



THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND ON COLL

(From information and material kindly provided by Betty MacDugall and Juliana Nichols.)

The present church's commanding position overlooking the village and the bay suggests that it, or some equally imposing edifice, has occupied the site for hundreds of years. So it's rather surprising to learn that, throughout the eighteenth century, Coll had no public building for Church of Scotland services, which were held in a variety of places including Ballyhough, Breacacha, Clad, Knock and Gallanach, with sermons being preached at the East and West ends in turn. Strict records of attendance were kept however and people could be fined for failing to attend services. Nevertheless (perhaps because attendance was high?) the Church was always short of funds and at a Presbytery meeting in 1761 it was recorded that the sacraments of the Lord's Supper could only be administered year about in Coll and Tiree owing to the "expense of the communion elements".

There's no record of the exact date when a proper church was built on the island, but the Statistical Accounts of 1843 mention one existing at Clabbach. It is described as being large enough for 350 sitters and services were conducted by various missionaries who tended to come and go frequently, with intervals between. In the decades following the Schism of 1843 the majority of islanders attended the Free Church, but by 1866 there was definitely an established church at Clabbach and the Revd. Archd. Campbell was its Minister.

Church of Scotland services were held there until the arrival of one of its more colourful incumbents — Dugald MacEachern — early in 1900. He was determined on the building of a new church in Arinagour, which was now the main centre of population, and to raise funds a Grand Bazaar and Fancy Fair was held in the Market Hall, Inverness in October, 1905.

Eventually building began and during the course of it, James MacTaggart, son of the redoubtable schoolmaster, who later became a well-known entertainer, was blinded in one eye by a chip of stone that flew from the mason's hammer. This was considered an ill omen at the time, but all went well, and the church, which had a rather fine window, was consecrated in 1907.

Dugald MacEachern, who remained its Minister for a further eleven years, had a reputation as a local bard and, wrote his younger brother Victor, "The manse of Coll which looked out on the wild Atlantic in all its moods... the music of its waves breaking upon the yellow sands of Clabbach inspired some of his sweetest lyrics... It was there that he composed his poem, 'The Harp of the Gael' which won for him the Bardship of the National Mod, that year." Another of Dugald's poems, entitled 'New Year in the Hebrides' probably dates from the same period; here is part of it:

*The Hebrides snow-white lie
Like swans on the breast of the ocean,
The wind of the frozen North
On Coll of the waves is blowing.
High on the castled crag
The wintry seas are breaking —
Beloved, a Good New Year.*

*Do you remember our youth
And the Hogmanay in the shieling?
The old year dying, the sun
Falling with gold the ocean.
The maidens of Arinagour
And the laughter, the feast and the music —
Beloved, a Good New Year.
Homeward we went, you remember,
At midnight by hill paths frozen,
With Margaret the golden haired
And lily-limbed, sweet-throated Murag.
The Old Year dead and each youth
Kissing his maiden and saying —
Beloved, a Good New Year....*

THIS WEEK. MARKET HALL, INVERNESS.

A GRAND BAZAAR AND FANCY FAIR,

To raise Funds for the Building of a Church at
Arimagour, Coll,
WILL BE HELD

On **THURSDAY, FRIDAY, and SATURDAY,**
October 5, 6, and 7, 1905,
Commencing each day at Twelve Noon.

OPENING CEREMONY, on THURSDAY,
at Noon, by
**LADY HELEN MUNRO-FERGUSON OF
NOVAR.**

Chairman—Provost Ross, of Inverness.

On FRIDAY by Ex-PROVOST MACBEAN.
PATRONESSES.

- The Right Honourable The **COUNTESS OF CROMARTIE**
The **LADY HELEN MUNRO-FERGUSON** of
Novar.
The Hon. Mrs **BAILLIE** of Dochfour.
The Hon. Mrs **MACKINNON** of Mackinnon.
Mrs **MACKINTOSH** of Mackintosh.
Mrs **MACLEOD** of Cadboll.
Mrs **FERGUSON** of Baledoun.
Mrs **HENDERSON** of Stenstar.
Mrs **HORATIO MACRAE** of Clanes.
Mrs **THOMSON SINCLAIR**, Colbode House.
Mrs **NORMAN MACLEOD**, Ravenwood.
Mrs **GAVIN LANG**, Mayfield.
Mrs **ARTHUR D. ROSS**, Atholdena.
Mrs **C. N. JOHNSTON**, Edinburgh.
Mrs **ADDISON SMITH**, Edinburgh.

Grand Transformation of Market Hall to represent
DELHI AT THE DURBAR.

Admission to Bazaar—Thursday, to 5 P.M.; 1s; after
5 P.M., 6s. Friday all day, 4s. Saturday, to 5 P.M.
6d; after 5 P.M., 1s. Season Tickets, 2s.

Visitors by rail admitted Free on showing Return
Half of Ticket.

Selections by Orchestra after Opening Ceremony.

In addition to Bazaar there will also be—Golf-putting
Green, Indian Shooting Junco, Marionette Show, Con-
certs, Waxworks, Musical Sketches, Competitions, &c.

**PRIZES WILL BE GIVEN FOR THE BEST
FANCY COSTUME WORN BY LADY
AND BY GENTLEMAN.**

Contributions in Goods or Money will be gratefully
acknowledged by the Stalholders, the Assistants, or
the Secretary.

Rev. J. MACCHEWEN,
At Duunacbeth, Inverness.

THE FANCY FAIR IN THE MARKET HALL.—

The second opening ceremony of the bazaar and fancy fair, held in the Market Hall on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, in aid of the fund for the erection of a church at Arimagour, island of Coll, was performed by ex-Provost William Macbean. Rev. Archibald Macdonald, Kiltarity, occupied the chair, and among the gentlemen present at the ceremony were Sheriff J. P. Grant, Provost Ross, Mr Mackintosh of Raigmore, Colonel Francklyn, Colonel Angus, Rev. Mr Hay-Dunwooly, Mr John Cran, Buschew; Rev. Mr Bentinck, Kirkhill; Mr Andrew Mackintosh and others. Mr Macbean said it was alleged that the Church was losing its hold of the people, but when one saw the success of the many bazaars and other agencies for obtaining funds for the support of the ordinances of religion, there was no ground for such gloomy misgivings. He was pleased to see that on that occasion all sets vied with each other in lending assistance to the good work that Rev. Mr Macbean had undertaken, and he hoped it would be a conspicuous success. He hoped soon to hear of Mr Macbean being accommodated in comfort in his new church at Arimagour to the spiritual benefit of his attached flock. (Applause.) On the motion of Rev. John Macbean, Mr Macbean was heartily thanked for having declared the bazaar open, and a like compliment was passed to the chairman. The fancy fair was largely attended on Friday and Saturday, and, in the evenings especially, the scene was lively and attractive. The various entertainments and competitions were well patronised. The names of the winners of prizes were announced on Saturday night, amid a scene of much mirth and expectancy. The drawings amounted altogether to £535, in addition to £100 contributed before the bazaar. To this total of £635 has to be added a grant by the Home Mission of the Church of Scotland of £200, and it is expected that another grant and a few more contributions will complete the sum required. The first prize in the poker-work competition was won by Alex. Mackenzie, Craigh, Bonar-Bridge, with a beautifully worked tray.