

Genealogy of Croft 6 Calbost

In the first lotting of Calbost carried out by the Seaforth Mackenzie Landlord about 1818 there were only seven crofts created in the village. By the time the second lotting was carried out by Sir James Matheson in about 1852 there were more incoming families as well as married sons of the village ready to acquire crofts of their own.

Norman Macleod, 'Tormod Choinneach' the original crofting tenant on croft 6 was one of four sons of the village who acquired a new croft in 1852. He was born in 1815 and he married about 1836. Six of his ten children were born before the second lotting was carried out and that indicates that Norman was a landless cottar at Calbost for about 16 years before he acquired a croft of his own.

The indications are that the eight additional new crofters in Calbost in 1852 were already married with families and resident in the village for some years. That indicates that there was a land problem in Calbost and Lewis as early as the 1830s when the population of the Island was fairly low. Therefore a second lotting of Lewis was long overdue when it was actually carried out about 1852.

Sir James Matheson wrote in 1851 that emigration was the only effective remedy to afford elbowroom for the population of Lewis. That is why the estate arranged a wave of emigration in the early 1850s and the diary of the Lewis estate chamberlain John Munro Mackenzie leaves no doubt as to the real policy of the Matheson proprietor of Lewis at the time of the second lotting. The entry in the John Munro Mackenzie diary for 23rd January 1851 reads:-

"There are two classes I would propose to emigrate, first all bad payers of rent. Secondly I would propose to clear whole townships, which are generally in rent arrears".

Rents were due to factors outwith the power of the crofter population as the entry in the John Munro Mackenzie diary for 31st March 1851 indicates:-

"Sir John McNeill the Government investigator took the following declaration from Rev. Macrae at Barvas Manse. Mr Macrae stated that when he came to the Parish he found the people well-off having plenty of cattle, sheep and money and that he would lend parties £5.00 more readily than he would lend 5s/- (25p now). The cause of the present poverty of the people he assigned to be the subdivision of the crofts, the fall in the price of kelp and black cattle, the stopping of the distillation of whisky and latterly, the failure of the potato crop".

Later in 1851 the factor met the people of the fishing villages of South Lochs and his dairy entry for the 12th September notes:-

"Also settled with the tenants of Cromore, Gravir, Marvig, Kershader and Calbost, all fishing villages and good payers of rent though occupying the worst land in Lewis. They make well at the herring fishing at Stornoway and Wick having good boats and nets, almost every tenant is part owner of a boat".

Apparently the people of Lochs were doing reasonably well at the fishing on 1851 probably because of the fact that the Lochs areas was suitable for fishing with its numerous sheltered bays, and they were paying their rent which proves that if the people elsewhere in the Island could afford to pay their rent, they would have paid and there would be no excuse to deprive them of their land and ship them overseas.

Families from Calbost and the surrounding areas were not forced to emigrate in the early 1850s but the diary entry of the factor John Munro Mackenzie for Saturday 8th March 1851 stated:-

"Went over the whole rental and arrears list of the Parish of Lochs with Mr Macleod the ground officer and fixed on about 60 tenants to get notice of removal who are in arrears of rent.....Those who do not pay cannot be allowed to occupy land any longer".

6 Calbost 1st Crofting Tenant

Norman Macleod	1815-1900
Christina Mackenzie	1815-1880
Marion	1837
John	1841
Ishbel	1843
Mary	1845
Peggy	1849
Kenneth	1851
Christy	1854
Anna	1855

Tormod Choinneach

Son of Kenneth Macleod	13 Calbost
Daughter Hector Mackenzie	6 Cromore
Mrs John Macmillan	17 Marvig/America
Cottar at 6 Calbost	
Mrs Kenneth Mackay	7 Calbost
died young	
Mrs D Morrison Harris	
Croft tenant	6 Calbost
Mrs Donald Macleod	41 Leurbost
died under 2 years	

Mary A	1858	Mrs Murdo Macinnes 36 Gravir
Hector	1862-1886	Died young
Christy 'Ruadh'	18 ? -1954	Granddaughter/Spinster at Gravir

Norman Macleod's kiln was sited beside the main road where there is a sheep dipper now on croft 6. Tormod Choinneach's kiln was one of the three in the village and in due course a tinker was staying in it for a while after it fell into disuse, the tinker was taking full part in the life of the village including fishing, he was also a piper and the young folk used to bring him a piece of black twist tobacco in exchange for a tune on the pipes, he used to say "mar is modh am piece is modh am puirt" "the bigger the piece of tobacco the longer the tune".

