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So little work has evinced itself in my Magnum Opus of family history, probably because the elves are falling down on the job when I leave papers open suggestively at night, so guilt feelings are gradually strengthening my resolve to do something about it, the guilt increased with each parcel of photos that arrives from a cousin. Not just the parcels arrive, sometimes the cousins do too, like my fourth cousin once removed (my 2-greats grandfather was also her 3-greats one) appeared from Canada. She was in the district, studying in London for a few months, so thought she might drop in. London being 600 miles away does not faze Canadians one bit and I'm still not absolutely certain how a three-year course in Canadian Studies includes three months in London to go to the theatre and museums and things a lot (upon each of which visits she does have to write a report) but there it is and here she was. We did the same with her and her mates as with her grandmother a year ago: fed them lunch, they went into raptures over the soup, genuine home-made, ie anything in the fridge, and took 'em for a walk up Knockfarrel so they loved the scenery and the food, and she didn't need to suffer too much family historing, and I think I've found my local researcher in Ontario now!

John Durham has discovered a collection of vignettes written by the husband of his great-aunt Catherine for the *John o' Groat Journal* so we will entertain you with tales of Caithness life from the pen of Hugh Oag [A Crofter] until the day comes that he puts them all together into a book.

The Rev. Donald Boyd has a knowledge of the Bible and of Latin to beat most of us added together and he has kindly commented on the marriage lintel we published in the August '95 Journal:

'Oh taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him' Psalms 34:8.

'Deus provident' (God will provide) Genesis 22:14.

'Be harmless as doves' Matthew 10:16.

1672 M RMcK EMcK, the happy couple

'Quam velut animum anchoram habemus' (which [hope] we have as an anchor of the soul) Hebrews 6:19.

'Anchora spei' (anchor of hope) Biblical concept, presumably referring to Hebrews 6:19.

'Vincit amor patris' (the Father's love conquers) Biblical concept.

'They shall mount up with wings as eagles' Isaiah 40:31.

The quotes are all from the AV (you look 'em up), but he backed them up with Vulgate, Greek and Hebrew references to remove any slight intellectual doubt I couldn't possibly have entertained. Thank you Donald.

In the same issue I reviewed 'Dates and Calendars for the Genealogist' and made a silly mistake, pointed out to me by one reader but no doubt noticed by many others: King James VI and I was not the first king of Great Britain, he was VI of Scots and I of England and it was not until 1707 that both countries ceased formally to exist, to be replaced by the United Kingdom of Great Britain, which lasted until 1801's Act of Union construction of the UK of GB and Ireland. That in turn lasted until the Treaty invented the Irish Free State in this century and we had the UK of GB and Northern Ireland. *Mea culpa* and thanks!

Regarding the Mackay's forthcoming book on Resolis I checked the Dingwall Burgh minutes that I've now typed up to 1789, and not a word about Resolis in the 18th century (shame) but since I found the Acts of the Scottish Parliament a useful source of Dingwall history, they might like to try that one out. At least the volumes are indexed, unlike the House of Lords proceedings: I searched those for hours to find something and only turned up a preliminary entry for an event I am researching before I resurfaced with my eyes and head spinning in several different directions.

Oh yes, keep sending the articles or you will continue to learn more than is good for you about Dingwall!



## OLD COUNTRY WEDDINGS IN CAITHNESS

by Hugh Oag (1847-1934)

(from his notebook dated February 1890)

Most things have changed greatly in Caithness during the last sixty years, and the country wedding of our day is very unlike that of the days of our forefathers. In the northern parts of the County along the sea coast where the inhabitants were crofters and fishermen combined, marriages nearly alwise [sic] took place in winter.

On the night before the marriage, a party of the nearest relatives of the bride and bridegroom met in the house of the former, to 'wash the bride's feet', when a very enjoyable evening was spent. On the wedding morning, one party met at the bride's house and another party at the house of the bridegroom, where breakfast was served (in the districts referred to). This meal consisted of buttered fish, eggs, scones, oat cakes and ale; tea was then almost unknown. Before leaving for church or manse, each guest got a glass of whisky on which no duty had been paid. When two or more marriages were to take place at the same church in the same day, the breakfast would be sometimes at an early hour, as it was believed that all the good luck attended the pair who were first married.

