

COUNCIL CHIEF AND HIS BLONDE LOOK-ALIKE

A RUGGER-PLAYING council official who was once accused of dressing up as a woman was the centre of a new mystery last night.

Eighteen months ago, six-footer A. W. S. "Stephen" Rae resigned as director of administration and legal services with the Western Isles Council in Stornoway, and left the area.

Recently, six-foot fashionably-dressed blonde Miss A. W. S. "Alexandra" Macrae started a legal assistant's job with Inverness District Council.

And an Inverness councillor said: "I am convinced Stephen Rae and Alexandra Macrae are the same person. Everyone is talking about this. The likeness is amazing."

Minister's son and former SNP candidate Mr Rae, 38, an Edinburgh University law graduate, once held a local government job in Falkirk.

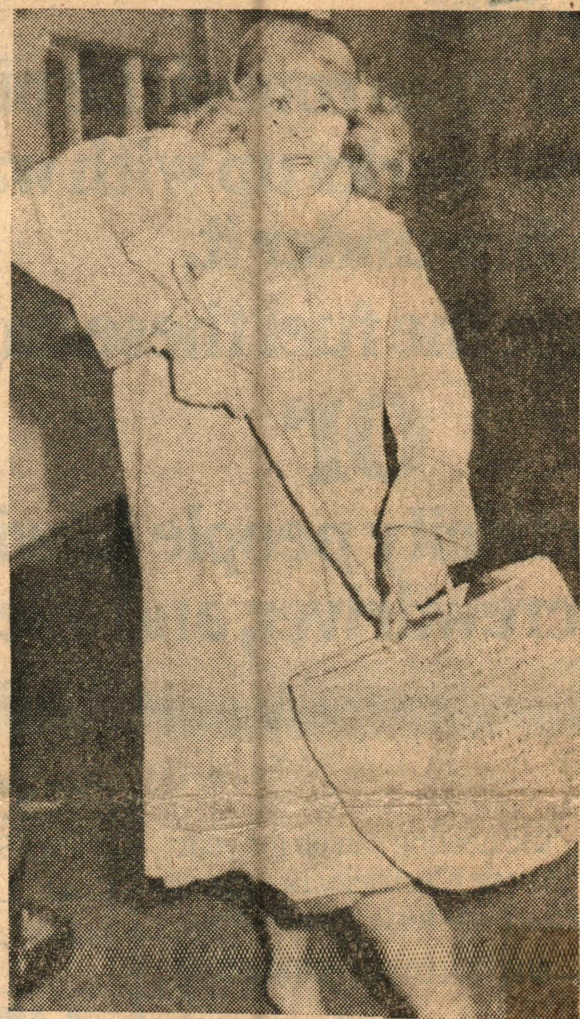
Platform soles

During his five years at Stornoway, he was married to a coloured nurse from Ghana, named Bibi. He played front-row forward for the Stornoway rugby team, and acted as club secretary.

But in 1975, he landed in controversy when staff at the town's Acres Hotel claimed that he appeared there in drag.

They insisted that a tall, mini-skirted blonde who inquired about dinner, then sat down to the meal in a long dress and platform-soled shoes, was Mr. Rae dressed as a woman.

Mr. Rae said he was in Edinburgh that weekend, and a relative was using his car.



ALEXANDRA MACRAE outside her flat



STEPHEN RAE in Stornoway

"I can quite understand how this person was mistaken for me," he declared. "It was a member of the family whom I do not wish to name."

Smile

Mr. Rae added that he did not see why his "family linen should be washed in public," and that he might have to consider looking for another job because of "salacious gossip."

Miss Macrae lives in a council flat in the village of Smithton, Inverness.

She answered the door in a frilly apron, and said she lived alone.

Asked if she and Mr Rae were the same person, she replied with a smile: "What a fascinating suggestion," and closed the door.

The man who hired Miss Macrae, Inverness District Council chief executive Brian Wilson, said: "I do not comment on the private lives of my staff."