



COIGACH'S SACRIFICE
IN
THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Compiled
by
Clare Church

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INTRODUCTION

This record is a continuation of the research carried out on the men from Coigach who died in WW1 and whose names are on the Achiltibuie War Memorial. Now is the opportunity to honour those who died in the Second World War, and also mention the prisoners of war who endured long years in the hands of the enemy, through no fault of their own.

There are 10 names on the War Memorial



Photo: Clare Church

An additional 4 men died as a result of the War and are included owing to their connection with Coigach, namely:

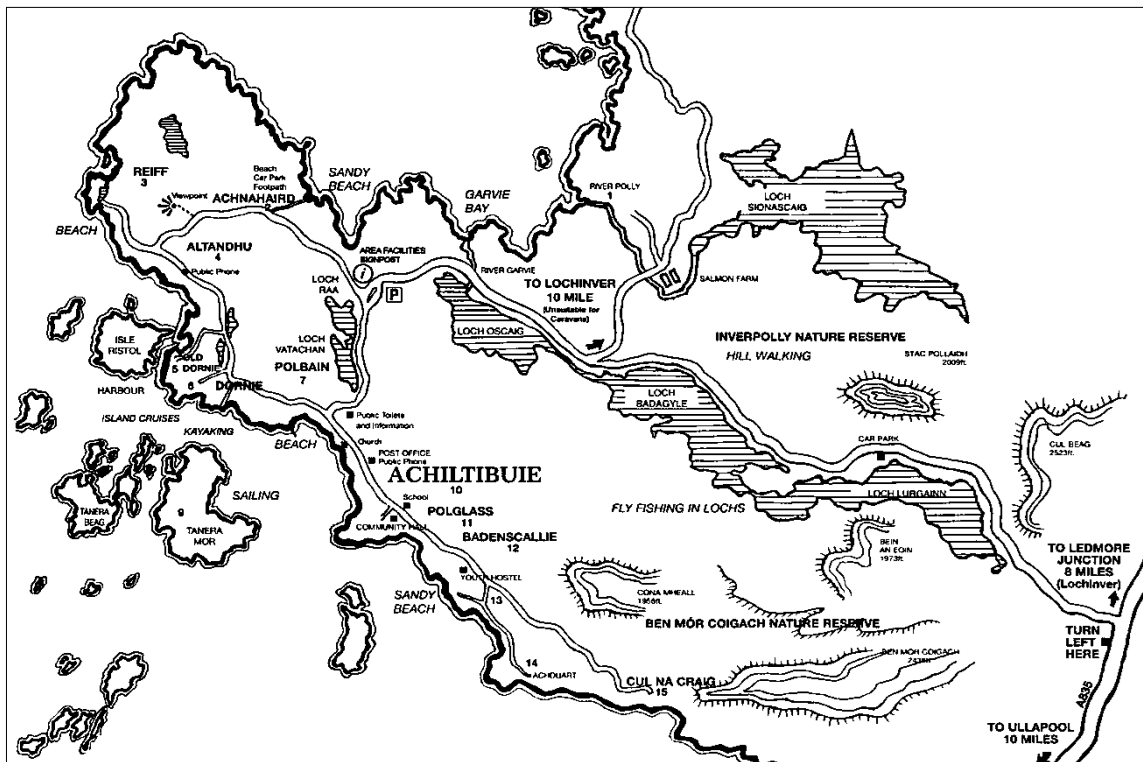
Naval Auxiliary John MacIver
Pilot Officer Charles Harkness
Private Albert George Watkins
Private Duncan Maclean

The majority who died served with the 4th, and later the 5th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders. The men from Coigach took their place in all branches of the services, i.e. the Royal Navy, Merchant Navy, Army and Air Force.

Also included in this document are the names of 7 prisoners of war from the 4th Seaforth Highlanders who were captured in 1940 by the Germans.

Nurses from this area who served for their country are not forgotten, as well as members of the community who struggled on without their loved ones.

Besides studying the War Diary of the 4th Seaforths up until the end of March 1940, of particular value is the personal diary of **Captain Patrick Munro of Foulis** of 'C' Company which can be viewed on the **Ross and Cromarty Heritage Society** website, which covers the period from September 1939 until the time of his capture on 12th June 1940.



Coigach Peninsula

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My main contact has been Mairi Thornton of Polglass, to whom I am most grateful for contacting relatives and providing much needed information. Thanks are due to Christine Wood, Archivist at Highland Archives, Inverness for making available relevant documents, and also to Robbie Mackenzie of Ullapool Museum.

The following relatives and local residents need to be acknowledged for providing me with details:

Bill Drake, Midge Drake, Anne Campbell, Sheila Durrant, Ian Mackenzie Fidlin, David and Sheila Green, Ian Mackenzie, Lesley Macdonald, Eric Macleod, Roddie Macleod, Kevin Macleod, Una Macgregor, Duncan May, Beryl Morgan, Fraser Muir, Lesley Muir, Peter Muir, Karen Peach, Margaret Starling.

Joyce Ingledeu has allowed me to quote from an article in the *Southern Daily Echo* regarding her uncle **James (Bunnie) Mackenzie** (D/JX 169450), and also provided additional information.

I am indebted to **Pauline Ward** and helpers for the document which is held in the CCHG archive regarding the nurses who served their country.

I have included **Appendices**, for which I must thank the following people:

Mary Macleod, the daughter, of a 4th Seaforth Highlander survivor from Ullapool, whose article gives vivid detail regarding the actions on 4th June 1940 during the Battle of Abbeville.

Ann Irvine, who kindly allowed me to view many documents and tapes relating to her father **William George Mackenzie** (2820287) who was a prisoner of war for five years.

Hector Donald Mackenzie, son of **Hector Mackenzie** (2820609) loaned me tapes on which many memories are revealed regarding the years 1940-1945 which were recorded by Hector (senior's) son-in-law, Kenny Macdonald.

Rachel A Sutton Hayes, niece of **Duncan Maclean** for her article on his family.

My research is an ongoing project and I welcome input of additional material. I accept full responsibility for any errors and omissions in acknowledgement of contributors.

Finally, I am indebted to my husband Tony for his corrections, suggestions and proof-reading.

Clare Church

May 2018

COIGACH IN THE WAR

The story of the soldiers of Coigach must be viewed in two separate phases: the unfortunate fate of the 51st Highland Division on 12th June 1940 brought an end to their initial involvement in the War, and sadly to the lives of five of the soldiers named on the War Memorial who had been killed at the Battle of Abbeville. The story begins again with the rebirth of the 51st Highland Division in 1942 and the untried 5th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders. One local man appears in both stories.

But first a brief look at the home they sought to defend.

Coigach was a protected area and travel was restricted. The boundary for the Highlands was at Beauly where officially persons wishing to either enter or depart needed to produce a permit. Civilians were dissuaded from travelling on trains because they were needed for the troops and freight. Thus tourism was much reduced to distant locations such as Coigach.

Home-guard: In 1940 Local Defence Volunteers, later to be re-named the Home Guard, was formed in fear of threat of invasion. The Lord Lieutenant of Ross and Cromarty, Sir Hector Mackenzie of Gairloch appealed to ex officers and members of the British Legion, and others aged 17-65 with knowledge of firearms, to join at their nearest police station. Howard Set-Smith was the officer in charge of the local area Home Guard and billeted at the Hotel, as apart from the Post Office this was the only phone in the township. The Home Guard operated 24 lookout points for ships and planes with 6 veterans in a hut with a wind up phone on the hill above Polbain, also on the look-out for enemy parachutists. Fraser Muir's father and Fraser Darling from Tanera were coastguards, operating at Polbain.

The Women's Land Army (Land Girls) served on Tanera Mòr hired by Fraser Darling who owned and managed the island. Between 1939 and 1943 he reclaimed derelict land to agricultural production. In 1942, the wartime Secretary of State for Scotland, Thomas Johnston, asked him to run an agricultural advisory programme in the crofting areas of the Scottish Highlands and Islands. He agreed, and for two years he travelled, taught and wrote articles that were later published in book form as *Crofting Agriculture*.

From the summer of 1940 everyone was required to carry a National Identity Card and urged to carry a gas-mask. In 1940 fishing ceased to be designated as a reserved occupation, so fishermen were now liable for conscription.

Firing Range: Build in 1914, this was known as ‘The Target’ at Achlochan. There were four firing stances (rifle rests). The range was used at least up to the end of WW2 by the Home Guard and possibly up to the demobilisation of the Territorial Army units a couple of years after. Both the Drill Hall and Firing Range were relinquished in the 1950s.



Photo: Clare Church

The **Drill Hall**, established in 1914 for the Seaforth Highlanders had a miniature cartage range, within the hall for .22 calibre rifles with a steel plate forming a stop butt for the 20 or 25 yard inside range. The number of volunteers had to be over a prescribed number in order to allow it to be built.



Drill Hall (Piping School Café 2017)

Photo: Clare Church

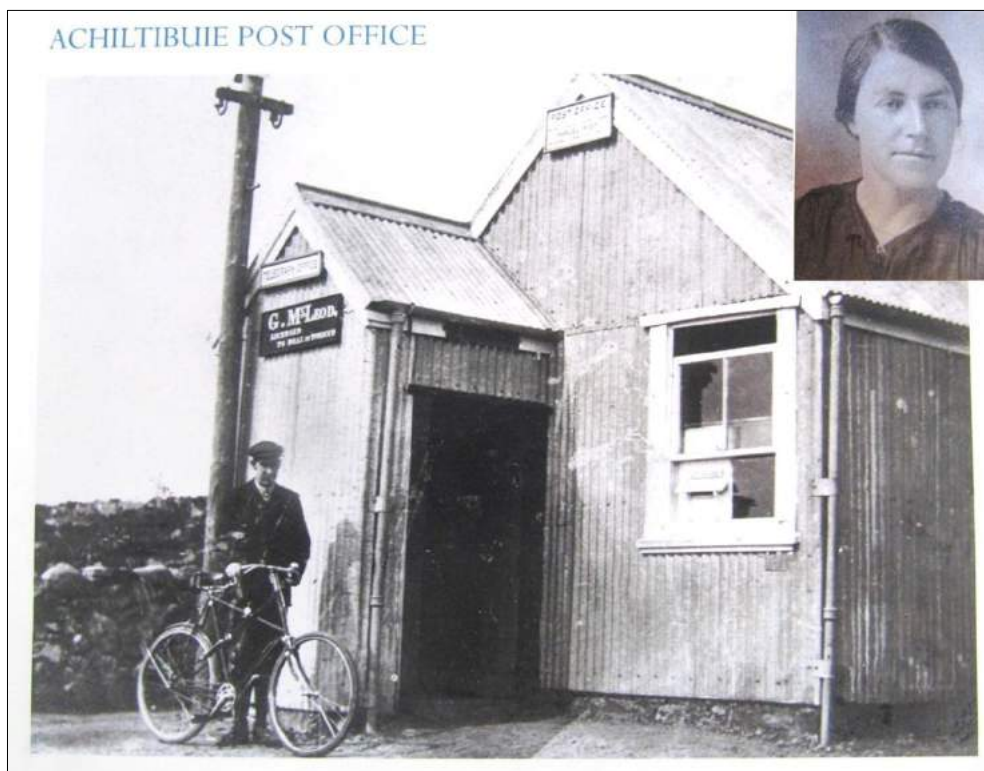
Crofting: Croft work revolved primarily round oats, hay, potatoes and livestock. The wives and mothers of those who had joined the army worked on the land, but they were used to it because their husbands were often working away from home during peacetime. The fishermen were away in the herring fishing areas by the first week in May. Before departure they would have prepared the land and sowed the seed late March, the cattle put out to the hill, dykes, fences and gates repaired and closed. At the beginning of May potatoes were planted by hand by the whole family, hence often children were absent from school during this period. When lifted, the potatoes were taken in creels and stored in a potato pit. Oats were harvested at the beginning of September. Little barley was grown as a fodder crop.

Before the introduction of tractors horses were used. Tractor ploughing commenced in about 1942.

Sheep: Lambing and dipping took place at the end of April, clipping in June and July, and the lambs were taken away in September.

Badentarbat was the centre for seasonal bag-net fishery for wild salmon. The ice was collected from man-made ponds during the cold weather and thrown in through a rear chute into the ice house and kept there until packed round the fish for transport to the urban markets during the salmon season in May.

Achiltibuie Post Office: Margaret (Maggie) Macleod (inset below) was the postmistress.



Achiltibuie Stores: In 1933 William Sinclair bought the shop. Later he had a van which travelled from house to house. At times naval blockades at sea stopped the shop boat sailing to Achiltibuie because of German mines laid in the waters of the Minch. The community ran out of paraffin and candles.

Electricity had not come to Coigach yet

William Sinclair c 1942 at the Manual Petrol Pump

Photo: CCHG



Achiltibuie Public School:

1939: The school closed for one week on the outbreak of WW2 on 3rd September. Evacuees started to arrive a fortnight later from Glasgow and Inverness.

1940 and 1941: Several evacuees returned home.

Attendance suffered when the potato planting took place in April, and also in June for peat lifting.

1941: Catherine Campbell - Headteacher

1943: 13th January – The first supply of milk under the Milk in Schools Scheme was issued to the children at the morning break.

5th November: A portion of jam was issued to pupils daily – sugar (4 lbs. per child) granted by the Ministry of Food to all children living in the country.

THE 4th BATTALION, SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS



The majority of men from **Coigach** served in 'B' Company, the **4th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders**. Their Company Commander was **Major Simon Keith Fraser** under **Lt Col H Houldsworth, M.C.** They formed part of the **51st Highland Division** with **Major General V M Fortune, C.B.** in overall command. There were nine infantry battalions in three brigades, the 152nd, 153rd and 154th. The infantry were drawn from the Territorial Army battalions of the five Highland Regiments; The Black Watch, **The Seaforth Highlanders**, The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, The Gordon Highlanders and The Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders. The Division had four regiments of artillery, a Royal Armoured Corps reconnaissance unit, and other supporting arms.



Photo: Courtesy of Coigach Community Heritage Group

From left to right:

L/Cpl Roderick Mackenzie (2818540) – captured 4th June 1940

Private Roderick Macdonald (2816982) – captured 12th June 1940

Private Robert Macleod from Culnacraig

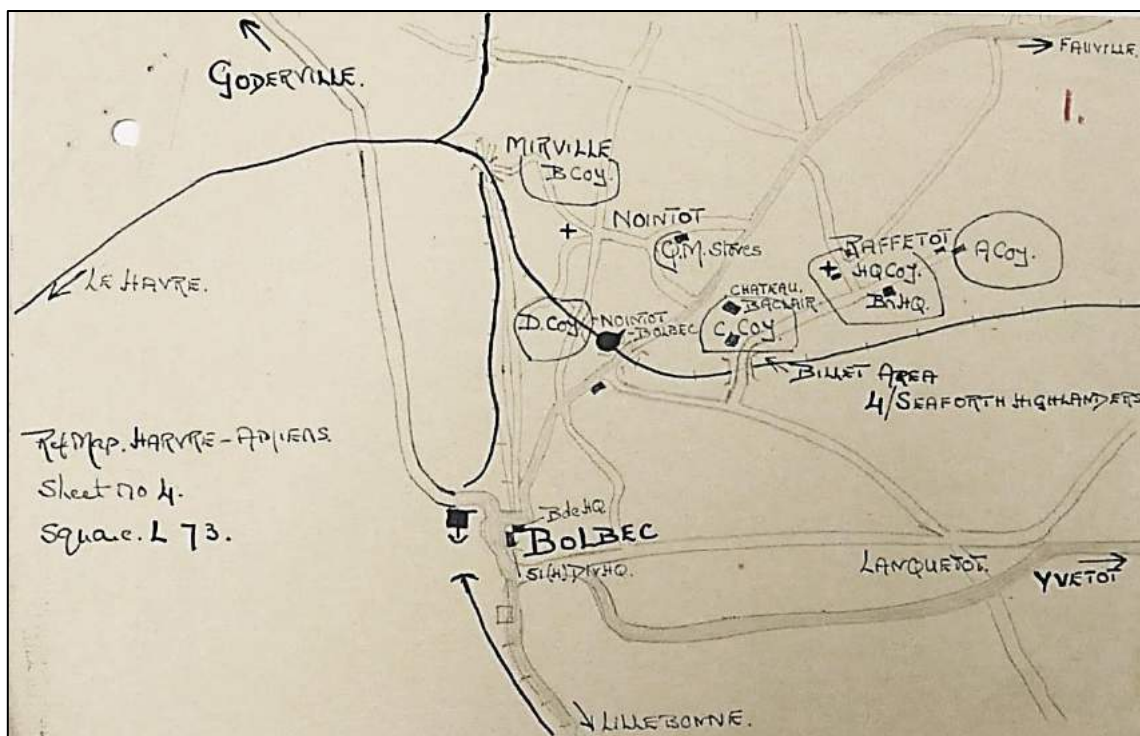
Unidentified – from Inverpolly

Private Robert Graham (2820799) – captured 12th June 1940

Private Norman Mackenzie (2822659) – died of sickness 19th May 1941

The 2nd and 4th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders formed part of the **152nd Brigade**. The Seaforths were hastily mobilised in September 1939 and spent the first month in Dingwall town hall in cold rough conditions. The Battalion then transferred to Inkerman Barracks, Woking in the first week of October, where it remained until early December when moved to Guadaloupe Barracks, Bordon, Hampshire. Embarkation leave was granted on 18th December (1st party) and 28th December (2nd party) when the first returned for duty. The Battalion left Bordon by train on 26th January 1940 for Southampton with 24 Officers and 602 Other Ranks, and embarked for service overseas. The ships had to anchor outside the port, the crossing having been delayed owing to fog. They eventually docked at Le Havre at 2100 on 27th January, with disembarkation commencing at 0730 the next day.

The troops left Le Havre by train for the Bolbec area, 25 km away. They were billeted in three villages of Raffetot, Nointot and Mirville in farmhouses and chateau stables. All areas were extremely wet and muddy. The roads and ground were frozen with ice hanging from the trees so all movement of road parties was temporarily cancelled.



TNA: WO 167/820

A ten hour train journey on 5th February transported the troops towards the Concentration Area at **Ecquedecques**, north-east of Bethune. **'B' Company** was billeted in Lières nearby.

Extracts from the 4th Seaforth Highlanders War Diary: 1940 – WO 167/820

9th February: *“Route Marches are the order of the day. This is a rural area but is overshadowed by the great coal fields of the North-East France. The people in our villages have been very kind to us, and we are all the best of friends.”*

22nd February: *“The Pipes and Drums played Retreat in Ecquedecques this afternoon on the road opposite the Mayor’s House. The performance appeared to be much appreciated by the Mayor and the whole civil population of the village.”*

25th February: *“The following officers and one N.C.O. per Company today reported for attachment to other Units in the B.E.F. to study the construction of defences. [This included **Lieut M. MacLennan** who had previously been the Headmaster at Achiltibuie School]. They will rejoin the unit on Saturday 2nd March.”*

28th February: *“The Battalion today moved out of the Ecquedecques area, and proceeded in troop carrying lorries to **Wingles.**”*

29th February: *“Our billets here at Wingles are extremely good. “B” and “C” Companies are in a disused cotton factory where they have ample room to expand themselves.*

7th/8th March: *“The Battalion left Wingles for **Lys-lez-Lannoy.** “B” and “C” Companies are billeted to the North-East of Leers which is a semi-rural village.”*

11th March: *“Battalion Headquarters is situated in a large and comfortable farm house, with Battalion Rear Headquarters at Le Briqueterie to the West.”*

12th March: *“H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester honoured the Battalion with his presence at Battalion H.Q.”*

22nd March: *“A” and “B” Companies conducted range practices today on the 2” Mortar Range at Bois Quatorze.”*

26th March: *“Advanced party of 3 officers and 50 men moved to the **Bailleul** area to prepare for the arrival of the Battalion on 28.3.40.”*

28th March: *“Arrived at Bailleul in severe snowstorm. Headquarters at Ferme Boddeart. “B” and “C” Companies are in farms in the Nouveau Monde area.”*

During April training took place in the Nieppe Forest. Much of the time the weather was cold and rainy. Later in the month the Brigade took over a sector on the **Saar front** in the area of Hombourg-Budange on the Maginot Line. It was then that they were detached from the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.), and put under **French Command** in the **10th Army**.

Regrettably the 4th Seaforth War Diary from 1st April onwards no longer survives , but the **152 Infantry Brigade War Diary** exists for this month, including this summary.

Summary of 152 Infantry Brigade War Diary.

April 1940

The beginning of the month found the Bde settling in to the BAILLEUL sector, thinking that they were to be there for at least six weeks. Everybody was very pleased as the sector consisted of broken hilly ground which included certain tactical features and was therefore much more interesting than the rest of the B.E.F. area. Work during the first few days was hampered by the perpetual stream of visitors.

On the 9th, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway and "Plan D" came very much to the fore. The Bde were at six hours notice, and some hard work was required to get all the necessary arrangements made. Bns were ordered to concentrate on route marching.

By the 14th "Plan D" after appearing to be a certainty, was gradually becoming more improbable, and the Bde were just preparing to resume their normal routine, when orders were received that the Div was to go to the SAAR, advance parties leaving on the 24th. At the same time Plan D remained in force, while a complete defence scheme for the BAILLEUL sector was also required for handing over to the incoming Brigade.

As a result conditions were fairly hectic, however everything was completed just in time. 132 Inf Bde who relieved us were very appreciative for what had been done.

