interest, for the purpose and on the terms recommended by the Commissioners, these advances to be repayable in seven equal yearly instalments, and the fund to be available only for a fixed period of 10 years. As governing any well-devised scheme, it ought, if possible, to be one which will commend itself to the crofters concerned, the views of the crofters who may require assistance are solicited; and should the Commissioners' scheme meet with general approval, the crofters are invited to send in applications for advances forthwith. Mr Rudd concludes his memorandum by notifying that he has resolved to make all his crofters a reduction of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on their present rents, and that this reduction will come into force and apply to the rents as for the year commencing at Whitunday, 1900, the stipulation being attached that each crofter shall enter into an agreement at the reduced rent for a period of seven years from Whitunday, 1900.

Along with improvements that had included building Glenborrodale Castle for entertaining his guests, James Dalgleish's tenants' rents had risen dramatically to the point that crofters from the Estate had taken their case for a fair rent to the Sheriff Court at Tobermory in 1890. Charles Rudd's proposed rent reduction in 1900 would, I feel sure, have been appreciated even if the quid pro quo meant a seven year tenancy agreement. Having made his money from diamonds and gold in Africa, Rudd was a very wealthy man so one feels he could afford a degree of generosity.

The Camerons were certainly still at Glendrian at the time of the 1901 census and, assuming that the seven year tenancies applied to all, it would seem likely that the move to Grigadale may not have been until 1907. There had been no new farmhouse⁵ built at Grigadale during Dalgleish's time as Proprietor, possibly because the main building was deemed adequate but a new house was constructed soon after the turn of the century which still exists today as a holiday let albeit somewhat altered and extended. The most likely explanation for this late arrival on the improvement program can be found in advertisements Rudd placed offering the overall tenancy of Mingary Farm. The first advertisement in August 1895 offered the whole sheep farm at 5645 acres, a second advertisement appeared in November offering the tenancies of East and West Mingary farms as a separate entity option.

ARGYLLSHIRE.

TO BE LET, with Entry at Whitsunday, 1896, for such period as may be agreed on,
Either First as a Whole,

THE Very Desirable and Well-Known SHEEP FARM of MINGARY, on the Estate of Ardnamurchan, extending to 5645 Acres (Imperial Measure) or thereby, of which 48 Acres are good Arable Land.

The Farm is estimated to carry upwards of 3700 Blackfaced First-Class Sheep and 100 Head of Black Cattle.

The Dwelling-House and Offices are in good order, pleasantly situated, and suitable for the Farm. Steamers call daily with mails to and from Oban, at Kilchoan, one mile distant, and a new Pier, at which Steamers will call, has just been erected on the Farm. There are Churches, School, and Post Office at Kilchoan.

Or Second.

The FARMS in Two Divisions are—**WEST MINGARY,** containing 4025 Acres, estimated to keep 2700 Sheep and 80 Cattle; and the other—**EAST MINGARY**—containing 1620 Acres, estimated to keep 1000 Sheep and 20 Cattle.

Suitable Houses would be erected on East Mingary. Mr Armstrong, Glenborrodale, Salen, Amdgour, will give directions to point out the Boundaries of the Farms, and further particulars will be obtained from him, and from Messrs Dalgleish & Bell, W.S., 1 Rutland Square, Edinburgh, the latter of whom will receive Offers.

One must therefore assume that in the event it was let out as two separate farms leading to a new dwelling at Grigadale for the East Mingary farm.

⁵ OS maps of Argyll published in 1867 and 1900 show no new dwelling though Ardnamurchan could have been surveyed several years prior to the actual dates of publication.

Charles Rudd died in 1916. He was probably the last person to own of the whole Ardnamurchan Estate but he had split up at least one major tenancy and begun a process that would see chunks of the Estate sold off during the rest of the century. His family sold Ardnamurchan to John Campbell Boot⁶ (Lord Trent) in 1934. Part of the Estate was then farmed by the company to 'help research and development of horticultural and veterinary products by practical farming experience'. The 'greater part' of the Estate amounting to 26,500 acres was sold in 1949 and thus the Estate began to be split up. Today the Ardnamurchan Estate is about a third of its original size which, in Dalgleish's time was recorded⁷ as 55,000 acres.

The end of an era

My great grandfather Alexander MacLachlan died of pneumonia in 1913 aged 58 leaving my great grandmother Christina, then aged thirty-seven, to head the family and run the croft without the additional income he had brought in as a joiner which couldn't have been easy. With the oldest child being just 14, she tried to convince her brother Hugh to return to Glendrian from Grigadale to help out. Hugh, probably imagining that he would be trapped running his sister's croft and providing for both her and her children, declined the offer preferring to take passé to Canada with his wife so Christina was faced with running the croft on her own which, even with a hired hand if and when she could afford one, would still have been no easy task given the ages of some of the children.

Her sister Catherine offered to help out as she and her husband, a grocery manager in a Glasgow Cooperative store, had no children of their own and suggested bringing up one of the children with them in Glasgow. This was agreed and on the appointed day they arrived at Glendrian to select one of the children who had all been made available in their 'Sunday best'. It was my grandmother's younger sister, Flora, who was chosen and she left the croft forever to be brought up in a City.

