



[The Tragic Death of Johanna Macleod (1915)]

Fifteen year old Johanna MacLeod (1900-1915) of 6 Calbost, daughter of Kenneth Macleod (Coinneach Thormoid), perished tragically in a blinding snowstorm in 1915 as she was coming home in the late evening from a neighbour's house, not more than 200 yards away.

My recollection is that she was lame because she had something wrong with one of her legs. It is quite puzzling how she must have walked and walked, and although she was among quite a number of houses she apparently missed them all as she passed quite near to them. Probably the houses were covered white with snow.

Apparently she lost her sense of direction, as is easily done in a snowstorm when the ground is covered with snow and there are no lights to be seen. Even in daytime it is easy to lose one's way, as I know when I was walking from Gravir to Calbost in daytime before the road to Gravir was built. The snow obliterated all the markings with which I was quite familiar, and I realised that I had better do something about it while it was still daylight and not snowing.

Accordingly I set course for the main road in the area at Cromore crossroads and eventually I came to the road and followed it home to Calbost.

Johanna must have lost her sense of direction home, which was roughly southwest and ended up going more or less the opposite way, northeast. She climbed fairly steep hills and must have become exhausted near the boundary between croft no. 2 and croft no. 8, where there is a small natural cairn marking the spot where her body was found the following day.

When it was realised that she was missing, the whole village turned out to search for her with paraffin lanterns, but without success until her remains were discovered the following day well away from the houses. It was a very traumatic time for the family, and even the village community.

[ends]

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