

The Parish of Resolis

G. S. M. Walker (1958)

Preface

Resolis is not unlike those happy nations which have little recorded history; it would be a laborious task to piece together the disjointed scraps of information still available, and this pamphlet can pretend to do no more than paint a few pictures of life in former times. Of books dealing with the parish, the following are particularly helpful: 'Statistical Account' (1795), 'New Statistical Account' (1841), 'Origines Parochiales Scotiae' vol II. ed. Cosmo Innes (1855), 'Fasti Ecclesiae Scotiae' Vol VII (1928), 'Place Names of Ross and Cromarty' by W. J. Watson (1904), 'Memorabilia Domestica' by Donald Sage (1889), 'Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland' by Hugh Miller (1835), 'The Families of Gordon of Invergordon, Newhall and Ardoch' by J. M. Bulloch (1906), and 'A Survey of Prehistoric Monuments (in the Black Isle' (by A. A. Woodham in 'Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland,' Session 1954-1956). Unpublished sources include the Session Records of the Parish Church (commencing 1822) and of the Free Church (commencing 1857), together with various deeds, charters and maps in private hands.

For help in gathering information, I am much indebted to the following among many: Major C. J. Shaw of Tordarroch; Colin Munro Esq. of Poyntzfield; the Rev Murdoch Campbell of Resolis Free Church; Dr A. A. Woodham, Cults; Capt J. E. G. Elliot, St Martins; Mrs Langlands and Mrs Thomas, Jemimaville; Mr Robert Whyte, Cullicudden, and Mr D. S. U. Mackenzie, Newmilns.

Resolis, By Conon Bridge, March 1958.

G.S.M. Walker.

I. Highland Life in Bygone Days

At a later period of its ancient history, the Black Isle was subjected to the attacks of Danes and Norsemen, and just to the north of the main road at Cullicudden, a sanguinary battle is said to have been fought; but the Newhall Burn seems to mark the limit of settled penetration from the direction of Blackstand, since names of Norse derivation, like Culbo and Braelangwell, occur only to the South of the burn, while Gaelic place names occur on both its Northern and Southern sides. This burn was originally much larger, being fed from a loch at Kinbeachie, and in spite it was quite impassable, as Donald Sage discovered to his cost one evening when returning on horseback from a week-day service in Cromarty. Communications in his time were extremely poor, and only one made road existed – that from Balblair which ran by Agneshill towards Munloch; heavy traffic consequently went by sea, ships being beached below the old storehouse to load grain and potatoes; the ferries to Alness and Invergordon were widely used, and the earlier Churches tended to be built by the sea-shore for ease of transport by water. Later, however, great crowds of foot-passengers travelled on the roads, and at Birch Cottage an old lady was accustomed to put out a table, with white cloth, glasses and a pail of water, to refresh the throngs which attended at Communion Seasons. So large were the congregations that services were then held out of doors, and the 'Sacrament Spot' can still be seen at the East gate of the glebe on Fanny's Brae, so named after an old lady who lived at the top of the hill. The high ground in the South of the parish, known as Millbuie, was once common land where people could collect firewood and peats of poor quality; when taken over by the heritors about 1833, one of them gave an annual contribution to the poors' box, in recompense for the lost right to gather firing; and the whole area has now been planted by the Forestry Commission, with the consequent obliteration of about nineteen crofts on Agneshill.

Our first statistics come from 1755, when the parish population amounted to 1371. It declined steeply in subsequent years, owing to bad harvests and the emigration of young men which followed; but this trend was reversed by the Urquharts of Braelangwell, who encouraged settlers to clear and cultivate waste land – a policy continued by the Mackenzies of Newhall, who in the next century provided crofts for persons evicted in the Sutherland and Strathconon clearances. In 1792 the population was 1,234, of whom 568 were males and 666 females, 201 being at or below eight years of age. A wide variety of occupations is listed: four millers, eight ferrymen, one merchant, eight house carpenters, two cartwrights, one boat builder, four blacksmiths, two wheelwrights, nine shoemakers, 11 tailors and apprentices, 27 weavers, four fishermen, five dyers and two coopers. There were four cornmills, three stills of 40 gallons each, two ferries, 712 black cattle, 356 horses, 2,391 sheep and about 30 swine. Owing to poor feeding, the horses and cattle were very small, and antiquated farming methods kept the people in great poverty, so that only three farmers in the whole parish were accustomed to have butcher-meat, poultry or beer on their tables, and for nine months of the year the invariable diet for most consisted of potatoes, flummery, bread and brochan and a little cabbage. Robert Arthur, then parish minister, made various suggestions with a modern ring: light industries should be established, a farmers' society encouraged for the purpose of improving both livestock and yield per acre, and longer leases should be granted – prior to 1782 only one lease had ever been given for a period of more than seven years' duration. Another forecast of things to come – and go – was made by Bishop Forbes, when he visited the district in 1762, and noted that the Cromarty Firth would make a splendid anchorage for the entire British fleet. Then,

