

**SCOTTISH RECORD
SOCIETY. PARISH
REGISTER OF
DURNESS, 1764-1814**

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Scottish Record Society. Parish register of durness, 1764-1814 by Hew Morrison

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HEW MORRISON

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE Register commenced in 1764, the year in which the settlement of the Rev. John Thomson as parish minister took place. Mr. Thomson was evidently not a proficient Gaelic scholar, although able to preach in the native tongue. He could not master the spelling of the local popular surnames, but he has preserved in the register a careful and minute phonetic rendering both of the names of persons and of places. His pains to identify persons led him to give the proper and popular cognomens, and in many cases to give the names of the fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers of those seeking to enter the bonds of matrimony, or to have their children baptized.

A perusal of the Register will show how necessary it was to be careful in noting the distinction between persons of the same name in that part of the country. Although the majority of the people bore the name of Mackay, there was a considerable mixture of other names, such as—Morrison, Munros, Macintyres, Sutherlands, Calders, Campbells, Macleods and Macdonalds.

The Register is particularly valuable in that it contains a detailed account of the Baptisms and Marriages of the parish at a time when registers were hardly kept at all. It also throws a light on the social and moral condition of the people. The various classes are very sharply defined. For example, we find as the very lowest a person designated as residing "sometimes with his father, and sometimes with his father-in-law." The next step in the social grade is a person living *in* a certain place. Then follows "little tenent," "tenent," "farmer," "tacksman," and some of the tacksmen have the prefix of *Mr.* or addition *Esquire*, while the parish minister himself seems to be at the top of the social ladder.

In regard to the condition of morals, one cannot but be struck with the frequency, especially at the beginning of the Register, of notices of baptisms of children not born in lawful wedlock. But when one considers the time and the strictness with which Mr. Murdoch Macdonald, Mr. Thomson's predecessor, held sway over

the people during his ministry, the matter need not cause great surprise. After Mr. Macdonald's death, Rob Donn, the poet, in an elegy to his late minister, speaks of the extremes in moral laxity to which the people had declined since death had deprived the parish of Mr. Macdonald's presence. The percentage of illegitimate children that were brought to baptism is after all not large, and gradually decreases.

The Register also shows that in the parish there were many at that time who plied a trade of some kind or other. There were masons, carpenters, boat builders, shoemakers, tailors and weavers, and it is also interesting to find that Lord Reay employed a *chef* in his house at Balnakeil.

The Register of Marriages was equally carefully kept. Early marriages were not greatly approved of in Mr. Thomson's day, and now and again when a young man, probably not much out of his teens, marries, he is put down either as a "simple young lad" or a "single young man"; *single* in this connection signifying that he had little or no responsibility.

Every leaf of the register is attested by "John Thomson, minister," and up to 1811 is in his own handwriting. After that it is in the handwriting of his successor, the Rev. William Findlater, who, although careful to begin with, did not keep the Register nearly so well as his father-in-law. Mr. Findlater's Register had the disadvantage of not being in the same volume as that of Mr. Thomson. Being of inferior paper, and having lain in some damp place, what remains is in a very poor state of preservation.

Altogether, the Register is one which the Editor is glad to have had the opportunity of transcribing and examining, and he has pleasure also in acknowledging the uniform courtsey of the officials of the Registrar General's Department.

HEW MORRISON.

EDINBURGH, *June* 1911.

PARISH REGISTER OF DURNESS,

1764-1814.

Each page to 1810 is signed "John Thomson, Minr."

1764.

1. John MacEnvicnish in Strathmore had a child baptized named Catharine	4 Nov.
2. Angus Munro in Eribol, Catharine	4 Nov.
3. John Bain in Eribol, Murdoch	4 Nov.
4. Murdoch Douglas, alias Gow, in Eribol, Barbara,	4 Nov.
5. Alexr. Cormack in Balnacille, Elisabeth	9 Nov.
6. Hector Mackintosh in Uaibeg, Kenneth	11 Nov.
7. John Miller in Balamhulich, Margaret	11 Nov.
8. Wm. Mackintosh in Balamhulich, Elisabeth	11 Nov.
9. John Bain in Uaibeg, James	16 Nov.
10. George Henderson in Crosple, Patrick	16 Nov.
11. James Munro in Saingo, Donald	17 Nov.

1765.

