



[Facts and Figures about Planasker and Other Schools in Pairc]

1. Following the passing of the 1872 Education Act the children aged between 5 and 13 years old were counted in 1873 with a view to building five new schools in the Park District, as follows:

Habost 25, Kershader 20, Garyvard 18, Caverstay 10	= 73 for Kershader School
Cromore 55, Crobeg 2, Torostay 4	= 61 for Cromore School
Marvig 57, Calbost 41	= 98 for Planasker School
Gravir 83	= 83 for Gravir School
Lemreway 101	= 101 for Lemreway School
Total	= 416

2. In 1873 the four Lewis Parish School Boards were formed. The Members of the Lochs School Board were as follows:

Donald Munro	Solicitor and Chamberlain, Stornoway
Roderick Millar	Medical Doctor
Rev. Ewan Campbell	Lochs Parish Minister
Rev. George Campbell	Lochs Free Church Minister
Donald Macdonald	Tenant at Crobeg
John Mackay	Ground Officer from Balallan
Kenneth Mackenzie	Gaelic teacher at Carloway

3. At the first meeting of the Lochs School Board held at Soval Lodge, Lochs in April 1873, Mr Munro was appointed Chairman and Mr William Ross, Solicitor, Stornoway was appointed to the conjoined Offices of Clerk and Treasurer at a salary of £50 a year.

4. At the Lochs School Board Meeting on 2nd June 1876 it was agreed to accept a contract offer for £13,325 from Alexander MacDonald, Lyndale, and Isle of Skye for nine schools in Lochs, including five schools in Park (South Lochs), all with dwelling houses included. That was an average of £1,500 per school.

5. The five new schools in Park opened as follows; all of them except Cromore exceeded 100 pupils at some time.

- a. Kershader in 1878
- b. Cromore in 1879
- c. Planasker in 1880
- d. Gravir in 1881
- e. Lemreway in 1881

6. The annual birth rate and the annual school roll admissions to Planasker School from Calbost give a very clear indication of the economic health of the small Calbost community:

Year	Year	Year			
1880/1881	16	1911	5	1941	2
1882	5	1912	5	1942	4
1883		1913	4	1943	4
1884		1914	7	1944	5
1885	3	1915	7	1945	4
1886	9	1916	6	1946	1
1887	8	1917	7	1947	1
1888	12	1918	7	1948	1
1889	11	1919	3	1949	2
1890	6	1920	2	1950	1
Total by Decade	70	Total by Decade	53	Total by Decade	25
1891	7	1921	7	1951	1
1892	6	1922	7	1952	
1893	5	1923	4	1953	

1894	10	1924	5	1954	
1895	14	1925	4	1955	2
1896	14	1926	4	1956	
1897	17	1927	5	1957	
1898	20	1928	5	1958	
1899	7	1929	2	1959	
1900	7	1930	4	1960	1
Total by Decade	107	Total by Decade	47	Total by Decade	4
1901	14	1931	4	1961	1
1902	7	1932	4	The last Calbost pupil	
1903	5	1933	1		
1904	7	1934	4		
1905	3	1935	3		
1906	9	1936	3		
1907	4	1937	4		
1908	10	1938	1		
1909	7	1939	2		
1910	5	1940	2		
Total by Decade	71	Total by Decade	28		

7. The total roll of Planasker School on its opening day on 16th April 1880 was 30 pupils. On the second day the attendance was better at 47 pupils. During the first few years attendance was very irregular.
8. As I was born in 1916, I went to school in 1921 and the record shows that 7 new pupils from Calbost went to school in 1921, as follows: Kenny Dan Macleod Croft 1, Norman Kennedy Croft 2, Kenneth Mackay Croft 7, Angus Macleod Croft 8, Donald Morrison Croft 9, Murdina Nicholson Croft 11, Chrissie Morrison, Halfway House.

There were others such as Domhnuill Alex an Thormoid; I don't know when his family moved to Garyvard. Also Johanna Rob, 3 Calbost, but I think she was slightly younger.
9. My nearest school pal was Donald Morrison and we were very friendly indeed. He was a person of even temper and his home atmosphere was easy-going, hence I spent a lot of time there. I do not recall us being in any undue misbehaviour.
10. On the other side of our croft were the Mackays (No.7) and, as there were no boundary fences in our young days, I just ran down the hill and spent much time with Kenneth & John Angus and the girls.
11. I am the only survivor of the group.
12. Barabel (Mrs Angus Nicholson) did not come to Calbost until later in the 1920s when her mother died after the childbirth of Anna.
13. Amazingly there was an average of 5 pupils from Calbost each year.
14. There was population growth throughout the 19th century, peaking in 1901 at 200 in Calbost.
15. In 1898 there were 20 new pupils from Calbost. Now-a-days 20 pupils are enough to keep a school open. Pairc new school is just over 20 now.

Decline

16. In the 1930s before the Second World War no one could envisage the serious decline of Calbost in the following few decades. At the end of the war there were still 20 Calbost pupils at school. By 1961 the Planasker school roll was down to 13 pupils.
17. The decline of the Calbost population is a reflection of the decline of the herring industry.
18. The last child born in Calbost, Murdo Christopher Mackinnon, was in 1956.
19. Because of de-population in Pairc and a dwindling school roll in all the five schools, it was decided to replace all five schools by building one new school, centrally situated at Gravir.

The Pairc new school was officially opened on Wednesday 26th September 1973 with a roll of 50 pupils. Group Captain Dr. Murdo Kennedy Macleod MA PhD, former Principal Chaplain, Royal Air Force opened it. The first Headmaster was Kenneth Macleod MA, both men from Croft 3, Calbost.