Last summer an old man told the writer that he remembered when a boy, a marriage party coming to the Kirk of Canisbay at 5am that they might be first on the ground. Although living in the same locality the bride and bridegroom never came to church together, each party set out separately at an appointed time, the bride to arrive first, as it was not considered lucky that day to see each other till they met before the Minister. At that time it was no unusual thing for about 40 pairs to walk out with a marriage. (The writer when a little boy remembers perhaps the last big wedding that went to Bruan Church, there were 33 pairs in the procession and they had nearly 5 miles to walk).

In old times the dress was also peculiar, the men usually wore black hats, blue coats with large brass buttons, white knee breeches, white stockings and buckled shoes. The females were dressed in white muslin gowns with a ribbon around the waist and on the head a cambric cap and ribbons. After the ceremony the party formed in procession, the newly married pair leading the way. A piper usually played all the way home. At every house as they went along, the people turned out to see the wedding party and any one who had a gun was there to fire it in their honour.

When they reached the door of the wedding house, they were met by a matron with the wedding cake. The party who took out and broke the bride's cake had to be a married woman and the nearest relative of the bridegroom. The cake was of oat meal baked with butter and enriched with rasens [sic] and sweetened. This ceremony always took place outside. The relative in question met them in the close on their return from church. She had the cake rolled up in a towel and, holding it above the bride's head, she gave it a stroke with her hand and then she shook the contents from the towel among the wedding party. This was followed by a scramble among the lads and lasses who pressed and struggled about the bride to get some of the falling fragments, each one wishing to secure a bit of the cake to put under their pillow to dream on.

On entering the house everyone got another glass of whisky. They then went out to the barn where a row of planks covered with a web of home made linen served as a table with seats on either side. Dinner usually consisted of barley broth, beef, mutton, fowls and oat cakes (pork and potatoes were thought too common). The broth was served in pewter plates, once

common in Caithness. For such large companies it was not easy to find plenty of plates. This difficulty was met by two or three supplying themselves with their ram's horn spoons from one plate. The bridegroom and best man did what they could to see that every one was served. The bride had the place of honour at the upper end of the barn. The barn was usually lighted with the old fashioned black lamp and fish oil (the goose neb) and rushes, a lamp being hung at each end of the barn.

After dinner the 'bride's cog' and bread and sweet milk cheese. The 'bride's cog' was a large wooden vessel with two handles made expressly for this purpose, out of which the wedding ale was drunk. It held more than three scotch pints. Each guest after taking a draught, handed it on to the person next him and so on till it went round the whole company. All drank health and happiness to the newly married pair. The old folks then all retired to the house, the barn was cleared of seats and tables, the piper or fiddler was placed on a high seat out of the way and dancing began in earnest.

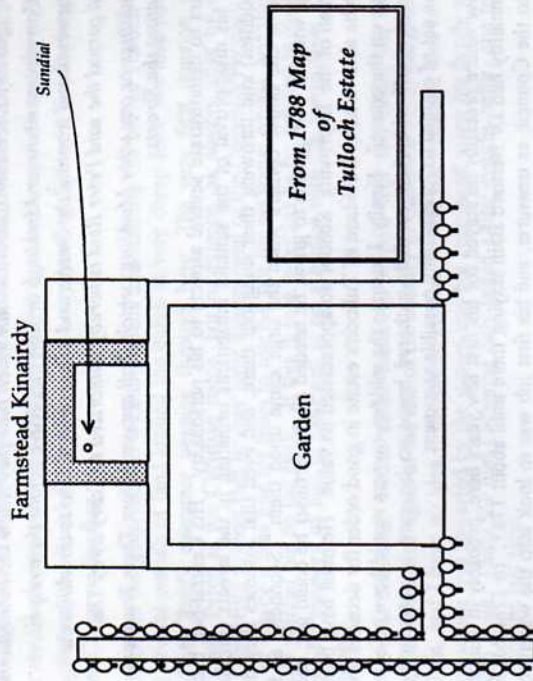
About midnight the bride was led away by the lasses and put to bed. The young men followed with the bridegroom whom they also undressed and put to bed. The 'brides cog' was again filled and produced and went round the whole company. The young man and wife had to sit up and pledge the company in a parting drink. The guests then returned to the barn and danced till daylight.

It may be wondered how poor people could make such big weddings. It really cost them nothing, each guest provided something suitable for the feast so that they had more than was required.

The writer when a boy, had the following account of a marriage that took place at Halkirk upwards of 70 years ago, from a man who was present at the ceremony. He died in Thurso a few years ago nearly 90 years of age. He was a man of excellent character and had a wonderful memory till the last.