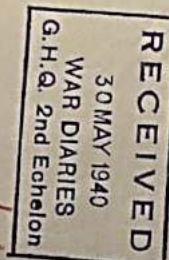
The Bde moved out on the 25th, M.T. going by road and the remainder by train. All the billets were left in very good condition, and, in the same way as when the Brigade left WINGLES, the incoming Brigade expressed the opinion that they had never taken over better kept billets.

The move down to the SAAR was uneventful, at the same time, as far as the M.T. were concerned the chief lesson of the move was that full timings and intervals between cols must be allowed, otherwise there are bound to be delays. The train move was comfortable and well organised especially the arrangements at the two halts.

After arrival in the Metz district many difficulties were experienced. Billeting was bad and muddled. Orders from above were very brief and in many cases insufficient, and when the relief commenced on the night 29/30th April few units really understood their duties.

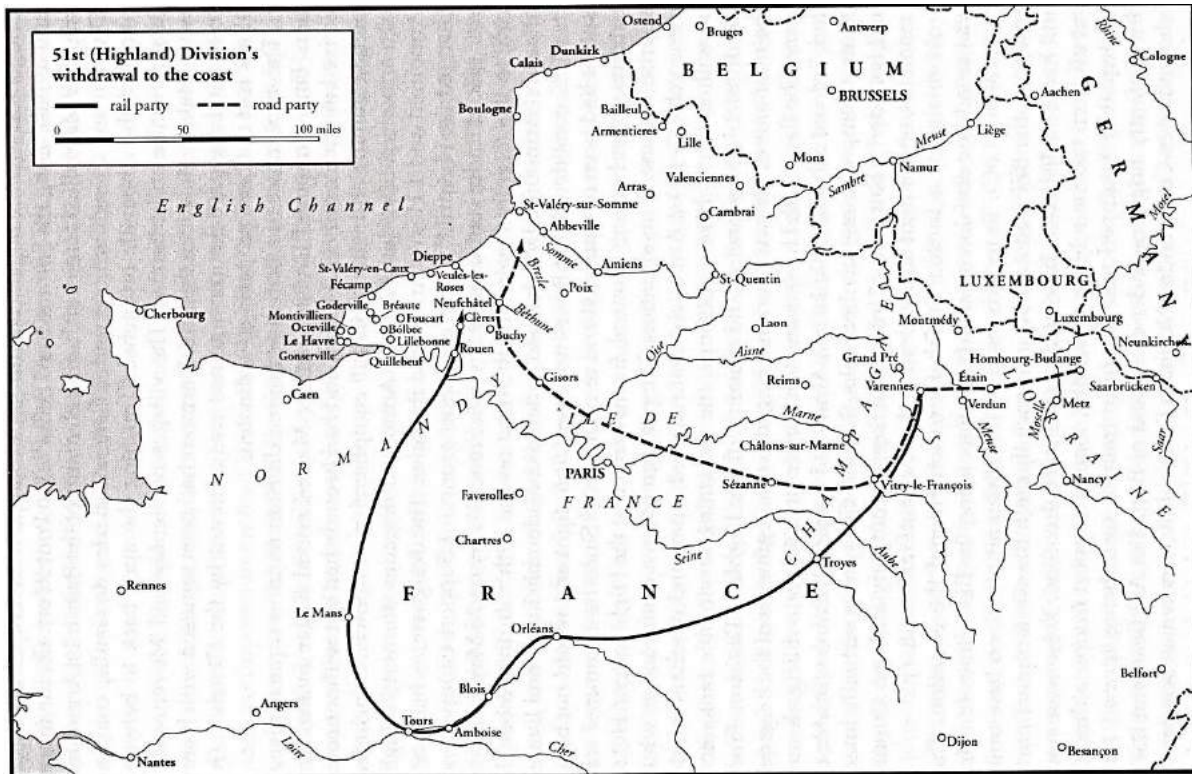
W. J. Ball

Brigade Major 152 Infantry Captain.
Brigade.



TNA WO 167/406

On 15th May the 51st Division withdrew from the Saar front owing to continued pressure from the enemy. They moved across France towards Rouen in an attempt to link up with the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.). However, by this time the withdrawal of the B.E.F. from Dunkirk was already in progress and this was no longer possible. The troops were transported in buses towards the River Somme to fight there alongside General de Gaulle and his Armoured Division.



Spellmount Ltd

Thanks to the **Ross and Cromarty Heritage Society**, the diary of **Captain Patrick Munro of Foulis**, Company Commander of 'C' Company, has been made available on the internet by the Ross and Cromarty Heritage Society. Hence it is possible to track in detail the Battalion's movements. Each extract is shown in *italics* with his initials PM at the beginning.

27th May: PM. *"Travelling very slowly through Rouen we saw the preparations the French were making to try and stop the German advance. The bridges over the river were being sandbagged and hastily prepared for demolition and there were many troops about. The subsequent speed of the German advance was so great that they didn't have time or neglected to blow these bridges and the Germans found them intact on reaching the town. We travelled some 30 miles by way of Neufchatel to a RV called "Starfish Cross Roads" in the Foret d'Eu."*

It is not certain if this crossroads, *Poteau Maitre-Jean*, south of Blangy, is the exact place where the troops rested, but it is typical of the area.



The signpost is one of 28 poles scattered in the forest, installed from 1876 to 1902 at the initiative of the Duke of Aumale, the Count of Paris and Count Baston d'Orléans, successive owners of the Forest of Eu. In other forests the poles are generally wooden; here they are unique, made of cast iron and each weighs several tons.

27th May: PM. *“The Battalion debussed and Companies went off to various ‘hides’ in the forest. A perimeter was formed with all-round defence and all the roads were blocked and covered by anti-tank rifles and guns. In the afternoon the CO took the Company Commanders in his car eight miles further north, through the small town of Blangy to a village called Le Translay which we were to occupy next day. At 9 p.m. we marched in darkness and silence to Le Translay. It had been completely evacuated in a hurry from what I saw when I went into some of the cottages. In one I found a half-eaten meal still on the table; in another a kettle boiling on the fire. Many animals had been left behind and birds in cages. Whenever I got a chance I spent my time letting out caged rabbits and birds, and loosing chained dogs, all of which would otherwise have starved.”*

28th May: At Le Translay

29th May: To Grebault-Mesnil: PM. *“While walking along the road a French Army lorry passed us and then stopped. They had four or five German prisoners in the back. They were the first Germans I had seen. They were all wounded and looked very dirty and exhausted and rather frightened.”*

30th May: PM. *“Some of us went to a nearby village called Huppy with the CO for a conference. The French Commander was General de Gaulle who no one then attached much importance to. He was wearing a very tattered uniform and looked extremely tired. All this time we were under command of a French Corps and the Division took its orders from the French.”*

Various sources say that installed in the attic of the highest house of Les Croisettes De Gaulle follows the progress of his tanks in combat. This was confirmed by a local resident when this photograph was being taken.



Les Croisettes

Photo: Clare Church

30th May: PM. *“We then went on to the village Behen which the Battalion was to occupy that afternoon. Just as we were completing our reconnaissances the Germans began shelling the village outskirts. My Company position was in a small wood in the grounds of a large chateau on the edge of the village. The Germans had occupied this village some days before. Just outside the front door two Germans had been buried and small wooden crosses put over their graves on which their tin hats were sitting. Because of this I didn't think it was*

a very healthy place to have my Company HQ. So I decided to steer clear of it and dug my headquarters position in the wood not far from the platoons.



Behen Chateau

Photo: Clare Church

31st May: PM. *“At 10 a.m. orders came for us to relieve the 2nd Seafortths in Moyenneville. The village was being shelled sporadically as we arrived. I chose a small orchard on the north (enemy) side of the village for my Company HQ. We dug two trenches, a ‘V’ shaped one large enough to hold ten men comfortably, and another smaller one fifteen yards away for the cooks. In my ignorance I had chosen a most unfortunate spot for my HQ. Mortar shells were coming over and bursting on impact with the top branches of the apple trees. I went off to find another site for my Company HQ in another orchard but at the south end of the village.*”

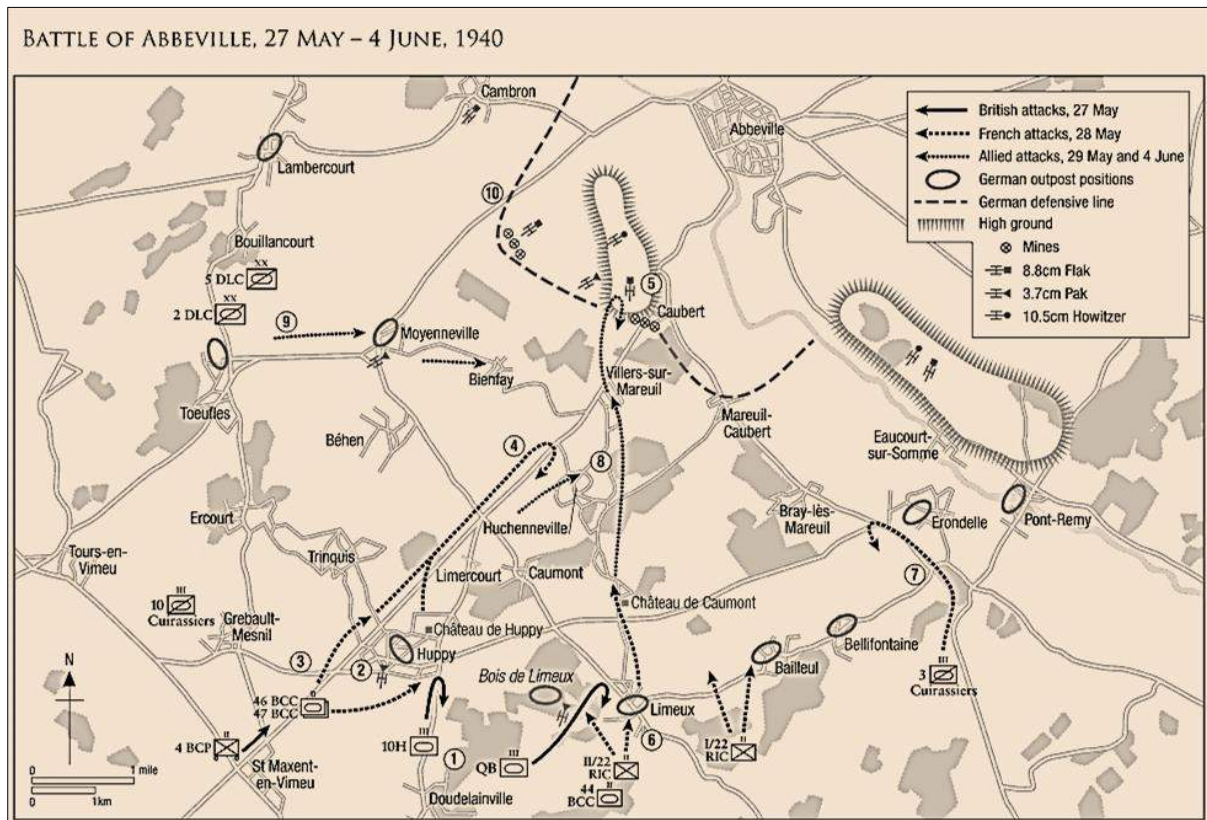
1st June: At Moyenneville

2nd June: PM. *“The day was fairly quiet until midday when the Germans began shelling Moyenneville. They made a mess of the middle of the village and knocked the church steeple down. Battalion HQ rang up in the afternoon to say that we were to withdraw that night. Shortly before midnight we set off across country, parallel to, but away from, the road leading out of the village. The Germans must have known some kind of relief was taking place as they were shelling this road the whole time. Our progress was slow and we seemed to come across enormous hedges and ditches every ten yards.”*

3rd June: PM. *“About 4.00 a.m. we arrived at a place called Les Alleux, the Battalion. RV.”*

THE BATTLE OF ABBEVILLE

The **Battle of Abbeville** commenced on the 27th May. German troops had crossed the Somme and established bridgeheads at Abbeville and St Valéry-sur-Somme. The 51st Highland Division was not involved until the last day of the battle, the 4th June. Details of the previous days are well documented in the several books listed in the Sources (p. 96)



Map: Robert Forczyk

4th June: Combined dawn plan of attack – from the Adjutant’s War Diary which was compiled in captivity.

Zero 0330 hours

- 1. 2-10 artillery barrage to open on Bois de Villers (about a mile from the start line) to cover the noise of tanks coming forward.*
- 2. French heavy tanks to follow the barrage and capture the high ground of Mont. de Caubert and Caesar's Camp – a Roman Fort - (2½ - 3 miles).*

3. *2nd Seaforths to attack Bois de Villers and clear it of enemy, this being their final objective.*

4. *French light tanks, followed by 4th Seaforths to advance on a two Company front ('B' on right, and 'C' on left) on each side of the Bois de Villers, to attack the Mont de Caubert and consolidate this objective.*

5. *French Dragon Porte (mechanised infantry) to advance through 4th Seaforths and follow the heavy tanks to Mont. de Caubert and Caesar's Camp and hold this ground until the arrival of the slower moving infantry.*

There was the difficulty of arranging effective co-operation between British and French infantry, guns and tanks at such short notice. Advancing from the wooded slopes east of Bienfay, the 4th Seaforths approached the rise of the **Mont de Caubert** but the tanks were blown up by mines, or gun-fire hit and they were disabled. The Seaforths went on without them but ran into machine-gun fire. Some survivors reached their first objective, about six hundred yards up the slope but were few in number.

Sergeant Donald MacLeod (2818541) (pp.46-52) from Achiltibuie was the only man left of his platoon. When his officer was killed, he led the platoon. Macleod himself, badly wounded, went on alone on the Caubert ridge, eluded the enemy for two days and nights, and finally rejoined his Battalion.

Captain Patrick Munro (PM) of 'C Company later stated that:

"Maps were very scarce and all I had was a 1912 Michelin road map which I had to share with Simon Fraser" [Company Commander of 'B' Company].

The CO came along and said he was sorry but we should just have to start with the one tank instead of 18. We all stood up and started the advance at a steady pace with bayonets fixed, preceded by a solitary tank!

We advanced in open order through open country, covered mostly by corn crops which came up to just below our knees. There was a very heavy dew and our legs were soaking wet in five minutes. Our first half hour went entirely according to plan and there seemed to be no opposition for some hundreds of yards. I heard the occasional bullet whistling over our heads but the noise of the barrage was so terrific we could hear little else. As we proceeded, light automatic and rifle fire became more apparent, and I began to see men being hit and spinning round like shot rabbits. Meanwhile, my solitary tank was rumbling along in front of us, doing quite good work and knocking out isolated Bosch [sic] posts here and there."

Opposition began to get stiffer and stiffer and soon the advance began to slow down and finally halted. I could see no signs of the Companies on our

right or left and so went to investigate. Our right boundary was a small ridge about five feet high and I crawled up to this and had a look over. As soon as I put my head over, a hail of fire came from in front and rear. The Jocks by now were all lying down in any small fold in the ground they could find, and firing from that position. Casualties were becoming heavier every minute and there seemed to be no hope of advancing further, under what was now very heavy fire. Shelling had now increased considerably. I decided to withdraw the Company back to where the 2nd Seaforths were in the Bois de Villers. The whole attack had failed, and the CO [Lt Col H W Houldsworth] had been wounded Soon, after it got dark, orders came through to the effect that the Battalion would withdraw that night to the village of Zailleux.”

'B' Company (Commanding Officer Simon Fraser) was virtually wiped out. He and all his officers who had taken part in the attack had been killed and only about 40 men survived, so they were attached to 'C' Company.



Photo: Clare Church

This scene (looking northwards) shows a calvary erected in 1918, destroyed by the Germans in 1944 and reconstructed in 1953. The French soldier's helmet, made of concrete, stands alongside. On Caesar's camp beyond, there is evidence of dugouts for German machine guns.



German defences on Mont de Caubert

An interpretation panel is placed on the western edge commemorating the battle. It is facing towards the slope over which the 4th Seaforths attempted to advance to reach Caesar's Camp, their intended target.



Photo: Office of tourism of Abbeville

BATTLE OF ABBEVILLE CASUALTIES

Twenty four 4th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders are buried in **Mareuil-Caubert Communal Cemetery**, situated 6 kilometres south of Abbeville along the D503 (Rue de Général Leclerc).



Photo: Clare Church

The Battalion suffered heavy casualties including five men from Coigach. Those whose bodies were not recovered nor identified are commemorated on the Dunkirk Memorial.

Two brothers, **Alexander Macleod Maclean** and **John (Ian) Kenneth Maclean** both died on the same day, 4th June 1940; what a tragedy for their father. Their mother had died when the boys were young.

Alexander was born on 12th April 1915 at Polbain.

John (Ian) Kenneth was born on 14th April 1919 at Polbain.

Alexander Macleod Maclean
Private, 4th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders
Service No. 2820078
Died 4th June 1940, aged 25
Buried in Mareuil-Caubert Communal Cemetery
Plot 2, Row C, Grave 17.



Photo: Clare Church

**John Kenneth Maclean – (listed as Ian on CWGC site)
Private, 4th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders
Service No. 2820598
Died 4th June 1940, aged 21
Commemorated on Dunkirk Memorial on Column 125**

Their parents were **Roderick**, a crofter, and **Christy Ann née MacLeod** of Polbain. Father, **Roderick**, born on 29th September 1875 at Achduart, was a member of a large family of John Maclean and Mary née Macleod. **Roderick** and **Christy Ann née Macleod**, married on 17th July 1913 in Coigach, Roderick aged 37 a crofter, and Christy 31 a domestic servant. Her address at the time was Polbain, her father, William, a merchant, and mother, Annabella Macleod née Mackenzie.

Christy, died on 10th September 1923 aged 42, at Culnacraig; cause of death Addison's disease from which she had suffered for 4 months. She had given birth to another son, **William**, in 1922, hence on her death Roderick sought a second wife to care for his children. He found **Morag (Marion) Mackay** from Carloway, Inch of Uig, Isle of Lewis, whose parents were Angus and Christine, née Martin. The couple were married on 11th January 1927 at The Royal Hotel, Dingwall, Roderick now listed as a postman, widower, age 48, usual residence Culnacraig. Morag's occupation was housemaid, spinster age 34. The ceremony was conducted by Thomas Campbell, Minister of the Free Church, Dingwall. Witnesses to the marriage were Simon Mackintosh of the Schoolhouse, Achiltibuie and Kenina McIver of 4 Upper Cottages, Stornoway.

There is a record of a Roderick MacLean being the tenant of croft 170 in Culnacraig in 1938. The family moved from Culnacraig to Elphin, probably that year as The British Postal Service Appointment Book for 1937 lists a Roderick Maclean as being appointed Postman on 26th January at the Elphin Sorting Office, Lairg. According to Eric Macleod, nephew of Alexander and John Kenneth, the family moved to the Urray area after WW2 where Roderick continued to be employed as a postman.

Roderick died on 25th March 1950, aged 74 at the Sawmills, Achterneed, Strathpeffer. Unfortunately his death certificate does not state his usual address. It is noted that his son William was the informant of his death, but not in attendance at the time. He must have travelled from his home in Leurbost, Stornoway to register the death on 28th March at Strathpeffer.

Morag (Marion) died six years later on 21st March 1956 aged 61 at Ross Memorial Hospital, Dingwall. Cause of death: mastitis. Her usual address was listed as Ivy Cottage, Muir-of-Ord.

The brothers had a sister **Mary Annabella** who was born in 1914. She married and settled in Dingwall where she took a great interest in the Achiltibuie children who attended Dingwall Academy. Some lodged with her before the school hostels were built for children from the west coast. She also taught Sunday school and was known as Mary Ella. She was a side-school teacher during the War and taught across different homes in the area including Letters and also in the Assynt area, where she met her husband at Reintraid. Her son Billy sat next to Mairi Thornton (née Macleod) at school - they had no idea their uncles died together on 4th June 1940 (her uncle being John Alick Macleod).

Murdo MacLennan
Lieutenant, 4/5 Battalion Seaforth Highlanders
Service No. 67704
Died 4th June 1940 aged 31
Commemorated on Dunkirk War Memorial on Column 123

Son of John, fisherman and Margaret née Cameron, who married on 7th March 1907 at Lochalsh. **Murdo** was born on 18th June 1908 at Plockton.

Page 5.

1908. BIRTHS in the Parish of *Lochalsh* in the County of *Ross & Cromarty*.

No.	Name and Surname.	When and Where Born.	Sex.	Name, Surname, & Rank or Profession of Father. Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother. Date and Place of Marriage.	Signature and Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if out of the House in which the Birth occurred.	When and Where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
14	<i>Murdo MacLennan</i>	<i>1908 June Eighteenth 12.6.08 p.m. Plockton Lochalsh</i>		<i>Mr. John MacLennan Fisherman Margaret MacLennan M. B. Cameron 1907. March 7th Lochalsh</i>	<i>John MacLennan Father Present</i>	<i>1908 July 7th At Lochalsh H. Sinclair Registrar.</i>

He was educated at Plockton Higher Grade School (his nickname was Plockie) and St Andrews University, graduating in Arts in 1931. His address at that time was 2 Harbour Street, Plockton.



Harbour Street, Plockton

Murdo was Headmaster of Achiltibuie School between 1931 and 1938 prior to his appointment at Newmore School, Invergordon.



