

The MAITLAND'S of NIGG

...42 year's service
...his belongings turned out
into the street

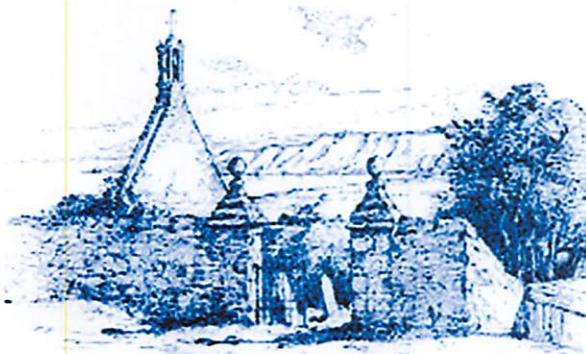


Today there are very few who are aware of the terrible deprivations that overtook the clergy and people of the Scottish Episcopal Church after the Penal Laws of 1746 began to bite. Here is evidence in the story of Richard Maitland, probably born about the year 1630, son of Richard Maitland, Incumbent at Forgue. Like his father before him, he matriculated at Marischal College and spent 1665-1668 in the Arts faculty. He was presented to the Church at Nigg in 1674. It seems certain that Richard, in a long life, was married three times and had a large family, one of which, Patrick, was his clerical assistant.

'Representation' states, "The said Mr Maitland, after a legal and canonical induction to the Kirk of Nigg and having faithfully served the cure there for the passage of 42 years, met with very severe and unjust treatment from the magistrates and Presbytery of Aberdeen. The mahistrates who had interest in that Parish because one half of it belonged to the Town's Common Good, sent their officials in February 1716 to convene some of the principal tenants requiring them to depose Revd Richard Maitland and asked them particularly if he prayed for the Pretender under the name of King James" —but only one of them would swear or acknowledge that they had heard him do so. Nevertheless the Magistrates ordered his church to be possessed by Revd James Farquhar who was then resident in Aberdeen —from an unsuccessful post in Tyrie. Farquhar, fickle in religious matters and of immoral character [he had two children out of wedlock], dabbled in Roman Catholicism, only to be 'rescued and reclaimed' by the Revd Dr George Garden. After this episode he became a confirmed Quaker and thence to Presbyterianism.

It was at this point that Farquhar was seconded to the Church at Nigg while

the lawful pastor Richard Maitland was forced to abscond. Maitland began to appear in public after the Presbyterians got possession, with the result of that Presbytery summoned him and other 'dissident' Episcopalian clergy for trial. A notice to this effect was posted on the church door and the congregation asked to give reasons why James Farquhar should not be installed. A Notary Public appeared on behalf of the congregation but he was intimidated by the magistrates and dropped the case. 'Unopposed', Farquhar was admitted minister on 6th March 1717. Four months later, Farquhar conspired to acquire the Nigg parsonage, which Maitland had retained. On the 4th July Farquhar and four sheriff's officers arrived at the house whereupon they threw Maitland's furniture and other household effects into the street. It was raining and they slowly deteriorated.



Old Kirk of St Fittick

Maitland, who had not been resident at Nigg and his son, Patrick, accompanied by the Notary Public, caught up with Farquhar in an Aberdeen hostelry, where the marauding party had repaired to congratulate their successful eviction. Farquhar became enraged, made violent gestures towards the aggrieved and berated Maitland as a 'soul murderer', the whole group being ejected for a breach of the peace! Two years later and in some distress both residentially and financially, Richard Maitland died in the 43rd year of his ministry nearly 90 years old.

According to Representation "Mr Maitland's son, a sober young man, in Deacon's Orders and assistant to his father met with much the same treatment (as his father) and upon the same account from the Presbyterians, having been obliged to disappear for his safety." Patrick Maitland may also have been one of the five clergy who led meetinghouses in Aberdeen City during the first Rebellion in 1715 according to Robert Wodrow's correspondence on the subject.

I am indebted to Dr William Kelly, doyen architect and ecclesiologist, for his scholarly descriptions of the church at Nigg. The publication referred to is *A representation of the State of the Church in North Britain* written by Bishop William Dunbar in 1718; published at London by J. Innys.



A sketch of the Nigg belfry drawn by Dr William Kelly and dated 1907. A good example of picturesque embellishment built, unusually, on the eastmost gable. The date on the belfry is 1704 inscribed with the initial M, with the date of 1759 on the bell, a good example of the bell founders' craft of the middle ages.



The Watcher's House
(to guard against body-
snatchers)

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