

# Districts: Kilmallie & Lochaber

also Ardgour, Argyllshire & Inverness-shire

Version 2 – September 2017

This is one of a series of 38 articles which should be read in conjunction with each other. Look at '[Setting the Scene](#)', in Small Print on the left of the homepage, for a list of all these articles and explanations of some concepts being used.

## Summary

The children of Donald McLean and Christina were born in Kilmallie.

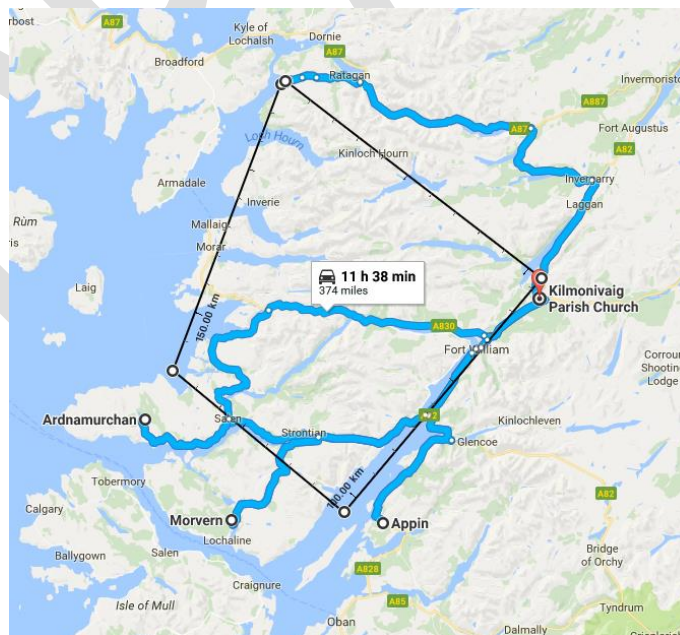
We are not sure of the boundaries in Donald's time - 1770s to 1830s. At different times, and for different purposes, geographical areas are named in different ways – often with slightly different boundaries. In these notes, we clarify the interconnections between Kilmallie and Lochaber – and also Ardgour, Argyllshire and Inverness-shire.

Kilmallie is a parish straddling the shires of Inverness and Argyll. It is the largest parish in Scotland. In Donald's time, Kilmallie was the north of Loch Eil. It is sometimes spelt as Kilmalie and rarely as Killmalie.

Lochaber is a civic administration district. This is much the same area as Kilmallie. The same area is referred to as Lochaber in current usage, rather than Kilmallie as in earlier time.

Ardgour is generally regarded as the area south of Loch Eil, and north of Morvern.

Argyllshire and Inverness-shire are much larger areas, within which Kilmallie, Lochaber and Ardgour are small sections.



[Research: We need to create a more accurate map which shows the various boundaries, in different eras, for Kilmallie, Lochaber, Ardgour, Argyllshire and Inverness-shire]

..ooOoo..

## Boundaries

It is taken that Loch Eil marked the southern boundary of the parish of Kilmalie and the northern boundary of the parish of Ardgour but it would have varied over the eras. Groome's Ordinance (ref: p370) details boundary charges in 1891 and also LANAFHG states that the massive parish was split into a number of Quoad Sacra Parishes (ref: xxx). In 1895, much of the Argyllshire part of the parish was split out to form the parish of Ardgour but then in 1975 Ardgour ceased to be a separate parish.

*"The length from north-west to south-east is about 60 miles; the greatest breadth 30 miles. It is bounded on the east and south-east by the parish of Kilmonivaig; on the south-east by Rannoch, in Perthshire; on the south and south-west by the parish of Appin; on the west by the parishes of Morvern and Ardnamurchan; on the north by Glenelg. It lies partly in Inverness-shire and partly in Argyllshire"* (McGillivray p 117).

In 1791, Fraser (p408) stated that the parish was 589 square miles or 376,960 acres (152,550 hectares).

*"In 1891 it was recommended by the Boundary Commissioners that the Argyllshire part of Killmalie parish (Killmalie then being situated in two counties, Argyll and Inverness) should at some time form an independent civil parish. This recommended was acted upon in 1895 when the parish of Ardgour was formed"* (Timperley p45).

## Population

The population of the parish is sparse and, apart from Fort William and Corpach, there are no population centres, just a few hamlets – Banavie and Clovulin north of the loch, and on the south there is Garvan, Blaich and Duiskey.

