



Calum Mac a' Leodhasaich (early 19th century)

Calum Maciver, 1776, is known in the oral tradition of Pairc, Lochs, as Calum Mac a Leodhasaich. His family, as follows, is on record at 22 Gravir in 1820:

Calum Maciver	1776	from the West Side of Lewis
Catherine Mackenzie	1776	?
Anne	1813-1887	Mrs. Donald Nicolson, Gravir
Mary	1816-1882	Mrs. John Mackay, Gravir
Margaret	1819-1903	Mrs. Alastair Smith, Gravir
Ishbel	1832-1894	spinster

Like many other young Lewis men of his generation he served in the Army and fought in some distant campaign, probably the Napoleonic Wars, round about the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries when the Seaforth landlord was very active rounding up young men on his estate as reluctant recruits for the Seaforth Regiment.

Calum Maciver and his best friend, a married soldier from Gravir (name unknown), were involved in a pitched battle where many of their comrades fell, Calum survived but his best friend from Gravir was missing, presumed killed, and as the regiment moved off to some other place, Calum naturally assumed that his friend was killed and that he would never see him again.

Subsequently Calum was discharged from the army after a year or two and he came home to the West Side of Lewis. After a while it occurred to him that he should go across to Gravir to report and commiserate with the widow of his friend. The eventual result of his trip to Gravir was that he married the attractive young widow of his army comrade.

Apparently the Gravir soldier wasn't killed but very badly wounded and it took a while for him to recover fully and be discharged and make his way back to Gravir. As he was approaching Gravir on foot on the road-less moor in the spring of the year, he saw a couple in the distance cutting peats. He felt that whoever they were he should know them and he altered his course slightly in order to talk to the couple and hear how the people of the village were doing. To his great surprise when he came up with the peat cutting couple, they were none other than his own wife and his West Side soldier friend now unwittingly but bigamously married with several children. When the matter was discussed and they understood the dilemma they were in, the Gravir man put it to his wife that the choice was hers and she should indicate which of the two men she wanted to follow. She responded by saying Calum was the father of her children and her decision was to stay with him, whereupon the other man turned away without visiting the village and he was never heard from again.

Local oral tradition maintains that Calum Maciver was an unusually wild man, and that she probably had no choice but to stay with him. It is also said that the following three worthy men in Gravir were named after the said Calum Maciver:

1. Calum Dhomhnuill Ruaidh Nicolson, 22 Gravir
2. Calum an ic Aoidh Mackay, 42 Gravir
3. Calum Eachainn Morrison, 43 Gravir

The oral tradition about Calum is very strong and 'beul-aithris' relates a subsequent story about him as follows:

A door-to-door travelling salesman who was selling clothes happened to come to Calum's door, and as it was the evening of the day at the time, the traveller asked for the night's shelter 'sgàth na h-oidhche'. Calum readily agreed, and he asked his wife to prepare a meal of salty meat before retiring for the night.

After partaking of the meal the family, including the traveller, retired for the night, but before retiring, the scheming Calum deliberately and secretly removed the pails of water from their usual place in the kitchen, and put them outside the house. In those days the domestic supply of water was carried in to the houses with pails from the wells. Calum Maciver felt that the traveller would be so thirsty after the late meal of salty meat, that he would rise during the night to quench his thirst.

Indeed that was what happened. The poor traveller did get up in the middle of the night, and having duly noted where the supply of water was kept, he was groping about in the dark for the pails of water in the kitchen-cum-living room, but could not find the pails. After a while the traveller approached the girls that were sleeping in the living room bed 'leabaidh an teine' innocently to ask them to guide him to the pails of drinking water.

At that very moment, Calum came thundering down from the upper bedroom in a threatening manner with his loaded gun at the ready. The poor traveller made off at full speed, but only in the nick of time, because Calum fired his gun through the open doorway, presumably to scare the traveller away, so that he would abandon his pack of merchandise. That indeed was what happened, and the wild man from the West side's schemes paid off.

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