

## Genealogy Croft 11 Calbost

The first tenant to occupy croft 11 Calbost was Murdo Nicolson 'Murchadh Mac Dhomhnuill ic Thormoid'. Donald Nicolson, his father, lived at the 'Gàrradh-Cruaidh' in Eishkin before the crofters were removed from there in 1833. Donald moved to 5 Gravir and his brother Murdo Nicolson moved to 47 Balallan. According to tradition, the progenitor of this branch of the Nicolson's' came from Uig, probably from Carinish, before settling in southern Park.

There were four daughters and three sons in the family of Donald Nicolson who settled at 5 Gravir. The members of the family settled as follows: Murdo Nicolson at 11 Calbost; John Nicolson at 32 Gravir; Kenneth Nicolson at 7 Gravir; Catherine married John Montgomery at 8 Leurbost; Christy married Donald Macphail at 19 Gravir; Margaret married Donald Macaskill at 26 Gravir; Ishbel married Calum 'Ruadh' Smith at 6 Gravir.

There were other Nicolson's living in southern Park before the people were removed from there that are thought to be of the same family.

<b>11 Calbost - Crofter</b>		<b>'Murchadh Mac Domhnuill ic Thormoid'</b>
Murdo Nicolson	1814-1896	Son of Donald Nicolson, 5 Gravir
Catherine Macleod	1820-1900	Daughter of Kenneth Macleod, 13 Calbost
Kenny	1843	Tenant at 11 Calbost
Ishbel 'Bell'	1845	Mrs Kenneth Mackenzie, 28 Crossbost/P.O.
Peggy	1848	Mrs Donald Finlayson, 10 Calbost
Mary	1851	Mrs Alex Macrae, 6 Habost, at Stornoway
Infant	1855	
Infant boy	1857	
Infant girl	1859	
Infant boy	1860	
Christy Finlayson	1855	Adopted when her mother died

The above Christy Finlayson, 1855, was the daughter of Donald Finlayson 'Domhnuill Challum ic Dhomhnuill Ruadh', 14 Calbost. Christy Finlayson's mother, Christy MacIennan, died when Christy was born and the baby was adopted by Mrs Murdo Nicolson, 11 Calbost, who gave her suck as she had lost one of her own babies at that time. Subsequently, Christy Finlayson married Alastair Morrison, 20 Marvig. As a widow she moved to Newton, Stornoway, where she died in 1939.

Murdo Nicolson, 1814, operated the Calbost mill on the stream; probably the mill was there when he came as the first tenant to croft 11. We feel that the original operator of the Calbost mill might have been the tacksman Robert Weir. Murdo's son Kenneth continued to use the mill until he moved to Stornoway in 1902. During Kenneth Nicolson's time, the millstones were changed and much larger and heavier stones were installed. These stones are still in the ruins of the mill. They came from a millstone quarry near Carloway. They were taken from Carloway to Stornoway in a horse drawn cart and from Stornoway to Calbost in an open boat, and manhandled from the beach at Calbost to the mill. The original smaller millstones were used as hearth stones by John Mackay, 7 Calbost, and Donald Finlayson, 10 Calbost.

<b>11 Calbost</b>		<b>'Coinneach Mhurchaidh'</b>
Kenneth Nicolson	1843-1929	Son of Murdo Nicolson, 11 Calbost
Catriona Macdonald	1841-1930	Daughter of James Macdonald, 9 Habost
Anna	1868-1952	Mrs John Kennedy, 2 Calbost, at Stornoway
Donald	1870-1932	Bachelor
Murdo	1872-1916	Tenant, 11 Calbost, lost First World War 1916
Ishbel	1873-1942	Mrs John Macleod, 8 Calbost
John	1875-1905	Bachelor
Christy	1877-1915	Mrs Alastair Mackenzie, 12 Calbost
Kenneth	1879-1938	Baker - settled in Glasgow
James	1882	Infant
Annabella	1883-1903	Died early at Glasgow
Mary	1886-1917	Married in Grimsby, England
Kate	1889-1964	Spinster at Stornoway - shop assistant

Kenneth Nicolson, 1843, attended school for a while in the Tolsta Chaolais area where his grandmother, Annan-Dhomhnuill, came from. He was a good scholar in both Gaelic and English and he could write letters in both Gaelic and English. He was a fisherman/weaver as well as a millar and it was said that he took a 140lbs boll of flour or oatmeal alternatively home with him from the fishing every Saturday when the family was young. Weaving was done on the 'beart bheag' (small loom) until the 1890s and Kenneth was taught the skill of weaving by his daughter Ishbel on the 'beart bheag'. She had acquired the weaving skills with her relatives at Balallan.

