

Petition by the Parishioners of Tiree and Coll in Favour of their Deposed Minister, Rev. John Fraser, 1698

Transcription by Flo & Andy Straker and Louise McDougall from document FH 200 held in the Argyll & Bute Council Archives, Lochgilphead. The assistance of Ms Jackie Davenport, Archives & Administration Manager, and Ms Marina Campbell, Archives Assistant, is gratefully acknowledged. 21st November 2008. (Editors' notes in italics)

The subject of this (unsuccessful) petition was the Episcopalian Minister, Rev. John Fraser. He was born in Mull in 1647, and was Dean of the Isles prior to his appointment in 1678 to the Parish of Tiree & Coll and its dependency of Iona. In the revolution of 1689, William of Orange's Presbyterian government came to the throne, and Episcopacy was outlawed. A few ministers conformed to Presbyterianism, but Fraser did not. He continued to occupy his charge until 26 October 1697, when it was declared vacant. However there were not enough Presbyterian ministers to service all parishes, so Fraser continued his work, illegally and secretly with no remuneration, subsisting on the generosity and benevolence of his parishioners. Fraser appealed to the Synod of Argyle, on 3 occasions, even offering to accept the Presbyterian Government, but the Synod would not relent. Unfortunately, no minister meant no church service & collection, and therefore no Poor Relief, which was administered by individual Kirk Sessions. Fraser died in 1702, and his successor, Aulay MacAulay, a strict Presbyterian, was appointed on 24 July 1704.

In 1698, the parishioners of Tiree & Coll, led by (Donald) McLean of Coll, petitioned the Synod of Argyle to re-appoint Rev. John Fraser as their minister.

(This document detailed below is torn in places, and deep folds have made some of the text indecipherable)

Petition & Testimony of the Persons in Tiree & Coll and in favour of the Good Conduct of their Minister-1698. To R. The Moderator & the remanent Reverend Bretheren of the Synod of Argyle

Barrapoll, Tyrie, 14th September 1698

(Declaration)

“ R.B. (*presumably the Reverend Bretheren*)

We the inhabitants & paris(h)ioners of the Isles of Tyree & Coll as ...(well)...sub (scribe)... that cannot subscribe.... are verie sensible in what sadd condition we might have been into if the lord had not inclined the heart of our pastor to administer the comfort of the word unto us... well since as before the time he has been depryved of his benefice and as we knoe (it) is no less grievous to him than the loss of his (.inten) to be through malitious groundless representations suspected of the least stain on his behaviour. Soe we think ourselves bound in consience to testifie in his behalf & for his vindication that the 22 years since he became our minister we have found him laborious in his charge & exemplary in his life both (torn)... his love (torn)...a long time before his admission & not able to goe much abroad (posen?e) Soe much that upwards of 30 families were (pre...ented)..wise? were all s... reduced after his entire for that now we have none among us of the profession ... perhaps is and in w... not soon paralleled in either the Isles or argyle....and seriously intreat you be pleased to consider both his & our condition w....t to advert narrowly how we sh.. ...ment we hold th... ouselves... less experience of our condition and inornitie ... us. Soe expecting your favourable answer we continue R.B. your assured friends & servants

witnessed? “

(Below the Declaration are two distinct columns of signatures, most appear to be McLean gentry, and persons of influence in the parish. The right hand column begins with Donald of Coll, followed by other Coll signatories, and the middle column pertains to signatories from Tiree. On the left are 2 smaller and somewhat illegible signatures, each not stating a landholding or residence, so these 2 persons may be notaries or similar)

(Notaries perhaps?)

(Tiree)

(Coll)

(19) **M. Ross**
(20) **C. M^cLene**

(7) **Hector M^cLeane in Ballmartine**
(8) **Charles M^cLeane in Balino**
(9) **J M^c Laine in Ballphuill**
(10) **Donald M^cLean in Baraboll**
(11) **Lachlan M^cLean in Cornaigbeg**
(12) **Lauchlane M^cLeane in Kenvarr**
(13) **Lauchlane M^cLean in Cornagmor**
(14) **Ewn (*Hugh/Hew*) McLeane in Balephetris**
(15) **H. (*Hector*) Fraser in Ruaig**
(16) **Lachlan m^cLaine in Roak (*Ruaig*)**
(17) **Donald m^cLaine in Roak**
(18) **Donald M^cLaine in Khelis (*Caolis*)**

(1) **Do: M^cLaine of Coll (*Donald*)**
(2) **Hew McLean of Dru----s (*unclear*)**
(3) **All: McLean off Tottaranald (*Allan*)**
(4) **H ? Mlaine in Crabach**
(5) **H (*Hector*) Mlaine of islamuck (*Isle of Muck*)**
(6) **C McLaine in Crosiboll (*on Coll*)**

Additional Notes:

(1) *Donald, Laird of Coll*

(3) *In 1716 an Allan McLean is residing at Totranald*

(5) *Hector 2nd of Muck, was a grandson of Lachlan 7th of Coll. He was served heir to his father Hector 1st of Muck on 30th April 1673. Described as '6 marshlands called the Isle of Muke', (see Clan Gillean Revised Notes page 405)*

(7) *Son of John Diurach*

(14) *Likely Hugh McLean, former Duart Bailie*

(15) *Hector was the son of the Rev John Fraser*

(16) & (17) *Signed in the same hand. These brothers Lachlan & Donald are both listed at Ruaig in 1716 Census. Likely sons of Young Ewn McLean.*

(18) *Perhaps Donald Glas McLean in Caoles 1716*

Misc:

Signatories names and residences have been transcribed exactly as they are written in the document.

This document was signed by a group of presumably educated and influential McLeans, and there are no Campbells mentioned, despite the Campbell takeover in 1679. However, after the Revolution in 1689, William of Orange had restored Argyll to his father's forfeited estates, therefore the Campbells would have been followers of Presbyterianism at the time the Petition was drawn up in 1698. In parts of Scotland, the years between 1690 & 1700 were considered famine years, especially in the Highlands, which was probably at its' worst in 1698. The island of Mull was severely affected. Many factors were to blame: over-cropping; a series of poor summers with little sunshine and heavy rainfall; and early autumn snows and frosts. Scarcity of seed, and King William's taxation during the France war years added to the burden. Temporary relief was given when the government relaxed the ban on the import of Irish meal during 1696, but the ban was re-imposed the following year.

Additional Sources:

Clan to Regiment - 600 years in the Hebrides, by Nicholas McLean-Bristol, 2007, pp. 98-106.

The Inhabitants of the Inner Isles 1716, published by The Scottish Record Society

Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae, *The Succession of Ministers in Scotland from the Reformation*, by Hew Scott, D.D., New Edition.
Clan Gillean, pp. 404-5, 418.

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