1. Donald Mackay, alias Macuilleam Macnish, in Mussel, Hugh	18 Jan.
2. John Gunn in Rispond, Hugh	27 Jan.
3. Thomas Campbell, alias Grange, Murdoch	3 Mar.
4. Wm. Mackenzie, alias Oag, in Nahaultan, Donald	13 Mar.
5. Wm. Mackay MacEorish, Alexander	28 Mar.
6. Hugh Calder, alias Down, in Balamhulich, christened Mary	31 Mar.
7. David Sutherland in Knockbreak, Janet [but not born in lawful marriage]	31 Mar.
8. Gilbert Calder, alias Down, in Teagisgil, John	14 April
9. John Macleod in Balinloch, Angus	29 April
10. Iye Mackay, alias MacEorish, Kenneth	5 May
11. Charles Campbell in Saingo, Donald	23 June
12. Wm. Morison, alias Machustanvicachinroy, in Uaibeg, Hugh	8 July
13. Angus Munro Macdhonilicorachy in Eribol, Marion	14 July
14. Richard Deunne in Eribol, William	14 July
15. Donald Macleod in Uaibeg, Mary	19 July
16. Hector Morison, alias Macomasbvicachinroy, John [n.b.l.w.] ¹	10 Aug.
17. John Mackay, alias Macalisterroy, in Uaibeg, Hugh	15 Aug.
18. George Mackay, alias Macen vicolicuillan, in Clasneach, Margaret	29 Sept.
19. John Calder, alias Down, in Grudie, Isobel	29 Sept.
20. Kenneth Mackenzie in Clasneach, Donald	11 Oct.
21. Donald Mackay, Chelsea Pensioner, in Balnacell, Niel [illegitimate]	27 Oct.
22. Alexander Cormack in Keoldale, Donald	8 Nov.
23. Donald Mackay, alias Macniel vicdhonil, in Uaibeg, George [n.b.l.w.] ¹	10 Nov.

¹ n.b.l.w.—Not born in lawful wedlock.

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| 24. John Macnish vicary, in Istanhall, Mary | 11 Nov. |
| 25. Neil Mackay in Hope, John | 17 Nov. |
| 26. James Clarke in Cnockbreack, Hugh | 7 Dec. |

1766.

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| 1. John Sutherland in Cnockbreack, Mary | 5 Jan. |
| 2. James MacCulloch in Ceannabin, Donald | 30 Jan. |
| 3. Mr. John Thomson, minister of Durness, Janet | 13 Feb. |
| 4. Angus Macleod, alias Bain, in Clashneach, George | 26 Mar. |
| 5. Robert Mackay, alias Macuilliam macnish, in Aultcori-fraigsil, George | 30 June |
| 6. John Mackay in Sartigrim, Janet | 25 July |
| 7. Alexander Mackintosh, alias MacDhoniil, in Sartigrim, Eury | 25 July |
| 8. John Mackay in Borley, Ann | 15 Aug. |
| 9. George Campbell, alias Grange, in Ballambullich, Margaret | 7 Oct. |
| 10. Iye Campbell, alias Grange, in Durin, Barbara | 7 Oct. |
| 11. Hugh Macpherson in Saingo, Hugh | 4 Nov. |
| 12. Hugh Ross in Borley, Donald | 23 Nov. |
| 13. Alexander Macdonald in Keoldale, Katharine | 8 Dec. |
| 14. John White in Achunahainat, George | 8 Dec. |
| 15. Alexander Mackaiscail in Crosple, Alexander | 21 Dec. |
| 16. Mr. John Thomson, minister of Durness, Kenneth | 27 Dec. |

1767.

