

The Genealogy of Croft 4

Norman Mackenzie, 'Tormod Og' was the first crofting tenant on croft 4. He was born in Calbost in 1817 and he married Matilda Ross Macleod from Cromore on 11th February 1839 at Keose. He was the son of 'Tormod Buidhe' Mackenzie who resided on croft 3 Calbost. He was one of several sons of the village who acquired one of the new crofts that were created in the second lotting at Calbost about 1852. He was therefore a landless cottar in Calbost for about 10 years after he married.

'Tormod Òg' Mackenzie is best remembered for the circumstances in which he won the hand of his young 22 year old bride, Matilda Ross Macleod from Cromore by his manly intervention as the Minister was about to marry her to his rival in front of the altar at Keose Parish Church in February 1839. That romantic story is related elsewhere under the heading, 'Megalín agus Tormod' and we shall not therefore go into detail here.

The ruins of 'Tormod Og's' home may be seen on croft 4 close to the bottom of the hill, 'Mula', on the west bank of the stream near the junction of the Calbost/Gravir Road. The house lies from north to south. There 'Megalín and Tormod' raised a family of six, four boys and two girls. Another girl Ishbel died young in 1859.

Their second son, 'Aonghais Ruadh' Mackenzie was a prominent businessman in Stornoway, as a butcher and farmer, and his influence is still felt there, where his descendants are still to the fore. Two other members of his family settled as landless cottars on the family croft.

There is a headstone on Matilda and Norman in the oldest part of the Gravir cemetery, towards the Church, just inside the old gate. The final parting of this close couple was also traumatic. Matilda died when her husband Norman was away at the Caithness herring fishing and communication was so slow at that time that he was unable to get home in time for the funeral. In the circumstances the death of his wife affected him greatly. He died in 1900.

'Aonghais Ruadh', Angus Mackenzie 1847, son of the above family, was a shoemaker to trade but when one of his cows was involved in an accident and he had to slaughter the animal and sell the meat among his friends, he realised the potential in butchering and so set up in business as a farmer and butcher in Stornoway, but the family butcher shop on Point Street closed down.

4 Calbost - original tenant

| | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Norman òg Mackenzie | 1817 - 1900 |
| Matilda Ross Mackenzie | 1817 - 1882 |
| Jess | 1841 |
| Malcolm | 1843 |
| Angus 'Ruadh' | 1847 |
| Roderick 'Ruadh' | 1849 |
| Anna | 1853 |
| Donald 'Ruadh' | 1856 |
| Ishbel | 1859 |

'Tormod òg'

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|--|
| Son of Norman Mackenzie, 3 Calbost |
| Daughter of Calum Bàn Mackenzie, 4 Cromore |
| Mrs Alex MacIennan, 6 Marvig |
| Tenant at 4 Calbost |
| Businessman in Stornoway |
| Cottar at 4 Calbost |
| Mrs John Macarthur, 2 Cromore/4 Calbost |
| Emigrated to North America |
| Died young |

4 Calbost 'Tenant'

| | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Malcolm Mackenzie | 1843-1908 |
| Ann Ferguson | 1847-1904 |
| Mary Ann | 1870 |
| Donald | 1872 |
| Flora | 1874 |
| Allan | 1876 |
| Duncan | 1878-1908 |
| Norman | 1881 |
| Malcolm | 1883-1907 |
| Johnnie | 1886 |
| Matilda | 1888 |

'Calum Ruadh Thormoid Og'

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|---|
| Son of Norman Òg Mackenzie, 4 Calbost |
| Daughter of Fergus Ferguson, 12 Habost |
| Mrs Angus Smith, 5 Calbost |
| Shopkeeper Stornoway, emigrated to Africa |
| Unmarried at 4 Calbost |
| Director of Education in Rhodesia |
| Died as a result of service in South Africa War |
| Emigrated to North America |
| Died as a Divinity student |
| Emigrated to South America |
| Emigrated to North America, returned as Mrs Maclean |

The family of 'Calum Ruadh Thormoid Og' (above) was brought up in the house that was formerly occupied by the Calbost tacksman, Robert Weir. The second lotting of the village about 1850 placed Robert Weir's house within the boundary of Croft 3, the original croft of Calum Ruadh's grandfather, Norman 'Buidhe' Mackenzie.