At the time of the marriage, he was a young man working as a mason at Brawl. Being able to sing a song and tell a story, he got an invitation. On this particular occasion the party had a long way to walk, and a storm of wind and rain broke out while they were on their way. Umbrellas were then unknown among the common people, so when they arrived at the manse they were all drenched to the skin. The minister of Halkirk at that time was the Rev. John Cameron (1769-1821), a man more noted as a sportsman with rod and gun than as a "fisher of men". When the dripping party appeared before him, he made quick work of the marriage ceremony. Bidding them to stand up, he said - "You will find in Paul's Epistles plenty about marriage which you can read at your leisure. Join hands and be going!"

They arrived home as best they could in the storm. The house was a long, low one, the cattle and family entering at the same door, each turning to their own end. The goodwife looked out what dry things she could find for some of the women. But there was no private apartment which they could use as a dressing-room, the house being full of guests. Here was a fix, and the problem was how the claims of decency could be properly observed. Even in the most embarrassing situations there is generally some way out, and it proved so on this occasion, though the solution of the difficulty was decidedly one to be remembered. It being the winter season, the cows were in their stalls; but the women and men fortunate enough to secure a "shift" of some sort went "butt" to the byre, and completed their toilet between the cows, no doubt to the astonishment of the soft-eyed animals who were probably anticipating something specially dainty in the form of feed. This it may be hoped they duly received in view of their inability to appreciate such a singular (or rather, very plural) display of "cutty sarks!" At any



The road on the left of this copy of the 1788 drawing of a big old house in Dingwall is what we Ordinary People know as the Kinairdie Brae but which will always be Tulloch Avenue to the council. It shows the position of a sundial marked PR JA 1783, which in turn was the first clue for the present owners as to who had built their home: Patrick Reid. We know little more, but what follows is what we can put together so far by using the IGI, the old parish register and the HFHS's book of MIs for St Clement's, the Burgh Council minute books in the Dingwall Museum and maps of the town there and in the Scottish Record Office. Bring in the files of Inverness Couriers (then the Inverness Journal) and the electoral register for Dingwall in the 1830s and we are beginning to get a grasp on the life of this man.

Patrick Reid was born in about 1746 and it may have been in Fife or Midlothian, but that is not yet certain. I fancy that he had a university education, as he was always called 'Mr' in these records. His first mention in Dingwall is at the baptism of his daughter in 1776. His wife was Jacobina Anderson, also possibly born in Fife or Lothian, who bore at least four children of his in Dingwall, and it's her initials which are joined to his on that sundial. They had arrived for him to take the place of Hugh Robertson in the early 1770s as factor for the Tulloch Estate with a good social position and one with a lot of power over hundreds of tenants in the thousands of acres from beyond Strathkiach to the north and east to the sea and Pitglassie. And the second mention in the Burgh's papers is this:

*1st December 1777. Thereafter The Provost Suggested to the Council a Proposal made by Mr Peter Reid Factor of Tulloch for Cleansing the Streets of this Burgh*

rate, a big wedding feast followed in the house, with plenty of whisky which had never paid duty to his gracious Majesty George the Third. Thereafter the tables were cleared away and they, like the "Hundred Pipers", danced themselves dry to the "pibroch's sound."

Another story is told of an open-air marriage by Mr Cameron. He was fishing on Thurso river, up the strath some distance, when he saw a marriage party coming on the opposite side of the river on their way to the manse. Shouting to them to come nearer, he asked the happy pair to join hands and married them, according to the usual formula, across the river. In neither of these cases is there any mention of a marriage certificate: but, no doubt, the necessary documentary procedure, according to the requirements of the time, were afterwards duly completed.

If we go further back, we find that a day did not finish a marriage feast. In his family history of Caithness, the late John Henderson Esq., W.S. Combe Lodge, Thurso says: - "The social habits of the County in the early part of last century (1737) are illustrated in an account of the Laird of Holburnhead's marriage given by a gentleman who was present at the ceremony. After naming all the County Gentlemen who were present, he says - "We danced four days out and drank heartily, and thereafter went home with the young wife where we renewed the mirth to a height!"