as now, the farms were mostly small, the average being of 10 to 50 acres arable; and the number of ruined houses indicates the size of population which formerly managed to subsist. In 1836, the population amounted to 349 families or 1,508 souls, distributed as follows: 42 in Gordonsmills, 147 in Jemimaville and 1,319 in the remainder of the parish. Following Robert Arthur's advice, the proprietor of Newhall had attempted to establish a snuff factory at Gordonsmills, but this soon ceased owing to heavy expenses, and the place was next used for carding wool by means of a water-wheel, though on a very limited scale. The distillery at Braelangwell, where an Excise Officer resided in 1832, was famous for its whisky, and there was also a still at Whiskypark near Gordonsmills.

The village of Jemimaville – or, as originally spelt, Jamimaville – was established by the Munroes of Poyntzfield in 1822, taking its name from the great-grandmother of the present Colin Munro. It soon grew into a thriving community, which even possessed a dancing master in 1834, and within living memory still had a doctor, tailor, shoemaker, baker, general merchant, hotel and reading room. During the last century a market used to be held at Tighninnich, between Jemimaville and Balblair; but the great fair of the district had previously been held at St Martin's Kirk, Drumdyre, from which place it was removed to Inverness by Act of Parliament in 1641.

At Newhall-point there once were salmon stake nets, now abolished by Parliament at the instigation of the Conon proprietors, which yielded an annual rental of £600 and produced about 3,000 fish each year. The fish were stored in an ice house at the Craggan, and must have raised the standard of popular diet, since some of the old agreements stipulate that farm servants are not to be fed on salmon more than two or three times a week. Work was hard in those days; older people thought nothing of riving cattle to market at Muir of Ord and walking home again from there the same day. For children, farm work often consisted of long hours spent in herding beasts on the open moor. One such girl, of a religious bent, used to take hammer and nail with her, which she employed for writing texts on some of the large stones still to be seen in Wester Culbo Wood; and over the farmhouse door her hand inscribed the text, somewhat alarming to strangers: "Flee from the wrath to come."

While on the subject of children, it may be interesting to mention that a foundling was left at Kirkton Farm in the year 1832. No trace of his parentage could be found, and the boy is said to have been named Michael Martin after the ancient Church dedications – Kirkmichael and St Martin's – of the two parishes which were united in 1662 to form the present parish of Resolis.

No less than eight schools have existed at one time or another in the parish. That at Drumcudden – predecessor to the present Cullicudden school – was built in 1826 by local labour at a total cost of £48 9s 9½d; it had then about twenty scholars and was staffed by a teacher supplied by the Inverness Education Society. Previously there had been a small school at the West end of the parish to teach spinning, knitting stockings and reading English; and the parochial school had been situated at the East end, as the bulk of the inhabitants resided towards one or other of the extremities. The parish school was later removed to a central spot at Newmills, where it had thirty pupils in 1836, and it was succeeded by the present Newhall school many years thereafter. There was also a small subscription school at Balblair, and in Jemimaville the General Assembly's Committee on Education established a very efficient and well-taught seminary, which after the Disruption of 1843 became the Free Church school. This last building, near the old Free Church, is now used as a store.

The effects of the Disruption were felt in Resolis as keenly as in most parts of the Highlands. In these happier days we can look back on that stirring event with clearer and more sympathetic understanding of the important issues at stake. Most of the inhabitants followed Donald Sage out of the Establishment, and some of the wilder spirits expressed their feelings in no uncertain way. The Cromarty precentor, who officiated when the Church was preached vacant, was paid £1 or nearly three months' salary in recompense for his pains on that occasion. Troops from Fort George had to attend the induction of the next parish minister; the Church windows were broken; and the Church bell was pulled askew in its moorings – perhaps a symbol of the unbalanced condition of the national Church, while so many of her children remain in other folds. In 1887 the parish population was given as 1,400, of whom 290 attended the Church of Scotland and 1,110 belonged to the Free Church; at that date, when fears were already being expressed about the growth of irreligion, it could still be stated that all the inhabitants attended some place of worship, though with varying degrees of regularity. At the latest census the parish population appeared as 640, being about equally divided in its ecclesiastical allegiance, but of these probably less than half are regular Church attenders.

