



## [Seumas 'an Håboist (b. 1850) and His Mother Flora Macinnes]

In the past, crofter townships were sometimes quite isolated. Even as recently as 150 years ago, about the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were very few roads in Lewis, and people walked or moved by boat from place to place. Some villages did not get a road until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was about 1928 before the vehicular road from Stornoway to South Lochs was completed.

Crofting communities were therefore more self-sufficient, and yielded tradesmen of every kind who were able to attend to the various needs of the community, such as carpenters, stonemasons, boatbuilders, blacksmiths, weavers, tailors, shoemakers, etc. Many of these men were self-taught men who could put their hands to almost any kind of work that was needed in the neighbourhood.

James Mackenzie, 4 Gravir, 'Seumas 'an Håboist', born in 1850, was one of these self-taught tradesmen. He was quite a remarkable person who earned for himself a first in several fields. It was he, for instance, who introduced the big wooden loom, 'a bheart mhor', to Lewis in the 1890s. Prior to that it was the primitive 'bheart bheag' that was in use in the Harris Tweed industry. He was also a boatbuilder, and he built some very big offshore fishing boats.

As his Gaelic patronymics indicate, his father John came from Habost to Gravir, and his father's brother Kenneth settled at 12 Marvig. Their father, Donald, was one of seven brothers as well as three sisters who were evicted from Buthinish in Southern Park in order to make room for the enlargement of the Park Sheep Farm. Then the family settled in Orinsay, but in 1843 the family was once again evicted from Orinsay, and they eventually settled as follows:

Donald	1786	came to Habost, Lochs
Roderick	1791	went to 27 Crossbost
Murdo	1801	went to 15 Crossbost
Hector	1807	went to 26 Balallan
Alastair	1810	went to 26 Crossbost
Kenneth	1812	emigrated
John		settled temporarily in Cromore

That gives us an indication of how families were ruthlessly evicted during the widespread clearances in Southern Park in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and were scattered all over Lewis and sometimes overseas.

Flora Macinnes, 1827, mother of 'Seumas 'an Håboist', and daughter of Donald Macinnes, 36 Gravir, were themselves, as a family, evicted from Brollum after the following incident:

A large boulder known as 'Clach a Ghorradair' mysteriously rolled down one day from its resting place on the top of the hill above the Macinnes home, and crashed through the roof, wrecking the house which was empty at the time, except for Flora who was a small child who was left in bed while the rest of the family attended to croft work nearby. Flora escaped unhurt, but the Stewart brothers, Alexander and Archibald, who were tenants of the Park Sheep Farm, would not allow the Macinnes family to rebuild their home again, and they were removed to 'Rubha' at 36 Gravir. We are informed that the boulder may still be seen inside the ruins of the Macinnes home at Brollum.

'Seumas 'an Håboist' designed and built a 42 foot 'Zulu' type of fishing boat at Gravir. He bought the necessary timber, etc while he was at the Caithness herring fishing, and took it home to Lewis on his own fishing boat at the end of the fishing season. It is said that he made all the masts, spars, sails, etc, at Gravir. The boat was built at 'Ceann a Loch', Gravir, where there was a small island, which is no longer there because it was washed away by sea erosion. The boat was launched on the high Spring tides as planned, and all went according to plan.

Probably, James Mackenzie built more than one off-shore fishing boat, but we have not been able to confirm that in the Fishery Office records, but I believe that some of the records were lost or kept privately. Donald Macleod, 13 Lemreway, a very knowledgeable and reliable person, told me that he understood that the name of one of the boats built by James Mackenzie was 'Anna Mhor', and the name of another boat he built was 'Welcome Home'. He also said that he was informed that one of James Mackenzie's boats was broken up in Eishken for fence posts after it was no longer useful for work.

Donald Matheson, Gravir, felt that the name of the first boat built by James Mackenzie was named 'Viking', and he thought the number of the boat was SY 24. A man from Lemreway confirmed that the name was 'Viking', and Angus Chisholm, 8 Lemreway, owned that, or another boat built by James Mackenzie at one time. 'Domhnall Dubh Mackenzie', 15 Crossbost, also felt that one of James Mackenzie's boats was named 'Viking' SY24, and that it might have ended up in Harris. We mention these suggestions in order to assist anyone who might wish to conduct further research into this subject.

### 36 Gravir

Donald Macinnes	1791-1876	Son of John Macinnes, Brollum, 'Domhnall Iain ic Phàdruig'
Rachael Macinnes	1796-1876	Daughter of Murdo Macinnes, Luachre
John	1824	Settled at 29 Lemreway
Flora	1827	Mrs John Mackenzie, 4 Gravir, 'Bean Iain Haboist'
Marion	1828	Mrs Murdo Macphail, 19 Gravir
Catherine	1831	
Murdo	1832	
Margaret	1836	Mrs Donald Campbell, 31 Lemreway
Murdo	1841	Settled at 36 Gravir
Catherine	1845	Mrs Duncan Macleod, 35 Gravir

Rachael, 1796-1876, the mother of the above family was a sister of Iain Ruadh, 1793, grandfather of Aonghais Fhionnlagh, 8 Gravir. They were born at Luachre on the borders of Lewis and Harris, at Loch Resort in Uig, Lewis, as follows:

Murdo Macinnes	1766-1845	From Luachre, then Orinsay & Crossbost
Flora MacLennan	1766-1853	
Neil	1792	Settled at Lemreway
Iain Ruadh	1793	Settled at 8 Gravir
Rachel	1795	Mrs D. Macinnes, 36 Gravir
Annie	1809	Mrs Neil Nicholson, 21 Lemreway
Alastair	1811	Settled at 5 Crossbost

Iain Ruadh, John Macinnes, 8 Gravir lived at Rubha Gravir with Macinnes, 36 Gravir and one of them had the option of moving to Ceann a Loch (8 Gravir). Iain and Donald cast lots to see which one of them would move to 8 Gravir. It was Iain Ruadh who moved by mutual agreement.

Anna Ruadh, 36 Gravir had all that history at her fingertips. She was quite remarkable and her memory was good. I often visited her in the old peoples' home in Stornoway. She was a fine upright lady.

The Macinnes family at 8 Gravir, Angus, Murdo and Mary, knew that history and all their relatives who came from Uig.

[ends]

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