Members of this very enterprising family did well in various parts of the world. Six of the nine went overseas, two of those six are buried in Africa, one in North America and one in South America, and Matilda returned from North America and married John Maclean from Carloway who was a policeman in Glasgow.

The family suffered two very sad bereavements in the passing of Duncan as a young man of 30 years old as a result of service in the South African War and Malcolm who died suddenly as a result of meningitis at the age of 24 years when he was a Divinity student in Aberdeen. Reference is made to him in 'Calbost Township History' under 'Padres and Preachers of Calbost'.

The family, and particularly Norman, before he emigrated to North America in 1910, built a new house, but unfortunately the head of the family died about that time. Norman's wife was Flora Mackenzie, 8 Keose. Flora's mother was Betty Campbell, 18 Gravir (Betty Alastair Iain). Norman and Flora's family at Niagara Falls, U.S.A. were two sons and a daughter, Malcolm, Donald and Annie.

The new house at 4 Calbost was ahead of its time in design. It was the first house in the village with 'storm windows' upstairs and a wooden floor throughout. The roof covering was the usual for that period, felt or canvas with regular coats of coal tar. It was sited on the brow of a hill within what was at one time the 'Lios mor' of the tacksman. It was Flora, the unmarried daughter of Calum Ruadh who lived in the house until she passed away in old age. It was still in good condition in the 1950s.

4 Calbost 'Cottar'

| | | |
|----------------|-----------|---|
| John Macarthur | 1856-1891 | 'Seonaidh, an ic Aonghais' Son of John Macarthur, 2 Cromore |
| Anna Mackenzie | 1853 | Daughter of Norman 'Og' Mackenzie, 4 Calbost |
| Matilda | 1884 | Unmarried at Steinish, Stornoway |
| Johnny 'Tommy' | 1891 | Killed in France, First World War |

The above Johnny Macarthur, 1891, popularly known as 'Tommy', fought in the trenches of Flanders in the First World War as a young man in his early 20s. He went to help a wounded German soldier on the field of battle and the wounded German drew his pistol and killed him.

Johnny's father died young at the age of 35 when Johnny was born in 1891 and Anna Thormoid, the widow, was said to have raised her family of two largely on the spinning wheel, working to the small hours of the morning and falling asleep at the wheel. Eventually her brother Angus 'Ruadh' Mackenzie found a place for her in Steinish, Stornoway.

4 Calbost 'Cottar'

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------|--|
| Roderick Mackenzie | 1849-1913 | 'Ruairidh Ruadh Thormoid Og' Son of Norman Og Mackenzie, 4 Calbost |
| Christy Mackenzie | 1853 | Daughter of Murdo Mackenzie, 13 Marvig |
| Roderick | 1876 | Emigrated to U.S.A. |
| Johnnie | 1878 | Emigrated to Africa |
| Ishbel | 1880 | died young |
| Donald | 1883 | Married Ishbel Maciver, Lower Bayble |
| Murdo | 1884 | Died under school age |
| Robert | 1885 | Died under school age |
| Robert Dan | 1887 | Died under school age |
| Matilda | 1892 | Mrs Alastair Mackenzie, 12 Calbost |

Roderick Mackenzie, the head of the above family, 1849-1913, was a cottar sharing croft 4 Calbost with two other families, that of his brother Malcolm and his sister Annie who was married to John Macarthur from Cromore. Roderick testified before the Royal Commission Highlands and Islands 1892, otherwise known as the 'Deer Forest Brand Commission' at their meeting in Stornoway on 9th July 1894.

The acreage given from the Blue Book at the Brand Commission hearing for Croft 4 Calbost was 1 acre, 3 roods, 8 poles arable and 2 roods, 27 poles outrun, as well as a share in the common grazings, the total amount of which for the whole village was 1,735 acres. Also, both Calbost and Marvig share jointly the Island of 'Torraidh'. The old rent for croft 4 Calbost was £3.55 and the revised 'fair rent' as determined by the Commissioners in the 1880s was £1.85. The croft was therefore grossly overcharged and the land available was grossly inadequate.