Stories of the supernatural are common throughout the Highlands, and Resolis has its share of these. Older people believed that they saw phantom funerals some days before the occurrence of a death; and Satan himself is said to have visited the parish on no less than three occasions. Late one night he joined a traveller on the road from Rosemarkie, but as they crossed the hilltop above Mount High, he looked down on the light burning in the minister's study and said, "That is the King's light and I must go." The same tale is told of several districts, and its only interest here is to provide a fictitious derivation for the Gaelic name Resolis; this however means, not as alleged 'the King's light', but rather 'the slope of light', in reference to where the present Church is placed. This story recalls that of the Two Watchers – the prayerful and studious ministers of Cullicudden and Kiltearn – who agreed to divide the nights between them, and kept a light beaming across the Firth from one or other of their manse throughout the hours of darkness.

Another appearance of the devil is said to have taken place at the Balblair Inn, where Donald Sage entertained the Presbytery to dinner after his induction in 1822. Much later in the century, a group of men were drinking and playing cards at the Inn, when a dark stranger appeared and joined them; a card being dropped under the table, they noticed his cloven feet; and on their calling for a Bible, he vanished up the chimney.

But the most circumstantial visitation of this nature is related in connection with David Ross, one of the godly 'men' of Braefindon at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Late one wintry evening David was returning to his home from Cromarty; he had safely passed Kirkmichael, and was in the neighbourhood of Kinbeachie Wood, hard by a tree on which a suicide had hanged himself, when a female figure, clad in white, rushed past him Eastwards, asking if she could reach Kirkmichael by midnight. She was followed by a furious rider on a black horse, accompanied with two black dogs, who again asked the time till midnight; soon the rider returned, long before the stroke of twelve, the woman across his saddle and the two dogs tearing at her breasts, and he held in front of her the mangled body of a child. Not many days later there died at Bruichglas a woman who had been strongly suspected of child-murder, and whose funeral, on its way to Kirkmichael, had passed the very spot in Kinbeachie Wood where David had had his appalling vision. Hugh Miller relates a slightly different version of the same story, according to which the woman concerned resided in

Cromarty, exercised over her neighbours all the baneful influences of a witch, and was seen to meet with the same horrid end. Kirkmichael is certainly reputed to be haunted; but a more rational explanation would connect the origin of these legends with a murder which happened there about a century ago, when a lover from Braelangwell was killed by the two brothers of his lass at Kirkton.

However, if the forces of evil were felt to be potent in former days, a strong discipline was also exercised to check them. The early records of the Kirk Session show the amazing number of meetings which were held to combat the frailties of the flesh. Even reports of gossip and slander were carefully sifted to the bottom, though the Session later felt that here it had exceeded its legal powers, and resolved for the future to confine itself to cases in which the good name of a communicant was involved. Raffles in Jemimaville were prohibited, Sabbath profanation was rigorously punished, and on this latter head there is one amusing record. In 1842, two householders in the village delated Grace Stewart for gathering ware on Udale shore between 9 and 10 p.m. on Sabbath evening; when accosted by them, the 'miserable creature' had declared that it was a fine morning. Called before the Session, Grace explained that she had gone to bed early, and on rising later had mistaken the hour and minute hands on her clock, so that the time, which was actually 9.15 on Sunday, had been misread by her as 2.45 on Monday morning. But this ingenious explanation did not avail poor Grace, who had to stand before the congregation and be solemnly rebuked.

In those days the Kirk Session was not only the School Board, but also the sole agency for Poor Relief, and it devoted much time in giving its best assistance to the destitute. Sometimes a person would apply for admission to the poors' roll, in order to qualify for free legal aid; and in such cases, not only the financial circumstances, but also the moral character of the applicant was carefully examined. In 1832, when an outbreak of cholera threatened, stocks of food and clothing were provided for the poor; and after this record of intelligent benevolence, it is gratifying to read that only one case of cholera, and that not fatal, was actually reported in the parish.

II. Places of Historical Interest

As a union of two ancient parishes, Resolis is particularly rich in ecclesiastical remains, and it has no less than seven Churches, four of which are ruined. The oldest is probably the Church of St Martin, dedicated to Martin of Tours, and situated by the 'trouty'¹ well at the bottom of Drumdyre. It is now a mere heap of stones, and even in 1641, when Martin's Fair was transferred from this spot to Inverness, it was described as lying waste. A popular tradition suggests that at one time it was served by monks coming out from Beaulieu Priory; but all that can be stated certainly is that in 1227 Jeronimus, parson of Cullicudden, was present at Kenedor in Moray, for a settlement of a dispute between the Bishops of Moray and Ross, and that in 1275 the Church of Cullicudden was taxed, along with other Scots benefices, for the relief of the Holy Land. The parson of Cullicudden held a prebend in the Cathedral of Fortrose.