Photo: Courtesy of Ullapool Museum

This photograph, taken in 1938, shows pupils of Achiltibuie School with their teacher, Murdo MacLennan

War Diary 25th February 1940: Whilst at Ecquedecques “Lt M MacLennan reported for attachment to other units in the BEF to study the construction of defences, and will rejoin the unit on Saturday 2nd March.

4th March: Move of Advance Party to Forward Area near Lille. Lt M MacLennan will command the column.”

Murdo died alongside his batman John (Johnny) Alick MacLeod (pp. 24-26). Both were killed when a mine exploded. Johnny was tending to a hand wound suffered by Murdo.

Murdo is also commemorated on Lochalsh and Plockton (below) War Memorials.



Alexander Macleod
Private, 4th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders
Service No. 2822660
Died 4th June 1940 aged 23
Buried in Mareuil-Caubert Communal Cemetery
Plot 1, Row C, Grave 16.



Photo: Clare Church

Alexander was the son of Duncan (1883-1958) and Isabella Macleod née Mackenzie (1882-1954) of Achiltibuie, who married on 26th January 1912 at 70 Church Street, Inverness (a commercial hotel run by Lachlan Cameron). Their marriage certificate reads thus:

Duncan Mcleod, crofter and fisherman, bachelor, age 28 (signed),
Usual residence Dornie, Loch Broom.
Father: Alexander Mcleod crofter (deceased),
Mother: Margaret Mcleod née Mcleod
to **Bella Mackenzie** (signed) domestic servant, spinster age 28
Usual residence Polbain, Loch Broom

Her father: Alexander Mackenzie, crofter,
Her mother: Christina Mackenzie née Mackenzie
Officiated by Murdo Mackenzie Minister of Free North Church, Inverness
Witnesses: John Beaton, Isabella Mackay

Alexander was born in 1917. He had an older sister, **Margaret**, born on 23rd September 1912. Margaret married **Albert George Watkins** in 1940 in Devon. Albert also died in WW2 (pp. 69-72). A sister Chrissy died age 5 on 18th May 1929.

This gravestone is in Badenscallie Burial ground.

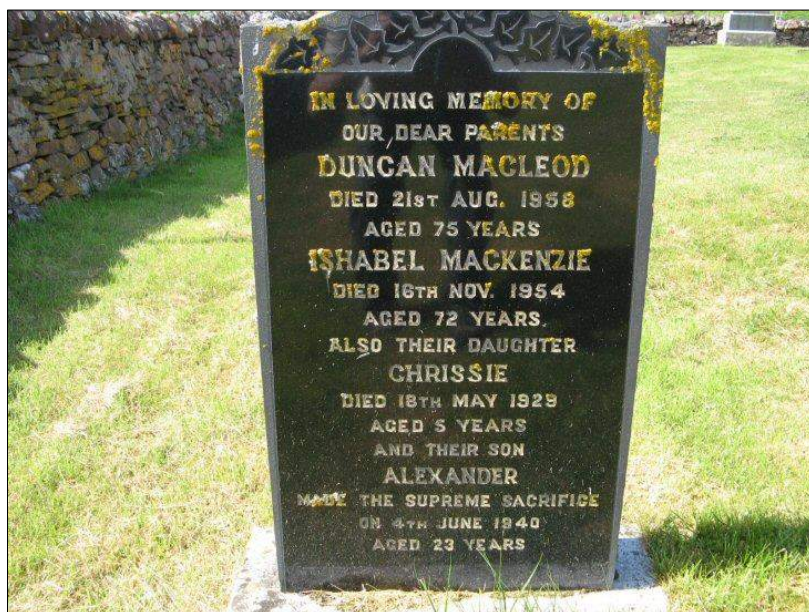


Photo: Roddie Macpherson

John (Johnny) Alick Macleod
Private, 4th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders
Service No. 2820676
Died 4th June 1940 aged 26

Son of Hugh (1872-1946), crofter, and Mary, née Macleod (1875-1946) of Polglass, who married on 5th February 1903 at Achiltibuie. Johnny was born on 17th December 1913 at Polglass.

Page 1.						
1914. BIRTHS in the District of <u>Coigach</u> in the County of <u>Ross</u>						
No.	Name and Surname.	When and Where Born.	Sex.	Name, Surname, & Rank or Profession of Father. Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother. Date and Place of Marriage.	Signature and Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if out of the House in which the Birth occurred.	When and Where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
1	<u>John Alick</u>	<u>1913</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>Hugh Macleod</u>	<u>Hugh McLeod</u>	<u>1914</u>
	<u>Macleod</u>	<u>December</u>		<u>crofter</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>January 2nd</u>
		<u>Seventeenth</u>			<u>present</u>	<u>at Achiltibuie</u>
		<u>5 1/2. am. P.M.</u>		<u>Mary Macleod</u>		<u>Rowanick Macleod</u>
				<u>Mc Macleod</u>		<u>Registrar.</u>
		<u>Polglass</u>		<u>1904 February 5th</u>		
		<u>Coigach</u>		<u>Achiltibuie</u>		

Johnny was one of 6 children. Willie (William), Abie (Abigail) and Jeanie May were born before their father Hugh went with other Coigach men to shepherd in Billings, Montana. Willie was born on 9th January 1905 at Polglass, Abie on 17th November 1906 at Polglass, and Jeanie May on 13th November 1908 at Achnahaird.

A passenger shipping list reveals the following person on board the ship *Furnessia* from Glasgow, departing on 4th March 1908 and arriving New York, U.S.A on 15th April.

McLeod, Hugh, 35, married, Shepherd, last residence Polglass, Achiltibuie, final destination Billings, Montana.



Photo: Courtesy of Coigach Community Heritage Group. Taken at Billings, Montana c 1910. L-R: ? from Gairloch, Angus Macleod, Murdo Maclean and Hugh Macleod. Angus and Hugh were brothers.

While her husband was away, Mary took her children to live with her mother in her old home at Culneorn, Achnahaird.

A possible date of his return to the UK was 1911 with a Hugh McLeod, labourer on board the Cunard Steamship Co. ship *Campania*, which arrived at Liverpool from New York on 23rd August.

Johnny, Chrissie (Christina Ann) and Dina (Murdina) were born in the years after Hugh returned from America, Johnny on 17th December 1913, Chrissie on 2nd September 1915 at Polglass and Dina in 1918, Ref 075/2 6.

Johnny was musical and played the melodeon. He also had a fine sense of humour and liked to tease his sisters.



Johnny with his mother at Polglass 1920s
Photo Courtesy of Mairi Thornton and Una Macgregor

Early in 1940 he was appointed batman to Lieutenant Murdo MacLennan (pp. 20-21) who had been the local schoolmaster in Achiltibuie. In the army this was usually seen as a desirable position, as confirmed by Johnny in a letter home. A batman was normally chosen by his officer and was exempted from more onerous duties, often receiving better rations. Senior officers' batmen might receive fast promotion to Lance-Corporal, with many becoming Corporals and Sergeants. The position was generally phased out after WW2.



Both men were killed when a mine exploded next to where Johnny was tending to a hand wound suffered by Murdo. They had been in France for only a few months. Johnny was listed as 'missing in action' and despite much correspondence with the War Office and the Red Cross it would be two years before the family had confirmation that he had died.

Johnny is commemorated on the Dunkirk Memorial on Column 125. After the war his brother Willie met a soldier who had served with Johnny and Murdo. This man told him about the explosion and that they would have died instantly without suffering. Had they known, this might have been a comfort to Johnny's parents.

Photo: Courtesy of Mairi Thornton and Una Macgregor

Both parents, Hugh and Mary died within months of each other in 1946 and are buried in Badenscallie Burial Ground. It was said his mother died of a broken heart having lost her son and husband.



Dunkirk Memorial Column 125

RETREAT FROM ABBEVILLE

5th -12th JUNE 1940

5th June: The 4th Seaforths withdrew to Limeaux, south-east of Limercourt. PM. *“We reached Limeaux just as it was getting light. It was a small, tumbledown village, completely deserted, and for some reason had obviously been rather badly dive-bombed. There were enormous craters all round it and one or two actually in the village.”*

2300 withdrew to Battalion Headquarters at Ramburelles.

6th June: Arrived Ramburelles 0500.

2100 Withdrew across the River Bresle. Arrived Blangy at midnight.

7th June: Reached ‘Star Fish Crossroads’, Forest d’Eu. At night, no transport arrived for journey to Le Treport, so started marching to Cuverville-sur-Yeres.

8th June: 0600 Arrived Cuverville.

p.m. Moved to Bois Robert, a village south of Dieppe

2100 Orders to move immediately to Arques la Bataille.

9th June: Early a.m. arrived Arques la Bataille.

PM. *“The Company was holding a line running parallel with a railway and a river; however the ground we were occupying was low and inclined to be marshy with the river Bethune running along our front. The platoons found that on digging down to a depth of two feet, they struck water.”*

“The village was still occupied but at 11 a.m. the Mayor issued a very belated evacuation order. I was immediately besieged by weeping women and children, all saying what were they to do, where were they to go etc.?”

10th June: During the night of 9th/10th June the bridges across the River Bethune were destroyed by allied forces.

The Adjutant’s official diary quotes: *“1300 hours. ‘D’ Company reported that the enemy were attacking and trying to cross the Bethune River by the destroyed [main] bridge. It was also reported that German lorries were debussing troops the other side of the Bethune at a crossroads. This information was passed back to the Royal Horse Gunners who immediately concentrated fire on the crossroads. However, enemy troops managed to cross the river and establish a post in an old factory near the railway”*.



Bethune River with railway line in foreground and CWGC WW1 cemetery in distance
Photo: Clare Church

“The RHA shelled the bridge and scored a direct hit on the ruin, which blew it to pieces. The Mortar Pl[atoon] shelled the factory post and drove the enemy out of it. 1400 hours. BN. HQ was heavily shelled, causing several casualties.”

Eight 4th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders are buried in the **Communal Cemetery.**



Photo: Clare Church

10th June: PM. “At 6.15 p.m. I received a message from Bn. HQ to the effect that the Battalion would hold on at all costs till 11 p.m. and then withdraw to a pre-arranged RV about two miles further back.”

2300 The troops marched westwards then were transported towards Battalion Headquarters at Yelon [Iclon on present day map].

11th June: In the early hours of the morning the Battalion came up against close range German gunfire. Shots were being fired from windows of the houses in a village. Much mayhem ensued, with an ammunition truck on fire and vehicles facing the wrong way in the narrow streets. Eventually Captain Munro found the Divisional Headquarters at Cailleville and reported the incident, much to the officers’ surprise that the Germans were so close.

1130 The Battalion arrived at Yelon.

12th June: 0500 Battalion reached St Valéry en Caux

0800 **General Ihler** [CO French 9th Army Corps] gave order to surrender, but **General Fortune** was determined to fight on but surrendered at 1000.

More than 8,000 members of the 51st (Highland) Division were taken prisoner.

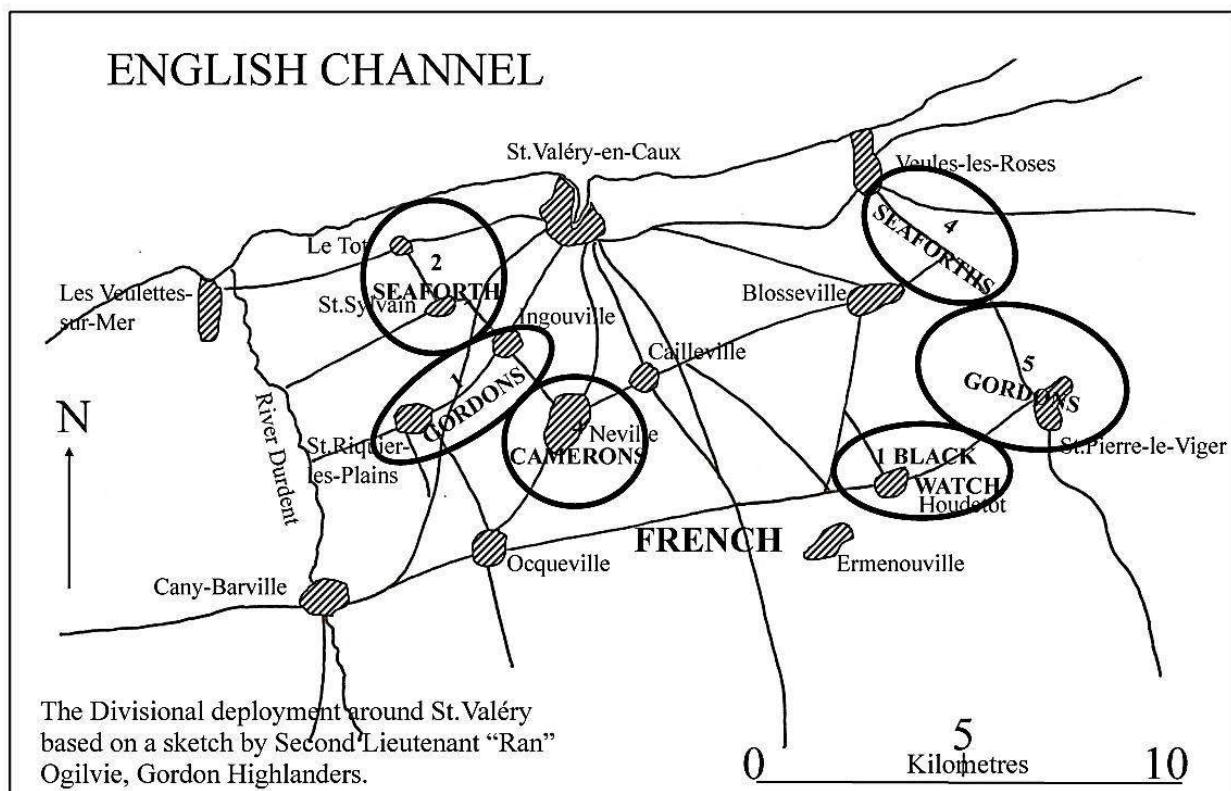




Photo: IWM RM4 342

Major General V M Fortune, GOC [General Officer Commanding] 51st Highland Division (right), with General Major Erwin Rommel at St. Valéry after the surrender of the 51st Division to Rommel's 7th Panzer Division (12th June 1940)



**Seaforth and Cameron Highlanders buttons found at St Valéry
Photo: Dunkirk Veterans**

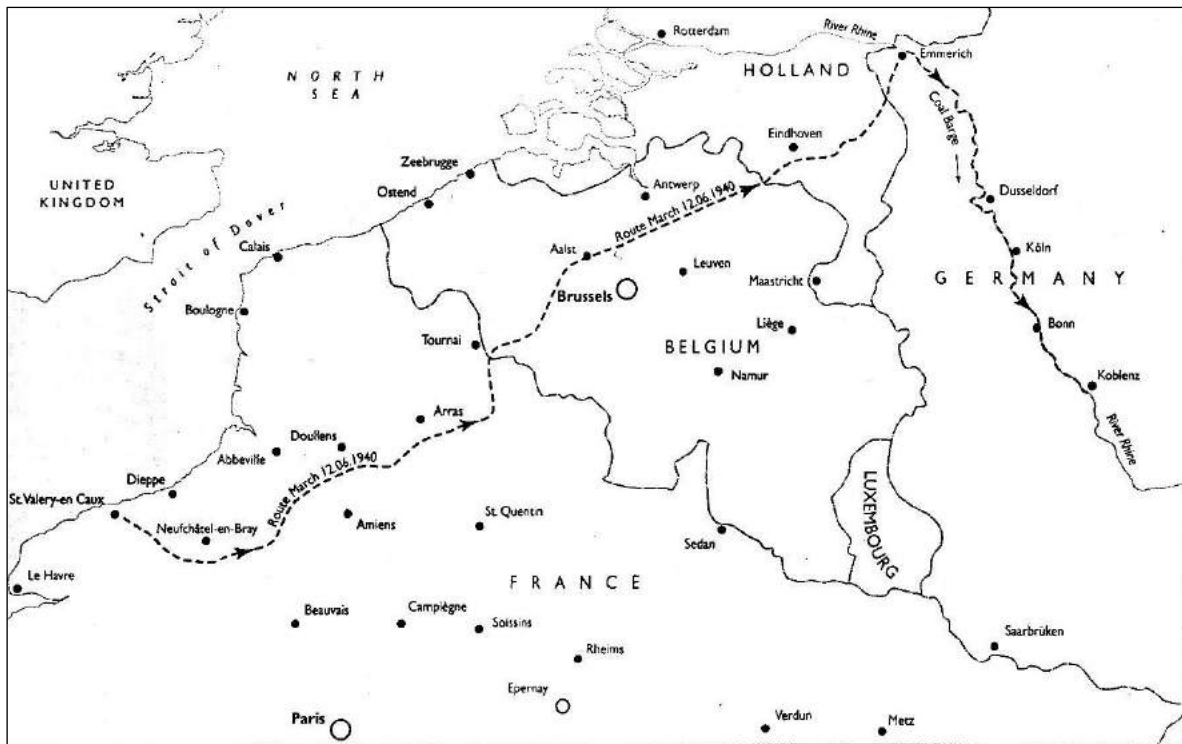
PRISONERS OF WAR

Following the Battle of Abbeville and during their retreat to the coast in an attempt to evacuate to England, the 2nd and 4th Seaforth Highlanders, 4th Cameron Highlanders, 1st and 5th Gordon Highlanders and the 4th Black Watch fought determinedly at Arques-la-Bataille and a few days later at St Valéry-en-Caux. But they were completely surrounded, out of ammunition and supplies, and were overwhelmed by the 7th Panzer Division under the command of General Erwin Rommel and ordered to surrender on 12th June 1940. These regiments have St Valéry-en-Caux as a Battle Honour.



The surrender was the start of five years of captivity. The men were required to march at least 16 miles a day and it took 16 days to reach the railhead at Hulst in Holland. Food was in very short supply and the prisoners relied on hand-outs from French and Belgian villagers. The men slept in fields with no cover. From Hulst, the troops were transported in open railway wagons to Valsoorden, where they embarked onto barges for a journey up the Rhine into Germany. They disembarked at Wesel and were sent by train to the prison camps. For most of the men of the 51st Highland Division, the next five years were a time of frustration, boredom and hardship.

Despite the harsh circumstances in which the men were living, the regimental spirit of the Highland Regiments helped maintain morale. Music played a strong part in this. The well-known Scottish country dance, 'The Reel of the 51st Highland Division' was created by Highland officers held as Prisoners of War.



Approximate route of march from St Valery en Caux to the Rhine, June 1940

It has so far been ascertained that the men from Coigach were imprisoned in the following camps, not necessarily for all of the five years of captivity:

- Stalag XX-A at Torun (Thorn)**
- Stalag XX-B at Marienberg,**
- Stalag XX-1D at Posen (Poznan)**
- Stalag VIII B (later called 344) at Lamsdorf (Labinowice)**
- Stalag VIII B was located at Teschen from 1943 to 1945.**
- Stalag 357, at Torun; from August 1944 at Oerbke, Lower Saxony.**

Stalag XX-A was not a single camp and contained as many as 20,000 prisoners at its peak. The main camp was located in a complex of 15 forts that surrounded the city of Torun (Thorn).

Extract from: an article in 51st Highland Division website by Henry Owens – Gunner Artificer, Royal Artillery

“Stalag XX-B was a bleak, forbidding camp on the outskirts of Marienburg, with the usual double wire fencing, lookout towers, and floodlighting. It housed many prisoners of all nationalities, in different compounds, and had a look of despair about it. We were allocated to a long hut with three tiers of bunks and an earth floor. We soon realised it was overrun with rats.”



**1940 at Stalag XXB, predominately Seaforth Highlanders
courtesy of Ullapool Museum**

Stalag XX1-D : In Poznań itself, three forts were used to house Prisoners of War; Rauch, IIIA and VIII.