The first 'beart mhor' (big loom) was introduced to Lewis by James Mackenzie, from Gravir 'Seumas an Habost', in the late 1880s or early 1890s and some of them are still used in the Hebrides.

Kenneth Nicolson, 11 Calbost, was a self-taught joiner and he set about to copy James Mackenzie's new loom. Apparently Mr Mackenzie was not very pleased at the thought of competition from Mr Nicolson and would not let him into his loom shed. Mr Nicolson ran into difficulty when he could not find heddles, reeds and shuttles etc; but Mr Mackenzie would not give him any information. Kenneth responded by saying: "Chan eil fios agam nach dean mi chùis" - "I don't know that I will not manage", and he then advertised for heddles etc. in the Highland News and he received many offers of loom parts. He was working with his new loom in the early 1890s and he took it with him to Stornoway in 1901. At that time Harris Tweed was entirely a rural cottage industry and Mr Nicolson's friends felt that he would not get enough weaving work in Stornoway to keep him occupied. At that time most of the tweed was done in Lochs and Uig.

There were no mills in Stornoway. Mr Nicolson was known in Stornoway as 'am Breabadair', which indicates that weavers were few in number if at all, in town at that time. He was about 59 years old when he moved to Stornoway and it must have been about that time that he emigrated to Canada but the Canadian emigration authorities refused him entry on the grounds of his age. He was sent back to Britain. An Irish foreman who saw him at the Canadian emigration offices lamented the fact that he was not allowed into Canada because he said he could do with "a strong Highlander like that". He lived at 9 Bayhead Street, Stornoway, and he carried out his weaving activities on Point Street.

After Kenneth Nicolson moved to Stornoway, his daughter Christy and her husband Alastair Mackenzie moved into the family home at 11 Calbost as follows:

<b>11 Calbost</b>		<b>'Alastair Dhomhnuill Bhig'</b>
Alastair Mackenzie	1875	Son of Donald Mackenzie, 12 Calbost
Christy Nicolson, 1 <sup>st</sup> wife	1877/1915	Daughter of Kenneth Nicolson, 11 Calbost
John	1904	Settled at W.E. Calbost/moved to Leurbost
Annabella	1905	Emigrated to Boston, U.S.A., spinster
Christy	1908	Mrs Angus Macfarlane, P.O., 10 Marvig
Katie Mary	1911	Mrs Paterson, New York, U.S.A.

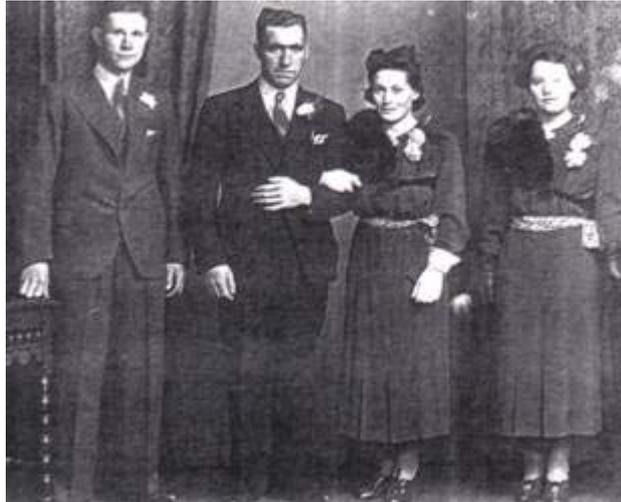
Alastair Mackenzie's first wife, Christy Nicolson, 1877, died in 1915, when he was away in the Royal Navy during the First World War and the young children were taken in by their grandparents, Mr and Mrs Kenneth Nicolson in Stornoway. Subsequently Alastair Mackenzie remarried Matilda Mackenzie, 4 Calbost, and eventually he settled on croft 12 Calbost. He was the village postman from 1917-1942.

