

PORT HENDERSON : PAST & PRESENT

The story of a former fishing village &
crofting township



Introduction

This booklet, written as part of Scotland's Rural Past Project, contains as much information about Port Henderson's past and present as we have been able to discover. Port Henderson, a former fishing village and crofting township, is part of the Gairloch Estates and cannot be looked at in isolation. Therefore it is set in its historical and geographical context within this West Coast area of Ross-shire.

The booklet contains information about Port Henderson's location in the local area, the use of Gaelic and other name derivations for various features within the landscape, the village within the fishing industry, the township within the crofting community, schooling over the years and life for residents and visitors during the 20th and 21st centuries.

Some of the data used in this project has been taken from work undertaken by Roy Wentworth. Roy was a local historian and the first curator of Gairloch's Heritage Museum. He undertook a great deal of research about Gairloch and district, taking information from local residents and from books, articles and maps. His particular interest was Gaelic name derivations. Where a Gaelic name comes from the OS Reference Name Books for the 1st. edition OS map, 1871 - 1877, this is indicated by the initials OSR and the initials OPR stand for Old Parochial Registers.

Other information has been supplied by local residents, from Ian Fraser, former lecturer at Edinburgh University, and gleaned from the Port Henderson censuses and estate records, books and articles. I have also reproduced some of the more general information about the earlier life and times of crofting townships which was first written in the booklet *Lonemore : Big Damp Meadow*.

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks go to the residents of Port Henderson, both past and present and too numerous to name individually, who have so freely given their time to lend photographs and to supply oral and written information. Without their help this booklet would have been far less interesting. Mairi Wyatt, a pupil at Gairloch High School and a resident of Port Henderson, gave the project twelve hours of time as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. She was invaluable in gathering together some of the census statistics.

And last but in no way least, my gratitude goes to Anne MacInnes who masterminded the whole project and kept me nearly as busy as herself

(More photographs and documents have been placed in the Gairloch Heritage Museum for local reference).

Dorothy Malone

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1) Description, locality and name derivation

Port Henderson is a township on the south coast of Loch Gairloch and is part of the land owned by the MacKenzies, the lairds of Gairloch, now of Flowerdale House and Conan House, Conon Bridge. To its south are the crofting townships of Opinan and South Erradale and to its east is the

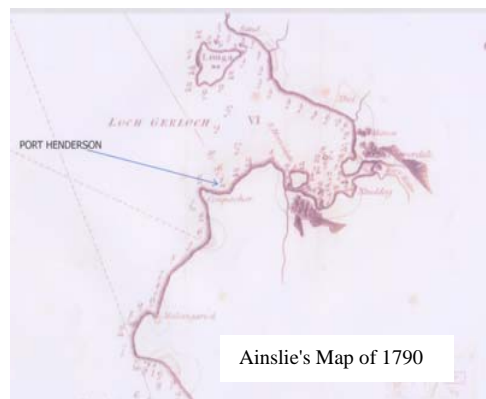
very small settlement of Badantonail ('clump of the gathering' OSR) and the larger village of Badachro ('lump of the cattle fold' OSR) which in its early years was a fishing community and a farming area, with two large farms, Aird Farm and Badachro Farm. Like other crofting townships in the Gairloch area Port Henderson is divided into two sections, the in-bye land, the croft area within the township boundary, and the common grazing area where crofters have the right to graze livestock. (See later for more information - pages 96/97).

The name Port Henderson doesn't appear on any of the old maps. The first time it was written on a map was on the Gairloch Estate Plan of 1844 but the 1841 census also denoted the village as 'Porthenderson' with a population of 132 (also see below for the OPRs for Gairloch). In Gaelic the name translates to *Portigill* or *Portaigil* and may be derived from *Port a geal*, the 'white port'. However, Ainslie's Map of 1790 and Campbell's Map of 1790 show the name 'Capuchar' in the position of Port Henderson. New Marine Chart of 1794 and Heather's Marine Chart of 1804 have 'Coupachar' whilst the Admiralty Chart of 1849 - 51 has 'Carr Pt (Point)' and 'P. Anderson'.



Carr Point

In Gaelic 'Carr Point' is *Sròn a' Char/Sròn na Carra* (the point of the projecting rock) and this can be seen as a prominent headland, consisting of flat rock slabs projecting into the sea where the coastline turns east into Loch Gairloch, with a rounded knoll behind. By the time the Admiralty Chart for the area was drawn up the Port Henderson crofting township had been established and the map shows this in relation to the main road and includes some indications of the croft boundaries. The name 'Anderson' might have been a misrepresentation of the word 'Henderson'. (See p. 18 and p. 103 for further suggestions re the village's name).





Admiralty Chart of 1841 - 51

The name Port Henderson is also said to translate into 'Gate Gully' from *Portigil*. W. J. Watson gives the definition 'port gully' using the Norse *gil* (ravine) but Ian Fraser (see below) is not entirely happy with this.

It is known that there was a Norse presence in the coastal areas of Wester Ross although it has been difficult to quantify this because of lack of archaeological evidence but the study of local place names has indicated the possible distribution of Norse settlements. One of these names is 'vik' (bay). Ian Fraser has written a chapter on Scandinavian place names and their connection with north-west settlements in Ross-shire (see *Peoples & Settlement in North-West Ross*, edited by Baldwin, 1994). For a bay to have been successful it required the availability of sheltered water, access to sea routes, some protection from winds from the west and the north-west, a reasonable depth of water and somewhere for beaching boats. Once a good harbour was found then permanent settlements could evolve. Arable land needed to be available for grain growing, hay making and grazing. Timber for boat building was another requirement as was the availability of fresh water. *Vik* names in Wester Ross often used the form 'aig' (an overlap with the Gaelic). (In the Gairloch area there are Tournaig and Shildaig, for example, as well as Melvaig, although this settlement doesn't meet all the above criteria.) One Gaelic spelling of Port Henderson is *Portaigil* (see page 4) and it could be queried whether this was linked with Norse. Its position is fairly sheltered and protected. It is on a known sea route and there was arable land and fresh water, although none of the streams was large. Also there were some wooded areas. This is solely conjecture although there is also the unsubstantiated history of the Viking dun (see page 11). However, Ian Fraser believes that the formation of the fishing village of Port Henderson was a trigger for a new 'English' name and that the Gaelic *Portigil* may have been used because of a possible port giving access for small boats which already existed in that position.

In all probability there was an earlier settlement at Port Henderson, though maybe not earlier than 1808, because of the reference to 'Portscounan South Aridale' in the OPR for Gairloch. (On August 16th 1808 a son, Alex, was registered with parents Murdoch and Isabella Fraser. Murdoch was a tenant at Portscounan. This could indicate that there was at least one dwelling house with a separate place name. Portscounan might be a corruption of *Port a' Sgùmán* a peninsular in the later Port Henderson). (As already mentioned South Erradale is a coastal township to the south).

Later OPRs showed the name with spellings such as Port Henderson, Porthenderson and Porthendersone.

According to the OS Reference Name Books Port Henderson was described as '*a hamlet composed chiefly of crofters' houses situated on the south shore of Gairloch near the extreme southwest point. The property of Sir Kenneth R. Mackenzie, Bart.*' Hamlets in Scotland were originally called 'clachans' and these developed into villages or townships as the years went by.

In *Peoples and Settlements in North West Ross* edited by John Baldwin, Caird explains in a chapter entitled *The Making of the Gairloch Crofting Landscape* that

‘During Sir Hector Mackenzie, the fourth Baronet’s tenure, the first sheep farm in Gairloch parish was created before 1810 on the Seaforth Letterewe estate, and others followedIn 1815, portions of the lands of South Erradale and Ardrisaig were cut off from these farms and let to 22 tenants to form a fishing village at Port Henderson, which later became a crofting township.’

Ardrisaig is marked on Roy’s Military Survey Map of Scotland (1747 - 55) and is shown as a small clustered settlement directly opposite Dry Island/Badachro. It is now known as Aird. Ardrisaig could also be thought to be of Viking origin because of the ‘aig’ suffix (ard + ris(h)aig). However, it is more likely to be Old Norse - *hris* meaning ‘brushwood’. (On the early OS maps there is an open area to the north of Port Henderson which is named *Meall na h’Airde*).

From the Gairloch Estate records ‘Minutes of Sett’ for 1815 the following is recorded :

‘I Sir Hector MacKenzie Bart. in terms of the foregoing Minutes do hereby promise a Lease of Twenty years from Whitsunday Eighteen hundred and fifteen of those parts of South Eradale and Ardrishach from Leckinthoil by Glaebuie and by the west end of Loch Badnashachlish to Loch nan iann and from thence to a cut near the point of Carr by the bottom of the hill called Uagh Threetadan to

(signed) Hector MacKenzie’ (See page 32 for names and more details.)

This delineates the exact area to be allocated to the fishing village but no name is mentioned in these minutes (although the words Port Henderson were written in the margin). Most of the first tenants of Port Henderson would have lived in other parts of the Gairloch parish, although some may have come from further afield and when this fishing village was first built there would have been no roads, only rough tracks, so the sea would have been the only means of access.



South Erradale farm had been leased to six tenants (four were Mackenzies and two were Macphersons) from Whitsunday in 1810 which confirms that there was at least one settlement to the south of Port Henderson before this fishing village was established.

By 1886 when Dixon was writing *Gairloch and Guide to Loch Maree* Port Henderson was one of the three villages mentioned as having the ‘most improved houses in the parish’ (the other two being Strath and Poolewe). Cottars’ dwellings (and in the case of any fishing villages maybe some of the fishers’ houses) became croft houses under crofting township allocation in the parish of Gairloch in 1845 but, according to Sir Francis Mackenzie, who made many suggestions about house improvement, many of the crofters clung on to their previous way of life.

Port Henderson is not mentioned much in Dixon’s book and only gets a short sentence in Chapter Ten when he describes excursions from Gairloch.

‘After leaving Badachro (and *Loch Bad na h’Achlais*) another mile brings us to the straggling

village of Port Henderson.’

At that time the road was passable for carriages as far as South Erradale but it became a bridle road after that. (In 1920 a new road to Port Henderson was approved and to ensure that the road was built and to bring down the cost by a quarter the men in the local community offered their services in free labour.)

Port Henderson doesn’t get even a mention in *Gairloch* by Alexander Polson (1920). His description of the 'South Side' of Gairloch states :

‘To visit hamlets on the south side of the loch one may drive or cycle round by the Kerry Bridge, and after going through some naturally planted birch woods pass Shieldaig and get to Badachro, and there see how catching and curing of fish are done. Then on to Opinan, where there are sand hills and a sandy beach, a cave worth exploring, and, if one is interested in bog iron, plenty of it may be seen in dykes a little further on.’

However, because there were no real roads which would lead to the houses in the township with the only ‘main’ road circling the area which contained Port Henderson as it went towards Opinan and South Erradale casual visitors would have no reason to stray from the main highway.

According to the Gairloch Estate Plan, before the crofts were allocated, Port Henderson



Remains of iron fence

consisted of two areas of settlement beside two bays, two curves of the seashore. The two rows of buildings had a path in front of them with gardens to the rear. It is not easy to see from any of the maps where the actual boundary of the township was to be found and although there might have been a partial head-dyke as some walls or banks can be seen in the area these are not complete. Only the remains

of a later old iron fence remain in evidence with some internal stone and turf walls.

Because Port Henderson was first and foremost a fishing village the oldest ruins which still remain are those of the fishermen’s cottages. These are found in two locations. One set are in a crescent shape at *Port a’ Sgùmán* continuing on to croft 21. These words can be translated as a ‘bay or a landing place for small boats’. However, this landing place can no longer be seen due to recent developments. This line of buildings includes a



Port a' Sgùmán

well-preserved corn drying kiln and a shed or a small yard where once the sheep’s wool was coated with butter and tar (smearing), which was the practice carried out before dipping sheep became customary. There was also a salmon fishing station with bothy (which has recently been converted into a holiday house). There is also an older corn drying kiln which can be seen amongst the bracken in the side of the raised beach slope. According to the OSR, *Port a’ Sgùmán* also translates as ‘creek of the stack of corn’ which fits in with the fact that corn drying took place in the area. There was easy access

from the sea because there were no roads to the fishing village. (It has been suggested by some residents that the kiln was used either to burn seaweed for fertiliser or to smoke fish. However, there are no tarry deposits to be seen which would indicate fish smoking). Between the headland of A' Sgùmán and the port there was a well, *Fuarán a' Sgùmán*, which was said to have the finest water in



Port a Sgùmán today showing ruins of the fishermen's houses and new build

Port Henderson, never to run dry and to be always cool. This can still be seen. A grassy area to the south of the buildings was used for drying fishing nets. Behind the buildings were 'gardens' as laid out in the original minutes of sett.

The second row of fishermen's cottages is found towards the main beach and was called *An Càrn Mór*, translated as 'the big cairn', although this name has also

been applied to one house, 'Carnmore.' (The original Carnmore burnt down and was rebuilt, see page 78).

To the north of the township is *Lianag na h-Atha*, meaning 'green of the kiln' (OSR) which is a small portion of land where there are the remains of two kiln structures. The faint outline of one can be seen on open moorland within croft 20 whilst the other, slightly more distinguishable, is nearer the rocky shoreline below croft 13.

Wentworth recorded that there were tracks or pathways which linked Port Henderson with the next township of Opinan and from there more led to South Erradale but these are now disused and not easy to discern. The main track from Port Henderson to Opinan was where the present road runs. There was also a track which cut across rough ground from the south of Port Henderson to Opinan which can still be followed and this was used by the schoolchildren when the school in Opinan was functioning.

It was very common for wells to be found in townships. Some were merely springs but others were built with small retaining walls for protection. One such well can still be seen with the stones in place. It was known locally as *Fuaran Aili Eachainn*. Aili Eachainn was the name of the shoemaker who lived in the house at *a' Bhuile Dhubh*, the 'black (cattle-) fold', who used this well. Aili Eachainn was Alec, son of Hector MacKenzie. From the census records for 1891 and 1901 Alexander is recorded as living in a two-windowed crofthouse on croft 10. His name is also recorded in the Opinan School registration book as being born on August 6th 1869. Today a few yards below the well is a concrete water tank, now disused, which once stored the well water. There is another well to be found under some overhanging rocks on the west side of *An Sgùmán* where the women used to wash blankets. After washing they would spread the blankets out to dry on the slopes. This well was only



Aili Eachainn's well

used for washing, not for drinking. Several other wells have also been found.

Some natural features of the area

Beside the present B8056 road there is much rough and boggy ground in which there are two lochs and streams. One burn is marked as *Allt an Lòin Bhuidhe* and *Caochan a' Lón Bhuidhe*, 'stream of the yellow marsh', (OSR), is part of this which flows into the loch, *Bad na h-Achlas*, translated as 'loch of



the clump of the armpit' (OSR). This is impassable and was described as being notorious for drowning cattle and sheep. On the north side of the stream at *Am Blar Mór* are the remains of many large disused peat banks. (There are other former peat banks to be seen in Port Henderson, both large and small). To the the loch is a small hill called *Creag Bad na h-Achlaise* which translates to 'rock of the clump of the armpit' (OSR).

Two other present day lochs were once a single stretch of water and this loch was called, *Loch nan Eun*. The 1st and 2nd OS (1875 and 1902) maps show the water to have been a continuous area. However, they are now separated by about 40 metres of ground with a small burn flowing through this and the south-eastern loch is one metre higher than the other one. A former track passed between the two stretches of water. Wentworth reported that there are remains of an earlier retaining wall or dam but there is no evidence of this. However there are the remains of a substantial circular turf and stone wall enclosing a fairly large area of ground at the south-western tip of the larger loch. This may have been what Wentworth suggested was a dam but it was probably an

Loch nan Eun



enclosure for retaining cattle or an area for growing crops. However, there are no visible remains of dwellings and it is possible that if this had been an enclosure it might have belonged to a neighbouring crofting township (such as Opinan or South Erradale) rather than to Port Henderson. Much peat cutting took place in this area and today it is very boggy. In English this loch is called the 'Bird Loch', 'Loch of the Birds' (OSR). In the early

1900s it is said that Alex MacKenzie, uncle of Duncan MacKenzie of croft 10, made the causeway across the loch, creating two separate lochs. This was done in order to avoid a long detour around the loch to the peat cuts on the other side. At first it was wide enough to enable a wheelbarrow to cross over and then it was widened for a tractor and subsequent deposition has also widened it. (The census forms of 1871 to 1901 show an Alexander MacKenzie who became a shoemaker and who was a brother to Murdo, Duncan's father).

To the west of the lochs Wentworth describes a steep and rocky knoll, *Cnoc a' Chomharraich* and under this outcrop of rock were the ruins of a house that *Seonachán* lived in. *Seonachán*, or John, was a shepherd. Local information states that John (son of a Finlay MacLean) was an Opinan shepherd and the ruins are within the Opinan township. However, against a bank of rocks within the Port Henderson common grazing is a sheltered and protected part where there are traces of what might be blackened areas, maybe from fire. This is known locally as the 'chimney'. (Children in the 1950s/1960s used to make fires in this area according to a former resident).

Just outside Gairloch on the road from Poolewe there is a large boulder called the 'Shoe Stone' where walkers to church in Gairloch would stop in order to put on their shoes. In Port Henderson there is the 'Stone of the Urine', *Clach an Fhuail*, because it was a convenient place for people walking along the road to stop for the call of nature! This rock can still be seen but today it is enclosed in a front garden of a bungalow situated on an apportionment of croft 10.



The 'urine' stone

On the shore to the east of the ruins at *Port a' Sgùmán* there is a rock outcrop called *a' Chreag Mhaol*, the 'bare rock', (OSR) which extends for about 50 metres along the shore and which is about six metres high above the low tide line. Its tip is cut off by a narrow sea channel, around three to four metres, through which, it is said, a dinghy could pass except when the tide was at its lowest. About 100 metres to the east of this rock is a row of flat, sloping rocks at the bottom of the beach. More rock slabs and a small rock pinnacle can be seen at very low tide. These are the 'little skerries', *na Sgeirean Beaga*. There are slight indications of a dinghy beaching place in a stretch of shingle about 20 metres to the east of these rock slabs. This was once used for fishing boats and is called *Port Alasdair Dhuinn*, or 'brown(-haired) Alasdair's port'. Wentworth gives no indication as to who was Alasdair and locally no-one has any further information. *Achlais a' Sgùmán*, the 'oxter' or 'armpit', is an anchorage which was once well-used by the boats in this area of Port Henderson.

Another port in this area is named *Port an t-Seada*, the 'Port of the Shed'. The beaching place for a small boat or dinghy is still visible from the shore that has been cleared of stones. It gained its



A beaching place

name because it is opposite the site where there was once a boat-building shed belonging to Roderick MacKenzie. These MacKenzies lived on croft 15 (but from 1900 they also paid rent for croft 12, see pp. 20/45/48/49). (Also see p.14 for the story of Roderick MacKenzie and the mermaid).

There is yet another beaching place which is still visible as a narrow slipway, once cleared of stones, and about 130 metres to the north of *Port an t-Seada*. This is called the 'little port', *Am Port Beag*. (In recent gales many stones were washed up making this port unusable).

Just behind this beach there is an area covered with bracken and grassy knolls which were once

old sand dunes, *am Mealbhán*, the ‘dunes’. Through these is *An t-Allt Mór*, the ‘big burn’, which is, in fact, a small stream probably gathering water from field drains before flowing out to sea.

On the west of the township there is a beach of rocky boulders with a seacliff behind going up to the level of a raised beach. It is called the ‘bay or creek of the lumps’, *Camas nam Ploc*, *Bloighd* on maps (OSR). This bay was reported as being good for lobsters. Between this bay and *a’ Sgùmán*, a roughly triangular shaped headland, there is a broad bay of about 150 metres in length consisting of boulders and rounded stones with a grassy, somewhat brackened, slope behind and a very low raised beach. It is called *An Camas Rointich*, the ‘bay of the bracken’ or according to the OSR *Camas nan Raineach*, the ‘creek of the ferns’. *A’ Sgùmán* (maybe translated as the ‘stack’) contains a number of stone dykes which indicates that it was once well cultivated. Between *Camas nam Ploc* and *An Camas Rointich* there is a large cleft in the rocks of the sea-cliff. It is named *an Geodha Mòr*, the ‘big narrow creek’. Children used to leap across this and the occasional sheep have been lost in it. South of *Sron na Carra* or ‘point of the rocky shelf’ (OSR) is *Camas Leathann*, ‘bread creek’ (OSR).