The new parish Church of Cullicudden was built in 1609 on a slope running down towards the Firth. Parts of the walls are still standing, and the Kirkyard contains the tombs of most of the ministers in Resolis, together with that of Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty. One wall of the manse is said to be visible in the farm steading nearby. Much of the adjacent land formerly belonged to the bishopric of Ross, and still bears a Crown duty known locally as the 'Bishop's Tax'.

At Newhall-point human bones were once discovered when digging behind the Craggan House. The Ordnance Survey marks a chapel on this site, of which Chapelton must have been the glebe; it may have been a private chapel, but the existence of a graveyard suggests rather that it was the original parish Church of the area, before Kirkmichael was built.

Kirkmichael itself stands in a romantic situation on the shore of Udale Bay. The earliest mention of an incumbent here seems to occur in 1533, when a charter is witnessed by Master John Innes, rector of Kirkmichael. The patronage of the parish was then in the hands of the Crown, a fact which links up with the gift of Ardmeanach, as a wedding present to Darnley, by Mary Queen of Scots. Under episcopacy, the rector of Kirkmichael was also Archdeacon of Ross, possessing a fine manse immediately to the West of Fortrose Cathedral, and his glebe lands at Kirkton are said to have been the best in the whole parish. The roofless chancel of the Church still stands, and formerly a bell hung on the gable, which was sometimes tolled at funerals. Here are the burial grounds of Mackenzie of Newhall, Munro of Poyntzfield and many other families, both old and new, connected with the parish; perhaps the oldest residents are the Holms of Ferryton, whose graves here go back four hundred years.

The parishes of Kirkmichael and Cullicudden were united by the Commissioners of Teinds in 1662, but for about a century thereafter, both Churches continued in use on alternate weeks, the minister residing at Cullicudden. About 1767 a central spot was chosen on the sunny incline, known as Resolis or 'the slope of light' from which the parish takes its popular name, and here both a Church and manse were erected by the heritors. The Church was of adequate size but its windows were small and dark, and it was rebuilt in 1830, when the present tall windows were put in and the gallery was probably constructed. It is a typical specimen of an eighteenth century country kirk, with a porch at either end, and more private entrance to the laird's pews at the front of the gallery. The pulpit, at the centre of

¹ Clouty well?

the long side, has a fine canopy, and bears an inscription in memory of Hector Macphail, during whose ministry this Church was first built. Originally a 'double-decker' pulpit, it had the precentor's box removed in 1930, when a harmonium was brought in from the former United Free Church; and the original long Communion Table down the centre aisle was replaced in 1925 with a small modern Table. Otherwise the Church is little changed, and even the rack for the old collecting ladles can be seen on the Session's box pew beside the pulpit. Lead tokens are still in use, and on the vestry window sill are kept six pewter Communion Cups and three larger pewter Platters, possibly of date about 1680, and bearing the mark 'James Dallas Inverness' with a crown and rose. Two chased silver Cups and a Flagon, of English manufacture, were presented to the parish in 1833, under the bequest of Mrs Macleod, Daughter to Thomas Urquhart of Kinbeachie; and the Church also possesses two smaller Cups, a Flagon and Platter, dated 1906, and formerly the property of the United Free Congregation. The Church bell bears the inscription: "George Watt Fecit St Ninian's Row Edinburgh D.U.H.G. 1787." These initials must almost certainly be those of David Urquhart and Henrietta Gordon, who would thus have been the donors of the bell. The old pews in the gallery are marked with letters and numbers to indicate the farms on the various estates to which they were allotted; no seat rents were charged, but a sum of 14s to 16s per seat was originally paid to the heritors and repaid by the incoming to the outgoing tenant. The first manse at Resolis was very small and situated on marshy ground at the bottom of the brae, but in 1831 the present manse was built on a much more commodious scale.

The first Free Church, built soon after the Disruption, still stands on the shore behind Jemimaville, though it is now no longer used. The manse of this Church was the large house with pillars in the centre of the village. In 1867, the present Free Church was built near Resolis, and a manse followed on this site some fifteen years later, after difficulties had been experienced in connection with obtaining a title to the ground. Both of the Free Churches are constructed much after the plan of the Parish Church, but without gallery or heritors' pews.

There are also two halls in Jemimaville – the former United Free Church Hall at the West end, and the former Church of Scotland mission, now used as a Public Hall, near the East end. The old United Free Church, erected in 1906 and since dismantled, stood at Newmills; and the former United Free manse is situated at the lower entrance to Braelangwell.