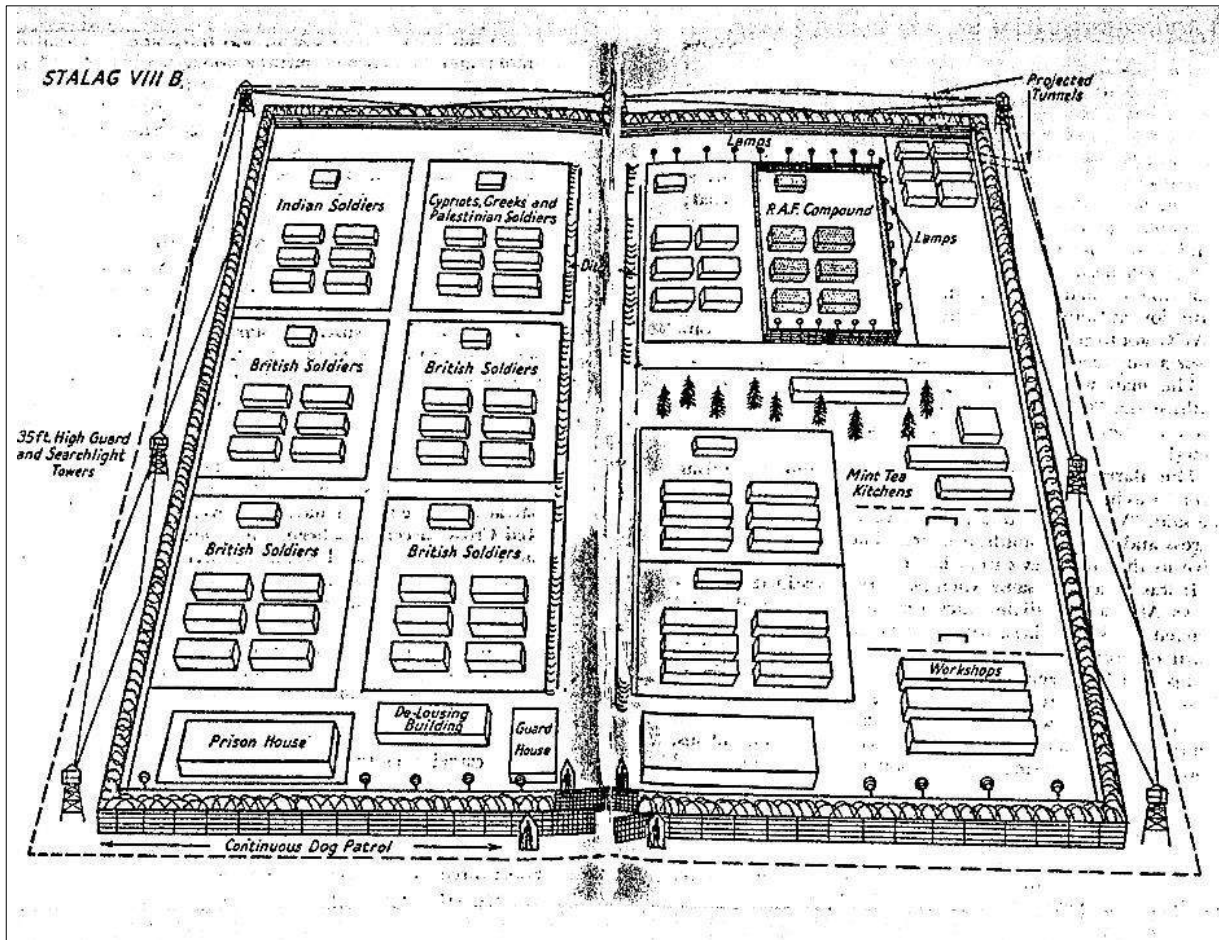
Extract from *The Prisoner of War, September 1942* – published from 1942 until 1945 for families in Britain.



“Stalag VIIIIB: *This camp, in Silesia, is the largest prisoner of war camp in Germany. About 270 work detachments are administered from it. There are some 20,000 British prisoners of war in the whole camp area, of whom 5,700 are in the base camp.*

The base camp is composed of rows of one-storeyed barracks, each with a wash room and running water. The barracks are of stone, built directly on the ground, which makes them rather cold in winter. There are large playing fields and room for vegetable and gardens. The men sleep on 3-tiered wooden bunks, with wool stuffed palliasses and have two blankets each. Lighting has

improved since the last visit, and bathing facilities are quite in order. Except for the Medical Officers there are no officers in the camp.



Shipments of clothing have recently been received, but there is still need for battledress. There is a gymnasium, and the prisoners of war play football, box, and have wireless and picture shows. A school has been arranged, which some 800 students attend every day.

Four chaplains attend to the religious needs of the prisoners and are allowed to visit work detachments and men under arrest. Eleven British doctors and 39 medical orderlies work in the infirmary.”

Extract from *The Prisoner of War – February 1944 – Stalag 344*

“The camp conditions have seriously deteriorated and strong representations have been made to the German Government on the conditions both in the main camp and in many of the work camps.

The transfer of over 5,000 British prisoners to Stalag from Italy has further crowded this already overcrowded camp. There are now 13,000 men in

the main camp. The others are distributed in 300 odd work camps. Every available barrack, including the church and the school, is in use to afford sleeping space for these men in the main camp. The shortage of blankets is acute. It is obvious that washing, bathing and toilet facilities must be quite inadequate for the demands made on them."

Stalag 357: In November 1944 British paratroops captured at Arnhem arrived at this camp. Led by RSM John C Lord of 3rd Battalion, Parachute Regiment, they set about raising the standards of the camp. Lord insisted on proper military discipline with regular exercise and parades. At that time 17,000 prisoners of war, mostly British, but also Russian, Polish, Yugoslav, French, and American prisoners were crammed into the camp causing severe overcrowding. Each hut contained 400 men, though it had bunks for only 150. By February 1945 the POWs were suffering from lack of food and medical supplies exacerbated by the influx of several hundred American POWs captured in the Battle of the Bulge and Operation Nordwind.

20th January 1945 – **Stalag XX-A** was evacuated

22nd January 1945 – **Stalag 344** at Lamsdorf, Silesia was evacuated.

23rd January 1945 – Evacuation began at **Stalag XX-B** at Marienberg, Danzig.

16th April 1945 - **Stalag 357** prisoners were liberated.

THE LONG MARCH

In January 1945, as the Soviet armies resumed their offensive and advanced into Germany, the Nazis made the decision to evacuate the PoW camps to prevent the liberation of the prisoners by the Russians. About 30,000 prisoners were force-marched westward across Poland and Germany in appalling winter conditions, lasting about four months. The first two months of 1945 were among the coldest winter months of the twentieth century, with blizzards and temperatures as low as -25°C .

Most of the PoWs were ill-prepared for the evacuation, having suffered years of poor rations and wearing clothing ill-suited to the appalling winter conditions.

Each Stalag was responsible for co-ordinating the movement of PoWs at the outlying Arbeitkommandos (work camps) as well as those at the main camp. They marched in small columns following side roads to villages where they could find accommodation at the end of each day.



Movements of Prisoners of War in Germany, 1944-45

In most camps, the PoWs were actually broken up in groups of 250 to 300 men and because of the inadequate roads and the flow of battle, not all the prisoners followed the same route. The groups would march 20 to 40 kilometres a day - resting in factories, churches, barns and even in the open. Soon long columns of PoWs were wandering over the northern part of Germany with little or nothing in the way of food, clothing, shelter or medical care.

With so little food they were reduced to scavenging to survive. Some were reduced to eating dogs and cats - and even rats and grass - anything they could lay their hands on. Already underweight from years of prison rations, some were at half their pre-war body weight by the end. Because of the unsanitary conditions and a near starvation diet, hundreds of PoWs died along the way

from exhaustion as well as pneumonia, diphtheria, and other diseases. Typhus was spread by body lice. Sleeping outside on frozen ground resulted in frostbite that in many cases required the amputation of extremities. In addition to these conditions were the dangers from air attack by Allied forces mistaking the PoWs for retreating columns of German troops.

As winter drew to a close, suffering from the cold abated and some of the German guards became less harsh in their treatment of PoWs. As the columns reached the western side of Germany they ran into the advancing British and American armies. For some, this brought liberation. Others were not so lucky. They were marched towards the Baltic Sea where Nazis were said to be using PoWs as human shields and hostages. It was later estimated that a large number of men had marched over five hundred miles by the time they were liberated, and some had walked nearly a thousand miles.

On 4th May 1945 RAF Bomber Command implemented **Operation Exodus**, and the first prisoners of war were repatriated by air. Bomber Command flew 2,900 sorties over the next 23 days, carrying 72,500 prisoners of war.

Liberated prisoners with an Avro Lancaster of No. 635 Squadron RAF at Lübeck, Germany, 11 May 1945.



COIGACH PRISONERS OF WAR

Sergeant Donald Fraser (2820079) POW No. 16308

Born on 11th March 1909 at Achiltibuie. Enlisted 1st September 1939.
Previous occupation: Shepherd. Address Achiltibuie. .
He completed a General Questionnaire for British Ex-Prisoners of War on 9th
May 1945: not wounded when captured at St Valéry en Caux on 12th June 1940.

Main camps in which imprisoned

XX-A Thorn, Poland from July 1940 to February 1943 (including a working
camp at Konitz, Poland August 1940-March 1941 – builder's labourer.

XX-A(5) Thorn, Poland from February 1943 to May 1944

357 Thorn, Poland from May 1944 to August 1944

357 Fallingbostel, Germany from August 1944 to April 1945

357 Between Elbe and Oder April 1945 to 2nd May 1945.

Donald's father Roderick (1869-1952) was a merchant.

His mother was Jean Macleod (1880-1960).

They married on 1st November 1906 at the Royal Hotel, Dingwall, both living in
Glasgow at the time.

Siblings:

Dolina Margaret,

Murdoch,

Jessie (1908-1982),

Sandy (died 1993 at Conon
Bridge).

Donald married Anne

Tinney in 1947 in

Inverness – Ref: 098/A

188. He lived in Skye

latterly but was buried in

Badenscallie in 1968.

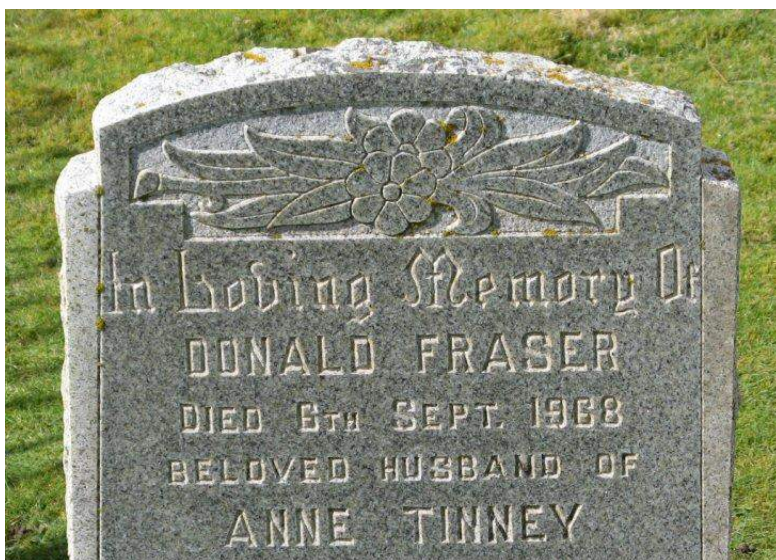


Photo: Roddie Macpherson

Private Robert Graham (2820799)
POW No. 6944

Born on 2nd June 1919. Home address: 103 Achiltibuie.

Previous occupation: Farm labourer.

Enlisted 22nd February 1937.

He completed a General Questionnaire for British Ex-Prisoners of War on 13th May 1945. He was not wounded when captured on 12th June 1940.

Main camps in which imprisoned:

XXI-D at Posen July 1940 to September 1944 –

VIII-B at Teschen September 1944 to January 1945

Work camps: Posen July 1940 to April 1943 – Road building
 Krotoshin April 1943 to January 1944 – Railway
 Pakosch January 1944 to September 1944 - Hemp factory
 Klausberg September 1944 to January 1945 - Coal mine.

Private Roderick (Roddie) Macdonald (2816982)
POW No. 15455

Born on 28th December 1910 at Badenscallie.

His father, Alexander, a crofter and mother, Kate (née Macleod) were married on 1st January 1890 locally.

Home address: 148 Badenscallie.

Previous employment: Farmer.

He completed a General Questionnaire for British Ex-Prisoners of War on 6th May 1945 in which he stated that he was not wounded when captured on 12th June 1940 at St Valéry en Caux.

Imprisoned at Stalag XX-B/39 from 1st August 1940 until 20th January 1945.
In a working camp at Marienburg, employed as a shoe maker.

After release on 11th May 1945 he returned home and married Joan Mackenzie.
He died in 1994 aged 84, Ref. Coigach 190/4.

Thanks to his daughter Lesley, it has been possible to view a photocopy of a postcard sent from Stalag XX-B/39. It was written to Mr William Macleod of 152 Badenscallie, Achiltibuie, requesting that he *“look round my home and see that the gates be locked and the shed. I am keeping on everything, get the sheep on the field it should keep them going the best part of the year, it will no do for me to let go”*

Private Hector Mackenzie (2820609)
POW No. 16792

Information has been provided by his son Hector Donald Mackenzie.
Hector was born on 23rd June 1917.
His parents were Angus (1864-1934) and Alice Macleod (1882-1970).
Imprisoned at Stalag 344.

Hector married Ethel Dorothy Edith Cima (1918-1996) in the March Quarter (i.e. Jan, Feb or March) of 1946 in Wandsworth (London) area, ref. 1d 609.
In 1934 Ethel was employed as a telephonist in London working for the Post Office. She was born on 28th March 1918, daughter of Arthur and Ethel Annie née Holliman.
1946 she lived at 73 Bangalore Street, Putney with her parents (before marriage to Hector).

Hector died on 11th November 1999 at Luton, Bedfordshire.

Further information regarding Hector, including extracts from tapes made by his son-in-law Kenny MacDonald can be found in **APPENDIX B** on pages 87-90.

L/Cpl Roderick (Roddie) Mackenzie (2818540)
POW No. 20564

Roderick was born on 1st January 1912 at Achiltibuie. His parents John and Jessie (née Macleod) had married on 26th March 1908 at Achiltibuie.

A telegram was not received by the family until February 1941 informing them that Roddie had been wounded and captured on the 4th June 1940, and was transferred to Stalag XXA on the 31st July from Stalag VID in Dortmund. His final camp was Stalag 344.

According to Roderick F Macleod, Roddie revealed that after he came home from four years 'in a ghastly German prisoner of war camp' he felt foolish and embarrassed as he stood watching Rommel pass along and he did not have a round to put up the spout of his rifle!

Roddie married Margaret Sybil Maclean in 1951 at Fodderty. They had two sons Ian and Roddie, a daughter Sybil who died aged 18 months, and another daughter, also Sybil who now lives in the south of England.

Roddie (senior) died in September 1979 aged 67 years. He is buried in Badenscallie Burial Ground.



Photo: Roddie Macpherson

**Private William George Mackenzie (Bobby) (2820287)
POW No. 126307**

Son of Alexander Mackenzie and Margaret (née George) who had married on 1st September 1919 at The Conon Hotel, Conon Bridge. He was 26, she was 23.

The following information is provided by his daughter Ann Irvine: William was born in Strathpeffer on 28th March 1917, fourth of 10 children - his father served in the Police Force. He married Kate Ann Maclean from Harris on 9th April 1947. She became the district nurse.

Willie is the youngest child, sitting on mother's lap with his older brothers Alastair, Norman and Iain.



Willie completed a 'Liberated prisoner of war interrogation questionnaire' which he signed on 28th April 1945. This gives exact details of his movements and conditions.



He enlisted with the Territorials on 28th March 1935. His previous occupation prior to WW2 was that of a Barman.

Address: Police Station, Achiltibuie.

Original capture St Valéry en Caux, 12th June 1940. Not wounded when captured.

He was held in Stalag XX-A from July 1940 until 1942, and Stalag XX-B from 1942 until 1945.

Throughout this period he was employed in a working camp.

XX-A September 1940-December 1940 – general labourer

XX-A March 1941-May 1941 – road making

XX-B 1942 - January 1945 – general labourer

Illness: Pleurisy 6 months – adequate medical treatment provided.

A recording of Willie's POW experience, when he was interviewed in 2003, aged 86, can be found in **APPENDIX C** on pages 91-92.

● * * * * *

William Macleod (Boy)

This Prisoner of War has been identified by Fraser Muir.

William was born on 31st January 1909 at Achiltibuie, the elder brother of Donnie (Beag) Macleod who was killed in action in 1945.

His parents were Murdo, a fisherman, and Jane née Maclean.

He could be **either:**

Private W McLeod, 28210839, POW No. 19900, at Stalag XX-A, Torun, Poland

or

Private W McLeod 2815621, POW No. 14021, at Stalag XX-B, Malbork, Poland

or

Private W C MacLeod (2822653). POW No. 6762 at Stalag 344, Lamsdorf

After the war 'Boy' survived to take up Board of Agriculture work in Skye.

THE 5th BATTALION, SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS

The 5th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders was mobilised on 1st September 1939 but did not begin active service until August 1942 – then in the Middle East. It formed part of the 152nd Brigade in a reconstituted 51st Highland Division. It took part in the North African campaign, in the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943, in the invasion of Italy in September 1943, and finally D-day and North West Europe.



The actions of the 5th Seaforths are well explained on the 51st Highland Division website – www.51hd.co.uk. and also in Alastair Borthwick's book *Battalion*.

Lieutenant Donald Macleod (Donnie Beag) who bravely fought when a Sergeant at the Battle of Abbeville, was later commissioned and transferred to the 5th Seaforth Highlanders.

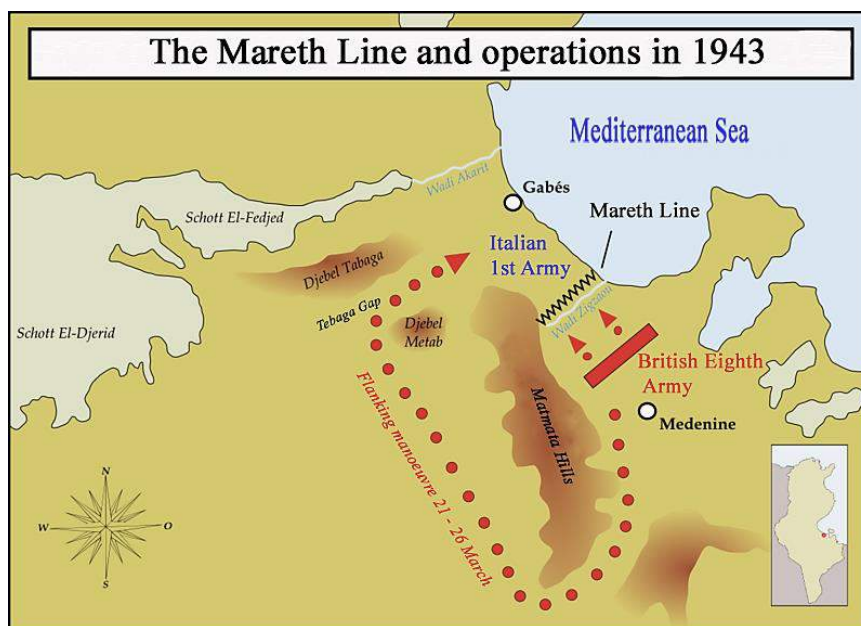
Donnie Beag and his friend **Sergeant Donald Hugh (Hughie) Macleod**, also in the 5th Seaforths, would also have participated in the following campaigns:

North Africa:

Capture of Tripoli January 1943

Medenine March 1943 - over 50 enemy tanks were destroyed

Mareth Line March 1943.



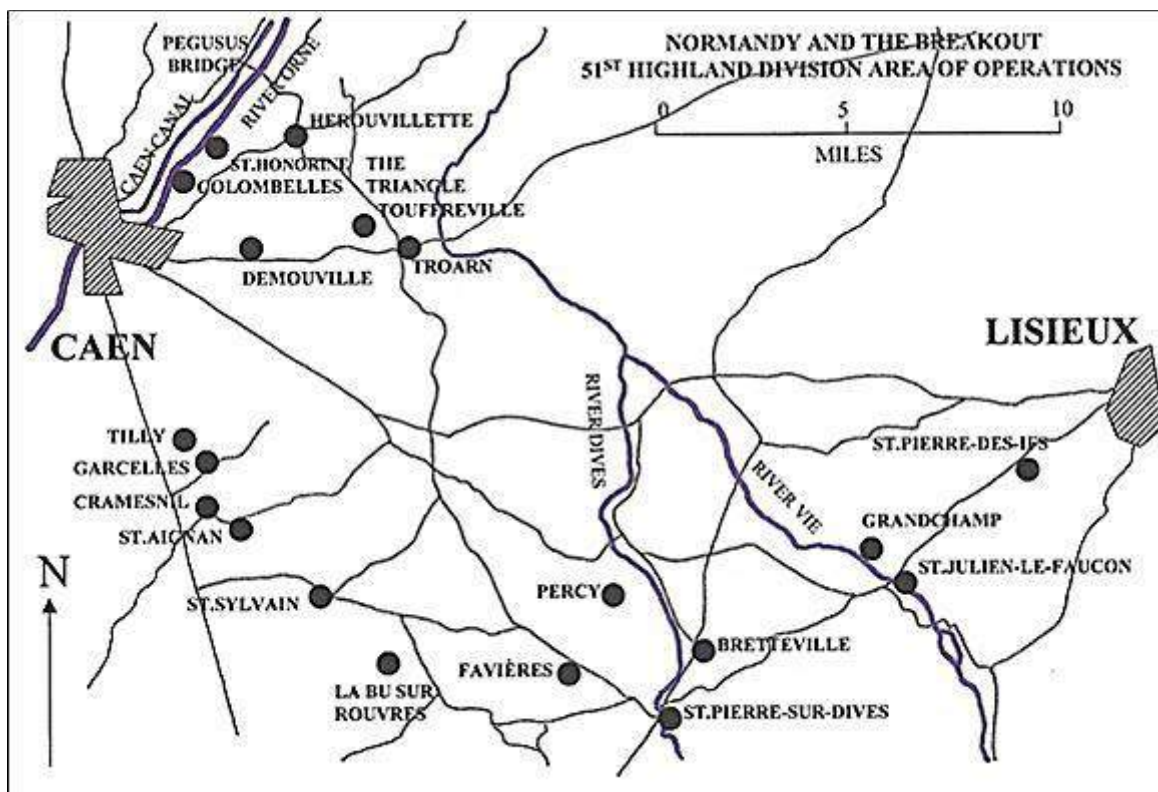
MarethMap1943.png

Sicily: Operation Husky June-November 1943 in which Hugh was awarded the Military Medal.

The 51st Highland Division returned to Britain in November 1943 and after leave settled down to training for the invasion of mainland Europe.