<b>11 Calbost - Crofter</b>		<b>'Murchadh Choineach Mhurchaidh'</b>
Murdo Nicolson	1872-1916	Son of Kenneth Nicolson, 11 Calbost
Ishbel Macleod	1880	Daughter of John Macleod, 8 Calbost
Johnnie	1901	Bachelor, emigrated to U.S.A. 1923 - returned
Murdo	1903	Died in his late 20s
Dolina	1906	Mrs Angus Morrison, 9 Calbost
John	1908	Married Mary Macleod, Ness/at Melbost/Stornoway
Kenneth	1909	Died as a young man
Donald	1911	Minister of Religion, Dunvegan, Skye
Angus	1913-1982	Businessman, 6 Holm Road, Stornoway/10 Calbost I
nfant girl	1914	
Murdina	1916	Mrs Carter, Birmingham, England

Murdo Nicolson, 1872, the head of the above family, served in the Royal Navy during the First World War and he was lost in 1916 in the 'Laurel Crown' in the North Sea as a result of a mine explosion, leaving a widow and a young family of eight children, the youngest of which was not yet born. John Nicolson, 1906, and Angus Nicolson, 1913, of the above family served throughout the whole of the Second World War in the Royal Navy.

Angus was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal in 1944 for outstanding skill and devotion to duty as the sole volunteer to undertake a dangerous mission during minesweeping duties on H.M.S. Brixham, in Corsican water in the Mediterranean. The late John Nicolson 'Iain Mor Mhurchaidh Choinnich' wrote about his experiences of the Russian Arctic Convoy.

(See Ceilidh House Story No.8 'The Russian Convoy')



In 1939 at the wedding of Angus Nicolson, 1913-1982, 11 Calbost, and Annabella Macaskill, 1917, 9 Calbost, at Leith. Bridesmaid Christyann Mackay, 7 Calbost, and best man Angus Macleod, 8 Calbost



Croft 11: Photo taken in June 1992 on the Annual Theme Day promoted by the Pairc Historical Society.

In the foreground may be seen the oldest white house in Calbost, about 100 years. It was converted from a thatched house by Kenneth Nicolson, 1842, after the first Crofters' Act of 1886 was passed and the crofters got security of tenure and could therefore build permanent homes for the first time.

To the right of that may be seen the house of his son Murdo Nicolson 'Murchadh Choinneach' who was lost in the North Sea in the First World War. Murdo's son, Rev. Donald Nicolson (retired), lives in the house now in the 1990s.

Three young Calbost men having finished their trade of carpentry in a shipyard in Glasgow decided to set sail on the 'Metagama' to the New World to make their fortune.

Left to right: James Macleod, 1900-1986, the second of six sons of Iain 'Ruadh' Macleod, 8 Calbost. Subsequently James married and raised a family in San Francisco, U.S.A.; Johnnie Nicolson, 1901, the oldest of eight children of the war widow Ishbel, Mrs Murdo Nicolson, 11 Calbost; John Angus Kennedy, 1900-1927, second of the family of nine children of Donald Kennedy, 2 Calbost.



The eighth child of Mrs Murdo Nicolson was not yet born when news came in 1916 that the father was lost in the North Sea by enemy action. His elder brother, Dugald, was killed in the First World War in 1915 at the age of 19 years.

Despite these sacrifices, the Great British Nation could not offer that Lewis generation anything but a succession of emigrant ships, calling at Stornoway as a concession.

John Angus was an accomplished boxer. Unfortunately, he sustained an injury to the bridge of his nose in the ring which eventually resulted in his death in the U.S.A. at the early age of 27 years. Johnnie Nicolson also returned home in the early 1930s in ill health and he also died at a comparatively young age. This photo was taken in Northern Ontario, Canada, in 1923.



Left: Mary Nicolson 'Mairi Choinneach Mhurchaidh', 1886-1917, daughter of Kenneth Nicolson, 11 Calbost. She was married in Grimsby, East Anglia, England, and she died at the age of 31 years.

Right: Kate Nicolson, 1889-1964, Mary's sister who lived in Stornoway and worked there as a shop assistant. She was the youngest of a family of eleven.





Front right: James Macleod 1900-1986 and his brother Johnnie 'Ruadh', 1904.  
 Back row right: sons of John Macleod, 8 Calbost.

Johnnie Nicolson and James Macleod, front row, emigrated to America on the 'SS Metagama' in 1923.