The 'big narrow creek'

On the opposite side of the bay from *A’ Sgùmán* to the east is another point, *Sròn a Mhuilt*, ‘point of the wither’ (OSR) whilst further north up the coast from this point is another small creek, *Geodh nan Calman*, or ‘creek of the pigeons’ (OSR). However, this does not appear to be within the township boundary.



Aerial photograph taken in 1947

As has already been stated it appears that there some evidence of a partial head dyke as stones or turf banks forming such a wall can be seen to the north east and south west of the township. However, an iron fence was put up by the estate and this still exists, although no longer used. A dyke crossing the common grazing to the south prevents lambs etc. from falling into unpleasant bog, the *Caochan* as previously mentioned. Aerial photographs confirm that there was extensive improvement to much of the crofting land with evidence of crop cultivation.

2) Some history

The Dun?

Ùmh Fhreadcadán is a knoll with a ridge above it and is situated to the south of the west end of Port Henderson’s boundary fence. There is also a cave, *Uamh Fhreachadain* or ‘Cave of the Watch’ or ‘Watching’ (OSR), shown on the 1969 OS map which appears to be merely a rocky overhang on the almost vertical slope.



'Cave of the Watching'

The cave may have been used as a look-out point but there is no evidence to support this. Below this on the north side of Opinan is a small rock called *Cnoc nan Carrachan* which means 'knoll of the wild roots' (OSR).



The Dun

Dixon described this headland between Port Henderson and its neighbour Opinan where there was the *Uamh* (said to be derived from a small hollow on the hill which faced the sea) *nam Freicedeadain*. This was believed to be the site of the last fortress in Gairloch held by the M'Leods, of the clan Siol Torquil, who may have come to Gairloch in the times of the Norse Vikings from whom it was said they were descended. This dun is an apparently natural large mound with traces of a long straight bank on its top. In around 1569 the M'Leods were driven from this dun, their last stronghold. For more information about the MacLeods of Gairloch see *Peoples & Settlement in North-West Ross* edited by John Baldwin, page 205.

There appears to be no evidence of round houses in the township although it is said that there is a broch or round house between Port Henderson and Opinan. There is no sign of this and it is possible that this might refer to the dun itself.

'People from Norway?'

When drainage ditches were made on croft 7 a burnt remnant of a pine tree was found, one metre below the surface of the ground. This was a short length of the trunk and some larger roots. A story is told locally that 'people from Norway' burnt the forest which existed at that time and that the burning of trees was a common Norse punishment. It is queried whether the remains of this pine tree might have any connection to this burnt piece of wood. (Above the stump was evidence of birch trees and it is known that birch trees regenerated quickly when the sheep population dropped). Norsemen conquered the Scottish islands and then parts of the west coast. In 1263 the King of Norway, King Haakon VI, undertook an expedition to the west of Scotland because of a dispute with Alexander III of Scotland who had conquered the Hebrides in the previous year. Haakon retook the islands and also came to the west coast of the mainland. He died at Kirkwall in 1263. (More details can be found in *Highlanders A History of the Gaels* by John MacLeod).

Local superstitions and tales

There were many superstitions in the wide Gairloch area and it was pointed out by Dixon that the surrounding countryside and coastline lent themselves to many suggestions of the supernatural. Swirling mists, rushing water and springs, twisted and gnarled trees, dark caves, deep lochs, the moaning and howling winds, islands and winter where there was more darkness than light all added to man's belief in things of a superstitious nature.

The cave of the gold

(according to Wentworth with additional information from Isobel la Croix of croft 7)

Uaimh an Òir is a cave in the sea cliffs, about 300m north of *Camas an Fheadir*, a small bay whose name means ‘creek of the grass’ (OSR), to the south of Port Henderson. There are two branches to the cave but each is only a few yards in depth because of rock fall within the last 100 years. Dixon also described this cave but said that the entrance was ‘fine’ and that the left-hand branch could be followed for about 40 yards.



The 'Cave of Gold'

One story is that a piper once entered it and the sound of his piping could be heard east of the village of Opinan and the last time it was heard was as far away as Torridon! There are many tales about such caves which were connected to each other by underground passages and which were said to contain gold. Pipers and followers attempted to find such treasure with their music being heard from miles away.

Isobel la Croix, when she lived in Opinan as a child, was told about this cave between Opinan and Port Henderson. She often walked along that bit of coast but could never see it. It can only be seen from a boat or from the shore at low tide. Isobel had been told that the cave went right under the sea and came out at Melvaig (on the peninsular to the north of Gairloch) and that a group of pipers went into it and were never seen again. One resident used to refer to the cave as the Golden Cave.

Also parents used to tell their children that a piper once led a party of children into the cave and they were never seen again. If any child went alone into the cave the same fate would happen.

Creagán a' Bhodaich (according to Wentworth)

This is the name of a small outcrop of projecting rock slabs immediately beside and on the north side of the B8056 road. It used to be a resting place for people walking along the road.

It was also said to be an eerie place and some people would hesitate to pass by it if they were alone at night. Some reported that they had seen a funeral passing there when in fact the road was empty. Others said that they had heard the clanking of what seemed to be chains. In January 1940 two local men were drowned when their car left the road and went into the loch, *Bad na h-Achlas*, which is particularly deep at that point and this clanking noise was believed to be that of the machinery used to lift the vehicle. An article, written in the Scotsman of January 19th 1940, reported the accident :

‘News was received yesterday of the drowning of two well-known Gairloch men at Loch Bad na h’Achlais, South Gairloch, between Badachro and Port Henderson. It appears that Mr John Macpherson, tea merchant and insurance agent, South Opinan, was on his way to Gairloch, and gave a lift to Mr Duncan Macpherson, 4 Port Henderson. When passing along the loch-side the car left the road and disappeared into the water. A motor cyclist, seeing the roof of the car sinking, immediately raised the alarm, and very soon a large

number of willing helpers were on the scene of the accident, having carried a boat to the loch, where dragging operations were immediately begun. The car was located about ten yards from the shore in twelve feet of water, and after some difficulty was hauled out by means of fishing tackle. It was not known till then that the car had two occupants. Life in both cases was extinct. Mr. Duncan Macpherson, aged 75, was a prominent Gairloch fisherman and boat owner, and a capable seaman. He leaves a grown-up family.

His son was present at the recovery of his body.....'

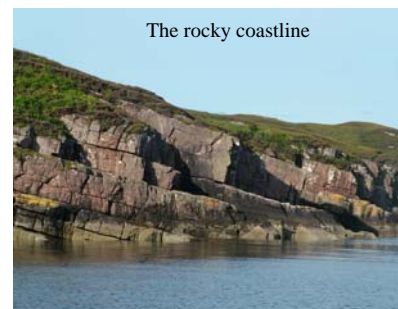
On the census for 1901 Duncan MacPherson was 36, a fisherman and was married to Margaret, sister of James MacKenzie, the unmarried head of the household. Duncan and Margaret had two children at that time, Duncan aged five and Catherine aged two. Another child, Alexander, had been born in 1900 but he died when two months old. James, his two unmarried brothers (Thomas and John) and the MacPhersons shared a house on croft 4 which had six windows.

The black fairy-knoll (according to Wentworth)

A' *Chathair Dhubh* or as written on the OS map *Carr Dhubh* is a bare, evenly-shaped knoll, with heather and some grass on one of its two tops, lying between the B8056 road and *Loch nan Eun*. Unfortunately, although there might have been a tale about this knoll, no local information was given to Roy Wentworth and maybe its other translation of 'black rock' should be taken (OSR).

A fishy tale (according to Dixon)

Many local tales were about fairies but there were other stories about water creatures. One of these stories concerns the mermaid of Port Henderson. Roderick (Rorie) Mackenzie who was still alive, but elderly, in Dixon's day, was a boatbuilder and well respected in the community. (On the census forms from 1861 to 1901 for croft 15 are listed the family of MacKenzies who were described as 'boat carpenters' and 'boat builders'. The 'carpenters' house had three windows and Roderick's sons, John and Colin, were also boat builders.) One day, when Roderick was young, he was collecting bait for a fishing trip on a rocky part of the shoreline. There he saw a mermaid sleeping amongst the rocks. Rorie managed to seize the mermaid by her hair. The mermaid pleaded with him that if he let her go that she would grant him any wish he would care to make. Rorie requested that nobody would ever be drowned from any boat that he might build. The mermaid gave her promise and she was allowed to go free. And from that day Rorie's boats were seaworthy and no-one ever drowned when sailing in them. Dixon wrote that he possessed one of Rorie's boats and, at the end of telling this short tale, suggested that those who wrote trade advertisements might like to use this anecdote. (It seems that Dixon took the story with a proverbial 'pinch of salt').



The rocky coastline

The man and the beast (as told by Isobel la Croix of croft 7)

A long time ago, probably in the late 1940s, Isobel's grandmother in Opinan told her about a man from Port Henderson who had cheated an old woman in Skye over the price of a cow. (Isobel cannot remember if he were the buyer or the seller). This woman put a curse on him and told him that all his life he would be followed by a beast, wherever he went and whatever he did.

When Isobel asked what the beast was like she was told that it was brown and quite small, a bit like a cat and a bit like a ferret. It didn't do anything, just followed him. Isobel asked if other people could see it and her grandmother said that they could.

It struck Isobel at the time that as curses went it was not a very bad one.

The singing sands (according to a former resident)

The sands at Port Henderson were known as 'singing sands' because they squeaked when they were walked on. (The sands continue to squeak today).



The Irish soil (according to Isobel la Croix of croft 7)

The soil below the house on croft 7 going down towards the sea was found to be very different from the rocky and peaty land elsewhere. When Isobel queried this she was told that this was Irish soil. The story was that in the past (presumably in the 19th century) boats used to go to Ireland with cargoes of salt herring and goat skins and come back with soil as ballast - Liffey mud, someone once said.

When Douglas Henderson, former Administrator at Inverewe Garden, was told about this he said that he had been told the same story and that Inverewe also had Irish soil. He tried to find some written proof, maybe from old ships' manifests, but was unable to find any. Osgood Mackenzie, in *A Hundred Years in the Highlands*, writes about soil being brought in creels but there is no mention of the soil's origin.

Isobel has a cousin in Inverness whose husband used to have a landscape and garden maintenance firm and he knew that there was Irish soil in Inverness, such as in the Ballifeary area and that the soil was different from that in the rest of the town.

Maybe there are written references which could be found about this transportation of soil from Ireland.

The return of Queenie (as told by one who knows)

When Willie MacMillan, nicknamed Peat, who later moved to the salmon bothy from one of the former fishermen's houses (with two windows) on croft 21, was elderly, it was decided that he would go to Perth for the winter to stay with his nephew Hector. So he went with his dog, Queenie. When spring arrived Willie decided that he would go back to Port Henderson for the lambing. Three weeks

after arriving home he was chatting to Duncan Mackenzie from croft 10 when there was a noise at his door. Willie opened it to find Queenie who had made her way back home all the way from Perth. After contacting his nephew Willie found that Queenie had gone missing the day after he had left but Hector hadn't wanted to tell his uncle because he knew the news would upset him! (Willie, son of William MacMillan, a fisherman, was ten years old on the 1901 census. Duncan died in 1977 at the age of 65 so this story probably happened a few years before that date).

'Smiling Morn'

On croft 7 there is a very small cottage on the east side of the croft. The garden is now overgrown and covered in rushes but in times past the land was quite good. There used to be an outhouse on the north side of the house. When the cottage was re-roofed a few very large photographic portraits were found of whiskered gentlemen. However, it was impossible to make out the facial features. The old lady who lived there was known as 'smiling Morn' because she obviously wasn't! (See Katy Nicholson's account on p. 81).



Smiling Morn's cottage today

(In 1910 it was reported in an Inverness newspaper that a puffer called 'Smiling Morn' arrived at Badachro harbour with coal for Mr. J. Mackenzie. Is the ship's name a coincidence?)

3) Fishing in Port Henderson

Traditionally in this township it was the fishing industry which provided the main additional employment which in later years sustained the crofting way of life.

Salmon fishing

The former salmon fishing bothy (and *An Sgùman* salmon station) was not included within the croft allocation in 1845 and was retained by the Laird, Sir Kenneth MacKenzie, who rented it out. Later it was sold. On the 1901 census the salmon fisher's house was recorded as being unoccupied and it appears that it stopped being used in the early 1900s although rent was still paid for the building in 1968 and it was



The salmon bothy before it was converted into a holiday home

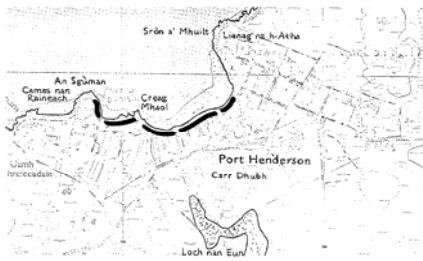
lived in for some years (see p.15). In the early years of the 20th century there were about 25 salmon-fishing stations operating in Wester Ross. Local crofters turned to salmon fishing once the peats were cut and would stay in the bothies when the season was at its height.

Salmon-fishing using bag-nets was an old tradition but ceased when there were no longer any wild salmon to be caught in the sea. Fishermen blamed the introduction of fish-farming and the increase in the seal population. The last remaining salmon-fishing station, at Red Point further down the coast from Port Henderson and still in the Parish of Gairloch, closed in the year 2000. The salmon season was from February to September which meant that in practice the salmon fishers during the last years of the 20th century worked from about mid-March to August. Hundreds of salmon would be caught every day and the fish would be sold locally or for the continental market via Aberdeen. About eight bag-nets were put out at a time and these were hauled in three or four times a day.

Herring fishing

Fishing for herring took place in the Gairloch area with some men working full-time and others combining fishing with crofting. In the early years of the 20th century drift nets were used. Local boats were often of the ‘Zulu’ design (see p.21 for the section on boats), some of which were built in Wester Ross. The main herring season in Wester Ross lasted from October to March and the fish were measured in crans, with one cran representing roughly 1000 fish. Herring fishing always took place at night and it was reported that the best fishermen could identify where there were herring to be found by hearing the sound of a shoal moving through the water. In late summer and in the autumn the fishermen looked for the herring when phosphorescence (*losgadh* in Gaelic) lit the sea.

In the 18th century fisherpeople developed into distinctive communities separate from the cottars,



A map to represent where the fishing village was situated

their farming neighbours and work was organised on a family basis. Although the British Fisheries Society (inaugurated in 1786 and closed more than 100 years later) tried to develop west coast fishing settlements not many landlords in the west took interest in developing fisheries. It is possible that fewer shoals of herring appeared in western waters. Therefore west coast fishing people became spread out into widely-spaced small holdings and these families mixed fishing with farming.

Whereas the east coast fishers were looked down on and maligned by others this did not appear to have happened on the west coast.

At the end of the 18th century John Knox, a former Edinburgh bookseller and an adviser to the national government, proposed that 50 fishing villages should be built in the Highlands of Scotland each containing about 30 or 40 houses with gardens, as well as harbours, storehouses, curing sheds, schools and churches. This was supported by the House of Common’s Fisheries Committee which concentrated on the inshore fishermen and the herring industry and the government and landowners deliberately tried to develop full-time fisheries. However, there were few such villages on the north-west coast, just Ullapool (begun in the 1780s) and the private fishing village of Plockton (which was more a crofting community than one for fishing). However, it is possible that small communities like

Port Henderson were built to conform in some small way with this proposal and as already stated Port Henderson became a fishing village in 1815. Although there was no real harbour, no school (except for the SSPCK one, see p.40) or church, the only houses were situated on the shore with gardens to the rear and the census of 1851 records that there were 17 fishermen in the village. According to the early Estate Records (1830 - 40) the numbers of the tenants, about 22 names, matched the number on the original sett of 1815 (see p.32) which would then match the Estate's numbering of the first crofts.

Fishing for herring took place relatively close to the shore, about five to ten miles out and small line fishing, with a lighter weight line, was used although in the early 1880s Mr. Russell, the parish minister in 1836, stated that Gairloch herring was taken in nets. Because herring is an oily fish it has to be cured in barrels. In the 1880s many of the young men in the Gairloch area went to places like Peterhead, Fraserburgh and Wick for the summer herring fishing.

Small boats could be beached at Port Henderson but larger boats moored at Badachro where there was a landing stage.

Cod fishing

In the 19th century up to the early years of the 20th century cod was caught using the long-line which was a long fishing-line with thousands of hooks attached. However, there was then the initial expense of buying the bait (although local mussels were used, see p.18). Cod was prized for its white tasty flesh. It was easy to catch and preferred shallow waters where warm and cold currents merged. The season for cod was between February and April and near Port Henderson, on Eilean Horisdale and Dry Island and at the village of Badachro, there were fish-curing stations. (The specifications for the building of the pier and curing house at Badachro were set out in a paper dated August 14th 1849 in the presence of John Mackenzie, for the Gairloch Estate, and witnessed by Thomas Anderson. The contractors were William Henderson and Son. It is interesting to note these names. Could the fishing village name of Port Henderson have been derived from these contractors? Were they working in the area earlier?) In 1826 a James Henderson of Clyth, a fish curer on the east coast, went to Ullapool. It was his plan to establish stores at different stations around the coast for the reception of salt and casks which would enable the fishermen to deposit the fish they had caught without any loss of time. Was this the same Henderson? The fish (and herring included) would be salted because it was a problem to keep it fresh. Herring was more difficult to cure than white fish because this needed salt-curing in water-tight barrels. (In 1911 it was recorded that there were three fish-curers in Badachro. Often the curers came from north-east Scotland and their names showed this such as John Watt who worked in Badachro). Curers needed a full-time cooper making barrels throughout the year, somewhere to make the barrels and a store of salt. It was usual for the curers to lay in hundreds of bushels of salt before each season although in the late 1700s the salt laws which required the curers to keep their salt locked in storehouses greatly reduced the west coast fishing because it was too expensive for the fishermen to keep enough salt for when this was needed. Salt was also heavily taxed. However, in 1825 the salt

regulations were abolished. Also needed was a trough and an open space for the gutters to work (gutters and labourers were seasonal workers). Women often worked as gutters, as did some of the older schoolgirls who were kept away from school in order to help (see p.50 on Opinan Public School) and the women and the girls greatly supported their fisher husbands and fathers. (According to the 1881 census Margaret McKenzie, a 56-year old unmarried woman living in a small two-windowed house on croft 22 in Port Henderson, was a gutter of herring). Coull writes that Alexander MacKenzie was operating as a fish curer at Port Henderson in the 1870s (see *The Story of Fishing in Gairloch*). According to the census form of 1871 an Alexander MacKenzie was recorded as living on croft 22. At the age of 62 he was a fisherman and a crofter, married with five children ranging from 12 years to 27 years of age. Although he is not recorded as a fish curer it is possible that this is the man referred to by Coull. The Dry Island station closed at the end of the First World War. It is probable that the fishermen from Port Henderson sold fish to those who ran the fish-curing stations. Saithe (coalfish), ling (salt ling is a Scottish traditional food) and hake were also caught. These fish were widely traded and were very large, often a metre or more in length. The flesh of young saithe was an essential element in people's diets. Saithe could be eaten fresh or hung out to dry in the sun for eating during the winter. For cod and ling the fishermen were paid eight 'old pence' for each fish and were paid in money rather than having delayed payments as in some areas of Scotland.

Between 1721 and 1766 the tenants of Sir Alexander MacKenzie (the Laird) 'were bound to deliver to him at current prices all the cod and ling caught by them....' In the *Old Statistical Account*, 1792, the Rev. Daniel M'Intosh wrote

'Sir Hector M'Kenzie of Gairloch, the present proprietor, sends to market annually, upon an average, betwixt thirty and forty thousand cod, exclusive of the number with which the country people serve themselves.'

Sir George Mackenzie, writing in his *Survey*, published in 1810, described the Gairloch cod fishery as it was in Sir Hector's time.