6 Calbost Crofter

Kenneth Macleod	1851
Peggy Macarthur	1856
Christy	1883
Mary	1885
Hector	1887
Mary	1889-1964
Johnnie	1892-1988
Bella	1894
Donald	1896
Johanna	1900-1915
Kenneth	1904
William	
William John	
Marion	
Mary	

Coinneach Thormod

Son of Norman Macleod 6 Calbost
Daughter John Macarthur 2 Cromore
Mrs Calum Macinnes 36 Gravir
Died young
Drowned at east coast Fishing
Mrs D Finlayson, 10 Calbost / Stornoway
Baker - Emigrated to U.S.A.
Married in U.S.A.
Minister of religion in Australia
Perished in snowstorm aged 15
Tenant at 6 Calbost moved to Steinish
Died in infancy
Died in infancy
Died in infancy
Died in infancy

Johanna, 1900, the daughter of the above family was tragically lost in a snowstorm. She lost her way coming home from the nearby house of Angus Smith on a Sunday evening. When it was realised that she was missing, the whole village turned out to search with paraffin lanterns but without success. Although she was lame she walked about a mile or more, narrowly missing several houses and she climbed a fairly steep hill. On the following day her body was discovered in the snow on the hill near the boundary of croft 8 and the extension of croft 2 where there is a small natural cairn marking the spot.

Kenneth Macleod's house is still standing. It began as a thatched house and it was renovated several times. The croft and the house went over to new people after the Second World War and the house was modernised in 1992.

6 Calbost 'Cottar'

John Macleod	1841
Mary Macleod	
Kate	1871
Alex	1872
Roderick	1874
Hector	1876
Donald	1877
Johnnie	1878
3 Infants	

'Iain Thormoid'

Son of Norman Macleod, 6 Calbost
1847 Daughter of Roderick Macleod, 15 Cromore
Mrs Calum Matheson, 13 Gravir / at Glasgow
Cottar at 6 Calbost moved to 10 Garyvard
Bachelor
Emigrated to U.S.A.
Emigrated to U.S.A.
Emigrated to U.S.A., returned, settled at 8 Battery Park
Died

Mary, 'Bean an Thormoid' was a sister of 'Bean Ruaraidh Gobha' Smith 5 Calbost.

6 Calbost 'Cottar'

Alex Macleod	1872
Peggy Morrison	1881
Donald	
Joan	
Dolina	
Annabella	
Marybell	
Alexina	
Peggy	

'Alex an Thormoid'

Son of John Macleod, 6 Calbost
Daughter of Alex Morrison, 9 Calbost
Died young
Died young
Spinster
Mrs Montgomery, Fort William
Mrs MacNicol, Glasgow
Mrs William Smith, Keose Glebe
Emigrated to America

Calum	Tenant at 10 Garyvard / moved to Stornoway
Hector	Settled at Kyle of Lochalsh
Joan	Spinster
Donald	Bachelor

As the family of Alex Macleod 1872 were Cottars without land of their own and one of three families sharing Croft 6 Calbost, they moved to 10 Garyvard in the early 1920s.

6 Calbost 'Cottar'		'Seonnaidh an Thormoid'
Johnnie Macleod	1887-1979	Son of John Macleod 6 Calbost
Christy Ann Macleod		Daughter of John Macmillan 20 Gravir
Iain		Settled in Glasgow
Allan		Accidentally killed in Australia
Mary Bell		Emigrated to Australia
John Murdo		Sea Captain, Laxdale Stornoway
Roddy		Chartered Accountant at Stornoway
Kate		Nurse - emigrated to North America

Due to the decline in the herring fishing and because the family of Johnnie Macleod (1887) were cottars without land of their own, they took advantage of a scheme of fishermen's houses at Sandwick Park, Stornoway, in 1933. John was then skipper of a large herring fishing motorboat called the 'Honour Bright' and he continued as such along with his Calbost crew for several years after moving to Stornoway.

6 Calbost 'Cottar'		Domhnull Mòr Dhomhnuill Aonghais
Donald Finlayson	1884	Son of Donald Finlayson 10 Calbost
Mary Macleod	1889	Daughter Kenneth Macleod 6 Calbost
No Issue		

The above family of Donald Finlayson moved to Stornoway about 1930.