The population of Kilmalie has been:-

1755 (year)	3,093 (people)	McGillivray p122 (source)
1792	4,225	McGillivray p122
1801	4,600 or 4520	McGillivray p122 and Groome
1811	5,000	McGillivray p122
1821	5,527	McGillivray p122
1831	4,200 or 5566	McGillivray p122 and Groome
1841	5,397	Groome
1851		
1861	4,272	Groome
1871	4,066	Groome
1881	4,157	
1911	3,704	
1951	6,248	
2017	10,000 in Fort William	

In 1831:-

- The Inverness part of the parish was 2745 people [research: Does this include Fort William – see ref p122]
- The Argyll part of the parish = 1465
- There were 687 families in 610 inhabited houses. The average family size was 6 (p122)
- There were the 1200 in Fort William and 3010 on farming lands – these are the same numbers as 37 years before. Thus, there is no evidence of a continuance of the movement off sheep farms which was so strong between 1755 and 1792.
- [research: We need to check whether there were 4,200 (McGillivray) or 5,566 (Groome) in 1831.

McGillivray casts doubt on the lower figure in 1831 *"The people employed on the Caledonian Canal are included in the census of 1811 and 1831, but if the census of 1831 had been correctly taken, the population would certainly have been found to be more than 4210, notwithstanding of the number that left the country when the Canal was finished"* (p122). The number 4210 includes 1465 in the Argyll part of the parish (which, I think, covers around Loch Eil), 1200 in Fort William, and 1545 in the rest of the Inverness part of the parish. *"The yearly average of births cannot be ascertained on account of the number of Episcopalians and Roman Catholics in the parish. There is no register of deaths kept. The*

yearly average of marriages for seven years may be about 30. The number of children for each family at an average is 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>. There are 610 occupied families” (p122).

In 1881, of the 4,157 people, 82% were gaelic-speaking, 65% were in Inverness shire and 35% belonged to the Kilmallie ecclesiastical parish (ref: Groome)

In 1887, John Bartholomew's Gazetteer of the British Isles described Fort William as a small town (police burgh) of 1,594 people with a post office, 3 banks and the fort which had become private dwelling-houses.

..ooOOoo..

There was confusion in the BRB about Kilmallie, “*Kilmallie cannot be identified. Therefore, it must be supposed that it was a house name as even detailed maps fail to show it, and the one on Duiskey Estate, Argyllshire from which they left for South Australia in 1837. North of this estate are Glen Mallie and the River Mallie, both skirting Lochail Forest. Where the river enters Loch Arkraig is the village of Inver Mallie. These are west of Clunes and north of Fort William.*” In fact, Kilmallie is parish.

..ooOOoo..

The appendix compares the circumstances in Kilmallie in Donald’s time – from when he was a child to when the family migrated from the area in 1837. Statistical accounts by Fraser in 1792 and McGillivray in 1835 are summarized with regard to land use, employment, timber, crops, sheep, fishing, rents, schools and churches etc.

..ooOOoo..

## References

These notes have relied mainly on Fraser, McGillivray & Groome. See [‘Library’](#) for full details of these and other references – as well as comments about their relevance and how they can be accessed.

..ooOOoo..