A noted antiquity, of partly ecclesiastical interest, is Craighouse or Castle-Craig, on the shore West of Cullicudden. This was a strong castle, the remains of which are about 50 feet in height, immediately overlooking the sea, to which a postern gate opens; the roof is of flagged stone, with a fine balcony, and the vaulting of the various floors can still be seen. The character of the building indicates that it was constructed in the early sixteenth, or possibly the late fifteenth, century. It is said to have been built by the Urquharts of Cromarty, who obtained a licence to erect Cromarty Castle in 1487; and in consequence of the misbehaviour of one member of the family, Craighouse is believed to have been confiscated by the Church prior to the Reformation, and to have become the principal seat of the Bishops of Ross. Certainly it was occupied in 1563 by Donald Munro, formerly High Dean of the Isles, and in the Reformed Church, Commissioner for planting Kirks in Ross-shire. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, it belonged to the Williamsons of Craighouse, who later become Counts in Germany; and after reverting for a period to the bishopric of Ross, it was finally added to the estate of Newhall.

Almost all of the united parish was at one time Urquhart property. Sir Thomas Urquhart was patron of both Kirkmichael and Cullicudden, and about 1645, when he refused an augmentation of stipend to the ministers, they denounced him publicly from the pulpit. The Urquharts survived longest at Kinbeachie, which was still in their hands about a century ago. Kinbeachie Castle is now sadly ruined, but a carved stone taken from it is preserved in the National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, and bears the date 1651 together with Sir Thomas Urquhart's initials, arms and motto ("Meane Weil, Speak Weil and Doe Weil").

The estate of Newhall passed on to the Gordons, on the marriage of Anne Urquhart of Newhall to Sir Adam Gordon of Dalpholly, who was knighted in 1695 or 1696 and served as Member of Parliament for Sutherland. Their eldest son, William, was created first baronet of Invergordon in 1704, and their third son, who will be mentioned later, became Alexander Gordon of Ardoch. Charles Hamilton Gordon, advocate, third son to the first baronet of Invergordon, founded the family of Gordon of Newhall. He appeared as junior counsel for the defence in the trial of Lord Lovat, which may indicate Jacobite leanings, though the rest of the family were staunchly Hanoverian. On his death in 1761, he was succeeded by a son of great intellectual promise, William, whose remains, first interred in Invergordon, were later taken to Kirkmichael, and reburied there with a fine epitaph including the line, "He never made a foe or lost a friend." In 1778 this William was succeeded by his sister, Henrietta Gordon, who married first Thomas Lockhart, Commissioner of Excise (died before 1787), and second David Urquhart of Braelangwell. Henrietta was a great builder and improver; shortly before 1800, she seems to have built both Newhall and Braelangwell Houses in the Adam style – the old Newhall House was near the present front gates; she gave her name to Henrietta Park and Wood, and also to Gordonsmills, which bears the date 1796; and she must have been responsible for moving the old estate mill to its present position at Newmills. She and her husband, David Urquhart, are both buried in Kirkmichael; and a descendant, who lives in the United States, has been officially recognised as the ninth Urquhart of Braelangwell.

One of the Gordons had married a relative of Mackenzie of Coul, and their eldest son, Colin Mackenzie Dhu, merchant in London, left £40,000 for the purchase of Newhall and other entailed lands by will dated 1798. His nephews, Donald and Colin, both died without issue, and by entail Newhall had to go to the nearest male heir on the death of Colin in 1842. The fifth sister of Colin Mackenzie Dhu had married John Stewart, Episcopal minister in Inverness, and their daughter, Charlotte Stewart, became the wife of Alexander Shaw of Tordarroch, tenth Chief of Ay, and later Lieutenant-Governor of the Isle of Man. Newhall was inherited by Charlotte's grandson, John Andrew Shaw, formerly of the Honourable East India Company, and on his succession he assumed the name Shaw-Mackenzie. He was himself succeeded in 1886 by his nephew, Charles Forbes Hodson Shaw-Mackenzie, a Judge in Bombay Presidency from 1862 to 1885, whose grandson was in 1957 officially recognised as sixteenth Chief of Ay, with surname Shaw of Tordarroch, the ancient barony of Newhall passing to his elder daughter, who retains the name Shaw-Mackenzie.

A niece of Colin Mackenzie Dhu, named Florence Mackenzie, married James Lyon of Inverness (died 1863), and her wedding dress can be seen in Inverness Museum. She lived in Braelangwell, and the Lady's Bridge and Road were constructed to enable her to visit her brother at Newhall. Her son, Colin Lyon-Mackenzie of St Martin's, became Provost of Inverness.