As the children each left school they found employment elsewhere no doubt sending home what they could spare from what they managed to earn. The eldest, Christina Ann went to work in domestic service at Brougham Hall in Westmorland⁸ but became a victim of the flu epidemic of 1918. My Grandmother left to work in Tobermory, her brother John became a joiner and would have been working away from the croft much of the time leaving Duncan, a railway worker, and the youngest daughter, Chrissie at Glendrian living on the croft. It was Chrissie whilst still at school who wrote the account of the MacLachlans at Glendrian in 1924. Sadly, she died the following year of Tuberculosis.

With no reason to stay on, the croft was abandoned following Chrissie's death and my great grandmother joined my grandmother who had married by then in Tobermory whilst Duncan remained on the mainland working for the railway. Other tenants came and went from the main farm house at Glendrian but as far as we know the MacLachlan croft was never occupied again.

⁶ Grandson of John Boot, founder of Boots the Chemist.

⁷ F.H. Groome, *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland* (1882-4)

⁸ now known as Cumbria.



The above photo of the croft at Glendrian survived as a treasured possession of my great aunt Flora, who had left the croft as a young child to be raised by her aunt and uncle in Glasgow. We believe it was taken soon after Chrissie's death and just before the croft was about to be abandoned for good in 1925/26.

Hugh and Katie Cameron returned to Scotland from Canada landing at Greenock in July 1938 aboard the Canadian Pacific Line's 'Duchess of York'.⁹

Cameron	Gatherine	45	Glendryen, Kilchoan, Acharnole	Housewife
Cameron	Ewan	54	-do-	Farmer

They gave the address they were returning to as 'Glendryen' (the standard family spelling) indicating that it was probably their initial intention to finally take on the MacLachlan family croft. In reality a better opportunity existed at Grigadale where Hugh's brothers Duncan and John had continued to run the farm since their father's death in 1924. The Camerons continued to farm Grigadale until the late 1940s when Hugh and Katie took on 'Longrigg Farm' at Strontian along with Hugh's brother Duncan. When Hugh retired 'Longrigg' was sold and he, Katie, and Donald moved to a house purchased in Pier Road, Kilchoan which they named 'Thorhill' after one of the farms in Canada. They lived at 'Thorhill' in Kilchoan until Donald Cameron died in 1959, Hugh Cameron died in 1962, aged 80 and Katie in 1987, aged 97. Hugh and Katie were the last of our family to live by working the land.

⁹ The names Hugh and Ewan were interchangeable in Scotland. Ewan actually being pronounced 'Owen'

My wife and I visited Glendrian on a glorious summer day in August 2009. Having crossed on the ferry from Tobermory whilst holidaying in Mull we were met by my cousin and his wife who had driven down from Inverness. Leaving the car at the edge of the road it was a very pleasant walk full of anticipation along the main track leading to the abandoned township. One couldn't help thinking though of the much longer walk that Glendrian's children had to make over much more difficult terrain to get too and from school at Achosnich each day in all weathers and the way a horse drawn cart had regularly visited the township along one would assume pretty much the same track we were walking to bring essential supplies for sale.



These regular visits were a source of excitement for the children who, according to my great grandmother, would put their ears to the ground as it was possible to hear the cart coming before it actually came into view. Like most of the townships in the area, Glendrian could never have been totally self-sufficient and, most probably operated by a general store in one of the towns, bridging the gap provided a lucrative business opportunity. Goods on offer included material for making clothes and she would tell how as a girl she would politely ask her mother 'Do you think I could have a wee pocket?' while her mother was still deciding just how little material would be needed to make a new pinafore dress for her without any wastage.

On reaching the settlement one can only say that it is set in a place of outstanding natural beauty that is full of intrigue, however, as Donald Houston, Factor of the Estate pointed out during our reasearch, it is a very different place in winter when the sun fails to rise above the surrounding hills and the wind and rain lash in off the Atlantic.



We had already pinpointed my great grandmother's croft buildings based on the photo before our visit so it was not difficult to find once we reached the main settlement area. It seemed somehow strange to be on the site where she and her children represented the tenth and eleventh generations of MacLaclans to have lived there and how in that particular tiny 'house' with its outbuildings for animals and storage, she and her husband had managed to live with their children.

Apart from the ruined buildings very few visible artifacts remain. We did locate a very weathered shaft from a horse cart near to the croft buildings though based on timescale this would most likely have been left much later by occupants of the large house on the site. I did find the remains of what had obviously been part of an oil lamp hidden from general view within an alcove in the stonework of the building. It was the brass part and still had the winder used to adjust the wick though the salt air had reduced it to a corroded crumbling shell which if it had not been sheltered from the wind would have become dust years ago. It was strange though to think that it more than likely once provided light for my family all those years ago.



The remains of the MacLachlan buildings at Glendrian

Having spent more than two years off and on researching my family history before the visit I was left feeling that I was only scratching at the surface of all that happened, what went on, and what life was really like. I hope in some way that others may find what little I have managed to draw together in some way useful in furthering an understanding of Glendryen (as the old folk spelt it) as sadly it is too late now to actually ask them.

Andy Carter 2013