'Messrs J. Nicol & Young are the fishcurers. They are obliged to receive the fish taken while they continue to be good. The fishermen are a class of people inhabiting the shores on the bay of Gairloch, paying from £1 sterling to £2. 2s. of rent for land. They receive for each codfish, measuring eighteen inches from the shoulder fins to the tail, 3¼ d.; and for every ling, measuring thirty inches as above, 5d.

It was written that Sir Hector received five 'old pence' for each ling and three 'old pence' for each cod and that he provided his tenants with wood for boats, gave an annual premium of twenty guineas for the best fishermen and took upon himself to guarantee the price of fish to the boatmen which in very good seasons involved him in considerable loss. He engaged a firm of curers from Inverness who sent the fish either pickled or dried to Ireland, Liverpool, London or Spain.

In 1786 John Knox recorded that there were 41 fishing boats in the Gairloch area with four to six men in each and in that year during the cod season in February and March these boats caught 18,000 cod and 500 ling. (The fishermen who later came to Port Henderson in 1815 might have been part of

this fishing industry, living in other villages in the Gairloch area).

Dixon wrote that the cod fishing was carried on until about 1877 by means of long lines with baited hooks, the bait being mostly of mussels. Gathering and preparing of bait was traditionally the work of women and children. The mussels had to be shelled by cracking them open with a short bladed knife and then the meat had to be scooped out. After 1877 nets mostly displaced the baited lines. Initially it had been felt that the use of nets would block off fish movement and the cod would move elsewhere. The lines were entirely made by the people themselves, of horse-hair and hemp. Everyone in the area grew a small plot of hemp and the women spun flax in order to make the lines and nets. The hooks, fashioned from knitting needles, bent to the right shape and sharpened and barbed, were also home-made, for Gairloch used to be self-contained and there was no need for anyone to go elsewhere to buy fishing equipment.

Cod cost around three shillings in the 1930s. Although fishing improved after the first World War because stocks had a chance to replenish themselves cod fishing ceased in the mid 1970s because of lack of fish.

Lobsters and crabs

Lobster fishing was of significance in the 1880s because catching these crustaceans was a suitable occupation for those men who were also crofters. Lobsters were caught close to the rocky coasts and small boats could be used. Lobsters were caught in baited creels which acted as a trap. Lobsters entered through the 'eye', a netted passage-way which was easier for ingress rather than for exit. Although there were problems with transporting the catch from the West Coast of Scotland lobsters were an important luxury item in large towns and cities, including as far away as London.

Crabs, as well as lobsters, were also caught although there were few of these. In *Salt in the Blood* by James Miller there is a quotation from Liz Duvill on page 93 who fished for crabs and lobsters with her father, Alex Mackenzie, at Badachro in the mid 1950s. Then the price for crabs was poor and the lobsters were sent to Billingsgate via Inverness. There was little local sale for lobsters except for the hotels in the summertime. The Mackenzies had about 200 creels. Alex threw away any prawns which he caught (although later prawn fishing became the main catch for much of the Scottish fishing fleet).

Fishing boats

At the Gairloch Heritage Museum there is the fishing boat, *Ribhinn Bhoidheach* or 'Beautiful Maiden', built at Port Henderson in 1914.

This boat was built in the MacKenzies' boat-yard on croft 12. The final brother continued to build boats when he was over 90 years of age. (The MacKenzies who were recorded as boat carpenters lived in croft 15 and rented croft 12). *Ribhinn Bhoidheach* was 14.8' long with a breadth of 6.9'. She drew 3.0' and had a registered tonnage of 1.75'. She was



registered with the number U.L. (Ullapool) 39 and her registration was renewed until 1978. 'Beautiful Maiden' was undecked and rigged with a dipping lug sail. Her mast was unstayed and was supported by the halyard which raised the sail and was brought down to the gunwale on the windward side.

She was first fished with a crew of two from Melvaig (a township to the north of Gairloch village). Because there was no harbour there she would be run up onto the beach after each trip and dragged out of the water by those on the shore. (There had been plans prepared in the 18th century to build a stone pier at Melvaig but this was never achieved). Then she was fitted with an engine and she fished from Badachro and was owned by Ian MacDonald from Badachro.

The 'Seagull' was another boat built at Port Henderson around 1890. In the 1990s it became unseaworthy and was going to be burned. Ian Blake helped to rescue it and it is to be found in his garden in Aultgrishan waiting to be restored. Ian hopes that if and when this happens it can be kept as a piece of local history beside the Aultgrishan slipway. (See the appendix for Ian's poem entitled *Tarring the Boat*).

(Another superstitious notion in the Gairloch area is that whales will attack a boat which has been newly tarred! Fishermen have always been highly superstitious. They would never whistle at sea because this would raise too much wind. Women were cautioned not to comb their hair at night whilst their menfolk were at sea because this could cause drowning and ships leaving harbour must never be turned anti-clockwise.)

Fishing boats known as a 'Zulu' (because the South African war had just ended) were also used in the area. These had enormous brown sails, 70 feet above water level, and were mostly in service during the 1890s. By 1903 the largest Zulu boats were over 80 feet in length and about 40 tons of undressed wood went into the making of the hulls. By 1914 72% of the Scottish fishing fleet were sailing boats but steam started to make an appearance and after the First World War fishing by sail had dropped to 62% and by 1925 to 54%. However, sailing boats for fishing, usually smaller ones under 30 feet in length, were still used quite extensively by 1939 but by 1967 there were none.

According to one source there were two recognised types of fishing boat on the north-west coast, the *bata gearloch* and the *sgoth asaintach*, both slightly scandinavian in appearance with pointed stems and sterns. Both were associated with specialist white fisheries and supposedly full-time fishermen. Boats for inshore fishing of up to about 30 feet were known as 'yoles'.

Port Henderson provided many of the local fishing boats during the 19th century. In the 1940s and early 1950s there were three ring-netters owned by local Port Henderson men which were moored at Badachro. They were built by James (Jimmy) Noble at Fraserburgh, a cousin to the present tenant of croft 10 as only small boats, up to about 20 feet, were built in Port Henderson. These boats were the 'Constance' (owned by Roddy 'Seacrest' of croft 22), the *Maighdean Bhan*, 'Fair Maid' (owned by Donald 'Long' of croft 14) and *Maighdean Mhara*, 'Maid of the Sea'



'Maid of the Sea'

(owned by Duncan MacPherson of croft 4). The Estate lent some money to the owners of the 'Maid' boats so that these could be bought. Later the money was paid back. (Ring netting was made illegal in July 1851 but was never entirely suppressed).



An article (see p. 95) from an interview in 1981 gives information about the Port Henderson boats. A boat called the 'Queen Mary' was once a clipper of the race and may have been built in about 1917 (this boat can also be seen outside Gairloch Heritage Museum and information states that it was built at Alligin in 1910). When Commander Rudd of Ardnamurchan, who owned Shieldaig Lodge Hotel, used to hold races in Gairloch, Kitta Mackenzie's father skippered the

'Queen Mary' along with the old man that owned her (a Mr. Kenneth MacKenzie of Isle Horrisdale). Once when the race was on Kitta and her cousin, Becca Macaulay, had been kept in school while the other pupils went with their headmaster to watch the race. However, the girls took a short cut and reached Carr Point in time to see the boat coming around the buoy. In about 1918 the 'Queen Mary' was fitted with a motor but she was never used for the local community to go to church or to a funeral or for the sacraments (but see p. 96). The boat 'Welcome Home' was the first to be fitted with a motor. She was an east coast Zulu. Her registration number was 132UL. The 'Mermaid' was number 2UL (both were Ullapool registrations). Hector's father, who lived in croft 6, owned the 'Village Maid'. This boat, the 'Welcome Home' and the 'Mermaid' took people to and from church but, it seems that this only occurred once a motor had been installed. The 'Village Maid' had her sail behind the mast which was awkward because the sailors had to move when the boat moved about. When motors were installed the sails were folded and the mast was set in a crutch. A 1316 Kelvin engine from Burges Lands and Co. Glasgow was used. 'Welcome Home' was the first to get an engine and the 'Mermaid' was next.

Fishing information from a resident of South Erradale

Hector Mackenzie worked for a winter on the *Maighdean Bhan*, 'Fair Maid'. Before the second world war most of the local boats were smaller, 25 to 30 feet in length. There were four Port Henderson boats moored in Badachro because of its sheltered harbour. Port Henderson was very much a fishing village with crofting as a reluctant secondary occupation. 'Village Maid' was owned by Donald MacKenzie of croft 6. 'Mermaid' was owned by MacKenzie brothers and MacPherson of croft 4. Donald MacPherson of croft 4 then went on to own *Maighdean Bhan* which is the Gaelic for 'mermaid' or 'fair maid'. 'Baden Powell' was owned by



Roddy 'Seacrest' MacKenzie (*but p.20 states he owned the 'Constance'*) and John Watson of croft 13. 'Princess' was owned jointly by Murdo MacKenzie (Donald Long's brother) of croft 16 and Kenneth MacKenzie of croft 15.

Different fish were caught at various times of the year. In December and January it was dogfish and saithe, followed by cod in February and March. These were caught on long lines with one person feeding out the line and two people baiting the large hooks that were placed alternately on either side of the line as the line was fed out. From March until the end of April lythe (pollack) were caught. Then the spring work on the crofts took place. From June until December it was the herring season with the men only taking necessary time off for the harvest. Church communions were organised for spring and autumn when the men were ashore.

Fishing was relatively quite lucrative so the fishermen tended to have quite large houses (*which might explain the fact that some of the houses in Port Henderson had four and more windows*).

The boats used set ground or top nets (either weighted down at the bottom with bottles as floats at the top or if herring was being caught then corks and floats were used instead). Sometimes these were also drifted slowly to catch the herring shoals.

There were seven fish curing stations in Badachro employing a great many people. As well as the boat crews there were curers, coopers, gutters, packers and salters. Some of the stations were at Isle Horrisdale, Aird (Port na Moniadh) (*Aird House was built about 1840 as a fishing station with two large jetties in front. The ground floor was used as a store for fishing gear and salt and the upper floors provided accommodation for the fish merchant and workers*), Dry Island (*staffed by Stornaway workers in 1894*) and Badachro Pier. The fish was packed into barrels and taken by boat to Russia.

After the war ring netters were introduced which were built in Fraserburgh. These boats were larger as they towed a net between them. (*By the 1950s a ring net might measure over 300 yards long and would extend to a depth of 45 yards in the open sea. One of the pair of boats shot the net and the other picked up one end. The two boats towed the net and turned towards each other to entrap the shoal of fish. As the boats came together the crew from the second boat jumped into the boat which shot the net and helped to haul in the catch. The second boat kept a good pull on the towrope to stop the other from drifting over the net. 'Ringers' felt themselves to be superior to driftnet men*). They caught more fish as they sailed in deeper waters. Many fish did not even reach the loch so inshore fishing declined. Fish were then caught all year round and there were no seasons. Eventually most fishing declined as stocks were not conserved. Government policy dictated that there should be fewer but more efficient boats. Prawn fishing became popular but again declined as stocks failed. At one time mackerel was almost wiped out because large factory ships, 'klondykers' (*often from Russia*) arrive to process and even to can the fish on board.

Hector MacKenzie

A Report of a Drowning

An article in the *Inverness Advertiser*, dated Friday, February 14th 1879, reported the following :
'GAIRLOCH - CASE OF DROWNING - On Wednesday morning of last week, Roderick Mackenzie,

Port Henderson, Gairloch, was unfortunately drowned near Portree, from the smack "Look-out," while the vessel lay to, and the rest of the crew - three young lads, were hauling the nets with the small boat. The morning was rough, with a heavy sea, and the boat was a decked one; and Mackenzie had a pair of heavy sea boots on, all of which, much impeded his movements. It is probable that he must have stumbled and fallen overboard. A search is being made for his body, though the chance of its recovery are remote. The South Side has by this catastrophe lost one of its best and most careful seaman, and much sympathy is felt for his bereaved parents. He was well-known as a most dutiful son. and a well-doing young man. The deceased was 36 years of age, and unmarried.'

From the 1871 census there is recorded a 27-year old unmarried fisherman, Roderick McKenzie, who lived with his father, Alexander, his mother Christy and his three younger sisters, Jane, Anne and Mary and his younger brother John. Alexander was 62 years of age and was recorded as a fisherman and a crofter. It is probable that the McKenzies lived in one of the fishermen's houses, one with three windows, on croft 22 and certainly the name of Roderick and his age confirms that he may have been the fisherman in the article. (This family is only recorded on the 1861 and 1871 censuses. Alex may have formerly lived in 10 Opinan but there is no record as to where he and the family went in later years).

Other boats

One former resident and one present resident recall that there was a boat called the *Baden Powell* (see article above by Hector Mackenzie) on the sandy beach which was used by residents for changing under when they went swimming. (This boat belonged to Roddie 'Seacrest' MacKenzie and John Watson).

All the children used to have great fun playing on an upturned boat on the green just above the beach. The boat was the 'Baden Powell' owned by John Watson of No. 13 (*and Roddie 'Seacrest'*). We used to call it the *Batten* and it was only when I was grown up I discovered *Batten* was the Gaelic way of saying 'Baden' from the name Baden Powell. It was a big boat so we were able to play on top of it and inside it.

Alice MacKenzie (née Maclean)

Puffers carried coal around the coast from ports such as Glasgow and these boats are within the memories of some present day residents.

Fishermen of Port Henderson

The census forms from 1851 to 1901 record occupations. In 1851 there were 17 fishermen (and 14 crofters). In 1861 there were 18 fishermen (with two other men probably away at sea when the count was taken) and 21 crofters. 1871 recorded 15 fishermen and 19 crofters (with two men registered as both) whereas there were fewer fishermen in 1891 (13 as opposed to 22 crofters) but the number had risen again in 1901 to 20, with one wife recorded as a 'fisher'. One of the fishermen was specifically recorded as a salmon fisher.

Before the crofts came into existence it seems as if most, if not all, of the inhabitants lived in houses along the shoreline and there might have been 22 (or even 23) of these, according to Estate records (which would correspond with the later croft allocation. See p.34 onwards for a detailed description of the early inhabitants). These houses and their byres and other outbuildings were built in



Remains of a row of fishermen's houses

joined pairs rather than the 'terraced' houses which have been recorded in other areas of the Scottish west coast. The 1901 census gave dwelling house names rather than croft numbers and 13 fisher's houses were noted, although many of these houses were no longer on crofts with a shoreline. Although in these later years one of these houses had two windows and two others had three windows some of these fishermen's houses must have been far more substantial than the other crofters' houses as there were three houses with six windows and

one other had seven. This would indicate that there might be an upper floor for the bedroom area rather than merely an attic area under the sloping roof.

On the 1881 census one 56 year-old unmarried woman's occupation was recorded as being a gutter of herring (see p.19). However, on the following census she was a domestic servant.

Fishing was at its peak at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. In 1886 there was detailed information on Gairloch fishing from the Reports of the Fishery Board for Scotland. Scottish fishing was going through a bad period after the crisis of 1884 with the international herring markets and the population in the Gairloch area was falling due to emigration. But in the wider parish of Gairloch there were 614 fishermen, some 40% of the able-bodied manpower. There were 142 fishing boats. It was believed that there were approximately 30 fishermen in Port Henderson (although the 1881 census only records 13 and the 1891 only records 15) with about six to seven boats.

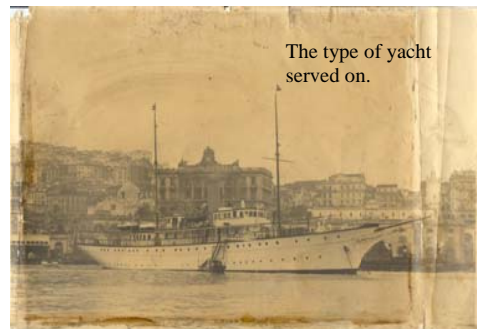
It was usual that in the early years of the century the fishing boats, small with 14 to 16-foot keels, would be owned by a group of three to four men and they would share the expenses and the profits equally. In later years larger open boats with about 20 to 25-foot keels were used for cod and ling fishing. These had about six men for crew and they shared all the proceeds. The Fishery Board reports showed that white fish landings and curings were at their peak and in the early 20th century herring fishing was at its peak. By 1913 it was stated that there were still about 30 fishermen in Port Henderson and the same number of boats which landed their catch at Badachro where there was a suitable jetty. Each boat made seasonal gains of up to £100.

Fishing continued well into the 20th century (this is confirmed by residents' accounts). The green above the *Port Beag* (see p.5) was used by the fishermen for drying their nets and laying up the boats when they were not in use and the land on croft 15 was also used for drying nets. The poles that were erected can still be remembered by residents today (see p.78).

However, an article in the *Scotsman*, dated May 1950, showed that not all fishermen could be totally honest. Seven men from the parish of Gairloch and these included four from Port Henderson, were charged with poaching deer in Lewis and were using their two ring-net boats for taking away their booty. One of the men from Port Henderson was found not guilty (as was one of the other accused) but the rest were fined a sum of £5 plus expenses.

Yachts and yachting

Before the 2nd World War working as skippers and crew, such as cooks, deckhands and galley men, on large pleasure yachts was an important means of employment for men in the area. Although this work continued after the war it slackened. The men would work on the yachts during the summer months once the spring work on the land had been finished. Conditions were not always good and the work was hard.



From Port Henderson there were three skippers, Duncan MacPherson from 4, Roddy 'Seacrest' and John Watson from 13. (Men from crofts 6, 10 and 19 also worked on these boats). The skippers were sometimes paid a retainer fee so that they would return every season. John Watson skippered the Will's yacht for 30 years (Will's cigarettes). The men would wear jerseys with the yacht's logo on them and if they didn't want these to be seen they would wear their jerseys back to front.

Often they sailed from Sandbank and sometimes they sailed at Cowes on the Isle of Wight. In later years the yachts belonging to the Whitbreads and to the Masons (of Fortnum and Mason) were moored in Badachro.

4) Official Records

The 'Old Statistical Account'.

This was printed in 1792, written by the Rev. Mr. Daniel M'Intosh and the information it contains refers to the whole Parish of Gairloch whose length was recorded as no less than thirty-two miles and whose breadth was about eighteen miles.

Arable land was limited and even when the 'season is favourable' crops that were grown could only serve the inhabitants for about seven or eight months of the year. Potatoes were an important crop and fish contributed to the economy (both cod and herring fishing was mentioned). Oats and barley were also grown but the autumn winds often spoilt the crops. Meal came by boat during the summer months and the cost of a boll (eight stones) was between 16 and 18 shillings.

The people were said to be sober, regular, industrious, pious, polite and hospitable. Few people reached a great age (late 80s) but two inhabitants were recorded as being 100. Fevers, particularly in

the winter, could be fatal. Gaelic was the common language and everyone, whatever their denomination, belonged to the Established Church.

However, as there was no settlement at Port Henderson when this survey was carried out this information is only of general interest.

The 'New Statistical Account'.

This was printed in 1836 and written by the Rev. Donald M'Rae and as with the Old Account any information refers to the whole Parish of Gairloch.

Gaelic was still the main language although some of the younger men used occasional English words. (Even in 1891, according to the census records, 34 out of the 130 residents of Port Henderson spoke only Gaelic and the same number were still recorded as being monolingual in 1901). Much was made of the poor housing with people living in one end of the building and the animals in the other. (This was the time before house improvements took place during the making of the crofting townships in 1845). However, some tenants were beginning to build separate byres. But people seemed to be able to keep clean. It was reported that people appeared to be unambitious and contented with their land, grass for two or three cows and fishing materials. Peat was the only fuel used. As with the previous account their character was said to be good and there were, as before, no Dissenters. The poor, about 100 in number, received parochial aid. There was a parochial school and eight Society schools (supported by different religious bodies) in the whole parish. People worked on the land and many were servants. Masons, carpenters, blacksmiths and weavers were also mentioned. Salmon, cod, ling and herring fishing continued to take place.

According to this report there were only four vessels belonging to the several ports and these could carry loads of around thirty-five tons each. Roads were said to be poor and the only post-office was in Poolewe (about 15 miles away from Port Henderson!)