### TATTIES AN' HERRIN'

I was pleased to see that at the "tattie and herrin" supper in Glasgow there was one gentleman who followed the good old custom of eating with fingers. "Tatties and herring" never have the right taste when they are slashed down with a knife and fork. No doubt this gentleman would look around him with a heavy heart, and like the old prophet under the juniper tree say to himself - "I only am left." Let him take courage; we have a fine record. Hugh Miller had no knife and fork when he made a big supper of tatties out of the pot in a Gairloch crofter's house, and Sir James Barrie tells of a "tattie" supper in "Thrums" where the goblet was set on the table on a broken plate and the guests helped themselves out of the pot. The mistress would fain have knives and forks but "Knowhead" (the farmer) was "master in his own house" and would allow no innovations.

To come nearer home, I have no doubt Sandy and Tam have peeled many a black-hearted tattie with thumb and nail. Indeed the use of a knife and fork for eating tatties and herrings was looked on as something wonderful in Caithness and much talked about. The story is told that one day the Rev. Mr Jolly of Dunnet and a fine old neighbour he was friendly with were speaking of old times and the changes that were taking place, when the old man said. - "Sir, I have seen three wonderful things in the parish of Dunnet in my long life." "What were they?" asked Mr Jolly. "Well," he replied. "the first is a lighthouse on Dunnet Head; the second a kirk on the Hill of Barrock; and the third my neighbour D..... eating tatties and herring with a knife and fork."

Long may Caithness folks have good tatties and herrings and good fingers to eat them with! Let our Glasgow friend take heart; there's a great army in Caithness who have not yet bowed the knee to knives and forks.

A Crofter (c1930)



*without first advising with the Council began to build a stone bridge upon the Water of Peffrey behind the Kirk of Dingwall ... whereupon Mr Reid appeared before the Council and acknowledged his willingness to go on with the building of the said Bridge with Stone and Lime with a sufficient Arch thirty foot long and sufficient to let a Boat pass through it, and to adjoin thereto a landing place at the South east end of the Bridge in length betwixt twenty four and thirty feet sufficiently built with Stone so as a Boat may ly along Side of it for discharging her Cargo or loading ...*

And in return for his generosity in widening roads and building the bridge Tulloch demanded (and got) several parcels of land around the burgh at very cheap feus. We may have another aspect of Mr Reid's character peeping through here. The very first mention of him as councillor had Peter as his Christian name, but nevertheless, as always after he was called Patrick. I therefore suspect that he may have disapproved of the Common People's version of his name, or maybe it was fine for them to use but not for his social equals, and this will have been clearly pointed out to the clerk. If this is true, wouldn't he be irritated to know that the sole remaining memory of him in Dingwall is on a bridge with the lower-class form of his name attached!

In 1791 he lost Jacobina, whose stone memorial is now lost too under the moss of St Clements, but he married again at the end of the century to Catherine Reid, daughter of Baillie Reid of Tain, and I have no idea if they were related. I love the romantic idea of a youthful assignment which was thwarted by the grown ups but recovered when his family was grown and his wife gone. Sadly for him Catherine only lasted a few months before she too went to the church for the last time.

As Tulloch's factor he built a name for himself among the improving landlords of his day, Sir John Sinclair himself commented in 1795 that the "opinion of one who is not a native of Ross-shire but has resided in it many years (Mr Reid of Kinnairdy) it is little inferior in point of either soil or climate to Fife." He remained factor until shortly before his death, which was in the year after Waterloo, and one daughter joined him shortly after, and everything was sold by auction in 1817: "The whole stock of Cattle, Horses and Labouring Urensilis ... also a stack of excellent Hay, consisting of 3000 to 4000 Stones." They were selling breeding stock of milch cows and horses and a threshing mill so there must have been little beyond the house itself for his older daughter Anne to inherit. But she stayed there with her husband, who (as it happens) only got the vote in 1832 as a result of being married to a property-owning woman. Only dyed-in-the-wool male chauvinists would consider it a shame how the rules have changed! Another daughter Elizabeth started a school for 'Young Ladies', and her young ladies remembered her with a small plaque in St Clements kirkyard when she passed on in the late 1850s.

The house is still there, extended in some directions, contracted in others, but alive with children as a large farmhouse should be. Just one wall survives of the barn and under the grass are bits of a threshing floor and strange (to me) stone constructions, but that wall continues to shelter between it and the opposite granary the gardens that Patrick laid out with Jacobina and marked with a sundial over two hundred years ago.