Normandy: Operation Overlord June 1944

152 Brigade commanded by Brigadier A J H Cassels consisted of 2nd and 5th Seaforths and 5th Camerons. In outline the operation was to invade the Normandy coast from the Carentan estuary to just east of the mouth of the River Orne. The role of the 51st Highland Division in the landing was as a second echelon division to support and fill in behind the first wave. After the landings the operations in the following weeks were some of the worst the Division had experienced. On 13th June 1944, 152 Brigade ran into stiff opposition in the area of **St. Honorine** and **Demouville**. Their attacks were driven off and they went into a defensive position north of St. Honorine.



Operation Totalise: The Breakout

The 51st Highland Division was placed under command of the Canadian Corps and on 6th August moved forward. The attack began on the night of the 7th, and when the operation ended on the 10th August the 51st Highland Division had secured all its objectives.

With the "Breakout" battle complete the 51st Highland Division had several days to recover before the advance continued. From Lisieux they advanced east, crossing the Seine and dealing with the enemy rear guard. The intention was to isolate the port of Le Havre.

Return to St Valéry 1 September 1944

It was General Montgomery's wish that the Division should recapture St Valéry en Caux and he asked the Canadian Army commander to arrange this. Carrying on they arrived at St. Valéry on 1st September where the 5th Seaforth and 5th Camerons met each other in the Station Square (below).



Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge
Ronchamps 10 January 1945

Rhine Crossing:

Late March 1945 – where tragically **Lieutenant Donald MacLeod** and **Sergeant Donald Hugh MacLeod** lost their lives.

Rhine Crossing Casualties

Donald (Donnie Beag) Macleod, DCM
Lieutenant
4th/5th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders
Service No. 309865
previously Sergeant, 4th Seaforth Highlanders, Service No. 2818541
Died 24th March 1945 aged 29

Much of the information in this biography is taken from a 15 page booklet on **Donnie**, written in 2011 by **Roderick F Macleod**, a resident of Polbain, for the Coigach Community Heritage Group (CCHG). A copy is available to view in the CCHG's archive.

Donnie, born on 24th December 1914, was the younger son of **Murdo**, crofter and **Jane née Maclean** of 5 Achiltibuie, who had married on 11th December 1902 at Achiltibuie. Murdo was owner of a Fifie, the "Flower of Polbain", with which he sailed long distances in search of herring. There were six children in the family, four girls and two boys.

Donnie was a member of the Territorial Army, like most local young men, and they regularly attended the annual camp, often held at Dingwall or Aberdeen. The attraction of joining the "Terriers" was a paid annual holiday, a new pair of boots and a chance to get away from home and croft work. At the beginning of WW2 Donnie was already a Sergeant and had been awarded the Territorial Efficiency Medal.

Donnie was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal in June 1940 as a result of his actions on 4th June in the Battle of Abbeville; his citation is evidence of his bravery.



WL 42858/122 100m. 2/40. W.S. Ltd. 51-6183. Forms/W.3121/6

Army Form W. 3121.

Date recommendation passed forward
Received: _____ Passed: _____

Brigade _____ Division _____ Corps _____

Schedule No. _____ Unit 4th Bn. THE SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS
(to be left blank)

Brigade _____
Division _____
Corps _____
Army _____

Army No. and Rank 2818541 Sergeant

Name Donald MACLEOD
(Christian names must be stated)

Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated)	Recommended by	Honour or Reward	(To be left blank)
<p>This N.C.O. showed the greatest gallantry and devotion to duty in the attack against the ABBEVILLE BRIDGEHEAD on June 4th. After his Platoon Officer became a casualty in the early stages, Sergeant Macleod led the platoon forward in the face of withering machine gun fire. As they advanced, every man fell but Sergeant Macleod carried on alone until severely wounded. He had then reached his objective.</p> <p>During the two days and nights that followed this N.C.O. showed the greatest grit and determination in working himself back through enemy positions until he reached a point where he could be evacuated.</p>	<p>It. Col. H.W. Houldsworth, M.C., Commanding 4th Bn. The Seaforth Highlanders. (Sgd.) H.W.V. Stewart Brig. Comd. 152 Inf. Bde.</p>	D. C.M.	119

TNA WO 373/16

Eric Linklater's book: *The Highland Division* mentions Donnie individually.

"Some survivors reached their first objective about six hundred yards up the slope [of Mont de Caubert]. They were few in number. Sgt. Donald Macleod was the only man left of his platoon. When his Officer was killed, Macleod led the platoon. Man after man fell to the clattering machine guns that cut them down like a reaper. Macleod himself, badly wounded, went on alone."

"The 152nd Brigade lost twenty officers and five hundred and forty-three other ranks in the day's fighting. Its battalions had been exposed to close machine-gun fire, to mortars, artillery and dive-bombing, and the Highlanders had not spared themselves. They had been signally unwilling to admit defeat and when defeat could no longer be denied, they often retained a stubbornly independent attitude to it. Sgt. Macleod, for instance, left wounded and alone on the Caubert Ridge eluded the enemy for two days and nights and finally rejoined his Battalion."

It is not known where Donnie was treated for his wounds, or how he managed to return to Scotland. He reported back to Fort George, near Inverness (his official depot) but he had no identity papers and was treated with suspicion by the officer in charge. So he asked for CSM Calum 'Beag' Macleod to be sent for, and Calum assured the duty officer that he was who he said he was. Donnie was then sent home on leave and returned for training at Fort George after a while. The 51st Highland Division was reformed and became part of the 8th Army.

Jim Muir recalls that after he was wounded and sent home, Donnie was lobster fishing with him for a while. According to Jim, he didn't have to go back to the front line but chose to because all his pals were there.



Jim Muir (centre) and Donnie (right) at Badentarbet

Photo courtesy of CCHG

Donnie then joined the **5th Seaforths** (because the 4th had been decimated in the Battle of Abbeville and then lost in the Division's surrender) and his Service No. changed to 309865. He was promoted to Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM), then sailed for Egypt via South Africa to join the 8th Army and moved forward to engage with Rommel at El Alamein. He had a brief leave to recover from malaria, after which he continued into Sicily with the Highland Division. Donnie was "commissioned in the field" in Sicily in October 1943 and made a full Lieutenant on 14th April 1944.



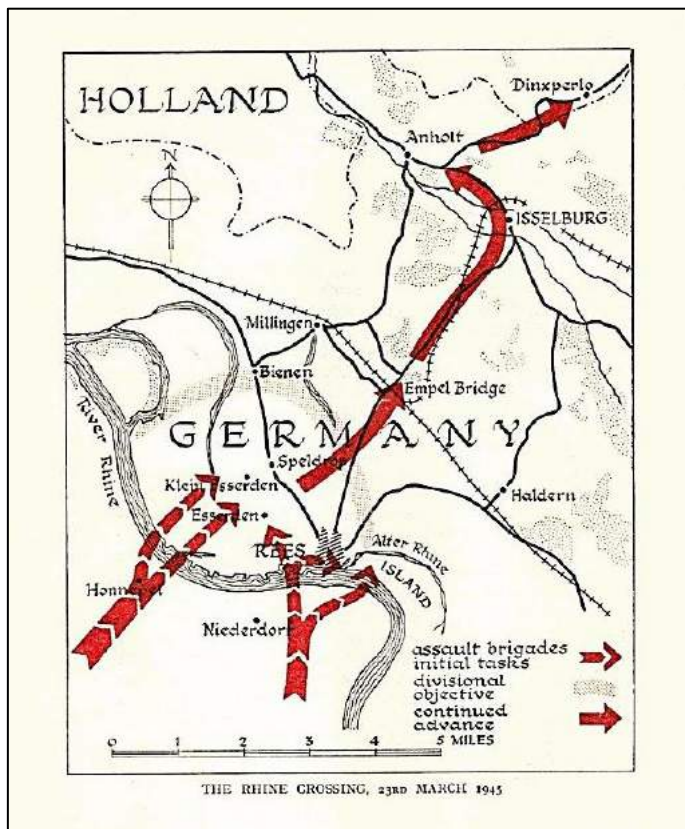
Donnie with his mother whilst on leave in 1943

Photo courtesy of CCHG



He then returned to Britain to join the preparations for the D-Day invasion as part of the Normandy force in June 1944. Training was carried out at Much Hadham in Hertfordshire and later at Wimbish, Essex. .

The Seaforths fought through Europe against fierce resistance from a determined German army as far as the River Rhine. This is where Donnie met his death, but not before meeting up near Brussels with his sister Seordag Murray, the well-known Gaelic singer and Gaelic enthusiast, who was serving in the W.R.A.C., the women's army.



The town of Rees, near Groin, was a major immediate objective of the Seaforths, and Donnie, who was platoon commander in charge of carriers, went ahead with a patrol of 2nd Seaforths to reconnoitre a suitable route for his carriers. Unfortunately, the patrol came under heavy mortar fire and Donnie was killed. The same day, the Divisional commander, General Tom Rennie, with whom Donnie had served from Normandy onwards, was also killed. Donnie's **Commanding Officer, Lt. Colonel John Sym** wrote a letter of condolence to his parents and stated -

“Donnie was killed outright by a shell while he was collecting the men of his patrol on the far bank, after crossing the river Rhine. He is buried near the village of Essenden though it is possible that a central cemetery may be found at a later date.” This did take place, and Donnie now lies in **Reichswald Forest War Cemetery in Plot 52.C.1.**

Alistair Borthwick in his book *Battalion* says *“The far bank was a level, featureless place, with most of the landscape still obscured by mist and the smoke of shell-bursts. Here we were met by Sergeant Mackenzie of the snipers, who told us that Lieutenant Donnie Macleod DCM had been killed. He had gone forward to gather advanced information for the Groin attack.”*



Photo: Des Philippet

In addition to the letter of condolence written by Lt Col John Sym, which Murdo and Jane Macleod received on the 21st April 1945, the following was sent by **Brigadier H W Houldsworth** who had played a major part in reforming and training the 51st Highland Division and fought with General Montgomery through the Africa Campaign with great distinction and bravery.

Dear Mr Macleod,

I feel I must send you this letter to say how deeply I feel for you and Mrs Macleod in the loss of your gallant son Donnie.

I so well remember meeting you both after Mrs Houldsworth and I called to see Donnie after he got home wounded from France in 1940. He had served under my command during that early fighting and had won the DCM for great bravery.

Long years have passed since then and although Donnie and I did not fight together again I saw him frequently both in the African desert and at home while he fought alongside our son Ian.

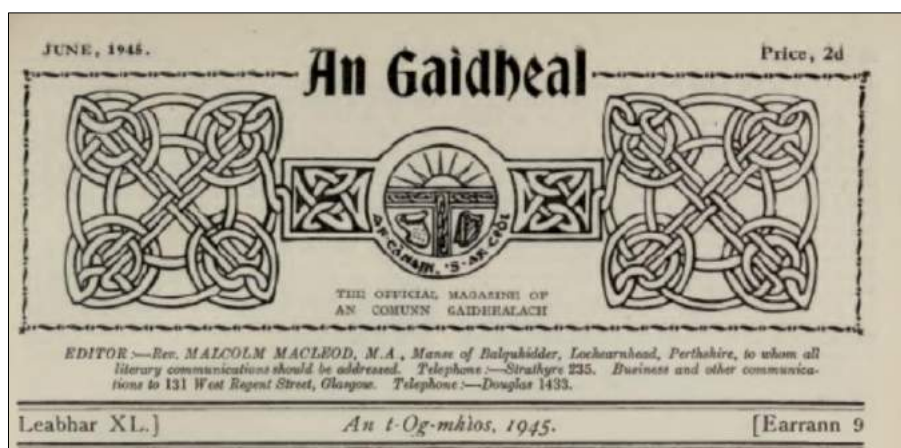
From all I have heard he continued to show the same bravery and powers of leadership, and his death in action after crossing the Rhine is deeply mourned by all ranks of the Seaforth Highlanders.

I pray that you and Mrs Macleod may be comforted in the knowledge of the wonderful part which Donnie had played in the defeat of Germany and it is through great Highlanders like Donnie Beag that the 51st Highland Division has won its great name.

Mrs Houldsworth joins me in deepest sympathy; we were very fond of Donnie

*Yours very truly,
HW Houldsworth, Brigadier*

In June 1945 *An Gaidheal*, a 12-page monthly newspaper published in Scottish Gaelic, included an article on Donnie. Here is an extract transcribed from the original:



Outstanding Gael falls in action

By the death in action in Western Europe of Lieut. Donald Macleod, D.C.M. (Donnie Beag), Seaforth Highlanders, of Achiltibuie, Ross-shire, the Highlands in general and Lochbroom area in particular has lost one of its finest sons. Lieut. Macleod met his death while with the famous 51st Division in the Rhine advance.

Donnie was a general favourite with all who were privileged to know him. He was a fine specimen of a Highlander, standing over six feet, fair complexioned, pleasant manners and a real Gael. He was probably one of our best singers of Gaelic Song in the traditional manner and during his training periods in the Dingwall and Aberdeen Districts, no Ceilidh platform was complete without him. He was also an actor of no mean ability and well I do remember his very fine performance in a Gaelic Play at the Lochbroom Provincial Mod a few years before the outbreak of war. Incidentally, his team won 1st prize in the competition. He took part in a Broadcast Ceilidh from Inverness and his sweet tenor voice and beautiful Coigeach Gaelic delighted thousands of listeners. We mourn the passing of a gallant soldier and a gentleman.

Sadly, **Donnie Beag** and his great friend **Donald Hugh MacLeod** (Hughie) (pp.53-56) died within days of each other. This article appeared in the press a fortnight later.

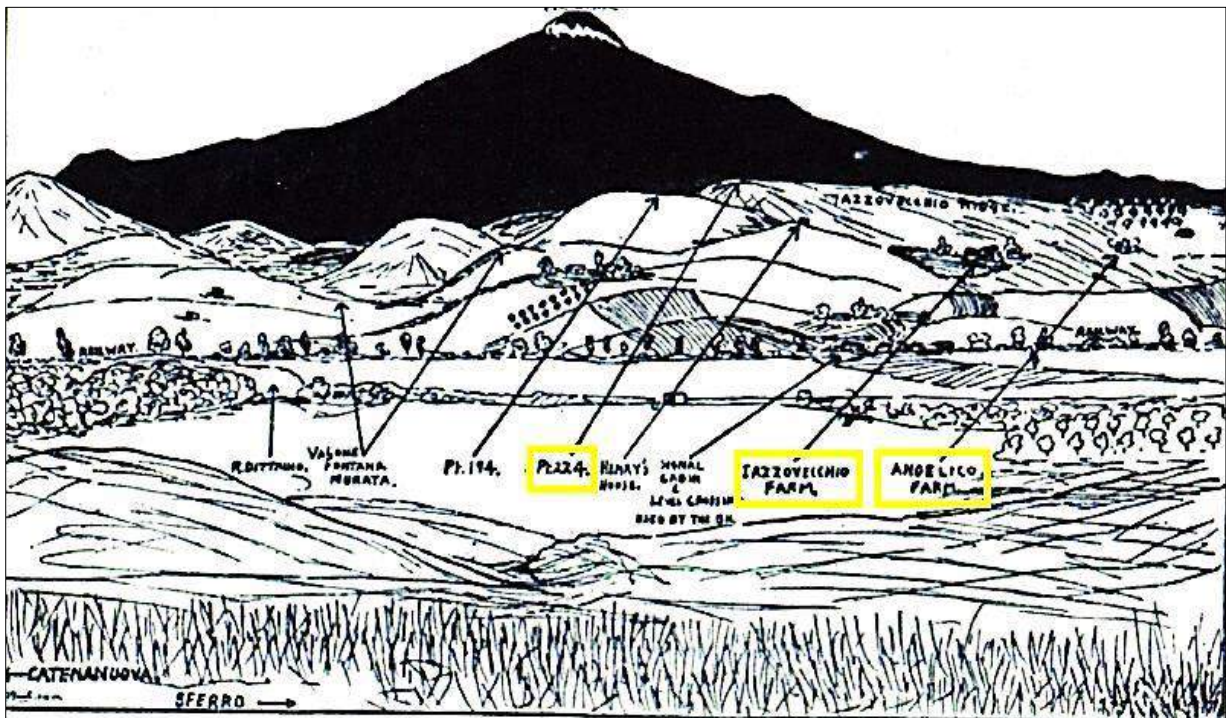


Donald Hugh (Hughie) Macleod, MM
Sergeant, 5th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders
Service No. 2820987
Died of wounds 30th March 1945, aged 22

Prior to enlisting, **Donald Hugh** (Hughie) worked as a plumber and originally came from Croft 157 Achloch in Achiltibuie. He was the son of Jean (Jane) Macleod who later lived in Ullapool. He was born in 1921 - Coigach 075/2 1. Fraser Muir states that he was not in the Territorials prior to the War and did not enlist until after 1940.

The two most significant moments in Hughie's military life are highlighted here:

On 1st August 1943 in the Battle of the **Sferro Hills** he was acting as Intelligence Sergeant. The Division was tasked to take the road from Sferro to Catenanuova but to achieve this it was necessary to clear the enemy of the Sferro hills who were positioned on a line of hills running north-west to south-east. At the north-west end was **point 224**. To the right in a fold in the ground was **Iazzovechio farm** and further right **Angelico farm**, with Mount Etna in the background.



As a result of his conduct, Hughie was awarded the Military Medal.

In lieu of Army Form W 3121.

152 Infantry Brigade 51 Highland Division 30 Corps
 Schedule to Unit 5th Bn The Seaforth Highlanders
 (To be left blank)
 Army No. and Rank 2820987 WS/Sergeant
 Name MOLEOD DONALD Hugh
 (1. Surname to be in CAPITALS. 2. Christian names must be shown (in small letters.))

Date recommendation passed forward.
 Received 9 Aug 45 Passed 10 Aug 45
 Brigade 9 Aug 45 10 Aug 45
 Division 14/8 18/8
 Corps 19 Aug 45 25/8 45
 Army Group 25 Aug 45 7/10 45

Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated)
 Recommended by
 Honour or Award (To be left blank)

In the battle of the Sferro Hills on the 1st August 1943 Sgt Hugh Moleod was acting as Intelligence Sgt. Although it was a very dark night he rode his M/C up and down the columns over the roughest ground to ensure that no elements of the Bn missed their way. His special responsibility was to guide up the vehicle columns in which were included the carriers and A/Tk guns of the Bn whose early arrival on the objective was vital to the success of the operation. The route was continually under enemy small arms fire particularly at a point where the vehicles had to disperse. Early on Sgt Moleod was wounded in one hand but he made light of it and carried on. It was due to his ceaseless vigil, and energy that all vehicles were successfully directed to their respective locations. When he had completed this task he then went forward on foot to contact the forward Coys. from where he sent back early and accurate reports at a time when the situation was confused and when it was imperative that the Commanding Officer receive immediate information. Finally he was of the greatest assistance in helping the I.O. to establish a Bn O.P. in the area of The Angelico feature, where hand to hand fighting still continued in the adjacent wood well after first light. This WCOs conduct and devotion to duty was of the highest order, his example was an inspiration to all around him and his efficiency and resource throughout a difficult period of over 9 hours contributed in no small manner to the success of the operation.

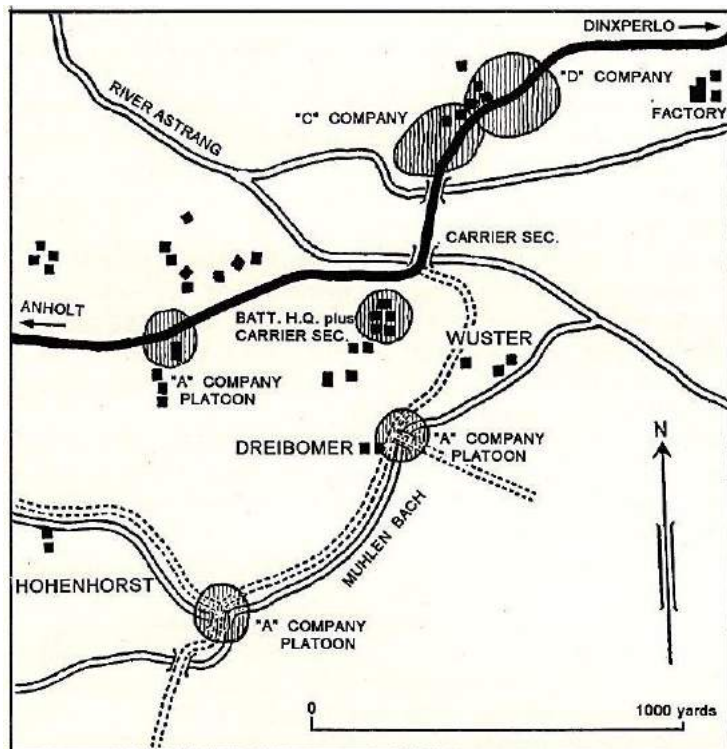
J. Macfarlane Lt-Col., Commanding, 5 Seaforth
P. H. H. H. H. Brigadier, 152 Infantry Brigade.
W. J. W. J. W. J. W. Maj-Gen., Commander, 51 (H) Division
B. H. B. H. B. H. B. Lieut-Gen., Commander, 30 Corps.
B. H. B. H. B. H. B. General, Commander, 8th Army.

Distinguished Conduct Medal (Immediate) 17/11/45
 Granted an Immediate M.M.
 General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, 15 Army Group.
 Awarded M.M.
 L.G. 18-11-45
 General, 16236

TNA WO 373/3

The second most significant and tragic event was a few days after the 5th Seaforths crossed the Rhine at dawn on 24th March 1945.