The Napier Commission

The Napier Commission was set up to investigate the conditions for crofters and the local meeting for the Gairloch area took place on the last day of July 1883 at Poolewe Church. The Laird, Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, did not attend although he was one of the commissioners because he wanted his tenants to be able to speak freely. He was generally praised as a landlord although there was some disquiet amongst the crofters over the fact that there was lack of security of tenure and about the ruling that tenants had to give the estate 60 hours of compulsory labour a year for no wages or food. This work was usually on the roads or boundary fences. One crofter reported on an actual eviction of a family for non-payment of rent.

'Murdo MacPherson evicted from croft and house in Opinan and the house was unroofed. He had to live for a long time after with his large and weak family in a tent at Porthenderson.'

It does not appear that this family settled permanently in Port Henderson as no Murdo MacPherson

appears on the 1891 census.

Representation to Sir Kenneth Mackenzie

A letter written from Port Henderson, Gairloch, dated March 11th 1887 from the Crofters of Port Henderson to Sir Kenneth S. Mackenzie :

‘Sir

The Crofters of the three townships met in the Opinan Public school on Friday the 4th inst. to see what we would do about the hill pasture, and we were all as one man. Two delegates from each township were appointed to meet with the factor on Tuesday till they would see the marches. When they met on Tuesday the factor told the Porthenderson delegates that the Erradale Crofters would not give us the hill-pasture, please let us know if it is by your order they are keeping the hill pasture from us. Your petitioners will much oblige by your immediate reply.’

This was written in a well formed hand by Duncan McKenzie of croft 4 and signed by the following :

Widow Alx McKenzie (14), Widow K. McKenzie (6), Kenneth McPherson (7), Widow A. McMillan (of probably 21), Donald McPherson (2), Hector McKenzie (10), Donald McKenzie (19), Alexander McPherson (20), John McLean (18), John MacKenzie (8), Roderick McKenzie (15), W. Murdo McKenzie (16), Widow R. Urquhart (17), Kenneth McPherson (11), Kenneth McPherson (9), Kenneth McLennan (12), Murdo Fraser (22), Alex McRae (5)

Nearly every croft was represented. The omissions are crofts 1, 3 and 13. Checking with the census forms of 1881 and 1891 it can be seen croft 1's head of household was a Catherine McPherson (although there is the possibility that she was connected to the McPhersons of croft 2) and croft 3 was subsumed with croft 4. Croft 13 was tenanted by Andrew Watson and his family and there appears to be no reason why he was not one of the signatories.

The crofters received a reply from Kenneth S. Mackenzie, dated 14th March 1887 and headed Conan House, Ross-Shire N.B. It is written in rather a scrawling hand as if dashed off quite quickly with the occasional crossing out and rewriting.

‘Mr Duncan Mackenzie No. 4 Port Henderson Sir

I am in receipt of your letter of the 11th inst. - signed also by a number of the Port-henderson tenants, - saying that “the crofters of the three townships met in the Opinan Public School on the 4th inst. to see what they would do about the hill, and they were all agreed as one man : but that when they met Mr Mackenzie the Estate Manager on (Binne Bhric) the hill on the 8th he said that the Erradale Crofters would not give you a share of the (hill) pasture. As the Erradale people were (also in Binne Bhric) present there that day it seems extraordinary that you should have accepted an expression of their views from another person without asking themselves about it. It is evident that there must be more in the matter than your letter discloses, but I expect Mr. Mackenzie will be down at the market, and when I have seen him, and have come to understand the question I will again write to you. So far as I am concerned I am ready to agree to what the Crofters may agree on, about the sharing of the pasture; but if my advice were asked I would say that Port

Henderson would be wise to stick to the fishing and to leave the farming to Erradale. Those who are within easy reach of Badachro harbour should in my opinion put no money in stock except in the milk cows they require for their own use, but should invest any capital they can get together in the very best boat and tackle of the day. Prosperity (never) seldom attends the man who divides his time between two trades. But as I have said, though this is my opinion, I am ready to agree to what the tenants agree to.

Yours Truly'

It would be interesting to know if Kenneth Mackenzie wrote again and whether the hill pasture was shared amicably. It is even more interesting to read that the Laird whose family imposed a crofting township on to a fishing village felt that the Port Henderson inhabitants should remain as fishermen, especially those who lived near to the Badachro area. Working the land in all the Gairloch townships did not give the crofters a living wage and many of them took other work, fishing being one of the more common occupations. However, out of the crofters who signed the letter there were only two fishermen, but two of the widows had been married to fishermen and checking their family membership it can be noted that another 15 were brothers or sons who were fishermen.

The Port Henderson Cases of 1888

In the *Scottish Highlander*, dated Thursday April 26th 1888 under a main heading 'The Highland Land Court in Gairloch' and a secondary heading 'Kenneth MacKenzie's Tenants' was an article about 'The Port Henderson Cases'. The Crofters Commission sat to hear cases of dispute between landlord and tenant in the Free Church (and it is assumed that this is Gairloch Free Church). Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, the Laird, conducted his own cases, assisted by his estate manager and the tenants were represented by Alexander Mackenzie of the *Scottish Highlander*. On the Monday and Tuesday the court had dealt with Opinan, South Erradale and Point and then on Wednesday 25th April it was the turn of Port Henderson. It appears that Sir Kenneth made an opening statement in which he explained that the township of Port Henderson was originally a fishing village in 1815.

The first crofter examined was Donald MacPherson, 'an old man'.

'He was considerably in arrear with his rent in consequence of his father's arrears on a different croft, No. 2, having been charged against him in No. ... although he had been removed out of his father's house and had to take his present miserable place. In a reply to Sheriff Brand, he said that his father had only one cow when he died, and that was taken away by the factor. He did not know that he was charged with his father's old arrears until some time later.'

It appeared that Donald MacPherson was put out of his croft by the estate authorities in the time of Dr. John Mackenzie and Sir Kenneth was unable to verify the correctness of this tenant's statement because it was before his time. Sheriff Brand said that he would like to see the old rent book, if this could be found, and charged Donald MacPherson to bring this to the Commission. (The only elderly Donald MacPherson found on the relevant census was recorded as living on croft 2 from at least 1871, maybe from 1851, and in 1888 he would have been 67 years of age. He was still in croft 2 at 1901 at 82 years

of age. It is possible that his father was a Duncan MacPherson who might have been living on crofts 14 or 20. Duncan was 70 years old on the 1851 census).

The next tenant to be called before the court was a Duncan MacKenzie who had two crofts and a boat with a 40 feet keel which he shared with his son. Sir Kenneth had given him most of the money needed to buy the boat and Duncan was in arrears by one rent.

‘Sheriff Brand said that, under these circumstances, he should pay up his arrears, to which he replied that he was quite willing, and would do so as soon as he made anything at the fishing. He could get nothing to ... them out of the croft.’

He was asked by Alexander Mackenzie how far away he was from the nearest harbour and was told that the distance was two and a half miles to Badachro because only boats less than 16 or 17 in keel could be hauled up at Port Henderson. Sheriff Brand remarked that it was not often that crofters and sons with boats as large as Duncan’s came before the court and he asked where the fish went after it had been caught. When the reply was to Stornoway Sir Kenneth asked why there rather than the two fishing stations at Badachro. It appeared that more money, ten to twenty shillings per cran, could be found in Stornoway whilst only six or seven shillings per cran was given at Badachro. Duncan MacKenzie said that he would pay his arrears as soon as he could ‘get it from the sea.’ (This Duncan MacKenzie was most probably the tenant of crofts 3 and 4. He was shown as a fisherman on the 1871 census and his son, James, was also a fisherman. In 1888 Duncan would have been 73 years of age).

The next tenant was John Mackenzie.

‘John Mackenzie was a shoemaker as well as a crofter. Cross-examined by Sir Kenneth as to having fallen into arrears, he explained that he could not, in recent years, get from the crofters as much as he would pay for the leather he was using. He was suffering, like the landlord, by the tenants inability to pay.’

His representative explained that the tenants in the township kept more cattle and sheep than they needed because they couldn’t get a price for them so they were only able to pay off small sums of any arrears they had accrued. The shoemaker received nothing for his labour. John Mackenzie also explained that he had built a house eight years previously which had cost about £60. Although the



A shoe pattern

wood was free from the estate he ‘complained that he had to cart it a long distance’ and this had cost him £3 - ‘as much as he would have had to pay if he bought it in Glasgow.’ He was still partly in debt over the house. (The shoemaker’s house was on croft 8 and, although John was shown as a 63 year old crofter on the 1881 census his son, Murdo, was a shoemaker).

‘Several other cases followed, displaying no special feature of interest. Most of the parties were in arrears, and very poor - widows, and men who fished as hired men during the fishing season.’

One more Port Henderson case was heard.

‘John Mackenzie, who appeared for his mother, Widow Alexander Mackenzie, gave interesting evidence regarding the fishing industry. The extent of the croft was four acres of reclaimed moss, for which they paid a reduced rent of £4.15s, and during the last two years they had fallen into arrears, in

consequence of failure of the fishing in which he was engaged, and out of the proceeds of which he paid the rent for his mother and maintained the family.’

He was asked if £7 from the fishing season was a good return as a previous witness had thought so. John felt it was a very poor return and it was what he had earned. He had a share in a small boat which was not a herring fishing boat. He fished in another man’s boat and paid him a share of the fishing for being able to use it. He possessed fifteen nets which cost him £2. 5s each. The representative told the court that John’s drift cost him about £34 and the nets would last about three years. Working out the finances the representative queried the witness as follows :

‘So that on the deterioration of the nets alone you lose about £12 each season..... Therefore a man who earns only £7 is £5 to the bad on nets alone..... And there is, in addition, the boat’s share, barking, and mending the nets, and your own labour and clothing..... Is it not the fact that you must earn from £20 to £23 in a season before you can have anything for yourself?’

John Mackenzie explained that he had earned £12 the previous year and £18 the year before that but those amounts only ‘kept him in material’ and he made no profit. The croft was poor and small and was unable to support stock. The representative summed up :

‘And the rent is about £1.5s an acre for moss 30 or 40 feet deep - a Midlothian rent.’

There was no mention as to the court’s decision on this case. (The Mackenzie family in question were likely to be Christy, a widow of 63 years of age, once married to Alexander and living on croft 22, then on croft 14 with John, her unmarried son of 27 years of age and a fisherman. According to the Inland Revenue records £4.15 for croft 14’s yearly rent was high).

A letter to the *Scottish Highlander*, dated 18th September 1885 showed one of the problems crofters might have with their landlords. Murdo Mackenzie (maybe from croft 8 or 19) owned a tup which he kept on 'the hill'. He sold this for £2. 10s and he had to deliver it to its new owner within a few days. He instructed the shepherd to deliver it but it had strayed to the forest (probably the deer forest at Shieldaig) and the shepherd was afraid to go there because of a letter which had been sent by the sporting tenant. It appeared that the tup had been found dead!

5) Port Henderson - the Fishing Village

Before the fishing village

The round houses (hut circles) of the pre-historic period were succeeded by turf-built houses. As already mentioned it is believed that there were no round houses in Port Henderson and it is also not known to which, if any, houses used turf in their construction. However, Dixon mentioned that there were two ‘dwelling-houses ... built of turf’ in South Erradale.

The fishing village

From the 1815 minutes of Sett (see p.6) twenty two men were allocated the land which, at first, was the

fishing village and which later became the crofting township. These were :

‘William bain Mackenzie, William Fraser, Murdo MacDonald, Donald Mackenzie, Alexander Macpherson, Angus MacDonald, Roderick Mackenzie, Alexn. Campbell, Donald Mackenzie, Murdo Mackenzie, Alexr. Macpherson, Duncan Macpherson, Alexr. Macpherson, Hector Urquhart (*deleted*), James MacDonald, John MacLean, Murdo Fraser (*deleted*), Niel Macpherson, John Macpherson, Murdo MacDonald, John Fraser, Kenneth MacMillan, John Campbell, Willm. MacKay on condition of occupying the same by building their houses two and two joined and as lotted out, for the first Five years to pay no Rent but to build their march dykes, make a port and road from the house to the same and for the next fifteen years to pay one Guinea each of yearly rent beginning the first years payment at Martinmas eighteen hundred and twenty and so on yearly. To be removeable by the decision of a majority of the neighbours their fellow labourers in the place before the Proprietor or Factor for the time. The ground must be laboured and laid regularly by draining and each man is to enclose one hundred feet back the breadth of his front ground or each two for a yard or Garden between them.

Hector MacKenzie’

(The Murdoch Fraser from Portscounan is shown in the list above but his name has been crossed out. Maybe he was thought to have been a possible tenant but that he had died. Other names on the list can be seen as having registered their children from 1815 onwards, such as Duncan MacPherson and his wife, Mary, registering Alexander in 1815 and Donald in 1819, and Neil MacPherson and his wife,



Ruins of fishermen's houses on croft 22

Katherine Urquhart, registering a daughter, Isabelle, in 1819). As stated earlier there are the remains of two rows of cottages and these are marked on the Estate map (shown on the A' Sgùman peninsular and where crofts 21, 9 and 22 were later allocated) and it is likely that all these date from 1815 when the fishing village was first set up. There were many of these cottages (the Estate Map shows five buildings on the peninsular, maybe eight in the first group plus three

further along and fifteen in the second group but these need not all be houses) and on the first census of 1841 26 separate households were recorded. Although this could indicate that there may have been other cottar's dwellings there are no non-shore buildings shown on the Estate map thus it is probable that there were more shore-built dwellings which have long disappeared.

132 people lived in Port Henderson in 1841, about 70% of these being adult (aged 15 and over). As has been described earlier a 'port' was a cleared section of shoreline where small boats could be pulled up and beached. These landing places were delineated by larger boulders and presumably would need clearing when storms dislodged the stones, making it difficult for boats to be moored. Because of the geography of



A former landing place

the land more than one port was made. The roads would have been roughly cleared tracks.

(The first census gave no numbers for those men who were employed as fishermen although it could be assumed that nearly every household contained at least one fisherman but the 1851 census showed that there were 17 fishermen as against 14 crofters. See p.24 for other fishermen statistics).

The houses would have been single-storeyed and made of rough stones with thatched roofs and as stated in the above minutes these would have been semi-detached. Like the cottars' houses those in Port Henderson would probably have been one-roomed with one window and maybe there would have been a partition for any livestock which might have been kept. A hole would have been made in the centre of the roof through which the smoke from the peat fire would disperse. There is some evidence of chimneys (such as two on croft 21) which might have been added at a later date.

The shore dwellings had allocated garden areas, strips of ground behind the buildings where it is assumed that vegetables and maybe some grain could have been grown. (Today the ground is still very fertile in these areas. The soil in these garden areas has been mixed with Irish soil which was brought back by the boats as ballast on their return from Ireland where they had taken their cargo of fish and goat skins. The soil is said to have been taken from the banks of the river Liffey that runs through Dublin - see p.15). The tenants might have shared other land elsewhere on the township, *feannagan* or 'lazy beds'. However, there is no real evidence of this now because later ploughing would have changed the nature of the fields although there appears to be an extensive run rig system shown on the Estate Map. Because of the position of Port Henderson the tenants would have been able to use shells for lime and seaweed for fertiliser. The tenants would have used the 'bent foot' plough or *cas chrom* to turn the soil for cultivation. This could only be used if the soil depth was shallow.

The corn drying kilns cannot be dated so they may date from between 1815 and 1845 or after this later date when the crofting township was set up. Grain-drying was needed in croft production when summers were cool and moist. Grain-drying was necessary for the process of malting, drying seed for storage and the next year's harvest and so that grinding for flour could take place. Corn drying kilns on the Scottish mainland were generally sited away from houses with the circular bowl and the covered flue sunk into the hillside. Usually there was a thatched roof to keep out the rain. A peat fire was lit at the mouth of this flue and the heat, which was not kept at too high a temperature, was drawn along the passage to enter the bowl of the kiln below a matted floor. This floor was usually made of wooden or iron struts and the grain was dried on a bedding of straw placed on the floor.



The corn drying kiln's circular bowl

Fishing continued in Port Henderson when the crofting township was established but as the years went by the fishermen started to use Badachro as their main harbour because of its more sheltered position (see the letter from Sir Kenneth MacKenzie to the Port Henderson crofters reproduced on p.28/29).

Details from the first minutes of Sett, Estate Records, with added information from the Gairloch Estate Plan of 1844 and the 1841 Census

Not all the tenants' names from the original minutes can be traced in later records (the first Estate Records deal with 1830 to 1840 so it is probable that some of the first fishermen had either died or been dismissed and others, either sons or men from elsewhere, had taken their places). As has been stated above there were 26 households with 132 people (adults and children) recorded on this 1841 census. However, it has to be remembered that when the 1841 census was taken the crofting township with its allocation of land had not taken place so all the families would have been living in the fishing village with their houses on the shoreline. There were seven people who were 70 years old or older (with three being 80). In 1841 nearly all the heads of households were recorded as being tenants and they would have paid rent to Gairloch Estate. One schoolmaster and his family were recorded, one tailor and one woollen HLW (woolen hand loom weaver). Families were fairly large (two families of eight were the largest).

Where the first families came from is mostly unknown but some analysis of old records show that people were born in places such as Diabaig, Red Point/Point Crofts and Gairloch.

Also it is not known where these households actually lived although the Estate Records give former 'house' numbers (shown below but these numbers only go up to 23 and these are detailed with the subsequent croft number beside them. There is also a number 24 which is believed to have been the school lot). (This analysis also shows how confusing the early records can be with census information and Estate records not always giving the same details as well as names slightly changing. Therefore some of these records cannot be confirmed for accuracy).

Original 1/Croft 1. The original house 1 appears to have been on An Sgùmán peninsular and this is shown indistinctly on the Estate Plan with Murdo McKenzie's name alongside who was probably one of the original fishermen on the original list (in 1815 around 26 years of age). From the Estate Records of 1830/40/41-1845 Murdo McKenzie, his wife Betty and two children, became the tenant of croft 1 (with one house) but by 1846 his rent was abated because of his loss of a leg and by 1847 the rent was again abated because he was a 'man on Poor Roll' with £6.5s.10½d. A note written after 1852 stated that he 'must work off arrear of interest on ? on own lot or let it to another - says he can't'. His family is recorded on the 1841 census, Murdoch MacKenzie 55, his wife, Catherine, 50, daughters Anne 24, Lexy 20 and Catherine 11 and sons Roderick 18 and Hector 11. By the 1851 census Murdo had died leaving his wife Catherine and children Roderick and Hector who were fishermen and her daughter, Katharine. A six year old grandson Alex McKenzie was also recorded. The family probably moved to croft 14 at some time before the 1871 census. However, because of the discrepancy between his wife's name and number of children there is no certainty that these assumptions are correct.

Original 2/Croft 2. The Estate Plan indicates that Don? MacPherson was to have been allocated this croft but Alex MacPherson seems to have been the likely tenant. He also had his rent abated, in 1845 for old age and in

1847 'as man on Poor Roll'. The 1830 - 40 Estate Records mention the name Alex MacPherson five times so Alex was probably one of the original fishermen (about 49 years old in 1815). On the 1841 census there is an Alex MacPherson, 75, with his wife Isabella, also 75, and their son Hector, 30. Hector was probably married to Jessie and they had two sons, Colin, 2 years old, and Murdo of 3 months. The 1845 Estate Records confirm that Hector lived in the barn. The 1851 census records Alex at 88 years and Isabella at 84 years but there are no further records of Hector and his family. By 1853 Alex was in arrear of Dun. McPherson of no. 14 (or croft 20) and a note at the bottom of the page of the Estate Record stated that he was an 'old man', a 'pauper.' It appears that Duncan MacPherson's son Donald took over croft 2 and it could be surmised that there was some relationship between Alex, Duncan and Donald. But because of similarity of names there is the possibility that this Alex MacPherson was from the original number 7 and was allocated croft 12.

Original 3/Croft 10. Widow MacKenzie's name appears on the Estate Plan but in 1845 Murdo McKenzie was recorded as the tenant of croft 10 and the 1841 - 45 Estate Record shows him married to Margaret and living in one house with one barn. They had four children. There is no further trace of this family and there is the possibility that this Murdo MacKenzie can be confused with the man of the same name on croft 1.

Original 4. There appears to be no-one on an original number 4 and this 3/4 amalgamation continues throughout the census records.