Mr Mackenzie testified that there were four families on Croft 4 Calbost at that time, two of them in the same house, therefore there were only three fires burning, with four, five and ten persons in the three respective dwelling houses, making a total of 19 people on the croft of about 2½ acres. There were more than that said Mr Mackenzie, but they are gone away. If we divide croft 4 extending to 2½ acres equally among the 19 people living on the croft at that time, it gives each of them an average of 1/8th of an acre of land each. Not only were the occupants of croft 4 denied a reasonable share of their native land, but they were also rack-rented.

Calbost consisted of 14 crofts, which are said to extend to about an average of 5 acres per croft of inbye land or a total of 70 acres of inbye land for the whole village, which had a population of 197 people at the census of 1891. That gives each person an average share of about 1/3rd of an acre. That explains why a number of Calbost people joined with other landless families from the surrounding villages in the 1891 land raiding in Southern Park in the hope of acquiring some of the land that was grossly underused there.

4 Calbost

| | | |
|--|-----------|---|
| Alastair Mackenzie | 1875-1952 | 'Alastair Dhomhnuill Bhig' 'Gladly' Son of Donald Mackenzie, 12 Calbost |
| Christy Nicolson, 1 st wife | 1877-1915 | Daughter of Kenneth Nicolson, 11 Calbost |
| John | 1904 | Settled at N.E. Calbost - moved to Leurbost |
| Annabella | 1905 | Nurse in U.S.A. |
| Christy | 1908 | Mrs Angus Macfarlane, 10 Marvig |

| | | |
|---|------|---|
| Katie Mary | 1911 | Mrs Paterson, U.S.A. |
| Matilda Mackenzie, 2 nd wife | 1892 | Daughter of Roderick Mackenzie, 4 Calbost |
| Christy Bell | 1920 | Mrs Lindsay in Ayrshire |
| Dolina | 1922 | Mrs Agnew in New York |
| Donald & Roderick (twins) | 1924 | both married in Glasgow |
| Christy 'Bheag' | 1926 | Mrs Johnnie Nicolson at Glasgow |

The family of Alastair Mackenzie, 1875, moved to 12 Calbost in 1933 but continued to cultivate croft 4 because they were still landless cottars. Mr Mackenzie was the postman walking to Cromore for the mails three times a week until the daily delivery was introduced in 1928 when a sub-post office was opened in Marvig. All these years he carried out the household delivery in Marvig and Calbost by foot. He was also a Free Church Elder and he took the evening Sunday service in the village as well as the weekly prayer meeting.



A view of the centre of Calbost showing the dwelling house of Roderick 'Ruadh' Mackenzie, 4 Calbost, in the forefront right corner and his barn to the left. At the far end of Roderick 'Ruadh's house is Angus Smith's old house on croft 5 with his barn attached to the house at the back.

The ruin in the centre is Angus Smith's brother, Allan Smith's house on croft 5 and beyond that is another brother, Ruairaidh Mor Smith, also on croft 5.

Beyond that is croft 6 with John Macleod's house and his son Alex Macleod's house, who moved to 10 Garyvard.

The white house in the centre of the photo is that of Kenneth 'Dubh' Mackay built on the site of Calum 'Beag' Mackay's house.

On the far side, above the road, may be seen Alastair Mackenzie's house on croft 12, and the freshwater Loch Dubh in the centre of the village.

A profile of the six male members of the family of Malcolm Mackenzie, 4 Calbost (Calum Ruadh Thor-moid Òg).



Donald Mackenzie, 1872, above left. Founding partner in the Stornoway shop Mackenzie and Mac-sween, this closed down in March 1995 after about 100 years. Mr Mackenzie emigrated to South Africa early in the 20th century and opened a shop there. He is buried in Cradock, Natal.

Allan Ross Mackenzie, 1876, abovecentre, emigrated to Rhodesia early in the 20th century. He was active in education at a very high level.