Kilmallie at different times		Comments
- from Statistical Accounts of Scotland		
1792	1835	
Rev Alexander Fraser	Rev Donald McGillvray	
Donald's circumstances	When Donald was 12 years old	2 years before the McLean's left the area
Population	* "There were 4225 in the whole of the parish of Kilmallie. Of these, 1200 were living around Maryburgh, including 194 in the fort itself" (p428)	* In 1845, there were 1100 people who were 'supplied' by the ministers for the two churches on each side of Loch Linnhe near Corran Ferry (McGillvray p125). and there were 500 to 600 people living within three miles of the Corrach kirk (McGillvray p125).
Land use	Average tillages on each of the sheep farms:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Oats - 13 acres under 12 balls of oats</li> <li>* Barley - 4 acres under 3 balls of barley</li> <li>* Potatoes - 10 acres under 14 balls of potatoes</li> <li>* ie a total 27 acres in tillage</li> <li>* and 34,973 in sheep pasture</li> <li>* a total of 35,000 acres.</li> </ul> <p>"In farms where this are black cattle flocks, there are nearly 4 times this proportion of ground under culture". (p425)</p>	"There is not one acre out of 800 cultivated or capable of cultivation in this parish. Considerable exertions have been made by some of the proprietors to drain and improve portions of land near their own residence; and wherever the attempt has been made, the returns have fully repaid the expenses" (p123).
Arable land & employment	* "In the farms of less extent, there is a smaller proportion accordingly. Indeed, those proportions are equal to medium of 4 ordinary sheep farms in the parish, or to 8, according to former divisions. In farms where there are black cattle flocks, there are nearly 4 times this proportion of grounds in culture. [ie sheep are less compatible with tillage.] The pasture grounds, including shealings, do not rent above 4 pence per acre annually. The returns, upon an average, are, of oats, 3 from 1, of barley 5, and of potatoes, 10. There is no hemp, and very little flax feed, sown in the parish. The valleys and meadows yielding spontaneously plenty of excellent grass; there is but little clover, or rye grass sown. The gardens yield the ordinary vegetables" (Fraser p425) * "There is no common in the parish" (Fraser p424)	* In 1845 McGillvray described fishing (along with shepherds) as the main source of employment (p123) * "There is not much arable land in this parish, so that the people are employed chiefly as fishers or shepherds; neither is there any cotton or woollen manufactory" (p123).
Timber	* On the property of Capt McLean of Ardgour, there are about 1000 acres of firs, oak and other species of trees. These woods, in many places, would be very valuable. Here, however, they are not, being far from the shore, and the roads to them extremely bad." (ref p 423) * The trees that grow naturally are oak, fir, birch, ash, mountain ash, holly, elm, wild gean, hazel and Scotch polar" (p423) * Those planted are larch, spruce, silver fir, beech, plane and fruit trees. (p 423)	* On Lochiel and Ardgour's properties there is a good deal of oak wood, and left in the best order, particularly by Colonel McLean of Ardgour, who is enthusiastically fond of wood. He has several spots planted with fir, well enclosed, which no doubt will be profitable hereafter. In the meantime, it is a great ornament to the country' (ref p120)
Crops	* 27 acres of oats, barley and potatoes were the principal crops - p425 * "Oats, barley and potatoes are the principal crops. The climate and soil here are ill calculated for rearing grain. In the best season, the crop is precarious, and hardly equivalent to the expenses incurred. Potatoes, which are mostly planted in drills, answer remarkably well; and turnips, it is believed, would turn to good account, particularly to the sheep farmer. Hitherto, however, little attention has been bestowed upon them." (Fraser p424).	

<p><b>Stock</b></p> <p>600 head of black cattle, 500 horses, 1000 goats and 60,000 sheep (Fraser p424)</p>	<p><b>Sheep</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "The sheep were first introduced, into the parish in the year 1764. They have since increased so much, that about three fourths of the country are occupied by them" (Fraser p424).</li> <li>* There were 34,973 acres of sheep pasture</li> <li>* There were 60,000 by 1791 (ref p 424) and 3416 pounds of wool were produced that year (ref p 427).</li> <li>* "Since the year 1764, when sheep were first introduced into the parish, the value of the land has augmented considerably - in general, to triple what it then was. Farms, under long leases, must be expected. Of these, there are only a few, which were granted by the commissioners upon the annexed estates. (THE ONLY ALLUSION TO THE AFTERMATH OF CULLODEN). (p432)</li> <li>* Where there are but short leases granted by the landlords, improvements will advance very slowly. There are some lands in the parish, which are esteemed high rented. The great augmentation of rents must be attributed, principally, to the mode adopted, of stocking farms with sheep. They require a smaller number of hands to tend them, than black cattle; can graze in places where these would not venture, and yield better produce. This, it will be acknowledged, is strong temptation to proprietors, who value money more than men, to encourage sheep farming. (p433)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Horses &amp; ploughing</b></p> <p>"They are used in ploughing, harrowing, leading home peats, and carrying manure to the fields. Four of them are yoked a-breast in the plough; and a man, who leads them, stands immediately before them, and walks backward, facing the ploughman. This surely, is very awkward! The gentlemen in the parish, however, yoke but two horses in plough; and the one who holds it, manages also the reins. Three different kinds of ploughs are used." (p424)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The sea fowls are gulls, herons, cormorants, curlews, ducks, teal, pies, marrots, fojn geese, eagles, and many others. Of the migratory kind, are the pitarries and wigsons" (p413)</li> <li>• The birds are eagles of three different kinds, hawks, kites, ravens, crows and rooks. There are heathcocks, ptarmachans and partridges, but they are decreasing annually as their eggs are trampled upon, and broke by the sheep. There are also snipes and plovers with all sorts of poultry, and a great variety of small birds of the muniscal kind such as rose, the heath and the rock-linnet - the chaff, the bull and the goldfinch - the sky-lark, the thrush, the robin-redbreaste etc. The migratory birds are woodcocks, cuckoos, swallows, martins, swifts and sionchatters." (Fraser p423)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wild animals</b></p> <p>"The quadrupeds are, deer and roes - hares, as large as those in the low countries of Scotland, but not so swift - weasles, polecats, badgers and foxes of two kinds: these last are mostly extirpated, since the introduction of sheep" (p423).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* People in Ardgour paid an annual fee of 20 pounds [ Question : or shillings] to fish upon the property of Mr McLean of Ardgour ( probably Alexander the 13th Laird) (p411).</li> <li>* Fresh : Salmon, sinnacks, char, grilse, trout (white, black and yellow). (p410)</li> <li>* Salt water : There were cod, Lythe, seath, slate, founders, mackerels, whiting, haddock and herring. (p413).</li> <li>Herring was the main commercial focus with 2000 barrels court in a good season (p412) but in 1791 they had a very good season with about 3000 barrels of herrings, which at 18 shillings per barrel is 2700 pounds' (p426).</li> <li>* "Herrings are the fish that abound most, and that are of the greatest benefit. .... There are red cod, lythe, seath, skate, founders, mackarels, whibings and a few haddock. .... If the weather be moderate, lythes and seaths may be fished every day of the year. .... They are killed with small rods, and a hook, having a feather, resembling one of the herring fry. Cod, skate, and flounder are caught with long lines with bates of herring or muscles. There are great many eels and sturgeons" (pp4128-413)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fish</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "Salmon, herrings, red-head, lythe, skate, founders, whittings are found in the salt water lakes." (p120)</li> </ul>