'The Primrose Path Battle' - night of 28th/29th March 1945. The 5th Seaforth supported by a company of the 5th Camerons were instructed to advance and seize the crossings on the Aastrang River and the small tributary the Holtwicker Bach, codenamed Primrose I and Primrose II respectively.



The thrust north would place the Battalion between the German defenders that were still holding Anholt and the Dutch village of Dinxperlo.

From the start, the Battalion Commanding Officer, **Lieutenant Colonel J M Sym**, *"did not like the look of the operation"*. In the early hours of the 29th March his fears came true. The battalion, straddled across the River Aastrang and by now far forward of the other troops, was attacked from two sides and part of it, including his own Battalion Headquarters was overrun.

Extract from: *Battalion* by Alastair Borthwick

"I got the wireless sets in, and then went upstairs to see how Sergeant Macleod was getting on with the lay-out of Battalion H.Q.," said Jack Latta, the Signal Officer. "Just as I reached the top of the stairs, shooting started all over the place. Hughie Macleod was firing a sten round the edge of the front door; and when I got to the hall window there were Germans within a hundred yards, dodging about among the buildings. I started shooting too. Then the hall was full of grey smoke with sparks all through it, and the door came flying off its hinges, and I was lying against the wall. Hughie was groaning at the door. It's funny, but I don't remember a bang at all – just the smoke and the sparks. It was a bazooka. Hughie was dying, and I didn't know that. I dragged him downstairs. There were four other wounded there too. I turned back, and at the top was a German pointing a gun at me and shouting down into the cellar.

Well... what could we do? We could hear more Boche outside, scraping away at the earth and sandbags over the cellar windows. We were helpless, and one grenade would have been the end of us. We put our hands up.

The Colonel and the part of Battalion H.Q. that most mattered were marched off to a house a short distance away.

The Battalion's casualties were fourteen killed and forty wounded. We recovered all our prisoners. Colonel Sym walked in under his own power, after escaping for the third time in two years; when our mortars stonked the area and the Germans fled to the cellars, he had hidden behind a stove and escaped in the confusion.

Early next day our armour was pouring over the bridges. The Germans had cracked, and the hunt was up."

As well as Achiltibuie War Memorial, Hugh is commemorated on Ullapool War Memorial, and also listed on a memorial at the village church of Dinxperlo commemorating the 'fallen for the liberation of Dinxperlo on 29, 30 and 31 March 1945.'

He is also included on the family headstone in Badenscallie Burial Ground.



Photo: Roddie Macpherson

Frederick Bain and Christina Macleod were Donald Hugh's grandparents and Hugh Macleod who died in France in September 1916 was his uncle.

Hugh is buried in **Venray War Cemetery, Netherlands in Plot IV.B.10.**

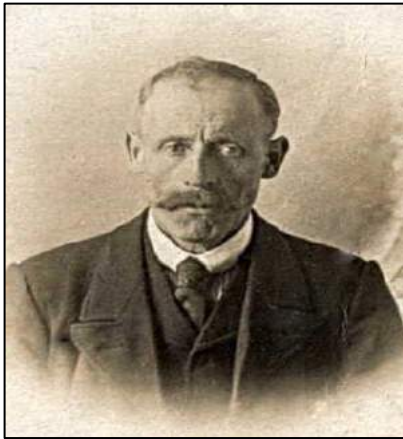


Photo: Fred

DEATH AT SEA

John MacIver
Trimmer, Naval Auxiliary Patrol
***HMS Forfar* (F30)**
Service No. 197164
Died 2nd December 1940 aged 31

Commemorated on Liverpool Naval Memorial on Panel 24.
Son of Simon McIver (1860-1943) and Mary Tullo (1875-1919) (below)



Photos Morag Henriksen

Simon hailed from Scoraig. Mary was born in Elgin. The letter, shown below confirms that she had been appointed as Teacher of the Scoraig Public School in October 1894, with a free house and a croft.

School Board House, Ullapool, 1st October 1894

Madam,

I beg to confirm your appointment as Teacher of the Scoraig Public School under my Board. The Salary, to begin with, to be at the rate of £50 per annum with a Free House and a Croft. Two months notice to be given on either side to terminate the engagement. The House is partly furnished and I enclose herewith a list of the furniture.

The School is due to reopen on the 8th instant and it would be desirable that you should be here by that date or as soon as possible thereafter. The route is by Rail to Garve Station on the Highland Railway hence Mail Coach to here where you stop over-night going on to Scoraig the following day. Arrangements will be made for conveying you from here to Scoraig.

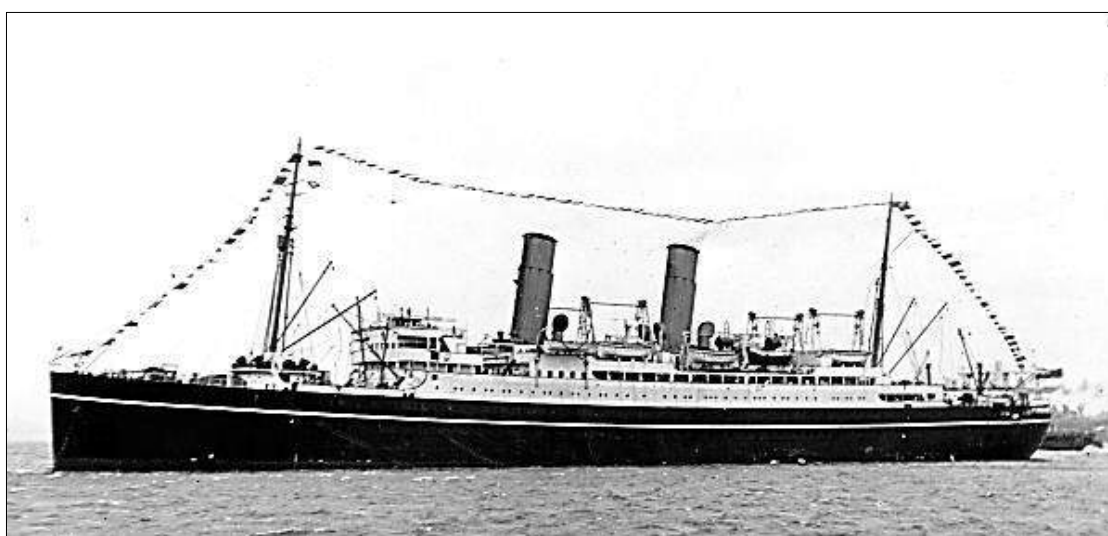
*Yours truly,
Ken Jameson*

Simon and Mary were married on 31st January 1900 at Scoraig Schoolhouse. In 1901 the family was resident at No. 4 Scoraig, Simon aged 41, a boat builder. At some stage before 1907 the family moved to the schoolhouse at Achduart, where Mary was Headteacher. They then moved to Altandhu where John was born on 8th October 1909. He was one of 4 boys and 3 girls. Mary is listed in Souter's Ross-shire Directory as the teacher in 1915.

An obituary for John's older brother Thomas reveals that when the boys were beachcombing in childhood they came across a box that had come from the troopship *ss Laurentic*, which had been sunk by two mines, north of Ireland in 1917. The box contained the ship's logbook.

The ship on which John was serving was previously called the *Montrose*. Sailors' superstitions are that it is unlucky to change the name of a vessel as was proved in this case. On 4 September 1939, *Montrose* was requisitioned by the British Admiralty for World War II service with the Royal Navy and converted to an armed merchant cruiser. Her conversion was completed on 6th November 1939 and she was commissioned into Royal Navy service as *HMS Forfar (F30)*.

On 2nd December 1940 *Forfar*, operating on the Northern Patrol, was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine *U-99* under the command of Otto Kretschmer. *Forfar* was en route to join convoy OB 251 and about 500 nautical miles west of Ireland. Thirty-six officers, including her commanding officer, Norman Hardy, and 136 men lost their lives. The survivors were rescued by the Royal Canadian Navy destroyer *HMCS St. Laurent*, the British destroyer *HMS Viscount*, and the British cargo steamer *Dursley*.



HMS Forfar

Photo : State Library of New South Wales

This article has been included on the **Wartime Memories Project** website by Morag McIver Henriksen

*Trimmer. John "Jocky" MacIver . Royal Navy **HMS Forfar** from Ullapool, Rossshire) (d.2nd Dec 1940)*

*Uncle John McIver was lost in the Atlantic when **HMS Forfar** was torpedoed on 2nd December 1940 a few months before I was born. I never knew him, but my father took me to see his name in the War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle when I was ten.*

*He had been on the Iceland run in **HMS Forfar** and got two weeks' leave to go home to Ullapool while the ship was being refitted to go to Canada in a convoy, which, under the Lease Lend scheme would be met halfway. The family were relieved at this. It seemed safer than the perilous Iceland runs - but it wasn't.*

The headstone of the family grave at Badenscallie Burial ground is littered with lichen and not clear enough to show, but the wording is:

Mary (Tullo) & Simon McIver, sons John & George.

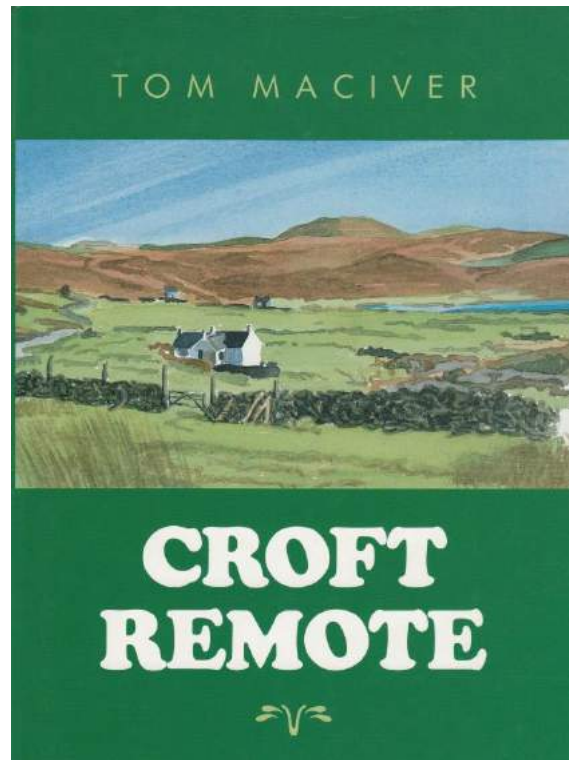
Erected by/her family/in loving memory of/MARY TULLO/beloved wife of/SIMON McIVER Ullapool/died 14 August 1919/also the above/SIMON McIVER/died 9 December 1943/and their youngest son/JOHN/lost on HMS Forfar Dec. 1940/GEORGE died 22/5/77.

Here are some details about one of John's brothers, Thomas.

Thomas MacIver was born 13th June 1907 in Achduart, Coigach. Tom went to school in Altandhu, and finished his secondary school education in Ullapool before attending Glasgow University to study a degree in Arts, and graduated on 17th November 1928. After graduation, and completing his teacher training at Jordanhill College, MacIver became a teacher at Plockton High School in 1929. In 1936 he became headmaster at Kyle of Lochalsh Primary School. He served in the Home Guard during the Second World War and in 1947 became headmaster of Marnoch Primary School. He later worked as a further education officer in Skye and then Dingwall.



Tom MacIver helped found the Ross-shire branch of the Liberal Party in 1959 and was awarded an MBE for services to politics. He was also a keen supporter of the Gaelic movement and a good friend of Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean. He also enjoyed writing and reciting his own humorous Scots verse. In 1994 Tom wrote a book called *Croft Remote* about a young boy called Murdo, based on his own experiences of growing up in the West Highlands.



At the age of 102 he was invited to be the chieftain of the Coigach Gathering and when he died in April 2014, in Kingussie, Thomas MacIver was Scotland's oldest man at the age of 106.

James (Bunnie) Maclean Mackenzie
Able Seaman
Royal Navy, *H.M.S. Repulse*
Service No. D/JX 169450
Died 10th December 1941 aged 22
Commemorated on Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 47, Column 3.

James was born in 1919, the son of Angus (1881-1960) and Morag Mackenzie née Maclean (1890-1983), of Polbain.



Ullapool Secondary School Group with Dan Macleod (headmaster) 1934 – 2nd Row 2nd girl to left Anne Mackenzie, Polbain. Her Brother James (Bunny) Mackenzie r.h. end bottom row . Acknowledgement: Joyce Ingledew

Following Ullapool School, James attended Dingwall Academy. He then began an Arts course at Aberdeen University in 1938. On the outbreak of war he joined the Royal Navy and trained as a Seaman. He was drafted to ***H.M.S. Repulse***, and lost his life on 10 December 1941 when his ship was sunk off the Malay coast.

Joyce Ingledew, niece of James has made available on the internet the following information and allowed me to use it. She has in her possession the photo of him (overleaf) and a brooch/tie pin of the ship that he sent his mother. Joyce states that her mother Anne was 13 years old and visiting a neighbour when she heard the announcement on the radio that the ship had sunk. She had to decide whether to go home and tell her mother. Joyce has the telegram and

letter sent from Captain Tennant who was commanding *HMS Repulse* at the time of her sinking.

Extracts from Newspaper article about James (Bunny) Maclean Mackenzie
Posted 5th February 2003 in **The Southern Daily Echo** by Ron Wain



WATERY GRAVE: *HMS Repulse*, which sank on December 10, 1941 and inset, James Maclean Mackenzie.

James Maclean Mackenzie died when Japanese warplanes torpedoed a British warship convoy in the Second World War. His Hampshire niece discovered the last letters sent by him to his mother.

RON WAIN reports... FEW could imagine her grief as she pored over his words. It was the last letter from her sailor son, written while on a British battleship that was to be torn apart by torpedoes dropped by Japanese warplanes.

Of course, Morag Mackenzie had already feared the worst as she read what her beloved James, 22, had to say. Mundane it may have been, but to a devoted mother every word tugged at the heart. The Scottish crofter's wife had already been informed that James – nicknamed Bunny – was missing. So when that conversational letter came, full of chatter about home affairs, she had hoped it was perhaps penned from a prisoner-of-war camp. It was not to be. Able Seaman James was one of 436 men who died when HMS Repulse sank following the intense air strikes by the Japanese on December 10, 1941, 50 miles off the coast of Kuantan, Malaya.

The poignant correspondence between a mother and son during wartime has been revealed for the first time by Southampton music teacher Joyce Ingledew. James was her uncle and Morag her grandmother, whom she cared for until the mother-of-five died at the age of 95. Joyce, 48, from Bursledon, said: "At the same time the old family home in the north of Scotland, which would have gone to Bunny as the eldest, has ended up in my hands, which is strange as my mother was the youngest of a large family who

have all died.

“I love the place and felt I needed to find out more about the family.

“What I find so interesting is reading the letters in hindsight.

“My grandmother received the last letter after James was posted missing. The postman held it back until one of the family was there with my grandmother.”

*The 32,000-ton **Repulse** was joined at the bottom of the sea by fellow battleship **HMS Prince of Wales**, bringing the combined death toll to 840.*

Both warships were part of the heavyweight Force Z, but the British loss has been often overlooked because of the havoc wreaked on the American Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbour, on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, three days earlier. That undeclared act of war by Japan brought the USA into the Second World War; an estimated 3,000 naval and military personnel had been killed or injured.

Back in 1941, James would often write to his mother from Repulse – a Portsmouth-based ship which Lord Louis Mountbatten of Romsey served on in 1921. One of James’s earlier letters to his mum in 1940 echoed a moving Second World War song – We’ll Meet Again – immortalised by Forces’ sweetheart Vera Lynn. He said: “Glad to hear John got a job at last, I may meet up with him some sunny day, who knows.”

The Royal Navy man had every reason to be philosophical, for death shadowed millions of people like him. That was why every letter sent to anxious mothers and fathers back home was proof that, thank God, their son or daughter was alive. Morag had already gone through the agony of thinking James was dead because of Nazi propaganda that was aired nightly on British radio by hate figure Lord Haw-Haw. Lord Haw-Haw – whose signature opening Germany calling, Germany calling – heralded each lie-packed broadcast – claimed in 1940 that HMS Repulse had already met a sticky end. James later wrote to his mother: “Sorry to hear Haw-Haw’s recounting of imaginary triumphs over Repulse, etc, troubled you, but you will be wiser next time.

In another letter to Morag, who lived on remote farmland near Ullapool in Scotland, James sought to give her reassurances as to his welfare. He penned: “Well re myself, I can only give you the old formula – alive, afloat and well.”

What came out of James’s letters was his relish of family life, of his joy at receiving morale-boosting gift parcels, and his sensitivity to others. And so to this man’s last letter home, dated December 1, 1941.

“Dear Mother, thanks very much for your letter and parcel, which I had yesterday. Life with me is much as usual and I was pleased to hear likewise of you.

“I expected you would have grim weather about this time of year.

“The parcel was very nice indeed, but sad to say, as in the case of the former parcel, the biscuits received a somewhat rough handling but were edible nevertheless.”

James, who left university to enlist, went on: “Correspondence between us has been very irregular and unsatisfactory since I went back off leave, due, I suppose, to the disorganisation caused by air raids so do not be alarmed if you do not hear regularly from me. This letter is in reply to yours of the 20th Nov.

"I wrote Nan a few days ago, but have received no letters so far. In fact you are the only ones with whom I am in communication at present.

"I intend to send Christmas cards here and there but am doubtful if I can get any, or in time. Well, it looks as if this will be the first birthday spent away from home.

"However, I can't complain having had 21 at home. Closing now, hoping Dha, Rhoda, Heckie and all around are in their usual place."

James signed off simply: "Yours Bunny."

Nine days later he was dead. No doubt his mother would have cause to reread those heart-wrenching letters, and reflect on James's words to her about being alive, afloat and well.

If only, my darling son, if only.

This is the grave of the Mackenzie family at Badenscallie Burial Ground.



Photo: Clare Church

ROYAL AIR FORCE DEATH

Pilot Officer Charles Harkness
Air Gunner, 75 Squadron
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
Service No. 121958
Died 29th July 1942 aged 28

The connection with Coigach is that Charles' mother Murdina (Ina) – née Mackenzie - was born in Polbain in 1873. Her parents were married in 1859 at Assynt.

21	Murdina McKenzie	1873, May Sixth	♀	Donald McKenzie Fisherman		1877, May 10 th at Althochain
		1.40 P.M.		Ann McKenzie Mrs. Macleod	his Father	Thomas McKenzie Esq.
		Polbain Coigach		1859 Assynt	Mr. McKenzie Esq. 107th St.	
Thomas McKenzie Registrar.						

Murdina's siblings were Kenneth (1865-1907), Henrietta (1876-1942) and Annabel (1868-1951). In 1881 the family was living at Nigg, Farm of Ankerville with Donald employed as a farm labourer. Ten years later Murdina was aged 17, a general servant at Old Dornie Farmhouse, working for Donald and Mary Macleod.

Murdina married Charles Harkness in 1901, chief steward on MacBrayne's steamers. The marriage certificate states that Charles Harkness age 26, ship's steward married Murdina McKenzie age 25 at Bridge Street Station Hotel, Glasgow on 20th March 1901. They were both living at 103 Smith Street, Glasgow. Charles's father was John, a railway guard, and mother Jane was deceased. Murdina's parents were Donald, crofter (deceased) and Anne. Witnesses were Bella Harkness and Robert Finlay. In 1914/15 Charles served on the ship *Chieftain*.

Charles (junior) was born on 9th July 1914 at 167 Langside Road, Glasgow, the family home. He had older siblings, Donald and Jane (Jean). According to Iain Mackenzie Fidlin, Roddie Shaw (who died in 1945 – see pp. 73-74) was a best pal of Charles's, along with Donnie Campbell.

Father Charles died on 17th March 1923 aged 48, with daughter Jane present. He had been ill with pneumonia for 10 days. Murdina then moved a few doors to No. 221 Langside Road and remained there until at least 1939.

Son Charles enlisted as a volunteer with the Royal Air Force.

His final movements are:

28/07/1942 – Attack Against Targets at Hamburg

Seventeen aircrafts were detailed to carry out an attack on the above target. Bomb load of 4000lbs, 30lb and 4lb incendiaries was dropped in target area and bursts were seen in dock area. Anti-aircraft fire was very accurate and there were many accurate searchlight cones in parts but clear over target. Six aircraft failed to return to base, including Charles's

Wellington Mk.III X.3558 AA-Z.

The crew on Charles's aircraft were:

Sgt. Alexander George Sutherland, RNZAF NZ405340 – Pilot.

W/O George Ernest Shones, RAFVR 564432 – Observer.

Sgt. Adrian Oscar Tabor, RNZAF NZ411104 – Wireless Operator.

P/O Charles Harkness, RAFVR 121958 – Front Gunner.

Sgt. Ian Gordon Stewart, RNZAF NZ404623 – Rear Gunner

The Wellington was probably hit by anti-aircraft fire over or near the target city and crashed near Cuxhaven, northern Germany. All the crew perished. They were buried in the **Central Cemetery Brackeswalde**, but later reinterred at **Becklingen War Cemetery**. Charles is buried in **Grave 27.A.14** .

*A beloved son and brother,
Until the day break,
And the shadows flee away*

His mother Murdina died in 1951 aged 75.



DEATH FROM NATURAL CAUSES

Norman Mackenzie
Private, Seaforth Highlanders
Service No. 2822659
Died 19th May 1941 aged 25

Son of Duncan and Katie Mackenzie née McKay of 126 Polglass, Achiltibuie, who had married on Christmas Day 1913 in Dingwall. Duncan was 37 and Katie 28. Her address was Caledonian Hotel, Dingwall. It is guessed that she was working at that establishment.