The property of Ardoch was in Gordon hands during the sixteenth century, for in 1562 James Gordon of Ardoch and his son George are found witnessing a charter of the Earl of Sutherland. To a later Earl of Sutherland, Alexander Gordon of Ardoch, third son of Sir Adam Gordon of Dalpholly, was sent in 1715 with a commission for the Earl as Lieutenant-General in the Hanoverian forces. In 1716, Alexander killed the Hon. James Cathcart in a duel at London, because the latter had cast aspersions on the courage of his brother, Sir William Gordon of Invergordon; and in the same year, undeterred by this sad event, Alexander became Provost of Fortrose. He married Ann, daughter of Sir Robert Munro of Foulis, a lady whose remarkable piety is celebrated both by Doddridge and Sage. The prayer-meetings which she held at Ardoch nearly drove her irreligious husband to commit suicide, but afterwards he experienced a change of heart and became a leading Presbytery elder. In 1728, he witnessed the marriage contract of Donald Sage's grandfather Aeneas with Elizabeth Mackenzie, and the two were married at Ardoch House. After a long and painful illness, Mrs Ann Gordon died a widow in 1762, and six years later her nephew, Sir Harry Munro of Foulis, erected a large altar-shaped tomb over her grave at Kirkmichael. Her son, Adam Gordon of Ardoch, also took the Hanoverian side, and after acquitting himself bravely was captured by the Jacobites at Inverurie in 1745. Adam's two daughters, Anne and Joanna, both married distant relatives of the Earl of Kellie, to whose earldom their husbands in turn unexpectedly succeeded; and their introduction to these future spouses is said to have been effected through the shipwreck of a baby girl at Ardoch.

Ardoch was then purchased by the Munros, whose first representative died in 1786, after making large additions to the old house; he renamed the property Poyntzfield in honour of his wife, daughter to the Right Hon. Stephen Poyntz of Cowdrey House, Sussex; and he was succeeded in turn by his nephews, George and Innes Gunn Munro. As mentioned earlier, the Munros of Poyntzfield took a great interest in the village of Jemimaville, and were responsible for the erection of its school.

Amongst the smaller estates, the most interesting is that of Brea, which in earlier days had been a hunting lodge belonging to the Earls of Ross. Sir James Fraser of Brea, a younger son of the seventh Lord Lovat, attended the 1638 Assembly at Glasgow, and is said to have led his clan under Montrose on the side of the Covenant. His son, James Fraser of Brea (1639-98) was a noted Covenanting preacher, licensed in 1672 by Thomas Hog of Kiltarn, then Moderator of the Field Presbytery of Moray; he was imprisoned for his religious principles in the Bass, Edinburgh Tollbooth, Blackness and Newgate; and he died minister at Culross in 1698, leaving behind him a Treatise on Justification and a volume of Memoirs illustrating the experience of a deeply tried believer. The old house of Brea is now demolished, but a carved stone taken from it is let into the gable of the present building.

III. Former Ministers in Resolis

It may be of general interest to add a list of previous incumbents in the various Churches, though it is only for the post-Reformation period that the catalogue of names can be complete.

Cullicudden

David Dunbar (died 1580) had held this charge prior to the Reformation, when he conformed to the Protestant religion.

William Munro of Coul was presented to the parsonage in 1580 by James VI, and is known to have been still in office at the year 1608.

Thomas Pape, a native of Ross-shire, was translated from Rogart in 1614, and in 1634 was still minister at Cullicudden.

Charles Pape, probably a son of his predecessor, had been admitted by 1638; he became Presbytery Clerk, and served at least until 1655. A lineal descendant, Alexander Pape (minister at Reay, 1734-82), was accustomed to carry a short thick cudgel, known as 'the baillie', which he was often compelled to use by the violence of his parishioners.

The charge of Cullicudden was vacant at the time of its union with Kirkmichael in 1662.

Kirkmichael

James Gray is mentioned as vicar in the years 1567 and 1571.

Walter Ross appears as reader at Kirkmichael in 1574.

Thomas Marjoribanks, son of an Edinburgh burgess, was parson in 1575, and continued as such for about ten years.

Alexander Reid was presented by James VI in 1586, and in 1601 is still recorded as being the incumbent.

Thomas Young, a St Andrews graduate, succeeded in 1614, and continued at least until 1635.

Robert Williamson, a Master of Arts of Aberdeen, took office in 1649, holding the charge until after 1655.

United Parish of Resolis

James Houston, son of the minister at Wardlaw, had been appointed to Kirkmichael before 1662, when the two parishes were united by the Commissioners of Teinds. He remained in office until his death in 1714, apparently without conforming to Presbyterianism; but his opposition to the new Establishment cannot have been active, since the Presbytery of Chanonry was allowed to meet in 1713 at Kirkmichael. In 1684, with the Bishop's consent, he granted a tack of the teinds of Drummudden to William Duff, a baillie of Inverness.