<p><b>Rents &amp; farm sizes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valued rent of the parish is 434 pounds 14 shillings 4 pence Sterling - with Ardgour having about 78 pounds which is 1.8%</li> <li>Real gross rent is about 5200 pounds,</li> <li>Lands rent at 4723 pounds 8 shillings 11 pence - with Ardgour receiving about 1663 pounds which is 35%</li> <li>Salmon fishing upon the river Lochy rents about 230 pounds</li> <li>Still water fishing at 27 pounds</li> <li>Horses rent at about 200 pounds</li> <li>Summary: Valued rent of the parish = 434 pounds, real gross rent = 5200 pounds, lands rent = 4723 pounds, Salmon fishing on the Lochy = 230 pounds, Still water fishing = 27 pounds, Houses = 200 pounds (approx) (p433)</li> <li>There are 93 farms in the parish. The average extent of which is six and half square miles, and the average annual rent about 50 pounds stilling. Of these 93 farms, 54 belong to Lochieil and 18 to Ardgour. And of these last 18, two farms rent at 100 pounds each, two at 260 pounds each, one at 340 pounds, and the lowest at 30 pounds. (p432).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Schooling</b></p> <p>"There are eleven schools in the whole parish: one, a parochial school, at Fort William - the salary the maximum; six schools supported by different societies, of which three are supported by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge; four schools supported by private individuals. The branches generally taught in the parochial school and in that supported by the Committee of the General Assembly at Carpath, are English reading, writing, arithmetic, Latin, Greek, book-keeping, geography" (p126).</p> <p>"There are 9 places of worship in the parish. Besides the established minister, there is a missionary, appointed by a committee for managing his Majesty's royal bounty, who resides at Fort William, and another, who officiates in the parish once a month. The minister of a mission, in some neighbouring parishes, also resides in Kilmalie, besides a preacher of the gospel. Once a month, a Papist and a Nonjuring clergyman, preach within the bounds of the parish." (p433)</p> <p>"The number of members of the Established Church is 3715, of Papists 103, and of Nonjurors 407." (p434)</p> <p>"An excellent parish church was built in the year 1783, which cost 440 pounds, and last year [1791], another was built at Maryburgh." (p 434)</p>	<p><b>Transport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 four-wheeled chaises (a type of horse and cart?)</li> <li>3 two-wheeled machines (another type of horse and cart???)</li> <li>2 close carts</li> <li>Sledges for hay and corn</li> <li>Creeils on horseback for peat (a wicker basket)</li> <li>Between 80 and 100 boats - 60 in Maryburgh</li> <li>4 sloops from 20 to 40 tons (single mast)</li> <li>1 brig of 200 tons (two masts)</li> <li>8 fermies (5 are on the salt water)</li> <li>ie very few land conveyances whereas there were many boats (p446)</li> </ul>
--	---	---