Original 5/Croft 19. the Estate Plan indicates Don MacKenzie but in 1845 Thomas MacPherson was the tenant and he was allocated croft 19. On the 1841 census he was recorded as being 35 years of age and living with Mary, 30 years and their three young children, Anne, Christina and Catherine. Anne MacPherson, a widow of 80 and probably Thomas's mother, lived with them. There was one house and one barn and a sub-tenant, Hector Macpherson who was married to Kate and they had two children as shown on the Estate Records of 1843. (Maybe Hector and his family lived in the barn). Thomas was also recorded on the 1851 census but his wife had died. Anne and Christine were still living with him and there were also two sons, William and Roderick. There are no further census records of Thomas. On May 24th 1853 Thomas paid fish money to D. McKenzie; by 26th. May he owed arrears and absconded and it appears that D. McKenzie took over the croft. Donald McKenzie is also recorded on the 1841 and 1861 censuses and on the 1830 - 40 Estate Records and was probably one of the original fishermen being 31 years of age in 1815. (A Kenneth MacKenzie with his wife and family are also noted but these may have been on croft 20).

Original 6/Croft 4. Alex Campbell was allocated croft 4 but crofts 3 and 4 are difficult to differentiate (see above) and the Estate Plan indicates that croft 4 was intended for Ann Mackenzie and croft 3 to Widow Campbell. The earliest record for Alex is on the 1841 - 45 Estate Record when he is married to Bell and has one house and one barn. By the 1851 census Alex at 67 years of age was crofting five acres and living with his 65 year old wife, Isabella. An Alex Campbell was shown on the 1815 list (at about 31 years of age) indicating that

he was an original fisherman.

Original 7/Croft 12. Alex McPherson was allocated croft 12 but see above for croft 2. (But there were three Alex MacPhersons on the original fishermen's list). The Estate Plan shows Ken MacLennan's name but by the Estate Records of 1841 - 45 and the 1841 census Widow (Margaret) McLennan, 35 years of age, had taken over the croft of 3 acres with her four sons and two daughters. The Estate Records of 1852 state that her husband drowned in 1841. According to the 1841 - 45 Estate Records they had one house but in another was Margaret's brother, John Macrae, who was a tenant from Mellon and there were two sub-tenants, Bell Fraser and Mary Matheson. On the 1851 census Margaret at 45 years continues to live on the croft with three of her children, Kenneth 23 a fisherman, Jane 19 and Alex 10. The 1830 - 40 Estate Records mention a John MacLennan three times and so it could be surmised that he could have been one of the original fishermen but there are no MacLennans recorded on the original list.

Original 8/Croft 18. John McPherson was allocated croft 18 and had been recorded on the 1841 census at the age of 55. He was married to Mary, also 55, and had four older children living at home. A John MacPherson was recorded on the 1815 list when he was about 26 years of age showing that he was an original fisherman. By 1846 William McKenzie took over the tenancy and a William Bain MacKenzie was recorded on the original 1815 list and, therefore, he may have been one of the first fishermen about the age of 21 years. He also was married, to Anne, and there were six children, also recorded on the 1841 Census. There was another change in tenancy in 1853 to John MacLean, noted on the Estate Plan and the 1861 Census but he was also recorded in 1841. John married a Catherine MacMillan (although the 1841 census names her as Anabella) and they had more than five children. In the Estate Book written as notes at the bottom of the page it stated that '..... charged but not removed, crop 1851 not sown, son carried off cattle, won't work.' It is not known whether this is William McKenzie or an older John MacLean but it would seem the former. The three families are not recorded on the 1851 census and only the MacLeans became long-term tenants of the croft. However, the three men's names were recorded on the 1830 - 40 Estate Records and John MacLean's name was shown on the Estate Map and it is probable that John MacLean was also one of the original fishermen when he was about 26 years of age.

Original 9/Croft 6. John McLennan was the tenant who was allocated croft 6 and he is recorded in 1841 at the age of 35 with his wife, Catherine, and his three (or four) children, depending on either the census or they Estate Record of 1841 - 45. They possessed a house and a barn. John is recorded on the 1830 - 40 Estate Records but there are no McLennans recorded on the original list of 1815. Against John's name for 1836 - 1838 were the words 'pay for school'. By 1852 the croft went to Alex McPherson and John McKenzie. The word 'fishing' was written against their names. McKenzies lived on the croft from 1861 onwards, Kenneth being the head. The Estate Plan shows both John Mackenzie and Alex Macpherson (and the name of Alex MacPherson is shown three times on the original list of 1815). Alexander married Jess in 1840 and their son Duncan was born in 1862.

Original 10/Croft 7. Alex McPherson was allocated croft 7 with a house and a barn although Hector MacPherson was shown on the Estate Plan. Alex (who died in 1857) was married to Catherine and they had three children, one of whom was Hector. It is probable that Alex was one of the original fishermen, at the age of 44 years, as his name is on the original list (but there are three Alex MacPhersons). Alex, Katherine and Hector were recorded on the 1851 census and Hector took over the tenancy by the 1861 census.

Original 11/Croft 8. John MacKenzie was allocated croft 8 but wasn't recorded on a census until 1851 when he was 61 years old with his wife, Mary 63, and his two sons, a daughter and a daughter-in-law. He was recorded on the Estate Plan and on the Estate Records of 1845 but not on any earlier Estate Record, nor is there a John MacKenzie on the original list. The Estate Record for 1847 showed a Jack M P.... (the surname is unreadable but it is probably Jack MacPherson).

Original 12. There appears to be no-one on the original number 12 although Alex McKenzie's name is shown on the Estate Plan in a house on An Sgùmán (see below). Alex MacKenzie, his wife Ann, his two sisters and four children were shown on the 1841 census and this family remained until the 1861 census.

Original 13/Croft 20. Ken McKenzie was allocated croft 20 but was ejected in 1851, maybe Whitsun. He is recorded on the Estate Plan, the Estate Records for 1830 - 40, but not on the original list of 1815, the Estate Record of 1845 and on the 1841 census. He was 60 and was married to Mary who was 50 and they had two children and maybe a grandson. It was written that the original 13 was vacant between 1850 and 1852.

Original 14/Croft 3. Mrs. (Widow) Campbell (probably married to Murdo, a 50 year-old tailor, and registered on the 1841 census as a tenant) was allocated croft 3 (see above for links with croft 4) and her name was shown on the Estate Plan. The Estate Records for 1841 - 45 note that an Alex Campbell and Bell had one house and one barn. An Alex Campbell is listed on the fishermen's records of 1815 (see above).

Original 15. There appears to be no-one on the original number 15.

Original 16/Croft 5. John Fraser (from Applecross) was allocated croft 5 and on the 1841 census he was recorded with his wife (Jessie from Diabaig) and four children with one house and one barn. On some Estate Records Christy Fraser, a servant, was living in the barn. (Frasers remained on this croft up to the 1901 census). Widow Fraser (maybe John's mother) was shown on the Estate Plan. A William Fraser is recorded on the original list of 1815 who might have been John's father. Both a William and a John Fraser are shown on the original 1815 list but this John would have been only 14 years of age.

Original 17/Croft 16. The Estate Plan shows Murdo MacKenzie but the Estate records give Widow (Mary/Elizabeth/Eliza) MacKenzie croft 16, and it is thought that she was married to Alexander. On the 1841

census she is 35 and lives with her father, William Fraser at the age of 80, and her three children. In 1851 she is 40 years old and lives with her 20-year old son, Murdoch (born in Isle Horrisdale about 1828), who later takes over the croft, her daughter and her elderly 80 year old aunt Isabella. A note states 'we must build house for her' and at the bottom another states 'This widow had not crop 1852 not given to paupers' and 'due spade 41'. (*'Due a spade' most likely refers to the tenant owing a day's work cutting peat or something similar*). (Widow MacKenzie lived to at least 72 years and by 1871 she was living in a separate small house.). However, according to the 1841 - 1845 Estate Records Widow A MacKenzie is recorded with three children and a farm tenant, William Fraser, thus there is some confusion over her name. No Alexander MacKenzie is recorded on the 1815 records but a William Fraser was. If he were one of the original fishermen he would have been about 54 years of age in 1815.

Original 18/Croft 14. Duncan MacPherson was allocated croft 14 and his name is shown on the Estate Records of 1830-40/ 46 and 52. A Duncan MacPherson is shown on the 1841 census (see notes for croft 2 and croft 20) but the croft was taken over by MacKenzies up to 1871, although some Estate records (1854 - 56) and the Estate Plan indicate that Alex MacMillan could have been allocated the croft. Duncan MacPherson's name appears on the original fisherman's list of 1815 when he would have been 34 years of age.

Original 19/Croft 15. Widow MacLennan whose husband drowned in 1841 was to have been allocated croft 15 (but also see croft 12) but the Estate record, of 1852, shows that Rod MacKenzie (ex 20 Midtown) was later allocated the tenancy and his name is shown on the Estate Plan and these MacKenzies (boat builders) remained on this croft up to the 1901 census. (However, the MacKenzies only started being recorded on the census forms from 1861). There is a Roderick MacKenzie recorded on the original fisherman's list of 1815 when he was about 25 years of age.

Original 20/Croft 13. Alex MacKenzie was allocated croft 13 and a note stated 'due spade'. The 1841 - 45 Estate Records and the 1841 census record Alex, his wife Ann, four children and his two sisters as having a house and a barn. On the 1851 census only Ann and three of the children are recorded. (Watsons took over croft 13 from 1871 onwards). The Estate Plan shows Ken MacKenzie who might have been Alex's father but no Kenneth MacKenzie was recorded on the original list of 1815.

Original 21. There appears to be no-one on the original number 21.

Original 22/Croft 11. Ken McPherson was allocated croft 11 and was shown on the Estate Plan. In 1841 he was the 21-year old tenant living with his widowed mother, Christy, 57 years old. The 1841 - 45 Estate Records show only Widow Neil MacPherson and a Neil MacPherson is shown on the earlier Estate Records indicating that he might have been one of the original fishermen and this is confirmed by a Neil MacPherson being recorded on the list of 1815. (MacPhersons remained on the croft up to the 1901 census). Kenneth McPherson was the brother-in-

law of young widow MacPherson and her daughter, Jess but it is possible that the widow and her daughter left the township before the census was taken.

Original 23/Croft 17. Ian McKay (ex-Mihol) appears to have been allocated croft 17 according to the 1845 Estate Records and the 1841 and 1851 census and 1841 - 45 Estate Records show a Jean/Jane and Christina/Christy MacKay but by 1852 Rod Urquhart took this over (his name was on the Estate Plan). (A Hector Urquhart was on the original list of 1815 but his name was crossed out). A William MacKay was mentioned on earlier Estate Records indicating that he could have been one of the original fishermen and a William MacKay is shown on the list of 1815. The word 'daughter' was recorded for 1837. Jean was 45 and Christina was 40 on the first census. (The Urquharts remained on the croft from the 1861 to the 1901 censuses). 'One spade' is written as a footnote.

Original 24. School lot?

(?)/Croft 9. John McPherson was allocated croft 9 but it is not recorded what was his original house number. His name was recorded on the Estate Plan, on the 1845 Estate Records with his wife Ann in a house with a barn and on earlier Estate Records showing that he might have been one of the original fishermen and this appears to be confirmed by his name appearing on the list of 1815 but he would only have been about 19 years of age at that time. (But see above for croft 18). On the 1841 census it is shown that they have four children. (MacPhersons stayed on this croft up to the 1901 census).

(?)/Croft 21. Duncan MacKenzie may have been allocated croft 21 from 1849 and his name is shown on the census form of 1861 and on the Estate record of 1849. But it is also possible that Murdo Campbell was on this croft, from the 1841 - 45 Estate Records and the 1841 and 1851 censuses. He was married to Margaret with four children. Both Duncan and Murdo might have been original fishermen. Croft 21 forms the land where there were original fishers' houses and is quite complicated and there were 7 numbered houses.

No. 1 was Murdo Mackenzie (see croft 1) & Alex MacPherson and his wife May, on the Estate Records (see croft 2) with a sub-tenant, John MacLean, his wife May and two children (see croft 18).

No. 7 was Donald MacPherson (on the 1841 census) with his married son and three children plus John MacPherson, his wife Annabel and two children as sub-tenants. They had one house, one barn and one byre.

9/11/17/18 showed no names.

12 was Alex MacKenzie, his wife Ann, his two sisters and four children (shown on the 1841 census) and this family remained until the 1861 census.

The Peninsular was recorded as being allocated to Ann MacKenzie.

Campbells also lived on this croft. Murdo Campbell, his wife Margaret and their four children were

shown on the Estate Records and then on the census form of 1851 (see above). Duncan Campbell also lived on the croft, recorded on the 1851 census.

(?)/Croft 22. This croft also forms the land where there were original fisher's houses and the Estate Plan shows 6 houses (10/11/12/13/15/16/19). In 1851 Charles McLeod (Catechist) was allocated a tenancy on Croft 22 and in June of 1852 McLeod was presented by Sir Kenneth 'ex sale of crop.' (Notes were also made about 'Colin Fraser grass' and 'Alex Mackenzie from 10 Openham' but no records from this township can be traced. These men are shown on the Estate Records of 1852.) Charles MacLeod was registered on the 1841 census as a 36-year old unmarried Free Church Catechist, with 21-year old Elizabeth Urquhart, his servant.

There are other people recorded on either Estate Records or the 1841 census whose houses cannot be traced. From the Estate Records only are Murdo MacDonald and his wife Christy with two children. A Murdo MacDonald is also recorded on the original list of 1815 (on two occasions). William, Donald and Catherine MacDonald live somewhere together and there is always the possibility that these families are related. Alex Torrie, a schoolmaster with his wife, Mary, and their five children also have a house (see below in the section on schools on p.41). A Donald MacPherson is recorded on the Estate Records of 1830 - 1840 and of 1845 and on the census of 1841 when he was 80 years of age living with his son Murdo, daughter-in-law Catherine and three grandchildren. But Donald is not shown on the list of 1815. The Estate Records of 1830 - 1840 also show a Kenneth Macmillan and that name appears on the 1815 list of original fishermen.

There are four other names which are recorded on the 1815 list of Sett but these are not on any other Estate or census record. These original fisherman are Angus MacDonald, Donald Mackenzie, James MacDonald and John Campbell.

Port Henderson S.S.P.C.K. School

Patrick Butter had been commissioned by the S.S.P.C.K. (The Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge) to inspect the society's schools within the Highlands and Islands and report on the condition of the buildings, the religious character of the instruction and the teaching quality and salary of the teachers. Between May 4th and November 11th 1824 Butter, a Gaelic-speaking preacher, recorded his findings on over a hundred schools.

The S.S.P.C.K. had been established in 1709 and had been granted a royal charter in order to spread the Protestant religion, especially in the Highlands and Islands and the schools were set up to promote education and eradicate religious superstition. Subjects taught included Christian knowledge, reading, writing and arithmetic. In later years agriculture and housekeeping (such as spinning and weaving) were added. The landowners (in the case of Port Henderson this would have been Sir Hector MacKenzie, the Laird, who died in 1826) supplied a schoolroom and a schoolmaster's house and the society provided a teacher. Until 1769 all teaching had to be conducted in English as Gaelic (and Latin) were forbidden but by the late 1760s the Society began to translate and print bibles in Gaelic as many

pupils only spoke Gaelic.

By 1826 there were 134 S.S.P.C.K. schools.

Although it is not known exactly where the school was situated it is thought to have been near the end of the row of fishing village houses where croft 22 is now situated, maybe its ruins are beneath a present garage. On the Estate Plan there are some pencilled numbers which appear to be original house/lot numbers. These are 14, 15(?), 16, 17, 23 and 24. On the 24 plot there is a diagram of two oblong buildings with one side coloured in red rather than the grey of the other oblongs which are houses. It is presumed that the red block might have been the school, perhaps with the schoolmaster's house attached. The extract from Butter's journal for the Port Henderson school dated 24th August 1824 (although it is not known to what the 'gaelic school' refers) states (and there are some words that are too difficult to decipher) :

"In the parish of Gairloch and 23 miles from Tighnafiline. Found 64 in present attendance all of whom except 12 are just commencing in the alphabet. There was formerly a gaelic school here which is now removed to the north side of the parish, and so many young children in this district finding their way to an English school at its first opening indicates really strongly the partiality of the people to that language as a school element however preposterous it should be to encourage it when it is worse than useless to the great majority of attendance only three of the numbers attending school read gaelic who ?? of the older class of children this school has not yet been visited by the parish minister or presbytery. The school house was erected for the Gaelic teacher by the inhabitants and is pretty well lighted all in good repair. The schoolmasters house is one of the old huts of the tenancy superficially fitted up for the purpose but apparently quite insufficient. Garden and (cows grass?) are promised and Lady Mackenzie wishes the tenant to agree to labour the teachers croft as compensation for school fees the inhabitants furnish the ?? free. Few of the scholars will pay fees. The Gaelic schools set an ill example in this respect even when the people could afford their schoolmaster in some measure as it is one of their rules not to exact fees. The teacher at this district reads to the people of the district in the school on sabbath when they regularly attend and I have reason to hope that he will be useful in this respect as well as ?? in the business of the school. The distance from church is 8 miles across a loch and three times that distance round its bend by land. Some of the old people in the district can read but they seem willing in general to send their children to school. Duncan Cumming the teacher has been 6 years in the service of the society and is 38 years of age."

According to the S.S.P.C.K. a teacher had to be '*a person of Piety, Loyalty, Prudence, Gravity, competent knowledge and literature and endowed with other Christian qualifications suited to that station*' and a publication *S.S.P.C.K. Schoolmasters 1709 - 1872* edited by Cowper for the Scottish Record society lists every known schoolmaster.

Duncan Cumming taught in the school at Port Henderson from 1824 to 1832. He had taught in two other schools previously, from 1818 to 1832 and he died in October 1843. He was succeeded in 1833 by Donald McLeod (maybe related to Charles MacLeod, see below) who had previously taught in Taransay and then was dismissed at his next school. Then Alexander Torrie (see below) took over

between 1834 and 1846 but it is recorded that he was 'not efficient' so he received superannuation from 1841. It appears that the S.S.P.C.K. school closed around that time. (The next school to open in the area was in Opinan in 1851 - see p.50).

The census for 1841 records a 60 year old Alex Torrie as a tenant and schoolmaster who lived with Mary, presumably his wife and Margaret, John, Norman, Jessie and Roderick, presumably his daughters and sons, aged from 25 years down to 12 years. This family is not shown on any later census for Port Henderson.

In 1841 Charles MacLeod, a Free Church Catechist, lived somewhere in the township with his servant but once the crofts were made it is not known where he subsequently moved.

6) Port Henderson - the Crofting Township

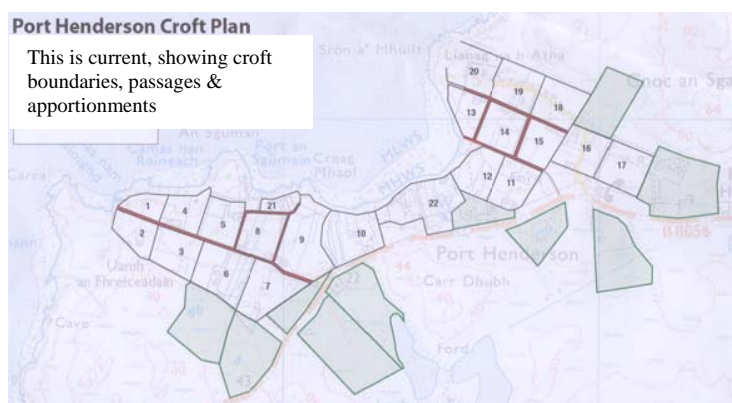
Sir Francis Mackenzie was an innovative laird and he had many ideas for his new crofting townships. The creation of the crofts in Gairloch were carried out in 1845, later than elsewhere in most of the Highlands & Islands and by 1884 most of the cleared land in the Highlands and Islands had started to become crofting townships as a result of settlement schemes recommended by the *Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Condition of Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands*. The Gairloch croft pattern was organised in squares rather than rectangles and the associated settlement pattern is scattered rather than linear. Port Henderson's pattern does not follow this strictly.