Duncan Mackenzie, 1878-1908, above left, served in the South Africa Military Police. He came home on leave in 1908 and developed pneumonia and died at the age of 30 years.

Norman Mackenzie, 1881, below left, emigrated to North America in 1910. After building the new family home he married Flora Mackenzie, 9 Keose and lived in Niagara Falls, U.S.A.

Calum Mackenzie, 1883-1907, below centre, he was a Divinity student in Aberdeen and when he came home on holiday he took ill with meningitis and died shortly after. He is buried in Laxay.

Johnnie Mackenzie, 1886, below right, emigrated to Patagonia, came home briefly in 1916.





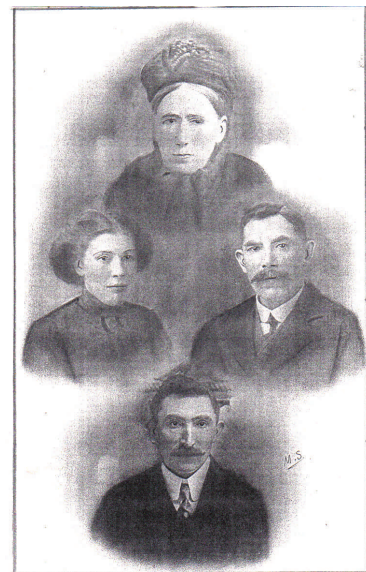
Memorial to Divinity student Calum Mackenzie, 4 Calbost, erected by his college lecturers and fellow students at Aberdeen University. The memorial is in Laxay Old Cemetery.



Left: Donald Mackenzie, 1856, 'Domhnuill Ruadh Thormoid Òg', son of Norman 'Òg' Mackenzie, 4 Calbost, was one of the earliest Calbost people to emigrate.

Ian Sheoc Macleod, 8 Calbost, born in 1842, and Alastair Ruaraidh Ceanneadach, born 1863, were two other Calbost people that emigrated early.

Domhnuill Ruadh is seen here with his wife and two daughters, Mary and Norma. Donald Ruadh never came back to Lewis but his two daughters called at Calbost to see Matilda, Mrs Alastair Mackenzie, 12 Calbost, their cousin, at one time. Donald was a builder in Buffalo, U.S.A.



Right: This family group of mother, daughter and two sons consist of:

(Top) 'Bean Ruaraidh Ruaidh', Christy Mackenzie, 1853-1942, 4 Calbost

(Centre) Her daughter Matilda, 1892 (Mrs Alastair Mackenzie, 12 Calbost) and her brother Johnnie R. Mackenzie, 1878, who emigrated to Natal, South Africa, beside her.

(Bottom row) is another brother, Roderick Mackenzie, 1876, who emigrated to New York where he died about 1922.

Note the traditional crepe bonnet and the over garment usually referred to as a 'cloak' worn by the grand old lady as her Sunday best. She was the skilled local untrained midwife.



Left: Master Mason, Johnnie R Mackenzie, 4 Calbost, in his Masonic Regalia in Natal, South Africa.



Royal Naval Reservist Donald Mackenzie, 1883-1913, son of Roderick 'Ruadh' Mackenzie, 4 Calbost, was only a few months married to Ishbel Maciver, Bayble, when he contracted typhoid fever. The doctor insisted that his pregnant wife leave Calbost temporary for her parents' home in Bayble. Donald passed away at the age of 30 years and at first no one would enter the house to assist his widowed mother to put the remains in the coffin that was brought from Stornoway by boat in the usual way. Eventually two men volunteered to carry out the task, having fortified themselves with a large chew of black-twist tobacco. Donald's son was subsequently born and brought up in Bayble.



Captain Roderick Gimson Mackenzie was the only son of Johnnie Mackenzie, 4 Calbost (Seonaidh, Ruairidh Ruadh) who emigrated to South Africa, married an English girl and opened a bakery business in Dundee, Natal, South Africa.