20. The total intake for each decade as recorded in the list herewith gives a fairly good idea of how many pupils walked to Planasker School from Calbost each day (over 100 in one decade 1891/1900).
21. We got one pair of boots each year and, once they were worn beyond repair, we went barefooted. There were two shoemakers working continually in Calbost.
22. The whole village community lived like one big family, caring socially about the young and the old particularly. and communally carrying out many tasks
23. During the nine years from age 5 to 14 prior to 1899 there would appear to be 100 pupils going to school each morning (see list).
24. The first and subsequent Head teachers at Planasker School were as follows:

Roderick Mackenzie	1880-1881
Alexander Wright	1881-1882
James MacDougall	1882-1886
Alexander Shanks	1886-1888
John Macleod	1888-1896
William Kerr	1896-1920
John Macarthur	1920-1927
Donald W. Macarthur	1927-1941
Alex John Maclean	1941-1946
Kenneth Macleod (Calbost)	1946-1953
Margaret Smith (Cromore)	1953-1956
Janet Macdonald (Cromore)	1956-1973

Planasker School closed in 1973 and the new Pairc School was opened that year.

25. Planasker - The name of the school is an Anglified corruption of the Gaelic name of the site of the school. The name comes from the 'waterfall' on the stream to the south of the school. The Gaelic word for waterfall is 'eas', and before the school was sited there that field on Croft 8 Marvig was known as 'Blàr an Eas Duibh'. Of course some witty Marvig character had an alternative version of the word 'Planask-er'. His story was that one of the crofters nearby came to talk to the builders almost daily and he always asked about the plan for the school, hence when they saw him coming, they would say, 'here comes the "plan-asker"'.
 26. The Calbost reader could amuse him/herself by trying to identify the Calbost intake of pupils in any year. In 1898 when there were 20 new pupils, Group Captain Murdo Kennedy Macleod and Dan Macleod of 8 Calbost were among those concerned. Also Seonaidh Murdo Iain Bhig, 9 Calbost and Gormellia Niall, 9 Calbost, Anna Dhomhnuill, No.9, Peggy Aonghais, No.9 etc. - 4 new pupils from the same croft.
 27. The Tawse was used extensively during our time at school and it was accepted as necessary to maintain discipline and the authority of the Head and teachers. As children we were quite reconciled to the Tawse and very often we felt we deserved it. We never heard anyone saying that they felt corporal punishment harmed them in any way.
 28. The generations before us had to take a peat to school every morning. It was an open fire we had in school and the janitor was William Macleod (William Dhomhnuill), 22 Marvig. His sister (Ishbel Dhomhnuill) was a school cleaner. The practice of taking a peat to school ceased about the time we went to school in 1921.
 29. Compulsory education had only come to Lochs in 1880 and that was about 40 years before I went to school. Consequently anyone over 40 years in our community would not have much schooling. Most of us were not very concerned about learning, because neither we, nor our parents, appreciated the value of education. Generally speaking we were only expected to take up a career at the fishing.
 30. All five schools in Park were three teacher schools at one time. Planasker School became a one-teacher school in 1953 and the junior secondary pupils were sent to Cromore. In due course Cromore School became a one-teacher school and the junior secondary pupils were conveyed to Gravir each day.
 31. If any of us were absent from school persistently the 'whipper-in' came to enquire why was the child not at school. In our time the 'whipper-in' was Murdo Mackenzie, 1 Marvig. Before that it was Alastair Bàn, Alastair MacIannan JP, 6 Marvig. On one occasion Alastair Bàn was required to investigate why 'Lachie's' children were not attending school. Subsequently Lachie was brought before the School Board and he explained that as soon as he could get the money from the sale of the two tweeds he was making, he would get boots for the boys to enable them to attend school.

Angry words were exchanged between Lachie and Alastair Bàn. Alastair responded by reminding Lachie that he had two letters after his name. Ha ha, said Lachie, there are three letters in the horn of our village bull.

32. First: Before the provision of the five schools under the 1872 Education Act, there was one small English Parish School near the Parish Church in Park, at Keose. It was set up in 1796. There were several voluntary organisations providing facilities for schooling, in a modest way, in thatched buildings.
33. Second: The Gaelic schools (Sgoilean Chrìosd) provided by the Edinburgh Society for Gaelic Schools, established in 1811, a voluntary organisation. The Calbost 'Tigh-Sgoil' also referred to as the 'Tigh Coinneamh' may still be seen in ruins on Croft No.6. The object of the Edinburgh Gaelic Schools Organisation was to teach people to read the Scriptures in their own language.
34. Third: Another earlier voluntary organisation the SSPCK (Society in Scotland for propagating Christian knowledge).
35. Fourth: Yet another voluntary organisation, The Edinburgh Free Church Ladies Association 1850 and known as 'Sgoilean-na-leadies'.
36. Fifth: At the Disruption of 1843 the three voluntary organisations came under the administration of the Free Church.
37. A Gaelic School was opened in Gravir in 1822 on Croft No.21 (the site of Iain Sheumais's house), Loch Shell in 1828, Marvig 1828, Cromore 1829, and Kershader 1832 etc.
38. In the statistical account of 1833, Rev. R. Finlayson, said that only 12 people in the Parish of Lochs could write - but many could read Gaelic, probably half of the people aged between 12 and 24.

[ends]

AN ARCHIVE RECORD FROM THE ANGUS MACLEOD ARCHIVE www.angusmacleodarchive.org.uk

Author: Angus Macleod

Date:

Original document title: A Note of Calbost Statistics in Relation to Schools

Location in physical archive: Series K, File 4, Section 82

NRAS reference: NRAS 4336/1/9/4

© Angus Macleod Archive