Thomas Inglis (1684-1747) was ordained as the first Presbyterian minister in the united parish on 26th May, 1715. Of a mild and gentle disposition, he was known as 'the lamb of Cullicudden' in contrast to a more fiery neighbour called 'the lion of Cromarty'.

Hector Macphail (1716-74), a native of Inverness and an Aberdeen graduate, was ordained and admitted in 1748 through the good offices of Mrs Gordon of Ardoch, having been unanimously elected by the people and not, like Inglis, presented by the patron. Sage describes him as having been "one of the most deeply exercised Christians of his time, and minutely conversant with the depths of Satan on one hand, and with the unsearchable riches of Christ on the other." He married a daughter of John Balfour, Nigg, and his wife at first deserted what she felt to be unedifying sermons from her husband, in order to cross the Firth and sit under her former minister, John Porteous of Kilmuir Easter. After many difficulties and temptations to atheism, Macphail resolved to resign from the ministry, inviting a friend, James Fraser of Alness, to preach at a week-day service and to intimate his intended resignation. But Fraser's sermon had so powerful an effect that he withdrew from that intention; and for the next three years hardly a Sabbath passed without one of his hearers being converted under Macphail's own preaching. Of the many tales in which he figures, the shortest and loveliest is that of the simple prayer which he taught to a servant lassie: "Lords, show me myself – Lord, show me Thyself." He maintained an intimate spiritual fellowship with James Calder of Croy, who was aware of Macphail's death at the very moment when it occurred.

Robert Arthur (1744-1821) was a native of Buchan and, like Macphail, a graduate of Aberdeen. He was presented to the parish of Resolis and ordained in 1774. Though strictly orthodox in his theology, his preaching lacked evangelical fervour, and he was handicapped by a defective knowledge of Gaelic; in consequence some of his more pious parishioners chose to attend the services of Charles Calder in Ferintosh, though he retained the affections of the bulk of the inhabitants, to whose interests he was sincerely devoted, and for whom he freely employed his knowledge of medicine in their times of sickness. He married a sister of the then Munro of Poyntzfield, and resided at Poyntzfield House to the neglect of some of his ministerial duties; but he came home to die at the manse of Resolis, sometimes sitting at the window there while Dr Macdonald of Ferintosh preached to his people outside.

Donald Sage (1789-1869) came of a long line of Highland ministers. After graduating M.A. at Aberdeen and studying divinity at Edinburgh, he was employed as private tutor for a few years, until he was appointed ordained minister at Achness in 1816. The evictions soon scattered his congregation there, and in 1821 he removed to the Gaelic Chapel in Aberdeen, from which he was translated to Resolis in 1822 on the presentation of Donald Mackenzie of Newhall. Immediately after his induction, he lost his beloved wife, Harriet Robertson; but after passing through a period of spiritual darkness, he flung himself into parochial activities, commencing with a ten months' catechetical visitation of every house. He married happily a second time, and left a family of six sons and four daughters. The older trees around the parish manse are of his planting, particularly a fine Cedar of Lebanon which has now had to be severely lopped; he was also responsible for several plantations round the old kirkyards, and for numerous improvements to the glebe. Leaving the Establishment at the Disruption of 1843, he resided first at Ardoch, and died in 1869 at the Free Church Manse, Jemimaville. His 'Memorabilia Domestica', of which the published edition is incomplete, contain much information on Church life in the Highlands. In his preaching, Dr Kennedy of Dingwall says that he was equally remarkable for exposition and for discourse, and that "few preachers have laboured more to exalt their theme and to abase themselves."

John Mackenzie (1792-1870) had been a fellow-student of Sage's in Divinity, and was translated from Rogart to Resolis in 1843. In 1847, he published a sermon entitled 'Speaking the Truth in Love'; like Arthur, he was a semi-qualified medical practitioner; and he was survived by six sons and a daughter.

Robert Cumming Macdougall (1839-1911) was presented by J. A. Shaw-Mackenzie of Newhall and admitted in 1871. He had been educated at the Universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow, and before coming to Resolis had acted as missionary in various places. "He was immersed in the lore of the Puritans and filled with the spirit of the Covenanters, a strong opponent of all innovations in Church worship, and an earnest upholder of the Protestant faith, a good classical scholar, and an eloquent speaker and preacher." He published a Memoir of the Rev. Hector Macphail; and his long beard, flowing in the wind as he walked or drove about the parish, is still remembered by the older generation.