(Page 16.)

1913 MARRIAGES in the Parish of *Dingwall* in the County of *Highland*

No.	When, Where, and How Married.	Signatures of Parties. Rank or Profession, Whether Single or Widowed, and Relationship (if any).	Age.	Usual Residence.	Name, Signature, and Rank or Profession of Father. Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother.	If a regular Marriage, Signatures of officiating Minister and Witnesses. If irregular, Date of Celebration, Name of Celebrant, or Sheriff's Warrant.	When & Where Registered and Signature of Registrar.
31	1913. on the Twenty-fifth day of December at <i>Maras's Restaurant, Ghurks Street, Dingwall.</i>	<i>(Signed) Duncan Mackenzie Small Landholder</i>	37	<i>126 Polglass Achiltibuie.</i>	<i>Roderick Mackenzie Crofter (deceased) and Mary Mackenzie M. Mackenzie</i>	<i>(Signed) J. Macfarlane</i>	1913. December 26 th at <i>Dingwall.</i>
	<i>After Banns according to the form of the Free Church of Scotland.</i>	<i>(Signed) Katie Mackay Gymnasium (Spinster)</i>	28	<i>Caledonian Hotel, Dingwall.</i>	<i>Christopher Mackay Farm Servant and Flora Mackay M. Mackenzie</i>	<i>(Signed) James Mawdsie Witness Gitta M. Gregor Witness</i>	<i>William Dunc Assistant Registrar D.D.</i>

Norman died of sickness on 19th May 1941 in Culduthal Hospital, Inverness; the cause of death was tuberculous meningitis, certified by Edward Mills MB ChB. It is suggested that he never went overseas. Alternatively he could have died when on leave. His occupation here is listed as Farm Worker (Private Seaforth Highlanders).

309	<i>Norman Mackenzie Farm Worker (Private Seaforth Highlanders) Single</i>	<i>1941 Mackenzie 25 years Culduthal Hospital, Inverness 126 Polglass Achiltibuie</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Duncan Mackenzie Crofter Catherine Mackenzie M.S. McKay (deceased)</i>	<i>Tuberculous Meningitis, As cert. by Edward Mills M.B.Ch.B.</i>	<i>Duncan Mackenzie Father</i>	<i>1941 May 20th As per G. Macfarlane Registrar</i>
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G. Macfarlane
Registrar

Norman is buried **Coigach (Badenscallie) Burial Ground** in **Grave 136**.



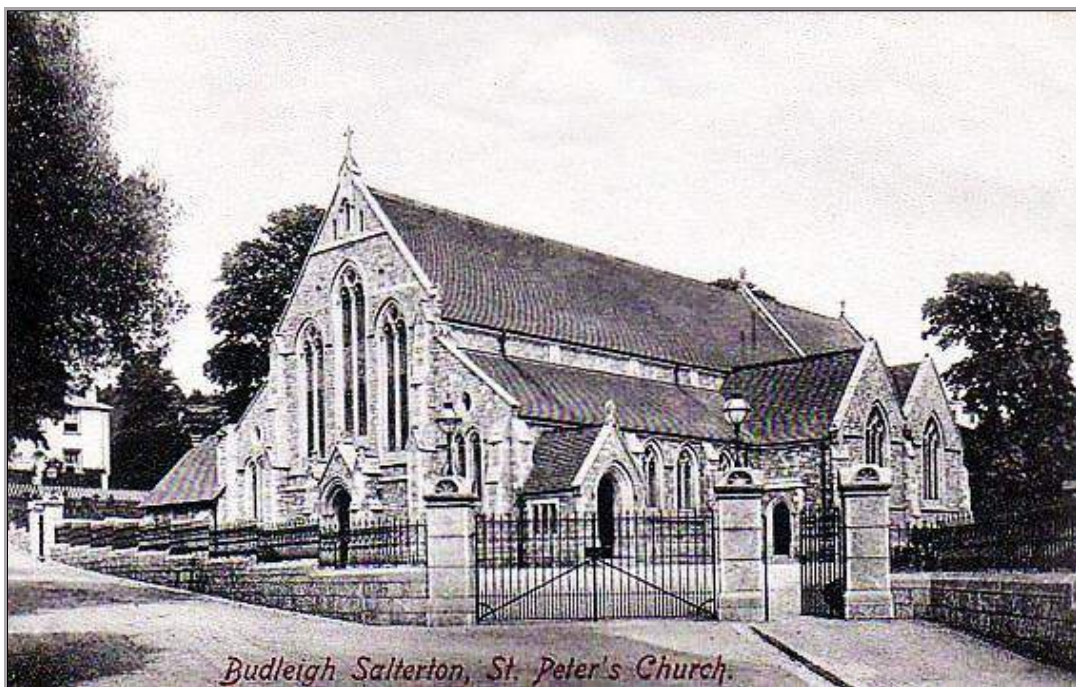
Photos: Roddie Macpherson

Another son, Roderick was wounded (announced in the Ross-shire Journal on 28th July 1944). Other siblings were Chrissie and Mary Anne.

Albert George Watkins
Private 1st Battalion Devonshire Regiment
Attached to 7th South Lancashire Regiment
Service No. 5628256
Died 15th October 1944 aged 29


Son of Thomas and Elizabeth Watkins (née Davies), husband of Margaret Watkins (née Macleod) of Achiltibuie, Garve, Ross Cromarty. **Albert** was born in the summer of 1915 and the twin of Walter Victor. Older siblings born in Budleigh were Irene in the Spring of 1912, and John Noel on Christmas Day 1913.

Albert married **Margaret Macleod** in The Parish Church, Budleigh Salterton, Devon on 20th April 1940.



Albert was aged 24, occupation gardener of 1 Greenway Lane, Budleigh Salterton (the family home). His father Thomas was also a gardener. Margaret was living at Kingsgate, Granary Lane, Budleigh Salterton. She was born in Achiltibuie on 23rd September 1912. It is noted that neither sets of parents were witnesses to the marriage so it is suspected they were not in attendance. The witnesses were friends/acquaintances living in nearby roads in Budleigh Salterton.

Why Margaret was living in Devon and whether she was working in the area is a mystery. A suggestion is that she was 'in service', but no occupation is listed on the Marriage Certificate. Margaret's parents were Duncan, a crofter and Bella née Mackenzie, whose son Alexander also perished in WW2 (pp. 22-23).


 CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE
 Application Number 8090751/1

1940 Marriage solemnized at The Parish Church of Budleigh Salterton in the Ecclesiastical Parish of Budleigh Salterton in the County of Devon							
No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname
53	20 th April 1940	Albert George Watkins	24	Bachelor	Gardener	Budleigh Salterton Kingsparrow Greenway Lane	Thomas Watkins Gardener
		Margaret Mackenzie	26	Spinster	-	Budleigh Salterton	Duncan Mackenzie Crofter

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by Dennis Jack Gadden de after Banns by me, T. R. Edmunds Vicar.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Albert George Watkins in the Presence of us, Henry James Pinnicomb

Albert was just older than the initial conscription requirements so would not have been asked to register immediately war broke out. By 1942 all male British subjects between 18 and 51 resident in Britain were liable to be called up, with some exemptions. Gardening was not considered to be an exempted occupation.

The outbreak of war in September 1939 found the 1st Devons at Rawalpindi in India, training to become a machine gun battalion. At some stage Albert was attached to the 7th Battalion South Lancashire Regiment, which was raised in 1940 and stationed in India from October 1943 to the end of the war. It is not known whether Albert left the UK with the 1st Devons, or was attached to the 7th South Lancs before departure.

The 7th Battalion left Liverpool on the 31st August 1943 destination Bombay, where they received orders that they were earmarked for internal security duties at Jubbulpore and Nagpur. For jungle training of British troops the 52nd Infantry Brigade was formed at Budni in Bhopal State. It consisted of the 20th Battalion The Royal Fusiliers, 7th Battalion The South Lancashire Regiment and 12th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters. Here British infantry reinforcements undertook two months' training in the forest before going to active battalions. Albert never rejoined the 1st Devons because he died on 15th

October 1944. The death certificate states that the cause of death was polio encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). He was initially buried at Bairagarh near Bhopal.

Return of BURIALS at Bhopal, C.I.

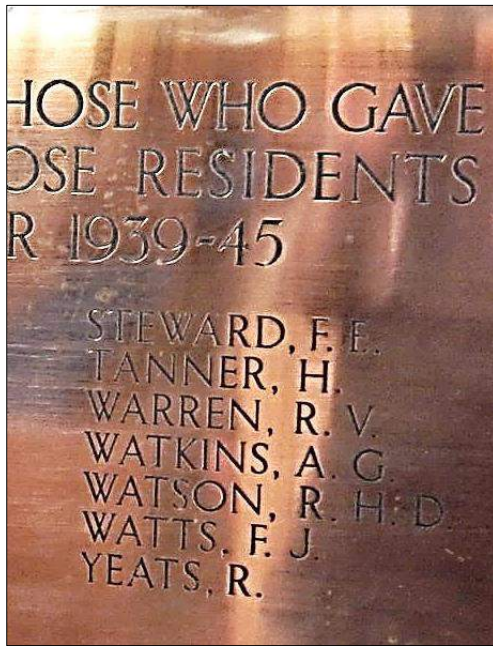
(Being an extract from the Register of Burials)

Serial No.	When Died.			Christian name.	Surname.	Age.	Nationality, Quality, Trade or Profession, &c. &c.	When Buried.			Cause of death.	Taken by whom?		
	Year.	Month.	Day.					Year.	Month.	Day.		Full name.	Designation.	Signature.
	1944	oct	5	ARTHUR	Brown	32	803576 Pte Att'd 7th South Lancs Regt.	1944	oct	5	Fracture of spine	C.P.N. Rowland	Chaplain	C.P.N. Rowland
	1944	oct	15	ALBERT GEORGE	Watkins	29	5628256 Pte Devonshire Regt. Att'd 7th South Lancs Regt.	1944	oct	16	Polio Encephalitis	C.P.N. Rowland	Chaplain	C.P.N. Rowland

The CWGC lists him as lying in **Kirkee War Cemetery in Plot 8.E.3**, near Poona, 481 miles from Bairagarh. After Independence in 1947 British cemeteries fell into neglect and the decision was taken to concentrate on a few that could be protected and maintained and considered to be safe. Sometime after WW2 his body (along with others) was exhumed and transferred to Kirkee.



Photo: Tony Beck



Albert's name is inscribed on a brass plaque inside St Peter's Church, Budleigh. He is also commemorated on Budleigh Salterton War Memorial, which stands at a high point on the sea shore facing out over Lyme Bay.

Albert's father, Thomas, died on 3rd September 1948 at his home, 1 Greenway Lane, Budleigh Salterton. Elizabeth Ann remained in Devon for the rest of her life, dying in the autumn of 1961 aged 89.

Maggie had 2 children with Albert: (Alexander) Bruce (born in 1941) and Heather.

Maggie returned to Achiltibuie and married for the second time Johnny 'Neil' Macleod in 1949. He came from Polbain. They went to live in Ullapool and had a son Neil. Maggie was widowed again in the early 60s. She died in 2010.

Announcement in the Press and Journal, 9th February 2010.

MACLEOD Peacefully, at Mo Dhachaidh Nursing Home, Margaret, aged 97 years, daughter of the late Duncan and Isabella MacLeod, Big Dornie, Am Meall Dearg, Coigach, sister of Dolina, Alexander, Jessie Alice, Donald and Chrissie. Wife of the late Albert Watkins and the late John MacLeod (Shonnie Neill Mor An Neill). Precious mother of Bruce, Neil and Heather, a much loved grandmother to Marina, Alexander, Calum, Brian, Monica, Roseann and Gavin, a beloved great-grandmother and a friend to many.

Funeral service at 12 midday, on Wednesday, February 10, in the Church of Scotland, Ullapool, thereafter to Badensgallaidh Cemetery, Coigach. All friends respectfully invited. `S Beannaichte Na Mairbh A Gheibh Bas Anns An Tighearna'. Ristol House, Market Street, Ullapool.

Roderick Maclean Shaw
Private, Seaforth Highlanders
Died 26th October 1945 at Polbain aged 33

Son of Roderick, crofter and Catherine née Maclean, who married on 14th February 1902 at Achiltibuie.

Roderick MacLean was born on 25th October 1912 at Polbain.
 His older brother, Donald was born on 6th December 1909.



Shaw Family at Polbain

Photo: CCHG

Roderick's school record was sufficiently good to qualify him for admission to Aberdeen University, and in 1931 he was in the Ordinary Graduation Class.

Roderick (senior) died of coronary thrombosis on 18th May 1942 at Polbain with Roderick Maclean (junior) present at his death. This rather proves that although the latter served with the Seaforth Highlanders he was not overseas in 1942.

The Reg. of Com. Act. M.C. 1. p. 26 25 th June 1902	5	Roderick Shaw Crofter married to Catherine Maclean	19.42... May Eighteenth. 84 30m. 10m Polbain Co. Arg.	M. 33 yrs	Murdoch Shaw Crofter deceased Margaret Shaw nee Maclean dead aged	Coronary Thrombosis 18 th May as certified by D. Wallace M.B. Ch.B.	Roderick Shaw son Present	19 42 May 26 th At Achiltibuie Rod. Maclean Registrar.
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Roderick (junior) died on 26th October 1945 age 33, listed as fisherman at Polbain.

Cause of death Hodgkin's disease – 3 years, pulmonary tuberculosis. Death certified by John P Leggate, MB ChB, West Terrace Ullapool. Donald Shaw, his brother, was present at his death. Roderick was interred at Badenscallie Burial Ground on 29th October.

Mrs Shaw (his mother) died in July 1970 aged 99. She is also buried in Badenscallie Burial Ground.



Photo: Russel Wills

Duncan MacLean
Private, Royal Army Service Corps
Service No. 2820078
Died 13th April 1950, aged 22
Buried in Badenscallie burial ground

Duncan was born in 1928, the son of **Alexander** (1884-1964), a building contractor, and **Rach(a)el née Mackenzie** (1887-1974).

Alexander and Rachel were married on 16th November 1920 at Queen Street United Free Church, Inverness.

Alexander, farmer, bachelor age 36.

Usual residence Achloch, Coigach.

Rachel, domestic servant, spinster age 33.

Usual Residence Altandhu.

Witnesses: Dn Maclean and Catherine Black

Siblings included Kenneth (1920-2003) - nick-name "Desperate Dan"

Occupation: Electric Linesman.

Duncan was called up in 1945 and fell ill when he was training. Fraser Muir remembers the family saying he contracted TB from a 'great coat' while training.

He died of Pulmonary Tuberculosis in County Hospital Invergordon, death registered by his brother. His usual residence was Crofton House, Market Street, Ullapool.,

1950 DEATHS in the District of <u>Roskeen</u> in the County of <u>Ross and Cromarty</u>									
(1.)	(2.)	(3.)	(4.)	(5.)	(6.)	(7.)	(8.)		
No.	Name and Surname, Rank or Profession, and whether Single, Married, or Widowed.	When and Where Died.	Sex.	Age.	Name, Surname, and Rank or Profession of Father, Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Cause of Death, Duration of Disease, and Medical Attendant by whom certified.	Signature and Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if out of the House in which the Death occurred.	When and where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.	
13	<u>Duncan Maclean</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>M.</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>Alexander Maclean</u>	<u>Pulmonary</u>	<u>Brother</u>	<u>1950</u>	
		<u>April</u>		<u>years</u>	<u>Building Contractor</u>	<u>Tuberculosis</u>		<u>April 13th</u>	
		<u>Inverness</u>					<u>Brother</u>	<u>St. Invergordon</u>	
		<u>Private, Royal Army Service Corps.</u>	<u>14. 15. 21. 22. County Hospital, Invergordon.</u>			<u>Rachael Maclean</u>	<u>as cert. by</u>		
		<u>(Single)</u>	<u>Usual Residence: Crofton House, Market Street, Ullapool.</u>			<u>M. S. Mackenzie</u>	<u>James Hood</u>	<u>Crofton House,</u>	<u>J. S. Anderson</u>
						<u>M. B. G. B.</u>	<u>Market Street,</u>	<u>Registrar.</u>	
							<u>Ullapool.</u>		

The family gravestone is very worn and not clear enough to photograph, but the wording is:

Alexander & Rachel (Mackenzie) Maclean, & s.Duncan

Erected/in/loving memory of/our dearly beloved son/DUNCAN MACLEAN/died 13th April 1950/a 22 years/also his parents/ALEXANDER MACLEAN/died 23rd April 1964/aged 81 years/RACHEL MACKENZIE/died 27th Sept 1974/aged 87 years.

Duncan's niece, Rachel A Sutton Hayes writes

“This is the gravestone of my Grandparents & Uncle Duncan who died tragically in Invergordon Asylum of TB. The whole family which included 4 boys & 1 girl (my mother) lived in Achlochan, Coigach. The house which my Grandfather built still stands today. They moved to Ullapool in the early 1940's. My Grandfather was a well-known and highly respected stonemason who built houses etc. in Ullapool and further afield.”

Rachel has provided a document entitled **ACHLOCHAN MEMORIES** which can be found in **APPENDIX D** (pp. 93-94).

NURSES FROM COIGACH

The majority of these notes are extracted from a document in the CCHG archive prepared by Pauline Ward and assisted by two former Health Visitors who gathered information on their predecessors - Beryl Morgan and Margaret Starling. The relatives were very happy to lend photographs to be copied for the archive. Mairi Thornton has also recently provided additional information and photographs after discussion with family members.

Rachael Fraser

Rachael came from North Uist to work in Coigach as a young community nurse, where she met her husband Donnie. She rode a motor bike for her rounds, lodging with Kathie Ann and Allah Macleod at Greenhill. She and Donnie went to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and eventually returned to Coigach with their young family. Rachael continued working as a District Nurse for many years.

Sandy Fraser

Sandy trained as a nurse in Glasgow's Victoria Hospital and later became a radiographer in London. She returned to Coigach where she lived the rest of her life and was a renowned Gaelic singer. Her sisters **Jessie Ferrier (née Fraser)** and **Dolly (Dolina Margaret)** were also nurses. In those days women were required to give up nursing when they started a family as Jessie did just before the war. Their brother Donald Fraser (p. 38) was a Prisoner of War from 1940 to 1945.

Jessie Graham

Jessie trained in the Royal Northern Infirmary, Inverness, and then worked as a District Nurse in Shetland, moving on to work in Perthshire. In 1976 she became the Nursing Officer covering an area including Coigach. Jessie had a sister, Isa, and her brother Robert Graham was captured at St Valéry en Caux on 12th June 1940 and a prisoner of war (p. 39).

Alasdair Maclean from Altandhu and **Angus Macleod** from Badenscallie trained together at Gartnavel Hospital in Glasgow. Alasdair moved to the Southern General Hospital and was then called up to serve with the Royal Army Medical Corps in Southampton. They both returned to Coigach to retire. Alasdair settled in a new house in Altandhu above the Fuaran Bar (which was his original family home). Angus and his wife Sadie retired to Badenscallie. His brothers Kenny and Roddie were still living in Coigach.



Rachael Fraser



Sandy Fraser



Jessie Graham with her brother John



Alasdair Maclean and Angus Macleod



Agnes Maclellan



Kenneth Maclean Macleod and Christina (Chrissie) Ann on their wedding day in 1948

Agnes Macleannan (née Gillies)

Agnes came from the Isle of Lewis. She had trained at the Southern General in Glasgow. In 1942 she came to Coigach as a District Nurse. She received a personal message from Queen Mary acknowledging her nursing service, bringing many Coigach children into the world. In 1944 she married Kenny Macleannan of Blairbuie and had 3 daughters and 2 sons. Two of her daughters also became nurses.

Barbara Macleannan

Much has been written about Barbara in *A Hundred Years of Wester Ross* (2002) by Donald Shaw. – p. 31.

Barbara was born in 1918, grew up in Coigach, one of 13 children. She left school at the age of 15 and went to work in Glasgow. Then, when aged 18 she trained in her chosen profession of nursing. After qualifying she was posted to Italy to deal with troops injured in the front line. Returning to Ross-shire, she worked at the Ross Memorial Hospital, Dingwall, before pursuing a career with the military charity SSAFA, for which she received the MBE. She eventually retired to live in Ullapool. She died in 2001.

Kenneth Maclean Macleod (Kenny) and Christina Ann (Chrissie) Macleod

Kenny came from Badenscallie and trained in Gartnavel Hospital, Glasgow. During WW2 he was a Petty Officer, nursing on aircraft carriers. After WW2 he worked at Craig Dunain, taught at the Royal Northern and then became Night Superintendent in Raigmore, all in Inverness. Kenny retired to Polglass and was elected a Coigach Councillor. Through his efforts the houses at Island View were built.

Chrissie was also a nurse and trained at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. She joined the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps in WW2. She became the Coigach District Nurse after WW2, staying with her brother William 'Uisdean' Macleod.

Katherine Maclean and Lena Macleod

Katherine (née Stewart) from Polglass, and Lena, from Culnacraig, both started their training in Glasgow at the end of the war and worked as Staff Nurses at the Robroystan Hospital. Katherine became a District Nurse in Glasgow until she moved back north with her husband and settled in Invergordon. Lena eventually retired to Inverness. Her sister **Betty** (married name **Cameron**) was also a nurse in Glasgow and attended the Clydebank Blitz (13th-15th March 1941). She retired to Skye with her husband.