Roderick's mother died while he was still young and later on his father passed away and he was therefore partly brought up in Britain. He volunteered to join the British Royal Marines in the Second World War and when the operation 'Overland' or the second front in Europe was being planned in Britain early in 1944, it was discovered that one more Commando Unit was needed than was available in Britain. Urgent instructions were given to form and train a new Commando Unit to be known as '48 Royal Marine Commando'. There was only three months in which to carry out this formidable task and Lieu. Roderick G. Mackenzie was selected to be one of the officers of the Unit. He was awarded the Military Cross on 'D Day' and promoted to the rank of Captain. On 1st November 1944 he was mortally wounded at Walcheren. His aunt Matilda Mackenzie, 12 Calbost, was his next of kin and his Military Cross medal came to her as well as a small privately published booklet of the history of the 48 Royal Marine Commando Unit.



Three Calbost fisher girls in the early part of the 20th century.

From left, Peggy 'Ruadh' Smith, 1893, 5 Calbost, daughter of Angus Smith and subsequently Mrs Donald Mackay, 28 Gravir.

Matilda Mackenzie, 1892-1973, daughter of Roderick 'Ruadh' Mackenzie, 4 Calbost, and subsequently Mrs Alastair 'Gladys' Mackenzie, 12 Calbost.

Christy Kennedy, 1893-1985, daughter of Roderick Kennedy 'Jun', 2 Calbost.



Christy Mackenzie, 1853-1942, wife of Roderick Mackenzie, 4 Calbost, 'Bean Ruairidh Ruaidh', daughter of Murdo Mackenzie, 13 Marvig. Christy was the untrained midwife in Calbost over a long period of years. She delivered scores of children, among them was the five children born to her daughter Matilda, the last of which, Christy, was delivered in 1926 when she was 73 years old. In 1924 she delivered the Matilda's twin boys, Donald and Roderick. Neither mother nor midwife knew in advance that twins were expected. Earlier on in 1920s the old lady delivered Matilda's first born, Christy Bell, on a Sunday evening after Matilda walked through the moor to Church in Gravir and back that same day, a distance of ten miles back and fore.

The writer is reliably informed that Christy, the untrained midwife, delivered all or nearly all the Calbost children prior to the mid 1920s. She is seen here shortly before she passed away standing beside the first car in Calbost, a Rover owned by Murdo Macleod, 'Peter', 8 Calbost. It was as a fine compassionate Christian lady that Christy left her mark.

The following is an extract from a letter written by Merchant, Johnnie R. Mackenzie, 'Seonaidh Ruairidh Ruaidh' 1878, 4 Calbost from Natal South Africa, to his uncle Angus Mackenzie 'Aonghais Ruadh' 1847, butcher, Stornoway, in 1916. Note the standard of education and the commercial outlook, yet his concern for those he left at home:

Dear Uncle

I am sure you have given up hopes by this time of hearing from me. At this stage I must apologise for my long silence and carelessness in not remitting your money for the 'Highland News'. However I now enclose P.O. for same. I sincerely hope this will find you all in the very best of health and spirits. I have been expecting to hear from Teddy but so far no word. I hope he is well also John, Angie, & Rod John. I am keeping fairly well lately, working everyday. I hear from Donald Challum very often, he is still in Hospital. There does not seem to be any change either way. At present I am in communication with the Hospital Board of this town to try and get him admitted here at a cheaper rate. I think it would do him good if he had someone near him to cheer him up. I hope you still have the naval contract and that business is good. There is a great scarcity of merchandise in this country at present owing to several of the boats on this route being sunk recently. I was talking to a representative of a leading firm of flour importers last night, and the latest cables from Australia advise them that no flour will be shipped for this country before the beginning of May. The price at present is 23s/6d plus pailage and cartage per 98lb bag so this will give you an idea how things are out here. Beef & mutton is very cheap about 36s/- per cwt. for beef. Several strong meat export companies have been formed here lately, so you will be able to buy Natal beef in London. They seem perfectly satisfied with the price it's fetching now.

How is Auntie Annie down at Steinish? I was dreaming about her the other night and am rather anxious to know how she is. I can't think of any news, which would be of interest to you at present. The weather has been very hot and dry. All the farmers are shouting for rain as their crops are all dying of the heat & dry weather.

Kind regards to all
Your affectionate nephew
John R. Mackenzie