According to the Napier Commission of 1883 which looked into crofting conditions a crofter was defined as :

'a small tenant of land with or without a lease, who finds in the cultivation of his holding a material portion of his occupation, earnings, and sustenance, and who pays rent directly to the proprietor.'

After the death of Sir Francis, his younger brother, Dr. John Mackenzie, managed the Gairloch estate from 1841. (See the appendix for information about crofting which first appeared in the booklet *Lonemore : Big Damp Meadow*).

22 crofts were planned for Port Henderson but it is said that croft 1 was not worked, although a house was built on the land (and there are definite census records for 1881, 1891 and 1901 and in the Opinan Public School Logbook of 1921 there was a reference to a Colin Mackenzie, a pupil, who lived at No. 1 Port Henderson), and the peninsular part of croft 21 was retained by the Laird. This housed the salmon fishing station and the corn drying kilns. The crofts were of varying shapes and not as regular as the



usual square Gairloch pattern. Crofts 3 and 4 cannot be easily separated and are generally taken as one unit. It also appears that there was more than one house on some of the crofts. By 1891 there was one house with two windows and another with five to six windows on croft 5; by the same year there were two houses on crofts 6 and 18, a larger one and the original first 'cottar's' house although 18's smaller house was attached as the former barn; by 1901 there were two two-windowed houses on croft 10 and by 1891 there were two houses on crofts 11 and 19. Crofts 21 and 22, the areas where the original fishermen's houses were to be found, continued to be in multiple occupancy. By 1901 there were three houses on croft 21, two with two windows and one with only a single window and there were five houses on croft 22, two with two windows, two with three windows and a larger one with five windows. Because of the lack of numbering on the census forms (only the censuses of 1871, 1881 and 1891 give actual croft numbers but there are some omissions) there are difficulties in working out where the families lived with any great accuracy. Usually this can be determined by taking census 1871 as the bench mark and checking names and ages on the other census forms. However, this still leaves a few families to whom a croft cannot be allotted.

The later Inland Revenue records of 1902 give a few details of all the crofts (tenant's name, building materials, yearly rent and what was the estimated value of the tenant's melioration) except 1, 2, 12 and 20 but there appear to be some houses which are not mentioned. Some of the houses were unfinished internally, in particular some with an upstairs and many had drystone and thatched byres and barns with the occasional mention of wood in the construction. The old byre and barn belonging to croft 17 were still turfed. Most of the houses were of stone and lime roofed with either corrugated iron, felt or thatch and they contained two or four rooms plus a closet or two depending on whether there was an upstairs.

The house on crofts 3/4 was slated 'in good order' and it contained four rooms and two closets. This house was wood-lined internally except for the kitchen and the upstairs stone walls were limed. This belonged to James Mackenzie and the rent was £5.15s. (Mackenzies lived on croft 3/4 since the 1971 census and by 1901 the house was a 'fisher's house' with six windows. Obviously much work had been undertaken and the estimated value of the tenant's melioration was £170. A small sketch showed the house with an adjoining building. Don MacPherson's croft (croft 11 tenanted by MacPhersons since 1845) contained two houses and a drawing shows a smaller house at the gable end of the larger building. The larger house which went with the croft contained four rooms and a closet and on the 1901 census was a 'fisher's house' with seven windows, whilst the other, smaller with two rooms, belonged to Lizzie MacPherson (but her name doesn't appear on any of the census forms). There was also a byre and a barn. Alexander MacLean's two roomed stone and clay felted house on croft 18 had an old thatched house attached and it is known that the former barn had been made into a house and was lived in by Isabella, Alexander's unmarried sister. On the 1901 census there appear to be six separate houses on croft 22 and four of these are detailed. Three were crofter's houses and two were cottar's houses, each of stone and clay with thatched roofs and containing two rooms and a closet. The

fourth was another cottar's house, but larger with four rooms and a closet and this was of stone and lime with a corrugated iron roof. Croft 21 detailed the salmon bothy. The 1901 census indicates three houses, two houses with two windows and a smaller one with one window. On the Inland Revenue forms a thatched house of stone and clay, a drystone byre and a small stone-felted cottar's house are mentioned but there are no details of rooms. However, there are two structures connected with salmon fishing consisting of stone and a bothy, part stone and lime felted and part wood. The only rent shown for the croft is £2 but separate amounts (£20 and £30) are shown as amelioration by the tenant for the dwelling houses and the salmon fishing buildings.

A house site was shown for an Alex Mackenzie giving details of outgoings such as Land Tax of ¼d. This would be a stone and lime house with a corrugated iron roof with two rooms and a closet downstairs and a first floor as yet unfinished. The only Alex Mackenzie on the 1901 census who might be building such a house is shown on croft 10, a 29 year old shoemaker living with his widowed mother in a two-windowed house whilst his brother Murdo with his family lived in a separate house



Croft 10 in the 1950s

which was shown on the Inland Revenue forms. In 1901 the two houses on croft 10 were only two-windowed so it seems that improvements were soon made.

Although Sir Francis Mackenzie believed that he was helping his tenants by allocating them areas of land upon which to build their houses and separate byres and other outhouses and where they could grow their own crops it must have been a great upheaval especially in a fishing village where all the inhabitants originally lived by the sea.

Once the crofts were allocated then the tenants had to rebuild their houses and improvements were made. Stones were chosen and dressed with infill placed into the cracks. More windows were inserted and any cattle that were owned were housed in separate byres and barns. Two rooms would become the norm with at least one fireplace placed at the end of the main room with a chimney breast and a real chimney. The fire still used peat. Roofs continued to be thatched with the thatch made from bent grass, heather, barley straw or rushes, depending on what was available. In later times corrugated iron replaced the thatch. The roof on the house on croft 18 was replaced with corrugated iron in 1916. Within living memory the last house which remained thatched was one on croft 8 in the early 1950s and a barn on croft 19 was thatched until quite recently (see photographs on next page).



Thatching

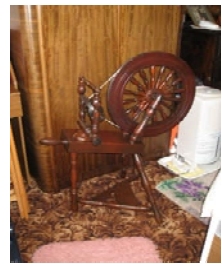
After the land was parcelled out (and the crofts were not allocated the same total acreage for both arable and pasture - this ranged from 1.5 to 8.25 acres) land was still turned by the *cas chrom*, the

foot spade and the tenants were allowed to keep a certain number of cows, calves and sheep (known as the *souming*).

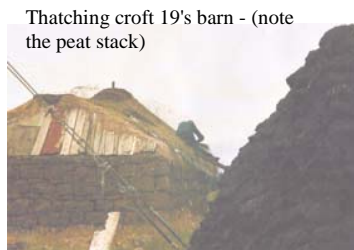
Common grazing land, outwith the township boundary, was given over to animal grazing. If the early run rig furrows ran at right angles to the contours of the land, down the sloping ground, then there might have been fairly heavy erosion, particularly as the average rainfall was high. As more 'modern' crofting methods were adopted ditches were dug to help with drainage and no longer was land shared for agriculture because each crofter was allocated his own land.

Money was set aside in the Gairloch area to construct and improve roads in 1850. One of these projects was the road from Badachro harbour westwards to Port Henderson.

Spinning and weaving took place in the houses. Women had their own spinning wheels and also knitted stockings. Lady Majorie Mackenzie, wife of Sir Kenneth, the Laird, set up stocking knitting as a cottage industry from 1837 onwards. Three women in Port Henderson were recorded as employed in this type of work. In 1901 Ann MacGregor of croft 6 who lived in a one-windowed cottar's house was a knitter and spinner and in 1881 Jessie MacKenzie and Anne MacKenzie who lived in separate houses on croft 22 were knitters of worsted. Also Catherine Macmillan was a dressmaker living in a small one-windowed house on Croft 21.



Croft 18's spinning wheel



Thatching croft 19's barn - (note the peat stack)



Croft 19's barn a few years ago



Croft 19's barn today

In Port Henderson most occupations listed were crofters (with the occasional cottar), fishermen, labourers or servants of various descriptions. Only occasionally did a man have another trade. There was a blacksmith and a miller recorded in 1881. There were a few tailors. Croft 9 was the shoemaker's and another shoemaker lived on croft 10. Croft 15 was the home of the boat builders, the MacKenzies (see p.10/48/49) but by 1900 John MacKenzie was also paying rent for croft 12 as this land was next to the shore. Trades seemed to be passed from fathers to sons. There were no masons recorded.

If women had work this was usually as servants or housekeepers. However, on the 1861 census two sisters were recorded as being 'general labourers' and one of the houses on croft 22 lived Ann (Annie) MacKenzie who was a provision dealer (grocer) in 1891 and 1901. But the Valuation Roll for 1897 shows that there were no shops in Port Henderson, although there were three listed for the neighbouring township of Badachro.

From the 1901 census it can be seen that a missionary lived in another of the houses on croft 22.

Analysis of the Census Returns from 1851 to 1901

	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
Number of households	25	31	29	27	25	37
Number of people	104	151	137	108	132	146
Number of schoolchildren (5 - 14)	15	37	30	16	18	34
Number of people aged 70+	9	7	14	8	14	19
Age of oldest inhabitant	88	88	84	98	89	94
Number of married people	37	41	39	27	31	41
Number of crofters	14	18	19	15	23	12
Number of fishermen	17	15	15	13	13	23
Other occupations	4 tailors 6 servants 1 FC carechist	1 tailor 3 servants 6 house-keepers 2 boat builders 2 labourers	1 boat carpenter 3 labourers 2 servants 1 shepherd 1 shoe-maker	1 miller 8 servants 3 knitters 1 teacher 1 labourer 3 carpenters 1 gutter 2 shoe-makers 1 seamstress 1 tailor 1 nurse 1 blacksmith 1 laundry maid	1 house-keeper 2 shepherds 1 dress-maker 1 laundry maid 14 servants 1 cattle dealer 1 shoe-maker 1 labourer 1 carpenter 1 lay missionary 1 provision dealer	9 servants 1 knitter/spinner 2 boat builders 4 labourers 3 shoe-makers 1 shepherd 1 dressmaker 1 missionary

The Poorhouse



The Red House in mid 1900s

There was a house, *Taigh nam Bochd*, shown as the 'Red House' on the 1968 OS map and as a 'poor house' on the 2nd edition OS map of 1902. This is still on the B8056 road now just outwith the township boundary. Originally it was built for people who were on poor relief and the Parish Council of Gairloch was registered as the occupier. It appears that there used

to be four sets of rooms, divided into downstairs and upstairs, with two closets upstairs. The 1901 census records six occupants, a 70-year old unmarried man, Roderick MacKenzie, a pauper, a 43-year old unmarried domestic servant and her six year old son, Bella Laing and Alex MacGregor, a 76-year old unmarried man, Donald MacKenzie, a pauper and an imbecile who was born in Torridon and a 77-year old unmarried man with his 79-year old unmarried sister, John and Margaret MacPherson. The Inland Revenue records showed that the house was made of stone with a corrugated iron roof. It was

old and in poor repair internally. Its estimated gross annual rental was £8, less a fifth for rates, which reduced it to £6. 8s. Its gross value was £125. This house was sold into private ownership about the time of the First World War.

The term 'poor' was given to those who needed outside help and were the 'deserving' poor (for example, widows, the very old, those who were faced with starvation because of inability to work, unemployment or because of crops failing). From the 1690s such people were the responsibility of the parish, depending upon charity such as church door collections, but the criteria for aid was that they had to have been born in the parish, be known to have lived a troublefree life for seven years and in the case of a woman to have married a local man. The 1845 Poor Law Act established parochial boards and in 1894 the responsibility for the poor was transferred to local councils. In 1896 Gairloch's Inspector of the Poor was a James MacIntosh. From a list of Charitable Clothing belonging to Lady Mackenzie which were given away in 1885 to 1887 it is noted that often the women were often given blue petticoats (skirts maybe?) and men were donated rugs and jerseys.

For the years ending 15th May 1901/1902 there was a list, 'roll of paupers', of the 'registered poor chargeable to the Parish' and against their names was the amount of money expended on each during the year. There were nine such paupers (pensioners) from Port Henderson. Most of them can be traced from the census forms. Murdo Macaulay, a former farmer and cattle dealer, lived in a Pauper's House on croft 22 and received 2s 6d. He was married to Barbara who was about 17 years younger than him. Murdo died on November 29th 1900. Catherine Macpherson who also lived on croft 22 received 1s 3d which seemed to be a standard amount. Margaret Mackenzie, registered as a pauper, and her sister, Ann, received this and they were also on croft 22. It has to be remembered that houses on this croft would be part of the original fishing village and, therefore, small. Bell Maclean lived in a cottar's house with one window on croft 18 (see page 85 for more details) and Widow Margaret Urquhart lived on croft 17 with her stepson and wife. Bell and Margaret also were given 1s 3d. Flora MacLennan from croft 12 who lived in a pauper's house received 1s 6d. Although the Poor House lists its occupants on the 1901 census only one Port Henderson person is shown on the 'paupers' roll' as living in this accommodation and this is a Catherine Macpherson who received 1s 6d and who died on January 3rd 1901. One other person is recorded from Port Henderson and that is a Mary Mackenzie, a 25 year old with a dependant who received 5s. It appears that she came from Inverness.

Registration for voting purposes

From a list of Parliamentary and Parish Council Electors for the County of Ross and Cromarty dated 1894 - 95 nine men were recorded as either being the only people eligible to vote or the only people registered to vote from Port Henderson. It appears that the key aspects for such eligibility was that the annual rent for land was £10 per annum or that the land was valued at £10. Much effort had been made to encourage the newly enfranchised crofter electorate to vote in 1885 (after the Reform

Acts which began in 1832) and the 1894/95 list would have been primarily for the first County elections but there might have been less encouragement to get the crofters to register for these. Certainly the Port Henderson rents were not as much as £10 per year.

Those registered were 'inhabitant occupiers of a dwelling house', crofters Duncan MacKenzie (3 and 4), Hector MacKenzie (10), John MacKenzie (14), Donald MacPherson (11), Kenneth MacPherson (half of 7), Kenneth MacPherson (20), Alexander MacRae (5) and Alexander Watson (13). Also registered was John MacKenzie, a boat carpenter (15). Checking with the 1891 census it can be seen that Duncan MacKenzie, Hector MacKenzie, Donald MacPherson, Kenneth Macpherson (7), Alexander Watson and John MacKenzie (15) were heads of households at that time. Kenneth MacPherson (20) and John Mackenzie (14) must have taken over their croft after the death of their fathers between the censuses of 1891 and 1901. It is interesting that Alexander MacRae in 1891 lived with his two unmarried brothers and his widowed mother and that his older brother, John, was the then named head of the household. By 1901 although Alexander still lived with brother John he had assumed the role of head of household, remaining unmarried, whilst John had married a younger woman and there were four children. Why the other male heads of households were not eligible for registration or why they had not registered is, of course, not known.

Rent Books

Rent Pass books were set up as a contract between Sir Kenneth Smith Mackenzie, Baronet, his Heirs and Successors with a named tenant and his Heirs and Successors. Rent was paid on November 11th of each year (Martinmas).

Croft 10's book began in 1881 and the tenant was Hector MacKenzie when he was 54. In 1897 Murdo MacKenzie, his son, took over the tenancy. In 1936 another Hector MacKenzie became the tenant. A note written on page 97 stated :

'Hector died intestate and unmarried 19/10/43, succeeded by immediately younger brother George who ? holding to younger brother, Duncan Mackenzie.'

This was dated 22/12/52 and signed by the factor 9/1/53. Mrs. Elizabeth A. Taylor became the tenant in 1980, as she was the widow of Duncan Mackenzie and the book is still current with her husband, William (Billy), succeeding.



Croft 10's rent book



Croft 13's rent book

Croft 13's rent book was started in 1888 and the tenant was Andrew Watson. The Watsons were first recorded on the 1871 census (MacKenzies were tenants prior to this) and Andrew was shown to be the head of the household on the 1881 census. He paid £2. 10s for the first two

years and then the amount was reduced to £2. 2s. per year. Andrew was recorded as having died on December 9th 1944 and he was succeeded by his son, John Watson, his only surviving son, 'other sons unmarried and all now dead'. Andrew was 88 years old when he died and on the 1901 census it was recorded that he only had one son, John, registered at the age of 18 years. (It appears that there were two other sons who either died young or were not recorded on this census, both called Donald, one was born in 1893 and the other in 1897. Another son, Thomas, was nine years of age on the 1891 census). In 1957 the rent was reduced to £1. 19s. 9d. and was increased to £4 a year in 1970. There were no records of payment after 1974.

The rent book of croft 15 ran from 1881 to 1970 with Roderick MacKenzie being the tenant until 1890 and then John, his son, took over. They were boatbuilders (see p.10/48) but croft 15 has no shore line. However, in 1900 John paid rent for croft 12 as well and today the local residents know croft 12 to be the boatbuilder's croft. In 1933 the tenancy transferred to another Roderick MacKenzie who continued to pay rent for both crofts.

Croft 18's rent book, in a leather cover, began in 1897 and was made out to the tenant, Alexander MacLean. Its last date was 2005. The first yearly rent was £2.10s but there were arrears of rent and interest in November 1897 of £21.16s. 4d. The arrears appear to have been settled quite quickly. Duncan Maclean took over the tenancy in 1933. In 1962 Margaret MacLean (Duncan's widow) was the tenant and in 1971 Alice Mackenzie (Duncan's daughter) took over the tenancy. Up to 1969 the rent only changed slightly but in 1970 it was raised to £5 a year. Then in 1980 it was again raised, this time to £12. Every November 11th the rent was paid and up to 1972 the factor or his representative would sign to confirm the payment over a postage stamp (Victoria 1d, George V 1d, 2d, ½d, 1½d, George VI ½d, 1½d, 2d, Elizabeth 2d and 1p).



Croft 18's rent book

Croft 19's present rent book started in 1929 when Alex Mackenzie was the tenant. At that time the rent was £2. 10s. Alex died on the 25th March 1954 and a written sentence states '*Agreed by older son Duncan MacKenzie that his younger brother John Mackenzie should succeed.*' The Crofters Commission was given this information.

Croft 21's (Gardens) rent book was started in 1898 and the tenant was William MacMillan when he was 55 and described as a crofter and a fisherman on the 1891 census. His son, another William, took over in 1914. In 1950 there was an additional rent added, for the Salmon Fishing Bothy. No rent for the bothy was paid after 1968. In 1972 Duncan MacKenzie took over the tenancy and in 1977 this transferred to Mrs. Elizabeth Ann MacKenzie (his wife). When Elizabeth remarried a name change took place in 1980 to Mrs. E. A. Taylor, formerly Elizabeth Mackenzie (see for croft 10). From 2nd December 1981 the rent was assigned to William Taylor, her second husband, who paid an extra common grazing share from 1988. This book is also still current.

Valuations Rolls

These were account books showing the yearly rent and the length of each lease for the tenants within the landlord's townships. For Port Henderson these began in 1868/1869 when K. (Kenneth) S. MacKenzie, Bart, was the proprietor. Some years showed the name of the factor as in that year it was John Binning of Brae, Dingwall and in 1871/1872 it was James Hay, Conon. Up to 1884/85 any tenant who paid rent of under £4 per year was not recorded by name but by a number and the word 'proprietor'. No records for 1885/86 were made and then from 1886/1887 every tenant was named, whatever the amount of money. Lot (croft) numbers were not shown until 1876/1877 but by checking with the census forms and Estate records the tenants can usually be matched although there are some discrepancies.

In 1868/1869 six tenants were named (crofts 5, 6, 8, 14 and possibly 21 which later became 4 - two tenants shared one croft). All had 12 year leases and all but one paid £4 per year, Roderick MacKenzie of croft 14 paid £4.15s. There were 15 other tenants whose tenancies amounted to £32 a year. Why these particular five crofts (later to become six, number 10 was added) were worth more is not known but checking from the total rents on the 1886/1887 list it can be noted that six croft's rents remained at £4 or above whilst another 14 crofts ranged between £1.10s and £3. Rent certainly dropped for the poor and in 1890/1891 Kenneth MacLennan of croft 12 paid 10s as he was a pauper. (In 1886/1887 it appears that crofts 3 and 4 amalgamated and the rent was £6 and croft 7 was halved, one half standing alone and the other half going to number 6. Crofts 6 and 7 have continued to be split in this way). According to these valuation rolls crofts 12 and 13 might have changed tenancies unless the numbering was incorrect. The rolls also confirm the acquisition of croft 12 by the MacKenzies of croft 15 in 1900/1901 so that they could build their boats in the boatshed on the shore. In the earlier years it appears that Kenneth MacKenzie, the Laird, might have paid for the 'occupiers' hill grazings at a rent of £11 per year.