Katherine Maclean and Lena Macleod


Nora Macleod (née Macaskill)

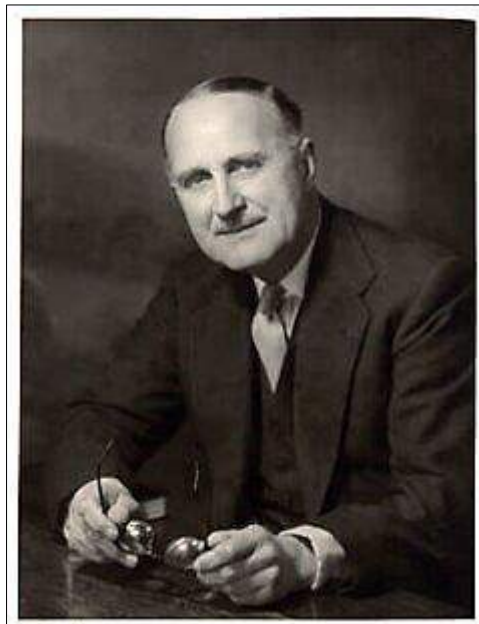
Nora trained in the Western Infirmary in Glasgow. She later joined the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps and went over to Normandy 5 days after the D-Day landings. Nora and her colleagues were nurses in France, Belgium and Holland, running field hospitals for wounded Allied servicemen and also German POWs. She then served in Norway, and in Suez, Egypt. She married Willie 'Uisdean' Macleod in 1952, brought up her family in Polglass, and became a relief district nurse in Coigach. Willie's brother John Alick Macleod (pp. 24-26) was killed in France in June 1940.



Nora Macleod (née Macaskill) in Egypt

UNVEILING CEREMONY OF WW2 NAMES

<p>Unveiling Ceremony</p> <p><i>of</i></p> <p>Coigach</p> <p>War Memorial</p> <p><i>(Tablets to fallen comrades 1939-1945)</i></p> <p>OCTOBER 8th, 1949</p> <p><i>At 3 p.m.</i></p> <p><i>By</i></p> <p>Brigadier H. W. HOULDSWORTH, D.S.O.</p>	<p> BUCKINGHAM PALACE</p> <p>The Queen and I offer you our heartfelt sympathy in your great sorrow.</p> <p>We pray that your country's gratitude for a life so nobly given in its service may bring you some measure of consolation.</p> <p><i>George R.I.</i></p>
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Brigadier H W Houldsworth, D.S.O.

APPENDIX A

ULLAPOOL SEAFORTHS

By Mary Macleod

The story as far as I remember from my father is that as war approached, all the Seaforths territorials knew they would be called up. I think they had formed very close bonds through drill and the summer camps. They gathered round the radio in the Morefield Hotel, Ullapool one of the few in the village at the time, and listened to Chamberlain's speech announcing the war. Dad sold his bike, assuming he would not be needing it and needing the money more. I don't know whether it was the next day, but they all collected for the transport: three buses and a car, according to Dad, and one of them said, 'The car is all they will need to bring us back'. He did not say much about the 'send-off'; I imagine it was still painful to think about the folk saying goodbye who never saw their boys again.

They were billeted in a granary in Dingwall, which was a misery, apparently, it was cold and loads of them got the cold; they then were sent for training down to England and from there were sent to France by boat. As they approached the French coast, one of them, with a wonderful Gaelic voice (I have it in my head that he said Donnie Beag) at the prow of the ship sang Sine Bhan. It is hard to imagine anything more poignant.

At first in France, things were good. They helped with the harvest where they were billeted and got on very well with the local French. The French loved the kilts and bagpipes and the Seaforths were all upset when they had to wear battle dress instead.

My father's great friends were Johnnie MacMillan, his first cousin, Colin Charlie Macleod, and Kenny [Macdonald]. Dad spoke of a lot of laughs, from killing and cooking hens (one of the sergeants was reduced to the ranks for this), to drinking their way through wine cellars. In the North when they were sent up – near Metz – they began to encounter the Germans through brief skirmishes. One story was of one such foray, when the officer in charge was completely confused about where they were and was leading them in the wrong direction and Johnnie Macmillan (who was corporal of their platoon) had an altercation with the officer and said he would shoot him if he didn't go where Johnnie knew was the right direction. All these boys had been poaching on the hills – good practice for that kind of war. They had enormous confidence in Major Fraser, who had been in the Great War, too, in the very area where they were now fighting again. He would join the boys round the fires, said Dad, and

ask his batman for his billycan when he had finished with it and eat with them, the same food – a great officer.

They were then transported back through North France to south of the Somme at Abbeville where the June 4th attack took place, with the B company of the 4th Seaforths leading the direct assault on the German positions, up through fields of June grain. The night before, they were billeted at the hamlet and chateau of Les Alleux. Dad said that all the boys were reading their Bibles. I imagine that with the fear of hell drummed into them in church, death and meeting their maker was perhaps even more terrifying.



They were told by Major Fraser to shoot low – disable not kill – at least that is how Dad understood it. They were also told they had to carry on even when any of them went down. When Dad was wounded, shot in the thigh, his cousin Colin Charlie [Macleod] bent down and said, 'Sorry, Jimmy'. As he stood up he was shot in the head in front of Dad. There were a number of them wounded in the corn field. Dad began to move

back but was shot again. They all lay still for an hour or so until bullets stopped coming over then crawled backwards. Dad was taken off in a stretcher and told the medics that another Kenny was still out there. He did not ever know until we were in France that Kenny was picked up. We knew he was because his grave we found in a cemetery further south.



Photos: Clare Church

[Kenny is buried in the same cemetery as other men from the 4th Seaforths, Mareuil-Caubert Communal Cemetery, in Plot 1, Row C, Grave 18].

Dad knew Kenny was dying because he had been shot in the stomach and was in a bad way. He just wanted to know he had died with his own people and not out in a field.

As you will know from the Linklater account, of a 100 in B company, only 17 were not killed or wounded in that action. I feel very lucky that my Father was one of the wounded and that he was lucky enough to have a surgeon treating him who saved his arm, which was on the point of being amputated. He mourned Colin Charlie and Johnnie all his life. I was so glad that I was able to take him and my Mother to France to visit their graves.

They never ever knew what had happened to Johnnie MacMillan. There were stories that he had died, having been shot while trying to escape – that would have been in Johnnie's nature, said Dad. He would not have wanted to be a prisoner. His grave is in Dunkirk cemetery, to the North, which bears out that theory.



Dunkirk Town Cemetery

CWGC

APPENDIX B:

HECTOR MACKENZIE'S MEMORIES

Hector Donald Mackenzie says :

“The story starts with my father working on the Braemore estate planting trees. I'm not sure where their Bothy was but I do know that most of the social activities took place in the village hall in Inverlael, now recently replaced with a new building . I have in the past met some of his former friends and they spoke of their experiences of parading on Fridays in the Ullapool drill hall. No guns or the like were involved, just marching.

When the call up came the boys were piled into the back of an open lorry. I believe it was hired from the local shopkeeper in Polbain, Donald Macleod. That lorry returned to Polbain and was used in the maintenance of the peat road until the late 1950s. The billet that was used in Dingwall is still there on the Inverness side of town. I got the impression from my father that there were some hijinks thieving each other's kit and general banter.

In the first few months of the war Dad was burned and had to go to hospital. On his discharge from hospital, he was because of the rapid German advance, unable to join his unit. They had fallen back with the intention of getting out of France towards Dieppe. They didn't get that far and Dad re-joined his unit where they made their last stand at St Valéry. Out of ammunition and surrounded, the Seaforths were hammered by heavy mortars. Forced to surrender my father said that some of the men thought they should have fought to the last man.

I do know that the majority of the men had little faith or respect for their officers. That's hardly surprising as the rank and file separated from their officers were made to march across France through the town of Lille. By this time the general state of the men's health was deteriorating as they had diarrhoea and they were not allowed to get out of line to relieve themselves. Rations were non-existent and Dad said the men would pull the heads off sunflowers and pick up corn to try to ward off the pangs of hunger. Later on in their captivity they were loaded into barges for their trip to Germany. This lasted several days. During the journey Dad described the meagre rations as hard bread and lard. I know the food in the camp was predominantly vegetable based; the protein part came in the form of occasional sausage.

The remainder of the journey was by cattle cars to Poland and internment.”

To fill in some of the details, here are some extracts from tape recordings of Hector made later in his life by his son-in-law Kenny MacDonald.

“We were only in Dingwall about a week, mostly practising marching, and kit inspections. I was still in my kilt and sporran, with long johns with legs cut off to keep me warm. Then overnight to Aldershot by train. We marched to the barracks. No basic training took place in Aldershot, where we stayed for maybe a month. We were issued with full kit, a rifle, and 5 rounds of ammunition.

Then on a train to Portsmouth, and via ferry to Dieppe. On arrival we were ordered to stay on the pier till given orders, but got fed up with this and went into town for a few beers. Back to pier and everybody had gone! Went to the maritime station and caught up with the rest. Marched to Lille on the Belgian border. This took about a day. Practised unarmed combat. In Lille for quite a time. Told to stay in cookhouse to help cook. A petrol stove caught on fire. Both my arms were burnt and I was sent to hospital. From there I was sent to Le Mans. I eventually re-joined the 4th Seaforths in Lille. The Germans were advancing and the retreat from Lille to St Valéry took about one day.

We were handed over in St Valéry, and forced to give up. The following morning I picked up a man who was lying on the ground (the Germans were going to shoot him) and carried him all day. Slept on the ground, the men were alive with lice. Heading east from St Valéry. Hoping to escape but couldn't because heavily guarded. Back to Lille over several days.

Went to Lamsdorf. There about a year. Wouldn't volunteer for work. In the end was tricked into moving to a work group building a railway siding, carrying railway lines at Laband. Too heavy to manage so got extra help. Working there for about 2 years. Then sent to a coal mine because I wasn't working hard enough. About 20/30 men were sent there. Worked at the coal face and filling wagons. Red Cross parcels started arriving. There about two months. Kept pretending I was unfit.

*Escaped from the coal mine with 3 others; I had a map and compass which my Irish friend had obtained. Escaped via the adit in the coal mine. We put boot polish on the back of our overalls which had a white **E** on it. It was moonlight. Got outside the wire of the coal mine. The 4 of us kept going easterly. It started raining, the boot polish got washed off. Going towards Poland. We split up, I stayed with the Irishman. The trouble was I had the wrong map and the Germans had changed the names of Polish towns so not sure where we were. We went for 2 days without sleep, eventually into woods to rest; a wolf came*

nearby in the middle of the night and woke me up. We had in our satchels chocolate, oatmeal and sugar from Red Cross parcels.

We carried on walking using the compass, following roads. 6 German police were standing at a road junction; we walked past them towards the Polish border. The policemen were watching us. We followed the river up the hill to the border. We had a sleep by a bush, and woke up and saw 4 German jackboots nearby. We shot off over the ridge to the other side. 200 German soldiers were sent after us. Then Polish Underground got us and allowed us to sleep in a loft. I spoke bad Polish, and the locals thought I was Ukrainian. We were given food, and an English speaking Polish man came along. Put onto horse and cart, two Poles and Irish friend and myself. Taken across the hills. The cart stopped at a little village.

The following day and for the next six months we lived in the woods in an old house. There we were eating good food, and drinking vodka. We lived in luxury. We got money from the bank in the town. We eventually decided to head on and got to Krakov. We had no change of clothes, and were still wearing the overalls underneath our khaki uniforms. We started walking through forest, and still heard wolves at night. Walking south, didn't know whether we were in Germany or Poland. I still had the compass. The ground was sandy soil, like a beach, but hundreds of miles inland. We sat down by the river Vistula at Krakov. A civilian Polish man said "don't go near the water." Germans were watching the river. Ukrainian guards were on the bridge over the river. We decided to go straight to the bridge and say who we were and want to cross. Went to get my Irish friend (I had said 10 of us were there). We went back to the town and asked for police station because we couldn't cross the river. The Underground people said the police in Krakov were OK. We had a lump of pork which we had been given and were asked if it had been pinched. We said we had just found it. Went to a prison. The following day we were interrogated whilst dressed in British Uniform; the navy blue overalls had been given away. We were sent to army prison for a fortnight.

Then sent back by train to the camp from which we had escaped. It took two days. Then interrogated again. We said if we go down the mine again, we will escape again. So then in the coal mine, working on the top. I had this special guard. Then sent back to Lamsdorf for punishment. I was up at 6.00 and made to run around the compound for much of the day. This lasted for 2 weeks. Then back to the coal mine, taking slag to the slagheaps. I was there for six months.

The Russians were advancing from the east by this time. The Germans started moving us out, marching to the north-west. It was sheer madness to try to escape. We were out in the open, in cold wintry weather. We slept in a barn.

The guards left us on our own. An Englishman called Curly and I left our boots on and we escaped. We weren't worried at all. We walked towards the east. We found a little village. Spoke to villagers. No soldiers there. Some had thrown their uniforms away, now civilians. There about a week. Slept in an empty school house, abandoned. No blankets. Wearing uniforms. A young boy got us some food, but I didn't trust him. One tank came into the village. This was the first time I saw metal burning. German Stukas had bombed it. The schoolhouse was virtually knocked down. Australian and NZ escapees also in the schoolhouse. I knew them, had worked with them before.

Next day the Russians came in. We were told to go along with them. Taken back to the coal mine, stayed outside. Slept in stables for the night. Then started marching again eastwards. Some food, not an awful lot. Marching quite a lot, then in goods trains, very cold. It took two days. Reached Krakov for the second time; Russians didn't do any damage to Krakov. We lived in the train carriages about a month, very cold. We could walk about if wanted to. After that the train started moving east, stopped at villages for a day or two, making way for the troops, clearing the line for other trains.

We were heading for the Black Sea, Odessa. There for 2 days. Across Black Sea to Port Said, Egypt on the 'Highland Princess'. Conditions on the boat, we slept on the floor, cold. Mostly prisoners on board. In Port Said a couple of days. A mixed crowd on the ship, Australians, New Zealanders who had been prisoners. We sailed past Malta, up the west coast of Italy to Naples, past Gibraltar, up the Portuguese coast. It was fortunately calm. To Liverpool, then sent south. I had no idea who was in charge on the ship. Eventually went north to be demobilised. Then, of course I was free to wander about in Glasgow

Hector's son, Hector Donald Mackenzie has stated :

"He did however form lasting friendships. In the 1990s Dad went to Jersey to meet up with the Irishman he escaped with from the mine. He mentions this in the tapes. As a young boy I remember men visiting and they would chat about their experiences and show photos. Some of the photos were of theatre productions or just of young men in various uniforms. There were photos of Dad in uniform and as a prisoner of war. They have been given to our relations in Canada or New Zealand . I think my cousin has a photo of him in a Cossack type hat. My brother has a wooden spoon that my father had his first meal with after escaping and meeting up with the Poles. Dad spoke fluent German and Polish. He had a great respect for the Polish folk.

What is not in the tapes is the account of Dad's Sister Agnes (Annie) who after the news of St Valéry walked every day from Polbain to the post office in Achiltibuie, hoping to get news if he had survived . There were no phones in the Polbain."

APPENDIX C:

WILLIAM GEORGE MACKENZIE'S MEMORIES Prisoner of War

Extract from a tape recording when he was interviewed in 2003, aged 86.

Thanks are due to his daughter **Ann Irvine** for providing this information.

"We were using 1918 equipment, let down, marched long distance across to Poland on foot then barges up the Rhine then on cattle trucks, 70 to a truck, and suffering badly from various problems, landed in this country where we didn't know where we were and couldn't understand the language. We suffered fairly badly from dysentery and were in a pretty bad way. We were set into huts and once we settled down we were sent out in work parties. We were south of Danzig. The Germans were pretty rough on us. We were winning the war and we got the rough end of the stick. The British Red Cross helped us to survive otherwise we wouldn't have – no way.

The years went by and somehow or other passed by until after 4 years heading for 5 we marched off again this time in deep snow in January 1945 and we marched along the Baltic coastline which was very very cold. We were put up in barns until eventually we couldn't find the steps up to the loft and we had to lie down anywhere. We got a little corner for shelter. However we were reached by the Americans in the northern part of Germany in 1945 and it was a wonderful feeling to have freedom again. I shall never experience that again I don't think in my life so anyway I am here today, alive at 86. I consider myself quite lucky. I have left a lot of good friends behind who won't come back.

At the time of D Day on 6th June 1944 were you folks who were in prisoner of war camps getting any news about it?

We were actually working in a German barracks. It was called Galvids Caserne. We marched underneath the Nazi flag every day. 5 of us were taken in there and we got this particular job at a scrap merchant's; because we couldn't help the enemy, we could only break things and this was something we were told to do although lots of our mates did not adhere to that. However we were in there and we were then breaking up vehicles so that was our job then.

Now you mention D-Day, what was I doing on D-Day? We were getting news. There was a party of 5 who worked in the German barracks, no it was a civilian electrical works and they managed to get the Germans to bring them

parts of a radio and we had some very able men amongst us and this fellow constructed a radio. We brought it in in haversacks, and bit by bit under the eyes of the guards and we were never sure whether we would have a spot search which was very frequent. However, if we were caught with that you can understand what would have happened. From the size it was 6" x 6" and we got news then.

One of our men went out into the toilet at night - there were 25 of us in this converted garage which we had in the prison camp - and he went out and got the news and brought it to us and actually we were in contact from the time of the Sicily landings until a month after D-Day when word came through that the Gestapo were on our watch. They had got some knowledge of us having news and the news was passed round during the daytime when we were sitting on our toilet seats. But we had to destroy the radio and set bits of it up here and there and so we got away with that.

So that was the story of where I was then, working quite a while and the conditions were really terrible. We were hungry, lousy, and suffering from various complaints. It was very nice to hear about D-Day".

APPENDIX D:

ACHLOCHAN MEMORIES

Extract from a document written by *Duncan Maclean's* niece, Rachel A Sutton Hayes.

“My Grandfather Alexander married Rachel Mackenzie from Altandhu in 1920. He was a crofter/building contractor and built the family home. This is the white house we all see today at Achlochan. I often wondered how he managed to get all the building materials across the bogs. Recently my cousin told me there was once a rough track, although my mother never spoke of it.

Alexander and Rachel had five children: Kenneth, Donald, Ian, Johan (my Mother, affectionately known as Dabac) and Duncan.

The family lived at Achlochan until around 1940 when they moved to Crofton House, Ullapool. My Mother never spoke of when they moved, but she would have been in her teens. Her youngest brother Duncan went to school in Ullapool. Sadly he died in 1950 from TB aged 22 years. The family spoke of him often with great sorrow and never got over his loss.

Leaving their beloved home was without question a huge wrench for them all. But times were changing and life was becoming much harder for my Grandparents. There was no work for their older children and my Grandfather was often away working.

My first memory of walking across to Achlochan was as a little girl with my parents. I was told to take my shoes and socks off! My Mother wanted me to experience what she did as a girl walking barefoot to school in summer. I clearly recall how lovely the deep soft moss and cool water felt between my toes. She spoke to me many, many times about her young life in Achlochan, often with a longing to go back to those happy childhood days. I never tired of her stories no matter how often she told the same ones.

She spoke of the loch where her brothers kept a rowing boat for fishing. Also the long bright summer nights lying awake in her bed listening to the Curlews calling. The numerous orchids and the time her brother Donald decided to run away to Horse Island in a wooden barrel, and Father saving him just in time.

Her Granny was a grumpy old woman and called her a Gaelic name which meant ‘wee brat’. That’s how she got the name Dabac, as her brother Ian

couldn't pronounce the gaelic word. She spoke of the grocery van that came weekly and stopped on the road, and her mother carrying a big heavy sack of oatmeal on her back across the bogs. In later life my Granny always walked bent over, from all this heavy carrying.

Her brothers digging at the old fort for buried treasure, playing soldiers at the rifle range and collecting old used cartridges. The catalogue her mother ordered their clothes and winter boots from, and how she would pour over it choosing a sister for herself. She always said how she longed for a sister to play with.

The annual Christmas party that the Cadbury's put on for the children of Coigach and each child getting a whole bar of Cadbury's chocolate. She spoke with anger about the female school teacher who used the edge of a ruler on pupils' knuckles for speaking their first language. How this teacher beat her little brother Duncan one day until he had an accident, because he couldn't speak English.

The family home had no running water or electricity. All their water came from a well which as I recall was fairly close to the house and frozen in winter. For certain is that my Grandmother worked very hard looking after the home, croft and children. My Mother never spoke of them keeping animals, just chickens. Perhaps they bought milk from a neighbour who had a cow. Like most men in Coigach then, my Grandfather had a boat and went sea fishing.

After moving to Ullapool my Grandmother did have a cow. In those days Crofton House had outbuildings for animals and the land where the High School is was used for grazing, growing hay etc.

When I came home on holiday every summer, a walk to Achlochan with my parents was always something I looked forward to. I'd watch my Mother staring longingly through the windows, no doubt remembering all the happy times she spent in that house.

I came home to live in 2003, my parents had passed and I had a growing longing to see inside the 'Old Home' as Mother lovingly called it. Eventually I did some asking and with some wonderful help, discovered who owned the house, and made contact. One very wet day in 2007 my late husband, my cousin and I walked the old route to Achlochan. We received a lovely warm welcome from Mike and his sister and there is no way I could ever put into words what it felt like being inside the house, or what I felt there. I am so thankful that Michael and his sister have the old home and care for it so well."

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