Archibald Campbell, M.A. was translated from Lairg in 1912, and moved to Kiltarn in 1920. During his ministry fell the anxious period of the first World War; and special Naval services were held in the Parish Church, to attend which a score of men from each of the ships anchored in the Cromarty Firth would row ashore at the storehouse point. For the children, an inter-denominational Sunday School was conducted in the village of Jemimaville.

Roderick Mackenzie, born at Kishorn in 1864, and educated at Glasgow and Belfast, was ordained to the Free Presbyterian Church at Portree in 1895. Translated to the Parish Church of Kintail in 1898, and to Urquhart (Inverness) ten years later, he was admitted minister at Resolis in 1921. Previously he had preached almost exclusively in Gaelic, and on coming to Resolis, he devoted great care to the composition of his English sermons, which became justly and widely celebrated. He now resides at the home of his daughter in Walsall.

Archibald Bell, M.A. who had been ordained to the ministry in 1923, was inducted as Colleague and Successor in 1945; and after seven years of devoted service to the widest interests of the parish, he was translated to Culter, Fife, in 1952.

Free Church Ministers

Donald Sage, having left the Establishment in 1843, applied himself energetically to building up a strong congregation, which after a period of worshipping in the open and in barns, obtained land behind Jemimaville for the erection of a Church. In his closing years, Sage's memory failed and his strong frame became very feeble, so that he required to have an Assistant from 1863, and a Colleague and Successor in 1867. But his hope remained firm and clear to the end, and he passed to his rest in 1869, having been for 47 years a minister in Resolis.

James MacLauchlan was ordained as Colleague and Successor in 1867, but resigned ten years later. During his ministry, the question of union with the United Presbyterians was first ventilated, and in reading the Session minutes of that period one can sense the coming storm.

John MacIver was ordained and inducted in 1879. He fell ill in 1910, retired in 1911 after a most active and profitable ministry, and died at Conon in 1922.

William M. Cameron was ordained and inducted in 1916, and died in 1950 at the age of 65. "An outstanding minister, an assiduous student, a deep thinker, and possessed of a rare

analytical mind, his pulpit ministrations were of a high order.” His son and daughter both now occupy Free Church manses; his father, Hector Cameron of Back, Lewis, was one of the twenty-six stalwarts who refused to enter the union of 1900; and his maternal grandmother was John MacQueen, minister of the floating Church at Strontian.

United Free Church Ministers

Charles E. Mackenzie was associated with the United Free Congregation from its beginnings in 1904, and in 1907 he was installed as their ordained missionary, continuing his faithful labours till his death in 1925. Before his ordination, he had been nearly mauled by a tiger in India; and after what seemed a miraculous escape, he vowed himself to service in the ministry.

Alexander Macrae was translated from Bower in 1926, and his death followed in 1929. But in spite of so early a termination to his labours, he was of a profoundly cheerful disposition, and always liked to be known as ‘Happy Sandy’.

IV. The Meaning of some Names.

Ardmeanach:	An old name for the Black Isle, means 'the middle ridge' ² between the Cromarty and Beaully Firths; it was given to Darnley as a wedding present by Mary Queen of Scots.
Ardoch:	'The high place', was the former name of Poyntzfield.
Auchmartin:	Seems to be connected with St Martin's Kirk at Cullicudden; some lands around Balblair, like those in the Western portion of the parish, were once appointed to the bishopric of Ross.
Badgrinnan:	'The little wood on the sunny hill.'
Balblair:	'Town on the plain.'
Ballycherry:	'Town of the quarter.'
Ballyskelly:	'Town of the story-teller.'
Braelangwell:	A hybrid formed from Norse and Gaelic, means 'the upland long field'.
Bruichglas:	'The green slope.'
Culbo:	A Norse word, means 'the farmstead on the rounded hill'.
Cullicudden:	'The cuddie creek.' This tasty fish used to be caught in great abundance at a small bay, slightly to the west of Cullicudden Church.
Ellan Vannin:	Manx for 'the Black Isle', ³ is a modern name of the former Drumcudden Inn.
Firichean:	Meaning 'the moors', refers to the open country divided in two by the main road, immediately West of St Martin's.
Kinbeachie:	'Head of the birch wood.'
Resolis:	Originally applied to a small farm, but later taken as the popular name of the parish, means 'the slope of light'.
Tighninninch:	Between Balblair and Jemimaville, means 'the market town'; a market was held here in the nineteenth century.
Toberchurn:	'The well of the cairn.'

² Ardmeanach may instead mean 'Monk's height' referring to a hermitage on the top of the ridge (Britannica)

³ Actually Manx for the Isle of Man! The etymology is most literally 'Mountain Island'.