Schooling : Opinan Public School

In 1851 a parish school opened in the adjoining township of Opinan maybe because the SSPCK school in Port Henderson closed, with John MacLean, from Gairloch, as the teacher. The Gairloch Estate plan for Opinan (Opinan), dated 1846, shows the school marked on plot 15. Children from Port Henderson attended this school which served the scattered communities in the south side of Gairloch parish, from Craig to Shildaig.

(A Side School opened in a room of a house at Craig in 1921 with four pupils. Neil MacLennan was the teacher. Craig Side School was monitored by the Opinan school headteacher but it closed in May 1932 because there were only two children attending. However, education also took place there in 1900 and 1901 as the school register records four MacDonald children in June, Kate being 17 years old

and then just two Macdonald children in May 1901).

A report from the Argyll Commission 1865 - 68 called it Openham Free Church School but later it became Opinan Public School.

The Log Books

In the Gairloch Heritage Museum there are four detailed logbooks for Opinan School starting on January 18th 1871 with Donald Bannerman, teacher of the 3rd. Division, making the entries and finishing on 3rd July 1964 when Rebecca MacAulay, the headteacher, retired after working for 22 years at the school. (Rebecca started at the school on September 7th 1942 in a temporary capacity). As school photographs are rare and written accounts virtually non-existent these logbooks written by the headteacher or acting headteachers provide an interesting insight into the life of the children both in and out of school. Sometimes the naming of pupils provides a link with Port Henderson residents, although the earliest entries rarely gave names but identified individual pupils by their register number. At the beginning of the first logbook there are printed extracts from the Revised Code. No. 58 stated

‘No reflections or opinions of a general character are to be entered in the log-books.’

However as can be read it didn't take long for the entries to voice the teachers' opinions as for example in December 1876

‘..... It is most disheartening to be teaching such stupid indolent children.’

Attendance and registration

For the teachers there was always a distinct preoccupation with pupil attendance

‘irregularity is the Arch-enemy to progress and efficiency’,

their attainment of adequate grades and the school's report being satisfactory. In February 1885 a depressing sentence stated :

‘poor look out for a high percentage of passes at the forthcoming annual inspection. Progress almost impossible.’

In 1887 the schoolmaster must have felt quite despondent for the report was

‘the most unsatisfactory ever received - a professional Crusher, considering the pains and energy put forth by the teacher during the preceding school year.’

Teachers had to register the pupils correctly and could be ‘fined’ for inaccuracy as happened in August 1890 when the teacher was reprimanded and had 1/10th deducted from the school grant.

Each morning and each afternoon counted as a school session and for clarification the logbook entry of November 2nd 1917 stated that the Scotch Education Code allowed two attendances to be counted for each pupil if four hours were put in every day. This was in response to a petition from parents in Port Henderson. Earlier in the year, in March, the headteacher had written :

‘The attendance throughout the week has been very bad. This was caused by the withdrawal from school

of five families - all relatives (and *not true* was written above these two words in different handwriting) objecting to the 9.30 morning opening. This week Mr. John Mackenzie 16 Porthenderson whose children are habitually late-coming in every morning after 10 o'clock - wrote a letter to the Headmaster demanding to be informed if the Board's authority was given for the opening time. This letter was disregarded. The following day all the Porthenderson children headed by this gentleman's son came in a body to the school. They arrived at 10.8 o'clock and they were all punished. In the afternoon they all left the school and have not returned yet.'

The Chairman of the School Board, a Mr. McAskill, advised that the school should open at 10 o'clock but when the Port Henderson children came in a little after that time they were again punished so they stayed away in the afternoon. (This family of ten children can be traced on the 1901 census and the son was probably John who was born in 1905). According to the headteacher they 'are a great hindrance to the work.' The headteacher could open the school on Saturdays if lost time had to be made up. Most of the entries in every logbook deals with attendance with many children being named for their absences.

Parents registered their children giving their birth dates and they started school at five for at that time they are shown as scholars on certain of the censuses. From an analysis of the enrolment register (1861 to 1909) and the census forms it can be seen that some children died before they could start their schooling and others probably died between the ten-year census spans. Most of the children on the enrolment register can be matched with their names and families on the appropriate census forms. In 1861 there were seven children registered, two of whom were resident in Port Henderson. The greatest number of children registered at any one time was in 1893 when there were 18 (ten seems to be the average number) and the greatest number from Port Henderson was seven in both 1894 and 1901 (with the average being around three and four).

The Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 made school attendance compulsory from the ages of five to thirteen and children became bilingual. However this Education Act made no provision for the speaking of Gaelic within the classroom as English was seen as the language necessary for economic opportunity and social progress. But Gaelic continued to be spoken and within the schools in the Gairloch area extra help in English was sometimes given to the schoolchildren. Even in 1937 it was reported that there were still some 'native Gaelic speakers'. In 1883 the school leaving age was raised to 14 and in 1890 fees for elementary schools were abolished but were retained for the secondary school which was of limited availability. In July 1880 an entry about school fees stated

'several parents are falling in arrears and the Board are to prosecute them'
and in April 1881

'Duncan McKenzie Port Henderson who has been summoned for school fees at the instance of the Board was here this morning in a very indifferent manner declaring that he was overcharged and withdrawing his children from school.'

This would have been Duncan MacKenzie of crofts $\frac{3}{4}$ who in 1881 would have had two children still attending school but who would have had to pay for three others when they were of school age.

There were statutory school holidays and in the early years the school was open on Christmas Day and on January 1st 1874 there was the comment

‘School kept today as on other days: we keep the Old Style here’
and the New Year holiday was from January 12th to January 16th (inclusive). From the log books it is not clear when the ‘old style’ ended.

Because the school room was large enough for meetings it was sometimes used for preachings during weekdays so the school was forced to close.

The school roll

The school roll fluctuated in numbers, for example from a high of 100 in May 1907 to a low of 7 in April 1961. When Badachro school opened in April 1912 Opinan School’s pupil numbers decreased considerably and there were only 58 on roll in 1913. A letter from the Education Authority dated 24th December 1915 stated that Badachro School comprised Shildaig on to and including Park, Badachro and also Badineal. However, children from the north end of Port Henderson transferred to Badachro School because it was nearer. (A Miss Annie MacLean from Strath was Badachro’s first teacher and there were 17 girls and 10 boys. In the December of 1912 she was replaced by Miss Christina MacKenzie from Port Henderson and the total on roll was 22. This could have been the daughter of John MacKenzie, the boat builder from croft 15. She was recorded on the 1901 census at the age of four). When Badachro School closed on June 30th 1961 the remaining seven pupils either transferred to Opinan or to Achtercairn schools.

Occasionally the reason why pupils left was noted. In 1878 Hector McPherson of Port Henderson and the father of Kenneth told the school that his son was ‘to go to service’ and he was under 13 years of age. (This family lived on croft 7 and Kenneth was not shown on the census of 1881 although he returned by 1891 to become the crofter and head of the household). Janet MacKenzie, who was only about twelve years four months and the daughter of a Kenneth MacKenzie in South Erradale, left the school in July 1885 to become a Domestic Manual Servant at Port Henderson. However, Janet cannot be traced on the 1891 census. Catherine McPherson from Port Henderson, croft 1, was withdrawn in July 1887 because she was moving to Applecross. According to the 1881 census Catherine was four years old in 1881 and was born in Applecross as were her sister and widowed mother. Catherine returned in 1889 and the school log stated that in December she was struck off the school register because she lived beyond the three mile limit and had a weak and delicate constitution and would be readmitted on April 1st if the weather improved. By the 1901 census she had left school for good and was registered as a domestic servant. Older children might become monitors and then would leave at the statutory leaving age or stay on for a few extra months. Annie Dewynter left school in June 1903 when she was in standard 6. Annie and her younger sister Florence originally lived in London and came to Port Henderson to live with their uncle and aunt, John, a lay-missionary and his

wife Louisa in a house with five windows on croft 22. According to local information the girls were abandoned by their parents.

Illness

Illness was probably the most common reason for children being kept at home, especially as illnesses such as measles, whooping cough and diphtheria could cause complications. Diphtheria broke out in the school in the winter of 1882 and the first death was John Nicholson, the teacher's son. In February 1909 John MacKenzie from Port Henderson died (maybe of croft 16 as there were two sons called John who both died young) but no mention was made of his illness whereas in April 1916 Anabella MacPherson from 7 Port Henderson came home from Dingwall Academy with diphtheria and a later entry for the September stated that Christina Mackenzie of croft 6 had died from this disease. The school closed for a while and of the four children infected with the disease three died. It was not until August 1941 that there was any reference to immunisation against diphtheria (and later against whooping cough). However, there still were outbreaks such as in September 1942. BCG (polio) injections started in 1956. If there was said to be an epidemic then the school was closed. For example this happened in April 1877, June 1883, in December 1887 when it was noted that 'fear predominates', in May 1906 when the only house still suffering from measles was croft 13 in Port Henderson (the Watsons), in January 1908 and in April 1918 when there was an epidemic in Port Henderson. 'Hooping' cough caused alarm in 1880 with parents refusing to send their children to school despite Dr. Robertson's attempts to allay their fears. Russian influenza closed the school in March 1890 and Spanish influenza was rife in November 1918. It was on a doctor's authorisation that the school closed such as in April 1877 when the doctor was Dr. Black and in March 1901 when Dr. MacNaughton from Poolewe closed the school due to whooping cough. In 1903 the doctor was Dr. Rae.

Some children seemed to take unnecessary time off according to the teacher such as Jane McLean, said to be from croft 7 but not found on the census forms, Annie MacRae, from croft 5 (about 13 years old) who had been absent for a month by December 1907 with no doctor's certificate but 'is still confined to bed', Annie McKenzie from Port Henderson (maybe from croft 8 at 14 years of age) who by May 28th 1878 had only attended 42 times in the previous 19 weeks and Margaret MacKenzie, from croft 6, who in September 1924 was shown to have only attended on 294 sessions out of 450 with 'pains in head' and no medical certificate. Medical certificates were needed in later years so that a pupil could be taken off the register which helped with the statistics. Often parents seemed unaware that such certificates were necessary and they could be summoned to meetings as happened to Murdo MacKenzie of 22 Port Henderson in February 1926 because of his son Neil's absences.

Medical inspections took place in schools from 1908. By the mid 1920s children in Opinan school could have their eyes tested by going to Achtercairn school in Gairloch. The dentist also visited the school and it appears that many teeth were extracted. When, in 1925, Roderick MacKenzie of croft

1 Port Henderson had an eye examination the telegram informing that the appointment time had been changed did not arrive in time! After the second world war it was recorded that children went to Inverness to have tonsils and adenoids removed and a few cases of appendicitis were noted.

Pupil absence authorised by parents

Children were kept away from school to work, such as for potato planting and lifting, peat lifting, looking after the cows, herding lambs and helping with the cod and herring fishing. Donald Bannerman appeared to be quite preoccupied by such absences and in 1871 he listed the reasons: February getting bait, March collecting seaweed, April planting potatoes, June cutting peats and hoeing potatoes and October lifting potatoes.

In 1878

‘The fishing seems to interfere greatly with the attendance; boys may be seen at every hour of the day in Badachro, about the boats. Their parents unhesitatingly attribute their absence from school to cold.’

By 1919 permission could be granted for boys to take a week or even a fortnight off school to help on the land at the request of their fathers as long as they had reached the age of twelve. Three letters were received in May 1919 from crofts 16, 22 and 7 for John Mackenzie (the same John who led the ‘rebels’ in 1917), Roderick Mackenzie and Alex MacPherson to help with the ‘springwork’.

‘Dear Macaskill

Owing to the bad weather we can’t get on with the planting. I would be much obliged if you would grant two weeks leave from school to my son John to help.

John Mackenzie.’

‘Dear Macaskill

Just a line asking you would kindly allow my boy Roderick a week out of school as I greatly need him for some help for the springwork as I am alone trusting you will do so.

M. MacKenzie.’

The headteacher wrote the comment ‘this custom should be speedily abolished’. However during the years of the second world war boys were still planting potatoes with permission from the local authority and in 1943 the school closed for two weeks because of potato lifting. Children were also kept at home for housekeeping purposes during the time their mothers gutted herrings at Badachro. During 1914 some girls were still kept away to gut herrings.

The Sacrament Fasts also led to children being kept at home and it was noted in June 1891 that:

‘the Sacrament Fast interfered very much with our progress for the Inspection but old customs are not easily parted with.’

In 1879 it was written that parents gave the following reason for keeping their children off school

‘there is no use in sending them till the sacraments are over.’

Even in 1956 it was noted that the school closed for Communion Days.

Weddings were also used as a reason for children being kept away from school. In February

1876 the headteacher was not amused

‘These weddings are a great annoyance, as parents do not exercise control over their children, who always absent themselves on such occasions.’

John MacLeod, headteacher, had particular problems with the MacKenzie family from croft 10, Port Henderson. In July 1880 he wrote

‘Alexander and Betsy McKenzie son and daughter of Hector McKenzie Port Henderson were observed at about 12 noon today lurking about the rocks in the direction of the ? They were chased by two of the boys, who had actually to carry Alexander to the school. Everyone in the family had this habit of avoiding school. They especially the boy who is the older were soundly punished on which they promised never to attempt the same thing again. They are not punished at home for any of their misdeeds, and that bears ample point.’

But the punishment obviously made no impression on the children for in October

‘Hector McKenzie (10 Port Henderson) family continues their old tactics of avoiding school. The father comes with the boy Alexander on his back almost daily. The boy dictates to the father instead of the father to the boy. He tried the same plan to the teacher but he’ll not be in a hurry to do it a second time.’

Alexander was about ten years old at the time and his sister, Betsy, was about eight. However, even if Alexander learnt little at school he became a shoemaker by the time he was twenty.

John MacLeod became more and more disillusioned by teaching and seemed to become very low spirited by the continual absences in the school which made teaching so difficult. His entry for November 9th 1881 appeared to be triumphal

‘I have this day given up charge of this school. J MacLeod.’

Pupil absence due to the weather

The weather was also a factor in school attendance. Rain, snow, cold and swollen rivers prevented any pupil who lived some way away from walking and in 1871 those children who had no shoes went home early because of the snow. Also in 1883 children having no shoes was mentioned. In March 1874 it was particularly snowy and cold and the six pupils who managed to get to school had to use the teacher’s sitting room as the school room was too cold. John MacLeod showed some compassion when he wrote the entries for October 30th 1876 and again for December 1879

‘Winter has set in in earnest: cold North wind and snow kept the youngest at home today: these are as a rule ill clad and underfed and consequently cannot stand the cold of a severe winter.’

‘Snow and frost have made an early appearance. This is an insuperable obstacle in the way of shoeless children attending school.’

Winters seemed to get worse over the years. In November 1904 only 17 children were in attendance because of the snowy weather and one of these was a boy from the Poorhouse (Red House). This was probably Alex MacGregor who was six years old on the 1901 census. On December 28th 1906 there must have been so much snow that only two boys from Port Henderson managed to reach school between 10 and 11am. They were immediately sent home and a third Port Henderson boy was turned

back on the road.

‘A part of the road between Badachro and Port Henderson is completely blocked by a huge snow drift.

Such a severe snow storm has not been experienced here for many years.’

Although the school was to have observed the first of the two-minute silences on Tuesday 11th November at 11am in 1919 as requested by the King this could not take place because the school was closed because of a snowstorm! By 1933 there was transport for the pupils who lived at Red Point but this was unable to function if the road conditions were bad and in 1945 the road to school was blocked by snow so the school had to be closed. In November 1946

‘The car could not go to collect the children from Red Point so none of them came. It was a very fine day and they could have walked for once.’

In February 1934 the Education Authority gave permission for Mrs. MacLean of 18 Port Henderson

‘To enrol her daughter at Badachro school as she would be able to travel to and from school by mail car.’

Pupil absence due to truancy

Truancy was rife and sometimes the pupil was named. In 1877 the headteacher had considerable problems with Murdo McKenzie from Port Henderson.

August 2nd ‘Murdo McKenzie Port Henderson having repeatedly avoided school against the will of his parents was sent for by the master. As he refused to come the master went for him to the house at play-time. The truant, however, saw him arriving and instantly took to the hills, where he knew he would not be followed’.

August 6th ‘The master went to the house for the boy and, having put him out of bed, waited till he would dress and breakfast. Having put his clothes on he, on the quiet, got to the door, and instantly took to the hills.’

August 22nd ‘Murdo McKenzie just came to school today, however long he may continue to come.’
There was no mention of Murdo again. (There were Murdo MacKenzies on crofts 10 and 14 who would have been 13 and 14 years old in 1877).

Even when reluctant pupils returned to school they paid little attention to their lessons as in 1880
‘William McLean Standard VI attends very irregularly; and even when he does attend he does no work; but sit and mope, mope and dream - spends a forenoon examining his finger nails.’

‘Angus McKenzie stands in his class the very picture of sloth, listlessness and helplessness.’

In 1887 Alexander Bain, although he is not to be found on the Port Henderson census records and Mary McKenzie, maybe from croft 6, were often absent. In 1889 John McKenzie from Port Henderson was habitually absent with John Watson from Badachro, both in Standard 1V, and

‘the teacher has a great deal of additional trouble with (these lads) in spite of the pains and energy put forth on their passage.’

In December

‘(If) both attended every day till the inspection it would take then all their time to pass the examination even fairly but an opening made at gutting herrings is every thing when there is no desire to be at school and learn. Oh what a drag to get such dullards to pass?’

It appears that parents could be summoned to attend a School Board meeting as in the case of Duncan Mackenzie in 1905 who might have lived on croft 19.

Was John McLeod being ironic when he wrote on November 20th 1876

‘.....and it is a curious coincidence that they are generally absent the History days.’

In the early years of the school’s opening there was first a ‘defaulting officer’, in the 1880s this was a John Ross and then there was a ‘Compulsory Officer’ (truancy officer). The latter was a Mr. MacKenzie who was thought to be inefficient. For example he visited absentees at Port Henderson in March 1890 and found Catherine McKenzie, Standard 6 (from croft 10?), looking after her ill mother. But Catherine was still absent in the middle of May. It was also recorded that the Compulsory Officer’s own son was a truant. By the September of 1903 the Attendance Manager appointed the then teacher as the Compulsory Officer at a salary of £3 per annum.

Teachers, pupil teachers and monitors

To cope with teaching the age range, especially when the pupil numbers were high and there was only one qualified teacher, pupil teachers and monitors were employed. In the 1870s the pupil teacher was deemed to be lazy, unable to apply himself to the work, forgetful and unsatisfactory. In 1875 it was noted

‘Unless K. Taylor greatly improves before next inspection he cannot be recognised longer as a Pupil Teacher.’

In fact he was dismissed in July 1876 and a 13-year old monitor was employed at 2/- a week. Duncan McPherson from Port Henderson was then employed as the replacement pupil teacher and he seemed to a good choice although as time went on he started to stay away or come in late. At the end of the first logbook there was a detailed analysis of the times the pupil teacher actually arrived each morning and this showed how late he was on occasion. In February 1879 Duncan was examined by an H.M Inspector at Achtercairn School. (Duncan was from croft 20 and was shown as a pupil teacher at the age of 19 on the 1981 census). The pupil teacher (maybe still Duncan) was left in charge of the school for seven weeks until Angus Nicholson, certificated teacher, 4th class was appointed to replace John MacLeod.

When Donald Bannerman left in 1872 an Alexander MacPherson became the interim teacher

‘until such time as a Certificated Gaelic speaking teacher can be procured.’

John McLeod was appointed in January 1873 and he was the headteacher for nearly ten years. On February 22nd 1884 there was a mention of his funeral. Often the schoolmaster’s wife taught subjects such as sewing. When Angus Nicholson was the headteacher C. Nicholson was the sewing mistress

and an Isabella Nicholson started work as the new teacher in August 1901. She introduced military drill which was taught by the local sergeant of volunteers. However she resigned and left in April 1904 and Roderick Chisholm, a certified teacher 3rd class, was appointed.