6 Calbost 'Crofter'		Kenny Choinneach Thormoid
Kenneth Macleod	1904	Son of Kenneth Macleod 6 Calbost
Anna Smith	1907	Daughter of Angus Smith 5 Calbost
Angus		
Peggy		

Croft 6 Steinish, Stornoway was bequeathed to Kenneth Macleod (1904) and the family moved to Steinish in 1944. Croft 6 Calbost was then sold to Alec Murdo MacIannan, 18 Marvig, who was living in Glasgow but before he took up residence in Calbost he died suddenly and the croft was eventually sold to Donald Macleod, 20 Marvig, who was born at 8 Calbost, as follows:

6 Calbost		'Domhnuill Yoe'
Donald Macleod	1903	Son of Angus Macleod 8 Calbost / 20 Marvig
Betty Finlayson 1st wife		Daughter of John Finlayson 8 Marvig
John		Emigrated to Australia
Donald Angus		Emigrated to Australia
Katie Bell		Unmarried
Iain (grandson)		Settled at Skigersta, Ness
Mary Smith 2nd wife		Daughter of Finlay Smith, 15 Cromore
No Issue		

Donald Macleod's (1903) father resided on croft 8 Calbost but both father and mother died when Donald was still very young and his aunt brought him up at 20 Marvig where he built a house and resided there as a landless cottar until the 1960s when he acquired croft 6 Calbost.

Donald Macleod - The last person in Calbost - was born there in 1902 when the population of the village was at its peak of 200 people. By the 1980s he was the only person left in the village. He led an active life, typical of many crofters. In his youth he served at his trade of carpentry in Glasgow and then he emigrated to New Zealand. He returned to Lewis and worked as a self-employed builder in Lochs. Now a sprightly 93 year old, he still attends to his croft work and has only given up his scooter a couple of years ago.



Calbost, with its population decline from 200 to one person during the 20th century, indicates the trend in the rural areas of Lewis due to the lack of work. There has been a gradual change in the pattern of work in Lewis in the 20th century and that change has been accelerated by the two world wars. There has also been a serious decline in the fishing, which was always the mainstay of crofting. It was the Merchant Navy and the weaving industry that kept Lewis going during the 20th century and there is also a serious decline in both of these.

Now the social policies and practices of centralisation and rationalisation resulting in the closing down of many subPost Offices, schools etc, has aggravated the drift of the people from the countryside to the urban centres where they hope to find work. Our young people grow up in towns and cities with quite different values and our crofting way-of-life, our language and our culture suffer.

Paradoxically, our rural villages are being repopulated by families from the industrial areas with a different culture and language and that also brings about a gradual change in the social fabric of the local crofting society, which is already in the minority in some places throughout the Highlands. Where is all this leading to as we enter upon the 21st century and can anything be done to arrest this serious social and economic decline and preserve our valuable heritage?



A view of Calbost from Croft 14 as the road goes out towards Gravir.

In the forefront may be seen the village prayer house as it was refurbished about 1972. On the right is 'Tigh Choinnich Thormoid', Kenneth Macleod croft 6, probably the second oldest white house built in Calbost, now owned by Donald Macleod who came from 20 Marvig and refurbished it.

To the left of that is the new house of 'Aonghais Ruaraidh' Angus Smith croft 5 and to the left of that is the de-roofed house of 'Calum Ruadh Thormoid Og' Calum Mackenzie croft 4 and part of 'Leas Mor' Rob Weir the tacksman.

On the hill opposite may be seen the road going towards Crofts 8 & 9.

Kenneth Macleod 'Coinneach Thormoid', 1851, and his wife Peggy had thirteen children. Five of them died in infancy or at a young age.



Hector, 1887 (on the left in the photo) was drowned in the steam drifter 'Trident' at Lerwick when he was swept overboard by the sail in 1909 at the age of 22 years.

Mary, 1889-1964 (on the right) married Donald Finlayson, 10 Calbost, and settled in Stornoway.



Right: Johnnie, 1892-1988 emigrated to Boston U.S.A. and set up in Business on his own account. He married Janet Macaulay from Uig, Lewis and they had a family of two girls and a boy.



Above left: Bella, 1894 emigrated to Boston U.S.A. and married Norman Morrison, Mangersta, Uig, Lewis.

Above centre: Kenny, 1904, became tenant of the family croft after his father died. He married Annie Smith, 5 Calbost, and they had a family of one boy, Angus and one girl, Peggy. The family moved to 6 Steinish, Stornoway in the 1940s.

Christy, 1883, the oldest of the family, married Calum Macinnes, 36 Gravir, and they had a family of one girl and five boys.

Donald, 1896, already referred to as a Minister of Religion in Australia.

Johanna, 1900-1915, perished tragically in a snowstorm at the age of 15 years. She was making her way home from neighbour's house in the evening and she lost her way in the storm. The whole village turned out to search for her with paraffin lanterns but without success. Her body was discovered in the morning.



Angus (Derrick) Morrison 9 Calbost
Ian (Donn) Carmichael, Lemreway
Murdo (Peter) Macleod 8 Calbost

Angus Macleod 'Aonghais Kenny', 6 Calbost, 1937-1998



Duncanina Smith 5 Calbost
Kenneth Macleod 6 Calbost