#### References:

Volumes II, III (1747-1807) of the Dingwall Council minute books in the Dingwall Museum  
Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster: *General View of the Agriculture of the Northern Counties of*

*of the fith and Dubs theron owing to the Slothfulness of the inhabitants, Provided that this priveledge be Contained with him for a year exclusive of all others Including the Castle and Kirk Streets To which Proposal the Council agree and empower the said Peter Reid to beginn his operation upon munday next the Eight day December Current within which time they Allow the Inhabitants to Carry away whatever Muddings or filth they leave before their respective Tenements and fronting the Streets and in case they fail so to do within the said period the said Peter Reid is hereby authorized to Carry away These Muddings or any other Muddings which shall appear before Their Tenements fronting the Streets.*

This appears to demonstrate several aspects to his personality. His Central-belt background showed in his disapproval of the slothful inhabitants urinating in the streets (producing the 'dubs' or puddles) and throwing their dung out there, and even that assumes they didn't just squat down at the house corners when the urge came upon them. Secondly, as factor of Tulloch and with his own garden to grow, he needed all the fertiliser he could get, and he was a businessman of the 'Improving School' so appreciated its value. He must have been a good manager to be able to keep Davidson of Tulloch's estate in good order for decades and still be able to serve on the council. Finally, I assume the midden-owners would have objected to this incomer running off with their carefully-gathered heaps so his care is noteworthy in first obtaining an act of council to forestall any possible argument.

I don't know where precisely he stayed for his first few years here, probably in Tulloch Castle itself as Kinnairdy had Dr Bernard Bain staying there until about 1783. In 1780 Mr Reid was elected onto the Council, as treasurer, and his first job was to look into the waterproofing of the flat roof of the Town House's steeple. Then, sometime near the sundial's year of 1783, Patrick and his wife and family built themselves their farmhouse up the Kinnairdy Brae with its fine view of his own lands down to the firth and with everything under his control, barn on one side, granary on the other, outhouses all connected. Surrounded by the C-shape of these buildings was the garden, surrounding in turn a well and separated from the orchard by a low stone-flagged wall. Did Jacobina like to get her hands dirty in it, or was all left to their staff? (The area marked 'Garden' on the map was not what we would count as a garden in 1996, for flowers and for pleasure, but was the piece of land defined for food production for the family.)

His first name was officially Patrick, but its Gaelic equivalent of Padhraig was pronounced something like Para (as in Neil Gunn's *Para Handy*) and was used interchangeably with Peter. This is another illustration of the strength of Gaelic among the non-governing people of the town. He was the 'Peter' whose bridge over the Peffrey is on Tulloch Street near the kirk and which he built in 1788, judging from Duncan Davidson of Tulloch's letter to the Council of October 1st 1787 which included the comment:

*And whereas my Tenant Mr Reid and I have at our mutual Expence opened a Road through the Farm of Kinnairdie, and a passage across the Peffrey at the back of the Church of Dingwall, and been at some pains in making the Road round the Church Yard ... and we propose to build a Bridge of Stone ... and to widen and Streighten the Road around the Church Yard ... so as to afford a safe and easy passage to the Bridge ...*

**And by June he was well into its building but**

## RESOLIS

Jim and George Mackay will be publishing a rather ambitious book on Resolis in late 1996, or at least before the Millennium, comprising principally genealogical source material pre-1855, although much other source material will be incorporated, including some post-1855 material of particular interest. They are hoping, depending on copyright and costs of publication, to include much of the material listed below, all of which has already been gathered on word processor, although error checking still has to be carried out on much of it.

They would be very pleased if other members of the Highland Family History Society could identify useful further sources of information on Resolis pre-1855, particularly those with genealogical interest, although any information would be welcomed. If copies could be provided then that would be even better, but just a reference to where the information is located would suffice and assistance will be acknowledged in the book. One rich source so far largely untapped is early correspondence: does anyone have any old letters relating to Resolis or to people with Resolis connections? The following has been entered so far:-

1. The Resolis sections of 'Originales Parochiales Scotiae', 'Old Statistical Account', 'New Statistical Account', and 'Fasti Ecclesiae Scotticanae.'
2. Resolis-related extracts from the works of Sir Thomas Urquhart, Hugh Miller, Rev. Donald Sage, the Families of Gordon of Invergordon, Newhall etc. and the Trial proceedings for the Trial of Robert Ferguson for the Murder of Captain Munro (1812).
3. Lists of Free Church Births and Baptisms 1843-1855, 1841 Census, 1851 Census, Sasine Abridgements (perhaps), SRO Electoral and Juror Lists, the Militia lists for 1798, 1814, 1820, 1825, 1826, 1828 and 1831, Monumental Inscriptions for Kirkmichael and Old Cullidden (not yet complete).
4. Information held in charts and Estate Plans held in SRO, Blaeu, Macfarlane Geographical Collections, SRO material on Resolis Religious Disturbances and Information on Ancient Monuments, Archaeology and Architecture given by the Scottish Office, Woodham, Meldrum, Beaton and Marshall.
5. A miscellany of data from the Scottish Antiquary, MacGill's Old Ross-shire and Scotland, Bain's Ancient Privince of Ross, Lewis's Topographical Dictionary, Imperial Gazetteer of Scotland, Records of Inverness, Report of the Committee of the General Assembly for Increasing the Means of Education, and Highland Destitution Committee meetings.

