

1841

*KILMONIVAIG  
PARISH*

JAMES MUNRO'S NOTES ACCOMPANYING THE 1841  
CENSUS RETURNS FOR EACH DISTRICT IN THE  
PARISH OF KILMONIVAIG.

**ROBERT MACFARLANE  
SOUTH AFRICA - NOVEMBER 1990**

### JAMES MUNRO - THE BLAROUR DOMINIE.

James Munro was born and died in Fort William, but he spent thirty years of his life at Kilmonivaig as Schoolmaster, Preceptor and Session Clerk. He first appears in the Kilmonivaig O.P.R., as Session Clerk, in 1835 and was still in that position in 1855. In the 1841 census he is shown at Blarour, in his household was a Catherine Munro aged 75 and Jane Munro aged 25. By 1861 he was not at Blarour, then it was Donald Macaulay.

James has been described as a little grey haired man who wore spectacles, bare faced or very few little whiskers below the ear. He was a pawky sociable man, well versed in the history of Lochaber and a strong Liberal in Politics. He was an excellent Gaelic Scholar and Poet, publishing in his time a Gaelic grammer. He was also a good Latin Scholar, familiar with the classics and deeply versed in English Literature.

### 1841 CENSUS FOR KILMONIVAIG

The returns from each district within the parish of Kilmonivaig had a space for accompanying notes. James Munro filled these out diligently, some at length. The notes have been copied out separately in the following pages and they certainly give an insight into the hardships experienced in the area at that time.

1. BETWEEN RIVER NEVIS & THE WEST MARCH OF FARM OF ACHINDALL

The class of persons designated "crofters" in this schedule are such as hold small allotments of land capable of keeping a couple of cows and a horse. The crofter himself, with the assistance of his family, work the soil and does every other thing connected with it. In general he rears a few beasts which he disposes of twice a year at the nearest market town, for the purpose of paying his rent with the proceeds. The crofters residence is generally a turf - built cot, covered with turf, and thatched over with either rushes, heather, straw, or fern: His furniture is very homely and often of his own making. He leads a laborious life, is generally poor enough: and when dies, leaves his family in very destitute circumstances. The rents which these poor crofters pay are now so high, that they cannot pay for giving the necessary modicum of education to their children, at . . . . . the schoolmaster experimentally knows that they do not pay him.

2. DAILVENV, TOMACHARRICH, GAMISKY AND ACHANDALL.

By the term "Cottar" we designate a destitute man or woman who is allowed to build a "cot" or "hut" upon the holding or possession of a farmer or crofter, and to reside there, providing such means of subsistence for him, or herself, as chance or charity may bestow. Many of these miserables are found in this parish. God knows how they live. They form a heavy tax on their poor neighbours (poor enough themselves), as such of them as derive assistance from the Church collections for the poor, do not receive, at the highest rate, above 5/- or 6/- per annum, in this parish.

3. DOANY, ACHNASINE, LIANACHAN, UNACHAN, ACHNAHANAIT & HIGHBRIDGE.

Achanahanait is a piece of mofsy moor, which has, some years ago, been lotted out into "crofts". Their appearance and that of everything about them is a picture of misery. Unachan is of a similar description. The crofts were let on a 19 year lease; but from the poverty and want of means of the crofters, there is little prospect that the "crofts" will be improved till doomsday, so as to afford their occupiers anything like a comfortable existence. It is to be hoped, that, were the proprietors of lands in this parish to become resident; for even a part of the year, among these poor and loyal crofters, they would do something more for their comfort than is now done. It unfortunately happens however, that all the "Heritors" of this large parish are non resident.

4. BRACLEITIR, KILMONIVAIG & LIANDALLY.

The Crofters of Kilmonivaig are in general like their neighbours. Nothing particular is to be remarked of them beyond what is stated in the previous schedules.

COPY OF TUITION FEES PAID FOR CHILDREN OF

PETER MACFARLANE

Mr P. MacFarlane

1856

To James Minors Schoolmaster

Febry	13	To	gr fee for Angus 4/6	Dean 2/6	Peter 2/6	<u>9.0</u>
	30	-	do for George (Latin)	7/6		5.0
May	12	-	do Angus 4/6	Dean 2/6	Peter 2/6	9.0
	30	-	do George			5.0
Sept	13	-	do Dean (wry)	3/6	Peter do 3/6	7.0
		-	do do to end of Sept			2.4
			when vacation starts			13.0
1857						4.6
Janry	27	To	gr fee for Dean 3/6	Peter 3/6	Angus 5/-	16.6
			do for Archibald			16.6
April	27	To	gr for all as above			<u>53.11.4</u>

A.B. £ from Sept 1855 to end of October not charged

My Counter account by Balance

£ 31 15 04  
Balance of 7/- in my favour  
P. MacF.

same

5. BLAROUR. TIRNADRISH. GAIRLOCHY. MUCCOMER & TOWAN EASA.

There are but few crofters in this district, but they are, like all of there clafs, so very poor as to be unable to pay for the education of their children. The Schoolfees for teaching reading are only 2/6 per quarter; but where there is a large family this becomes heavy on a poor man without means. To give each the benefit of education the fees should perhaps be diminished and the salary of the Schoolmaster be augmented; for, as it is, a man cannot exist without recieving his fees; more than a merchant or farmer without his profits.