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|--|---------|
| 1. Neil Mackay, alias Macenvicneil, in Hope, James | 8 Feb. |
| 2. Donald Mackenzie, alias Machustan, in Strathmore, James | 11 Feb. |
| 3. Wm. Mackintosh, alias MacneilvicEio, in Ballambullich, Ann | 15 Feb. |
| 4. Donald Mackay, alias Macalister, in Freasgil, Donald | 8 Mar. |
| 5. Murdoch Munro, alias Macdholvicorachy, in Eribol, James | 19 Mar. |
| 6. William Morison in Uaibeg, Isobel | 20 Mar. |
| 7. John Bain in Durin, Robert | 23 Mar. |
| 8. Wm. Mackay, alias Macphatrick, in Braegisgil, James | 30 Mar. |
| 9. John Ekel, alias Calder, alias Macdholicustan, vic Gilbert in Hunleam, Donald | 5 April |
| 10. Charles Campbell in Saindgoe, William | 24 May |
| 11. George Aberach, alias Mackay, from Armadale, parish of Farr, George | 4 June |
| 12. Murdoch Douglas, alias Gow, in Eribol, Donald | 5 July |
| 13. Alexander Fraser in Achunahainat, William | 5 July |
| 14. Donald Morison Macdholicuistan in Lochsuian, Katharine | 14 July |
| 15. Neil Mackay, alias Machustan Macneil, in Arnoboll, George | 3 Aug. |
| 16. Donald Mackay, Chelsea Pensioner in Balnacille, Margaret [n.h.l.w.] | 27 Aug. |
| 17. Hector Mackay, alias Macdholicachinskerray, in Islandchoary, Forbes | 7 Sept. |
| 18. James Clarke in Cnockbreack, Charles | 8 Sept. |
| 19. David Sutherland in Durin, Ann | 11 Oct. |
| 20. Donald Mackay, alias Macdholicuillam roy, in Achumore, John | 17 Oct. |
| 21. Neil Morison in Clasneach, Kenneth | 6 Nov. |
| 22. George Mackay, alias MacEnvicdholicuillam, in Gheodhachreave, Hugh | 6 Nov. |
| 23. Alexander Cormack in Keoldale, John | 18 Dec. |

1768.

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|---|---------|
| 1. John Ekel, alias Calder, alias Machustan Macuilliam, in Arnoboll, Hugh | 15 Jan. |
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2. John Mackintosh in Balamhulich, Elspie	11 Feb.
3. Hector Bain in Dulnaberu, Donald	20 Feb.
4. Wm. Mackay, alias MacEorish, in Durin, Barbara	6 Mar.
5. Angus Sutherland in Saindgo, Mary	20 Mar.
6. Hugh Bain in Eribol, William	1 April
7. Wm. Mackay, alias Machustan Macmhorachie, in Mussel, John	5 April
8. Hector Morison in Durin, George	27 April
9. Niel Mackay, alias MacEmish, in Keoldale, Barbara	16 May
10. Alexander Grange, alias Campbell, in Achunabainat, Barbara	3 June
11. John Mackenzie in Bataulheoir, Ann	15 June
12. Donald Mackay, alias Macuillam Macnishvicdhonil, in Uaibeg, George	7 June
13. Angus Munro in Eribol [no name]	July
14. John Ross, alias MacEnvicoun, in Achucharaset, Donald [n.b.l.w.]	15 July
15. Iye Campbell, alias Grange, in Durin, Donald	5 Aug.
16. Alexr. Campbell in Craigmhulbin, Margaret	12 Aug.
17. Angus Munro, alias Macdholicorachy, in Eribol, Isabella	14 Aug.
18. William Down in Altnacealich, Catharine	14 Aug.
19. Angus Bain in Eribol, Niel	15 Aug.
20. John MacEmhicdholicuillam in Shimins, Ann	19 Aug.
21. Robert Mackay, alias Macuillam macnish, in Aultcorifraisgil, Catharine	23 Aug.
22. Mr. John Thomson, minister, Francis	30 Aug.
23. John Mackay, alias Macuillam macnish, in Freasgil, Janet	25 Sept.
24. Hugh Ross in Borley, Barbara	25 Sept.
25. Alexander Mackintosh in Crosple, Donald	1 Oct.
26. John Whyte in Achunahainat, Elizabeth	14 Oct.
27. Mr. James Clarke in Cnockbreack, Mary	18 Oct.
28. Wm. Mackenzie in Naultan, Barbara	26 Oct.
29. Thomas Campbell, alias Grange, in Crosple, Elizabeth	28 Oct.
30. John Munro, alias Macnish vicdholicorachie, in Freasgil, Catharine	30 Oct.
31. John Sutherland in Crosple, Janet	9 Nov.
32. John Mackay in Sartgrim, Barbara	15 Nov.
33. Richard Denoon in Balnaceill, Isobel	16 Nov.
34. Hugh Mackay, alias Macdholicemishmacuillam, in Achu- charasait, Barbara	16 Nov.
35. James MacCulloch in Ceanabin, Christian	16 Nov.

1769.