Material which has not been included for reasons of length or obvious copyright difficulties are the Parish Registers, Kirk Session records, Tayler's History of the Family of Urquhart. SRO Tax Records (E.326) and Valuation Rolls (VR.115) have not yet been tackled.

If anyone can assist in identifying further sources of information, then they can contact Jim Mackay at **11 Lilac Avenue, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 0AZ.**

My great-grandfather, Donald MACKAY (1856-1931), the fourth in a family of eight, was born on what, for a while, was a rather crowded 3-acre croft at "Feabue", otherwise known as the "Muir of Petty", a mile or so from the Culloden battlefield east of Inverness. The family had not always lived there. Judging from OPR and census entries, it would have been between 1822 and 1828 that Donald's mother Mary had accompanied her Cameron parents when the latter, for reasons at present unclear, migrated to Petty from Urquhart and Glenmoriston, west of Loch Ness. Donald's father, Alexander, had arrived from the opposite direction, namely Forres in Elginshire [Morayshire], not only his place of birth, but that, too, it would seem, of his father, who was employed locally as a gardener and carrier. Alexander, for his part, is shown in decennial census returns for Petty as working as an agricultural labourer (ploughman), general labourer and carter. It was in 1848, whilst in the employ of his future father-in-law, that he married Mary Cameron. Census returns tell us that those living at the Feabue croft could speak Gaelic.

By 1871, Donald, at age 15, appears to have flown the Feabue nest. He has yet to be found in census returns for that year, but is traced in civil registration, the census and estate records during the period 1881 to 1891, working as an itinerant farm servant/dairyman at Upper Reasurie Farm, Culloden, Moy Hall Farm, Tomatin; Coulmore on the Black Isle; and Drakies Farm outside Inverness. A 6-month spell of employment at Moy Hall earned him £18, immediately prior to his marrying a Roseisle, Morayshire girl, Marianne James, a domestic servant in Inverness. When the 1891 population census was conducted, Donald, Marianne and their son and daughter were living in a 4-room dwelling - either Ness Cottage or View Cottage - in Culcabock village, the family base for a good number of years.

Perhaps it was his involvement as a volunteer fireman with the local fire brigade at Culcabock/Inverness which gave Donald his first taste of "steam", but in the event, by the turn of the century, he was recognised as an "engineer", fully engaged in operating steam-powered traction-engines in outlying areas. The inscription on a silver tray presented to Marianne by "her wellwishers at Skibo" establishes when a contract won by Donald at the castle ended in 1902 and from surviving correspondence it is known that he was later engaged on some sort of traction-engine project at Guisechan Estates, Strathglass. In due course, Donald and Marianne moved to Spean Bridge in the Lochaber District to see out their days close to their daughter, who was the local district nurse.

Donald and Marianne's son, Alexander James ("Sandy") MacKay (1883-1948), was born at Coulmore in the parish of Killearnan on the Black Isle and, like his younger sister Annabella, was educated at the Inverness Royal Academy. He was to take up engineering as a vocation when he left school, no doubt encouraged by his mechanically-minded father, and during his time at the Academy is likely to have received tuition in the various engineering subjects that were on offer there. Where in Scotland he completed his engineering training is unknown, but Sandy is understood to have ended up as a diving supervisor at Aberdeen.

In about 1905, Sandy paid a visit to London, fully intending to return to Scotland, but as it happened, his departure was to prove permanent. Initially, he was tempted by the offer from a London firm of engineers, of a 3-day tour in Italy to assist the newly unified State Railway - *Ferrovie dello Stato Italia* (or FS) - with the integration of rolling stock, which British companies such as Midland Railway, had started exporting to the Italians c1905. Travelling much of Italy in the course of the railway project, the story goes that, based at Naples at one

