



[Sandy Macfarlane of Marvig (b. 1856)]

Sandy Macfarlane was born in Marvig in 1856, son of Alastair Macfarlane 'Alasdair Thormoid', 10 Marvig, and Betty Macdonald from Bettyhill, Sutherland, a fishing bride. Sandy married Marion Mackenzie, 13 Marvig, about 1882, and they had twelve children, two of which died in infancy. Only six of the family reached mature age, three girls and three boys. Marion, the mother of the family, died comparatively early.

Sandy married again in his seventies Mary Macleod, 47 Vatisker, Back, and they went to live in Stornoway. He lived there to the ripe old age of 96 years.

It was the fishing that 'Alastair Beag', as he was called locally, followed but he was also for a time employed by the Eishkin Estate as skipper of their yacht 'Transit' and motor boat 'Puffin'. After moving to Stornoway he worked as relief skipper on steam drifters at the herring fishing from time to time.

In the early 1930s Finlay Smith, 15 Cromore, another well known fishing skipper, had two steam drifters, 'Aurora' and 'Spray', and Sandy Macfarlane skippered the 'Aurora' for a while. He also skippered the steam drifter 'Coronation' from Back, and perhaps others as well.

On one occasion he took one of these big steam drifters through one of the narrow channels leading on to the anchorage at Marvig. There are a number of ways of gaining entrance to Marvig harbour, and in order to navigate some of these narrow channels or 'Kyles' a boat has to perform a series of sharp turns to port and starboard with very, very little margin for error. The experience is somewhat alarming for a person going through for the first time, and the Back crew crowded up to the fore part of the boat to witness the performance and, at one point, one of them called out excitedly to skipper Macfarlane that there was a 'sgeir', a submerged rock, just in the path of the boat. Macfarlane responded calmly, 'Bha i riamh ann' (it was always there).

Sandy was also a leading Churchman. He was the senior elder in the Park Free Church congregation at Gravir for many years.

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