1. John Ekel, alias Calder, alias Machustan Macuillam, in Arnoboll, Isobel	21 Jan.
2. John Mackenzie, alias Macarlisboig, in Eribol, James	29 Jan.
3. Donald Mackay, alias Macnish macdholicustan, in Dallinarait, James	29 Jan.
4. John Bayn in Durin, Catherine	1 Feb.
5. Rory Sutherland in Clashneach, George	12 April
6. Charles Macalister, alias Campbell, in Saindgoe, Christian	27 April
7. Donald Mackay, alias Macuillam Macnish, in Batnaha- chlash, John	1 May
8. John Rose in Braegisgil, Angus	1 May
9. John Mackintosh in Balamhulich, Mary	7 May
10. Iye Morison, alias Gairloch, in Crosple, Mary	15 May
11. Donald Mackay, alias Macuillam, in Dalnaberu of Strath- more, Christian	22 July
12. William Calder, alias Francach, in Hunlean, John	23 July
13. Alexander Mackaiscal in Crosple, Margaret	25 July

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| 14. John Ekel, alias Calder, alias Machustan macdholicgilbert,
in Hunleam, Katharine | 25 Aug. |
| 15. John Macdholicorishskerray, alias Mackay, in Borley,
Mary | 26 Aug. |
| 16. James Munro in Balnaceill, Mary | 28 Aug. |
| 17. Robert Down, poet, in Saingo, George | 12 Sept. |
| 18. Alexander Cormack in Keoldale, George | 14 Sept. |
| 19. Angus Morison, alias Macnish macEnichustan, in Eribol,
Katharine | 15 Sept. |
| 20. Murdoch Macleod in Balamhulich, Isobel [n.b.l.w.] | 1 Nov. |
| 21. Donald Morison in Lochsuan, Donald | 22 Nov. |
| 22. John Munro, alias Macnish macdholicorachie, in Freasgil,
Ephie | 22 Nov. |
| 23. Wm. Macneilicen, alias MacKintosh, in Balamhulich, Mary | 10 Dec. |

1770.

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| 1. Angus Macleod, alias Macuillam Machustan, in Balamhulich,
Mary | 17 Jan. |
| 2. Wm. Fraser, alias Macalister vicarister vicuillam, in Balam-
hulich, Donald [n.b.l.w.] | 22 Jan |
| 3. Janet Nin mhorachy machustan, alias Mackay, in Saingo,
Ann [n.b.l.w.] | 26 Jan. |
| 4. George Campbell, alias Grange, in Balamhulich, John | 7 Feb. |
| 5. Lewis Thomson, Mary | 13 Feb. |
| 6. James Clarke in Cnockbreack, John | 23 Feb. |
| 7. Wm. Morison, alias Macdholicneil mhorachy, in Island
Choarie, John | 24 Feb. |
| 8. William MacKaiscail, alias Mackay, alias Macpatrick, in
Braegisgil, Patrick | 3 Mar. |
| 9. Catharine Morison, alias Nin Uillam machustan, in Island-
hall, Barbara ¹ | 25 Mar. |
| 10. Donald Mackay, alias Macdholicustan, in Sartigrim,
Donald | 11 April |
| 11. Donald Mackay, alias Macuillam machuistan, in Strathbeg,
Margaret [erased and written as above] | 13 April |
| 12. Donald Campbell, alias Grange, in Clashneach, Christian | 13 April |
| 13. Donald Mackay, alias Macalister, in Freasgil, Alexander | 29 April |
| 14. John Morison, alias Macuillam machustan, in Islandhall,
William | 29 April |
| 15. Alexander Campbell in Craigiemhulin, Mary | 25 May |
| 16. Wm. Munro, alias MacRobmacDholicorachy, in Balam-
hulich, Janet | 14 May |
| 17. John Mackay, alias Macalister roy in Uaibeg, Alexander | 13 May |
| 18. Angus Sutherland, in Saingo, William | 3 June |
| 19. John Down, Crosple, Hugh | 22 July |
| 20. Kenneth Mackenzie in Clashneach, Alexander | 22 July |
| 21. Robert Mackay in Aulcoirefraesgil, Charles | 22 July |
| 22. Hector Morison in Durin, William | 10 Aug. |
| 23. James Mackenzie in Eribol, Kenneth | 12 Aug. |
| 24. Wm. Mackay, alias MacEorish macneil, in Clashneach,
Kenneth | 9 Sept. |
| 25. Neil Gordon in Freasgil, William | 30 Sept. |
| 26. Robert Morison, alias More, in Achunahinat, Donald
[n.b.l.w.] | 7 Oct. |
| 27. Donald Campbell, alias Macalister macnish, in Crosple, Eric | 7 Oct. |
| 28. Donald Mackay, alias macuilleam macnish macdhoneil, in
Uaibeg, Barbara | 9 Oct. |
| 29. Alexander Mackintosh in Crosple, Katharine | 10 Oct. |

¹ Nin is daughter of.