## Health

- Rheumatism is attributed to the dampness of the air and people ceasing to wear flannel shirts (p409).
- Smallpox was almost under control with a program of inoculations even though some were resisting it. In one season 460 were inoculated and 3 died – attributed to a 'bad habit of body' rather than ineffectiveness of the inoculation (p409). Maybe the McLearns were inoculated – or maybe they were among the anti-vaxers.
- Fevers of the epidemical kind were very frequent (p409).
- Dropsy was pretty common – "This is ascribed to their feeding so much upon potatoes, which is now become a substitute for meal" (p409).
  - "The jaundice and the stone are almost unknown here." (p409)
  - "The itch [presumably STD], which has been imputed as a dis grace to this quarter of the island, is but rarely seen now, even among the lowest classes of the people. This, doubtless, is owing to their living in a more cleanly manner than their forefathers." Rev Fraser quoted one instance (p409&410).
    - Some lived to a very old age – 13 lived were over 84 years old (in a population of 4225) – (p428&429)
  - The tallest person is 6ft 7.5 inches. The general height is 5 foot, 7.5 inches. (p446)
- In 1792 in Maryburgh, within a population of 1,200, there were 6 people of 84 years old, 1 at 88 yrs, 3 at 97, 2 at 98 and 1 of 104. And of people who had died, someone was 107 years old when he/she died about 1777, 109 yrs in 1781, 102 yrs in 1788 and 103 years old when he/s he died in 1791. (p429)
- There were two instances of suicide (p447)

## Rheumatism is a prevailing disease (p118)

There are persons at present in this parish on a hundred years old (p118)

## Living & working conditions

- "Manner of living upon sheep farms, anno 1791 - The people submit, as may naturally expected, in a great measure, upon the affairs of the flock. If they live apart, as herds, they have each a stone of oat-meal per week, from the possessor, together with grass for 2 cows, and 70 sheep; and they plant as much potatoes, for their own use, as they can cultivate. They live very comfortably, and generally have some money. They are well accommodated in clothes and bedding; which is a consequence of their more extensive commerce with the world, and of the abundance of wool. Travelling to the hills, to look after the sheep is their usual employment; excepting at the shearing and shearing seasons, when they gather them all down on the low grounds, and take them by parcels for these purposes. Shepherds, who live in their master's houses, have their maintenance, and grass for 70 sheep, or so. Their allowance and profits are superior to those of domestic servants. Their sheep are marked for themselves, and the produce sold commonly with the master's and at the same price." (p444)
- "Servants are kept, either for tending and managing sheep, or for black cattle. The former are few in proportion; two shepherds are sufficient for any ordinary farm, capable of grazing 1,460 sheep. If they live in their master's houses, they have, besides, their maintenance, grass for 70 sheep. If the shepherd be married, and keep a family of his own, he has grass for a cow, and 60 sheep or thereabout, and a stone of meal per week. All of which are equal to about 20 pounds. If a servant be employed for the purpose of husbandry, and lives by himself, with a family, but ready to answer when called on, to assist in the work of the farm, he is paid as follows :-
  - Grass for 2 cows = 2 pounds and 10 shillings
  - Grass for 20 sheep = 2 pounds
  - Lands for potatoes = 2 pounds
  - Maintenance for working for his master = 3 pounds and 10 shillings
  - Oatmeal (3.5 bolls) = 2 pound, 18 shillings and 4 pence
  - Cash = 5 pounds
- He also has use of his master's horses
- Upon black cattle farms, the wages are something different. Domestic servant men have from 5 pound to 6 pound; women from 50 shillings to 3 pounds. In harvest, or in the time for cutting peats, the men have a shilling a day, and the women from 6 pence to 5 pence, with their dinner.' (ref p445)
- Statute (labour) is 6 pence per day

## Language

"The Gaelic is the mother tongue of the natives; and it is thought that in this, and some neighbouring parishes, it is spoken in its greatest purity. Though Gaelic be the original language, there are very few people, especially the younger class, who do not understand and speak English. It is remarkable yet not the less true, that the illiterate Highlander, who is a stranger to every other language but the Gaelic, speaks it more fluently, more elegantly, and more purely, than the scholar." (p430)

- \* "The prevailing language is the Gaelic; but the English is gaining ground. The people are very desirous to acquire the English language. When one person wishes evil to another, it is not uncommon to hear a Highlander say, "Don beurta arta," i. e. may you never speak properly in English. The intercourse with the south country by steam-boats, and the number of schools in particular, have tended to spread the English language among the inhabitants; but they prefer to receive religious instruction in Gaelic; indeed, many of them who can speak in common conversation in English cannot follow an English discourse." (p123)
- \* "The rising generation imitate their equals in the south country in their dress. Tartan among men, and cotton cloth among women, are the common costume" (p123).
- \* "The common diet of the peasants is potatoes, with herrings or milk. Such as are in better circumstances may have a little meal and mutton; but potatoes is their principal food for three-fourths of the year" (p123).