Above: a copy of the telegram sent by 'Coinneach Murchaidh', 11 Calbost, to his son Kenny in Dennistoun, Glasgow, advising him that his brother Murdo, who was the father of the above members of the Nicolson family, drowned when his ship 'Laurel Crown' was sunk in the North Sea in 1916 by a mine.

Murdina Nicolson, 11 Calbost 'Murdag Mhurchaidh Choinneach', daughter of Murdo Nicolson.



Born in 1916 some months after her father was lost in the First World War, her mother was left as a widow with eight young children. Murdina married Michael Carter in Birmingham, England.

Below: Four of the eight members of the family of Murdo Nicolson, 11 Calbost



Top left: Murdo, 1903, died in his late 20s

Top right: Kenneth, 1909, who also died as a young man.

Bottom left: John, 1906, emigrated to California as a young man about the year 1930, not realising that America was in the grip of a deep depression and that he was much better off at home. After struggling for a few years he returned to Britain and worked in the Merchant Navy and the whaling. He wintered at the whaling in South Georgia in the Atlantic on several occasions. A Royal Naval Reservist, he served on the Russian Arctic convoy run during the Second World War. He wrote a moving account of a Northern convoy run. After he married, he settled in Melbost, Stornoway.

Bottom right: Angus Nicolson, 1913-1982. He also followed the fishing and the Merchant Navy in his youth as well as whaling at South Georgia in the Atlantic. A Royal Naval Reservist, he served during the whole of the Second World War, mainly in the Mediterranean theatre of war where he was awarded the D.S.M. for outstanding courage and devotion to duty as the sole volunteer to undertake a dangerous mission during mine-sweeping operations in Corsican waters. Previous to that he survived sinking by enemy action on 'HMS Fiji' at the battle of Crete and again on 'HMS Quinton'. After he married he engaged in business as a merchant and Harris Tweed manufacturer and settled at 6 Holm Road, Stornoway.

Below: left in the photo is Fergus Ferguson, Habost, Lochs and John Nicolson, 11 Calbost on the right



Right: on the left of the photo John Johnston, husband of Jessie MacIennan, 18 Marvig (centre); Angus Nicolson, 1913 - 1982, 11 Calbost on the right





A view of Calbost Bay on a windy day.

On the left may be seen the ruins of the house and stackyard of John Morrison 'Iain Beag Iain an Mhurchaidh', 1885.



A view of Calbost from No. 11 on the south side. The new 1940 road to Gravir and the village prayer house may be seen on the left of the picture.

Also No. 7 and No. 5 and the road going on to Marvig on right at No. 1.

No. 8 may be seen with the trees and below, Loch Dubh in the centre of the village.

From Croft 11. Rev. Donald Nicolson, born in 1911, the son of Murdo Nicolson 'Murchaidh Choinneach Murchaidh'. Educated at Planisker School, Marvig, in the years of economic depression in the 1920s, when very few pupils could afford to go to the Secondary School at Stornoway.

Leaving school at 14 years of age he became a fisherman/weaver and was a shareholder in his own motor fishing boat called 'Welcome Home'. In his very early 20s he was converted and shortly after that he set his mind on preaching the Gospel. He became a lay preacher and served in various places in the Highlands and Islands. When the Second World War came he volunteered for war service, but was advised to remain at his post. After the war he studied for the Ministry at the Free Church College at Edinburgh and subsequently he served in North Tolsta, Raasay and Dunvegan on the Isle of Skye from where he retired in 1992.

He spends his time now between his birth place, Calbost, and Stornoway and is out preaching on supply every Sabbath as well as during the week although he is now aged 84 years. He has not missed a Sunday preaching engagement in the three years since he retired and has traveled as far as London on several occasions. He was also Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

In the 1950s, there were six Calbost born Ministers preaching the Gospel in various congregations across the World, most have now passed away and only two are still alive in retirement, Rev. Neil Macleod in Sydney, Australia and Rev. Donald Nicolson in Calbost/Stornoway.

Six of these Gospel Ministers claim that Kenneth Macleod 'Coinneach Mor', 1776-1837, and his wife 'Anna an Dhomhnuill', 1790-1871, who came from the Tolsta Chaolais area are their common progenitor. 'Coinneach Mor' settled in Calbost after 1809 when he returned from 'Cogadh-Na- Tuirc' in Egypt.