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| 30. Robert Macrobmacrob in Hope, James | 4 Nov. |
| 31. Wm. Ekel, alias Calder, alias Macdholicustan in Mussell,
Hugh | 9 Dec. |
| 32. Hector Bayn in Strathmore, Ann | 10 Dec. |
| 33. Donald Campbell, alias Grange, in Keoldale, Donald | 14 Dec. |

1771.

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|---|----------|
| 1. George Mackay, alias Macenvicdholicuillam, in Geod-
hachreeve, George | 13 Jan. |
| 2. Iye Grange in Durin, Katharine | 26 Jan. |
| 3. Donald Fraser in Eriboll, Donald | 3 Feb. |
| 4. George Morison in Strathmore, Jean | 4 Feb. |
| 5. Angus Morison in Islandchoarie, John | 5 Feb. |
| 6. Wm. Down in Altnacealich, Margaret | 5 Feb. |
| 7. John Miller in Achumore, Hector | 10 Feb. |
| 8. Hugh Mackay, alias Macdholicemish macuillam, in Achuc-
harasait, Hugh | 22 Feb. |
| 9. Donald Macleod, alias Macnish, in Keoldale, Hugh | 3 Mar. |
| 10. Barbara MacKay, alias Nin Dholicorishskerray, widow in
Sartigrin of John MacKay, Ann | 12 Mar. |
| 11. Angus Munro in Eriboll, Hugh | 15 Mar. |
| 12. George Bayn, alias Macdhonil, in Borley, John [n.b.l.w.] | 18 Mar. |
| 13. Hugh Ross in Borley, Donald | 7 April |
| 14. Charles Campbell in Saingo, Margaret | 14 April |
| 15. John Sutherland in Crosple, Margaret | 26 May |
| 16. Thomas Grange Campbell in Crosple, Christian | 26 May |
| 17. John Mackay in Borley, Donald | 28 May |
| 18. Hugh Ekel, alias Macenvichustan, in Atnoboll, Jean | 7 June |
| 19. Hector Morison, alias Macdhonil, in Kerruack, Catharine | 9 June |
| 20. Lewis Thomson in Cnocbreack, Margaret | 13 June |
| 21. Alexander Ross, joiner in Balnaceil, Mary | 14 June |
| 22. William Mackay, alias MacDholicuillam Roy, in Clasneach,
Donald | 5 July |
| 23. Hugh Morison, alias MacEnvichustan, in Balnaceil, Lucie | 9 July |
| 24. Mr. John Thomson, minr. of Durness, Margaret Gordon | 11 July |
| 25. John Mackay, alias Macuilleam, in Freasgil, Elisabeth | 21 July |
| 26. Donald Macleod in Uaibeg, Lucy | 28 July |
| 27. John Macpherson in Achumore, Chatherine | 28 July |
| 28. Hugh Morison, alias Macuillam machustan, in Islandhall,
William | 12 Aug. |
| 29. Kenneth Sutherland in Durin, Angus | 20 Sept. |
| 30. Barbara Murray in Shinnins, Barbara [n.b.l.w.], nor her
father known. ¹ | |
| 31. Donald Mackay, alias Macnish mhicDholicustan, in
Dalinarait, John | 28 Sept. |
| 32. Robert Mackay, alias MacEnmhicuillam mhic neill, in
Uaibeg, Eric | 4 Oct. |
| 33. Alexander Cormack in Keoldale, Fairlie | 18 Oct. |
| 34. Robert Mackay in Aultcorifraisgil, Christian | 24 Nov. |
| 35. John Mackay, alias Macen mhicDhol, in Shinnins, Mary | 1 Dec. |
| 36. Angus Mackay, alias Macen mhicalister, in Mussel, Ephie | 18 Dec. |

1772.

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| 1. Iye Grange, alias Campbell, in Durin, [Margaret] | 15 Jan. |
| 2. [This entry is a repetition of No. 1, but adds "Margaret,"
omitted there.] | |
| 3. Neil Macleod in Saingo, Isobel | 18 Jan. |

¹ Barbara de'ated John Ross, alias M'En, who strongly denied.