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Note example of fees on opposite page and below :-

Mr P McFarlane  
To James Munro Schoolmaster

1856  
Febry 12 To qr fee for Angus 4/6 Ian 2/6 Peter 2/6  
30 .. do for George (Latin) 7/6  
May 12 .. do Angus 4/6, Ian 2/6 Peter 2/6  
30 .. do George . . . . .  
Augt 12 .. do Ian ( ) 3/6 Peter do 3/6  
.. do do to end of September  
1857 when vacation took place  
Jany 27 To qr fee for Ian 3/6 Peter 3/6 Angus 5/-  
do for Archibald  
April 27 To qr for all as above

N.B. Fee from Augt 1855 to end of October  
not charged

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6. ACHANEID & INVEROY

x Some persons have emigrated from this dist. to Australia within these few years, but I cannot state the numbers. They all went as shepherds. All the crofters in Inveroy complain of high rents and bad crops; and they would willingly leave home for a better land if they could command the means. There is no cause to wonder at this, for the climate in this quarter has taken such an unfavourable turn to the worse that the crops have diminished in quantity and quality so, that it is hardly worth people's while to labour their patches of land.

✓ 7. KEPPOCH. BUNROY. ACHADERY AND BOHINE.

The same remarks apply here as in former schedules.

✗ 8. COILLE - DIAMHARIR. AND THE TWO BOHUNTINS.

ditto to 7

9. ACHO - MHADAIDH, GLENTURRET, LECKROY, ANNAT, BRAONACHAN, AND DOWN TO CRENACHAN, INCLUSIVE.

This is an extensive district of sheep ranges where the residences are very far asunder and the only remark I have to make respecting it, is, that the enumerator had a long and dreary walk to collect his schedules.

10. CREAG = VEAG, ALLD = A = CHAORUIN, TULLOCH, MURLAGAN, ACHLUACHRACH

This is another wide sheeprange where the enumerator had enough to do.  
11. TORR - GHULBAINN, FERSIT, STRATHOIFEIN, SLIOBH - LAIRRICH.

This is also a sheepranging District over which the enumerator (Alexr. Boyle) had to travel 40 miles, going and coming, twice.

12. LOCHTREIG, CREAG - NANOCH, AND ALL THE OTHER SHEPHERDS HOUSES IN THAT MOORLAND REGION.

The enumerator for this district had to range over a space of 20 miles, going and coming, so that tho his number of schedules is but small yet he had to do much work.

13. INVERLAIR, ACHA = NAN = COMHICHEAN.

x The smaller tenants in the district are said to be better off than many others, because they have "sheep" in common. Those who have sheep, are, in deed the only comfortable folk in the Highlands of Scotland. The proprietors naturally encourage Sheep farming because they get better rents for their lands when they are turned into sheep pastures. As most of the natives are poor, there is an influx of Sheep farmers from the Low Country & other parts; and it is very probable that in a few years the most of the poor natives will be obliged to take shelter in the back woods of America, or wherever they can find . . . . .

14. CLIANAIG, INSH, COIRECHOINLIDH, COILLE - CHONAIT AND PERTINENTS.

All within this District are pretty well to do, save the Crofters and Cottars.

15. STRONABA, RATLAICH = VEAG AND CROIT = CHOIS.

The enumerator for this district writes me as follows "all the people in Stronaba are in very miserable circumstances. The proprietor has been warning us off for these 35 years, and causing us to pay a share of the law expenses incident on the process of removing. He has this year raised an action of Ejection against us, and altho he has not yet executed it, it hangs over us, and we do not know what to do. We have not yet been allowed to cut our peats, tho the season has been so very "favourable". I believe there are as poor people in this district as in any in the Highlands."

16. RATLAICH = VOR, AND BOTH SIDES OF GLEN = GLAOIDH.

Most of the people here are pretty well off save the Cottars of whom there are a good many, chiefly poor destitute females, Vide 11.

17. FROM LETTER = FINLAY TO CEUM = NO = H = INGHINNE, SOUTH SIDE OF THE CALEDONIAN CANAL.

There is a vast number of poor crofters in this district. But as the Glengarry part of it has lately become the property of the Right Honourable Lord Ward, it is to be hoped when he knows their condition, he will do something for their comfort.

22. FROM POLLARY INCLUSIVE, EASTWARDS ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE GARY, TO MUNEGIO INCLUSIVE.

The enumerator for this district writes me as follows "I found the people were but in very middling circumstances, and a great number of them very poor indeed. I plainly saw what an effect the want of education has upon them; for in those families who had received only a little [education] it was to be seen in the arrangement of their household furniture, the cleanliness of their children and last, tho' not least, in the state of their "croft" or potatoe land . . . I found only 50 of the number could read; 24 or 25 of these 50 could write; but not more than 6 could hold correspondence by letter, or were in any way capable of making use of what [education] they had. Four of the families are on the point of emigrating to North America, & only wait some promised assistance from Mr Ellice Junr. who is their landlord. Excepting those who are engaged as Shepherds or gamekeepers, I do not meet with any in what I could call comfortable circumstances; for their rents are so high that they cannot afford their . . . the common necessaries of life. They are keen to express a willingness to work could they meet with employment."

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