As already mentioned pupils became both monitors and pupil teachers such as Flora MacPherson from Port Henderson in April 1907. A newspaper article, dated August 1990, reported the death of Flora Macpherson, aged 100 years, who had been born in Port Henderson and who had been a pupil teacher at Isle Horrisdale, from November 18th 1907 to 1914, before becoming a fully qualified teacher, studying at Aberdeen Training Centre and working in several Scottish schools. On the census forms of 1891 and 1901 there is a Flora MacPherson, the daughter of Donald and Joanna MacPherson, of Croft 11, a 'fisher's house' with three windows, the smaller of the two houses on the croft. Donald was a crofter and a former fisherman and his family are recorded on the croft from 1851. By 1901 Flora had two younger brothers. Isle Horrisdale school was a Side School and was under the supervision of Opinan until 1916 and then it was attached to Badachro. It opened in January 1902 and 13 children left Opinan school to attend it. In 1914 it is recorded that Catherine MacPherson, a monitor at Opinan school in April 1913, went to teach for a short time in Isle Horrisdale Side School starting on October 30th 1913 although in a taped interview in 1980 when she was in Strathburn House, Gairloch, she said the year was 1916. Catherine MacPherson (later Mrs. Kitta Mackenzie, *Cioda 'n Dunnchain*) was born in Port Henderson about 1897. (This was probably in a house on croft 4 as there is a Catherine, aged two years, recorded on the 1901 census. Her family were fishermen).

Teachers seemed to take examinations to achieve the next stage in their certification process during their teaching hours. John Macleod received his 'Parchment Certificate' in July 1873. When there was only a single teacher he was expected to work even when 'ill and weak' as 'duty's call must be obeyed.' Mr Donald MacIver was the headteacher during the 1st World War and was called up on November 1st 1918 and he joined 'colours' (but he obviously didn't serve for long!) At the end of 1919 John Finlayson was appointed and in May 1924 the new headteacher was John Cooper who left on December 17th 1929. Although some headteachers served for some years in the school, John MacLean, Donald Bannerman, Angus Nicholson, Mary MacKay and Rebecca MacAulay, there was a large turnover of staff and in all 19 headteachers were registered, although some of these were appointed just as an interim measure.

The school buildings

Although the original Opinan school buildings were said to be 'good and slated' by 1873 the ventilation was bad and rain came in through the windows. Therefore new school buildings were

started on June 16th 1874 and a plan of the school showed it as having the master's house attached with a small yard behind. £100 was paid for the land which belonged to Gairloch Estate.

'Masons were busily engaged for beginning the building of the New School.'

The original building was also too small as on February 18th 1873

'no more to be admitted - insufficient capacity in school room.'

The old building was taken for housing and almost eight months were lost in schooling while the new school was being built and another week was taken in painting the school at a later date. The entry for April 13th 1875 explained that there had been no school since August 28th as the old schoolroom had been divided into several apartments before the new school house was finished. When Hector McKenzie from Port Henderson accidentally put a stone through one of the panes in the south gable of the school in January 1877 his parents had to pay for its repair.

The school always seemed to be in poor repair. The report of 1886 stated that the harling and plastering of the school should be repaired and the whitewashing which had been recommended the previous year had been 'most imperfectly executed.' In 1899 the February report stated that the heating was inadequate as the grate was small and the peat was of an inferior kind.

'At a distance of about six feet from the fire place the highest temperature shown by the thermometer during my stay was 41 degrees - in the forenoon it was 40 degrees F only. This serious deficiency of heat must be rectified without delay.'

In 1918 the school fires consumed three creels of peat a day, 15 creels a week, but by 1920 coal was burnt. Children brought peats for the fire but in February 1877

'Catherine M' Aulay has been detected for two successive days attempting to evade the bringing of peats.'

When a clock was installed in the school room in early 1877 it was such a novelty that the children spent a great deal of time looking at it and when it struck they just stopped work.

In the early 1900s the master's house had been allowed to get into a surprising state of disrepair. By 1906 it was felt that the one-room schoolroom was not adequate for two teachers (there were then over 90 pupils) and that a glass partition was needed. This was installed in April 1907, an additional window was put in, new desks were provided and a press and peat shed were built. But the Inspector's report of 1910 deemed that the desks were obsolete and needed replacement and by 1914 they were still 'unsatisfactory'. However in 1931 new dual desks were provided although they were not installed until November 1932. Also in 1910 it was stated that a large terrestrial globe, a mercury barometer, a magnetic compass, a balance and weights and measures were needed. New latrines were provided in 1912 but these were obviously unisex because in 1917 a sentence stated that the 'use of same offices by boys and girls must be discontinued'. By 1932 the lavatories were still dilapidated and of an 'antique type' with no water supply. Water was supplied in 1936 but it was poor and the newly installed closets had to be hand flushed. In 1919 the room the headteacher worked in became very smoky and the

windows rattled in the wind making it difficult for him to be heard. Much damage occurred in 1931 which resulted in the children being taught in the dwelling house. With falling rolls by 1947 the three classrooms were not needed so in June 1948 the larger room was used for games and PE. It wasn't until 1950 that fittings for electric light and power were installed and electric fires were used rather than the former peat and coal fire in 1955.

For the year of 1901 information from the Income & Expenditure of the School Board for Opinan School show that £72.16.0 was received (from grants and relief of school fee grants) but the expenditure was £137.7.4. The schoolteachers' salaries were £87.10; purchase of books and apparatus was £15.6.3; fuel, light and cleaning charges were £4.3.11 (fuel costs were kept low because the children took a peat to school for burning on the fire); repairs cost £4.4.9; rent, rates and taxes were £6.6.2 and the repayments of loans and interest were £19.16.3. (However, other records for salaries paid for 1901 and 1902 stated that the master or mistress was paid £85 or £75 per year, the monitor £5 4s and the sewing mistress £5. The salary for the Craig Side School teacher, then under the supervision of Diabaig, was £14).

Lessons and conditions inside the school

Not much was written about conditions inside the schoolrooms. The very first entry for 1871 stated

'Lessons given according to Timetable. The children made the usual progress.'

Geography was introduced for the first time in January 1871 and in 1874 a new timetable was introduced which divided the school into juniors and seniors. Half an hour of Religious Instruction from 10 to 10.30am and Music from 3.55 to 4pm were given to the whole school and then the rest of each day was given over to various components of English and Arithmetic with short sessions of History, Geography and 'Specific subjects' (see below). By 1876 the timetabling had changed yet again and the school was divided into six classes with Drawing added to the curriculum.

Little snippets give some information such as some children wrote on slates and others used foolscap paper (which didn't always arrive). By 1908 only the Infant classes used slates. In 1922 a report stated :

'in the lower room pupils were observed spitting to clean their slates. It should be clearly understood that this insanitary and disgusting practice must cease.'

In 1876 a ballframe was purchased which was probably an abacus.

In the early years the younger children were Gaelic speaking and even by 1924 the use of Gaelic was blamed for the children's lack of expression when reading out loud in English. It was obvious that the Education Authority wanted English spoken and in November 1879 there was some subtle encouragement

'A football presented to the boys on condition that no Gaelic would be spoken during the play hour had

to be temporarily taken from them as they continued to use Gaelic playing with it.'

In November 1906 Latin and Mathematics (Euclid and Algebra) were taught to five pupils on the Supplementary Course for 15 to 30 minutes before and after school. (But the inefficient pupil teacher, K. Taylor, mentioned earlier also learnt Latin). The older pupils were able to compete for the Secondary Education bursary. In 1892 legislation stated that pupils could stay on at the elementary schools and take examinations for education bursaries and 1908 legislation stated that Continuation Classes, industrial or commercial, could be introduced for pupils over the age of 14. For example in August 1921 Maggie MacKenzie of 16 Port Henderson was presented with an Intermediate Bursary which admitted her to Dingwall Academy. (Margaret was born in September 1907).

There were six standards to work through and clever pupils who reached standard 6 before the age of 13 could study 'specific subjects' such as languages, maths, agriculture, navigation or domestic science. Schools earned extra grants for satisfactory teaching and a pass in any one of these subjects gained a Merit Certification.

Religious Instruction commanded its own syllabus and on pages 417 - 420 in the first logbook there is the complete three-year syllabus written out in most beautiful copperplate handwriting. There were three divisions, standards V and VI for the first, standards III and IV for the second and Infants and standards 1 - 11 for the third. For example for year one Division 3 would be instructed in 'The Creation, The Fall and The Deluge; The Birth of Jesus Christ; and for 'Repetition' The Lord's Prayer and Psalm XXIII. Pupils would be tested locally and after each examination the results with comments would be written in the logbooks.

Although most of the lessons were basic subjects and there were many tests and drills (with arithmetic often being assessed as very weak) by the year 1910 lecturers from Aberdeen Agricultural College were giving lectures on subjects such as poultry farming and also gardening was put on the curriculum, although it was noted that rabbits began to eat the cabbage plants. In April 1947 the garden wall collapsed and vegetables had been lost when cattle came in. It was requested that the garden should be used as a poultry yard until repairs could be done. This happened in May with eggs set for hatching. A new playground was made at the back of the school in 1961. Even dressmaking classes began in 1927. In 1948 it was reported that a sewing Inspectress examined sewing and knitting of both boys and girls. The school took part in the Provincial Mods and in 1952 the choir won the Silver Cup for Unison Singing and the third prize in the Gaelic Mod in the next year. Books and supplies arrived by steamer to Gairloch pier and in 1906 a bookcase was donated to the school but this was too big and was housed in the schoolmaster's house. In 1904 there was a national syllabus for PE but most physical activity was given in the form of drill.

In 1932 an Intelligence test which took 48 minutes to complete was given to the two pupils who were born in 1921. This was for the Scottish Council for Research in Education, from Moray House. Once this research was completed IQ tests became the norm.

After the second world war school dinners were brought in from Achtercairn school in Gairloch and in 1962 lunches were prepared on the premises as an electric cooker was installed. However this was barely used because of the school closure. Free school meals were mentioned in 1959 as being given to those children whose fathers were not in employment. Before 1946 the children received milk allocation through dried milk and a charge was levied between 1930 and 1945 but in the September of 1946 liquid milk was provided and this was free. The allocation of ration books was mentioned in 1948.

In 1890 it was noted that boys from Point were ill-behaved as they broke and ate their pens which led to the comment:

‘Parents are greatly at fault for their children’s disobedience and lack of good breeding.’

The headteachers had little to say which was positive about parents.

There was little mention of punishment. In 1873 John MacLeod

‘caught a boy attempting to avoid his tasks thinking that the teacher would not recognise him - made him an example to such as might attempt the same at any future time.’

In 1874 two boys were thrashed ‘pretty sharply’ for copying from their neighbours whilst on February 16th 1877 a long entry described the misconduct of two older boys. They were about 16 years old which is surprising because by this age one would have thought that they would have left school.

‘Two boys John Chisholm Opinan and Roderick McKenzie Erradale have been guilty last evening of a very serious misconduct; when School was dismissed yesterday evening they set two of the little boys to fight at the end of the school. The little boys were then brought into the School and punished. The two mentioned above - who are about 16 years of age were today ‘suspended’ for a week from school: they are not to be admitted even then until their fathers guarantee for their subsequent good conduct.’

They returned on February 27th.

Celebrating local and public events

The pupils seemed to be given few treats or if they were these were not thought to be worthy of mention. Most that were written about were for nationwide occasions except for April 1891 when the following paragraph was written :

‘it is humbly and truly hoped the attendance will improve now with the weather and that time may be yet redeemed. The school treat to be given by Lady MacKenzie and Sir Kenneth on Wednesday in honour of the marriage of their son Captain Kenneth J MacKenzie may also be conducive to improved attendance at school as it has already given indications in that direction.’

In July 1902 the children were given medals from Sir Kenneth and Lady Marjorie MacKenzie as commemoration of the Coronation and in June 1911 the school was closed for Coronation Week with the pupils receiving Coronation Bibles. (Sir Kenneth and Lady Marjorie took a good interest in the school and visited regularly). There were other school holidays because of royal weddings, Princess Mary’s in February 1922, the Duke of York’s in April 1923, the HRH Duke of Kent’s in November

1934, the HRH Duke of Gloucester's in November 1935 and Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh's in November 1947. In January 1936 the school closed for the funeral of King George V. The Coronation in May 1937 also gave a school closure with the children receiving flags and medals and there was yet another closure, just a half day, for the silver wedding of the King and Queen. For the Coronation of 1953 all Gairloch pupils received a savings bank with half a crown in it, a coronation chocolate box to be used afterwards as a pencil case, a blue enamelled mug and a Testament.

In September 1939 the school was closed for a week because of outbreak of war. However there was little reference to war except that a few names of evacuees were mentioned, mostly from Glasgow but these children stayed for only a short time. To celebrate victory in Europe two days' holiday were given in May 1945 and Badachro and Opinan schoolchildren were entertained at Lochmarea to a Victory Celebration in 1946. They went by special bus and enjoyed games and a ramble up the hills at the Loch side. Cards with a message from the King were distributed.

Opinan School closure

When the school at Opinan finally closed on July 3rd 1964 the children transferred to the school at Achtercairn, in Gairloch.

7) Port Henderson in the 20th. and 21st. centuries

From the 1901 census to 2010 Port Henderson has seen a great deal of change. Electricity, running water, good transport and easy links with other villages were unknown in the early 1900s. At that time the community was still an extremely close-knit unit and although there are many people living within the township's boundaries who can trace their families back to the 1800s, there are also incomers and new houses, including some holiday homes.

Distress in Wester Ross : the Menace of the Fuel Scarcity

An article in the Scotsman dated December 20th 1923 describes the problems people in Gairloch's scattered townships were encountering because of the lack of peat and crops at that time. The weather had ruined both of these and the reporter stressed that poor people were totally dependent upon peat for fuel for there was no wood. Port Henderson was named as one of the south side townships which were suffering.

'The plight of some of the people in this area is already serious so far as fuel is concerned, and it is difficult to know how they are going to get over their food problem. The shadow of famine darkens their doors, and the menace to health is giving serious anxiety.'

It was stated that real hardship was to be seen among the fishermen, the crofters and the cottars. The fishing failed in the south side of Loch Gairloch. There were few herrings and white fish seem to

have been killed. The fields were sodden and the potato harvest wrecked. Doctor Knox whose practice ranged from Kinlochewe to the far north of Ross-shire felt that because of poor nourishment and lack of fuel an influenza outbreak might result. There were signs of this starting. The reporter wrote that in some of the townships people went to bed by six o'clock in order to try to keep warm and that many of the houses provided little shelter from the cold and the damp. The district nurse from Poolewe, Nurse Maclennan, spoke of the scarcity of milk although the children were coping with walking to school on their diet of brose and sugar. Some households depended upon salt herrings. The article ended on a slightly optimistic note by pointing out that because of the Gulf Stream the winter was quite mild!

(In 1846/7 the potato blight, caused by a fungus, *phytophthora infestans*, to which the potatoes had no natural resistance, had struck the Gairloch area and the Estate borrowed £10,000 under the Drainage Act in order to make sure that no-one starved. However, most of that money went to the crofters so that they could drain and reclaim their own holdings).

A Place for a Holiday

However, the area enabled people to enjoy themselves. A holiday journal was kept by Helen Bryson and Maisie Clark in the August of 1936. This account, entitled *Highland Tramp* recorded, through typewritten accounts, sketches and photographs, the three week holiday that these young woman took in the west of Scotland. Their holiday was spent walking in and around the West Coast and visiting the Isle of Skye, staying in bed and breakfast establishments and youth hostels. (The Scottish Youth Hostels Association had recently been founded in 1931.)

It has relevance to Port Henderson because they recorded one particular day when they caught the ferry (probably from Gairloch) and visited Port Henderson from where they travelled on to Red Point. There they enjoyed a picnic and swam in the sea, walked on to the Youth Hostel at Craig, (after talking to someone at the fishing station on the way). An extract from their journal states :

“TUESDAY : Our wanderings begun. A ferry with an old brown sail carried us to Port Henderson in a blatter of rain and rocked in the cradle etc. Voyage enlivened by songful and hilarious ruck. Part of our walk on the other shore was in rain and then it cleared up into a beautiful day when we got to Red Point ..”

(The Scottish Life Archive holds albums of their photographs, drawings, objects such as tickets and postcards, poems and the journal entries).

Port Henderson still attracts visitors as it has done for many years. One later account tells of one family's holiday within the area over many years and another recounts a young boy's memories of holidays with his relations.

A Place to Live

General memories of a bye-gone life

Much work has been undertaken by Roy Wentworth in researching the history of Donald Hector Mackenzie (*Donald Long*), 1911 - 1999, of 14 Port Henderson. An unfinished draft, dated June 2000, traces this Mackenzie family back over many generations. It is interesting for this Port Henderson project to see how these Mackenzies link the crofts of 6, 11, 14 and 16 (and probably others) through marriage. Although there are records dating before 1675 it is best to start from Hector Mackenzie (around 1675 to 1752) who lived in Diabaig. His son Murdo (around 1740 to 1821) and his grandson Hector (around 1793 to 1866) also lived in Diabaig but Hector died in Redpoint. Hector married Annabel Fraser and they had seven children. Their eldest son Kenneth (born about 1822) took over croft 6 Port Henderson (shown on the 1861 census). He married Margaret Macgregor and they had seven children. John, the third son (born in 1864) married Marjorie Mackenzie from croft 16 and he took over that croft by the time of the 1901 census. They had ten children (although two Johns died in infancy) and their second son, Kenneth, was the father of Ello Tallach (see her account, pp. 75-78) and he married Barbara Macpherson from croft 11.

Similar research has been undertaken on the families who lived on 2, 5, 19, 20 and 22 (and maybe 14) Port Henderson which shows how families in this tight-knit community joined each other through marriage. A Donald MacPherson, a tenant in Mihol, Strath (across the sealoch from Port Henderson) had a daughter named Mary. She married a Duncan MacPherson who had lived in Kerrysdale, between Gairloch and the Overside, from 1803 to 1808. Duncan was one of the original men who was given a 15-year lease to live in the newly formed fishing village of Port Henderson. His name appears on the 1841 census with his daughter, Jessie, and sons, Alex and Donald. When the crofts were allocated in 1845 Duncan was the tenant of croft 20, although one of the early records show Duncan as being the tenant of croft 14, from an original number 18. One of Duncan's sons, Alex, took over croft 20 at a later date and his other son, Donald, became the tenant of croft 2. Jessie married a Donald MacKenzie and they rented croft 19. One of their sons, Neil, left the family croft when he married Alexina Urquhart, from one of the houses on croft 22, previously of croft 5 where she was the



House on croft 19

grand-daughter of Jessie and John Fraser. The Frasers moved to croft 22 between 1871 and 1881. Thus Neil and Alexina lived with Murdo Fraser, Neil's uncle, on croft 22. When the Frasers moved from croft 5 Alexander MacRae, from Aultgrishan, North Gairloch, took over the croft and was recorded on the 1881 census. By 1901 Alexander was living with his brother, sister-in-law, and their four children. Today two descendants of the MacPhersons, MacKenzies, Frasers and the MacRaes have married and are now living in Mellon Charles, a township beyond Aultbea, still within the wider Gairloch parish.

Although the present house on croft 19 appears to be the original it was said not to have been built until the 1930s. Information has been given from a William MacLean, of croft 18 born in 1900

(and according to the 1901 census there is a William recorded at the age of one year) that a man known as 'Poority' hanged himself inside the original house in 1919 and so the family left the house. 'Poority' was Murdo Mackenzie and he was a postman. He was unmarried and lived with his father, Donald, who died in 1910, his mother, Jessie, having died in 1898. Murdo was first recorded on the 1861 census at the age of three years so he would have been about 62 years old when he died. The death certificate confirms that Murdo committed suicide by hanging on April 21st and that the information was given by his nephew, Alexander MacKenzie (and there is an Alexander Mackenzie shown on the census of 1891, aged three years old, who was the son of Neil). According to the Valuation Rolls of 1902 no rental records of croft 19 were shown from 1894 and the present Rent Book started in November 1929 which ties up with a new house being built. But according to another source, members of the family had always lived in the house so it could be that the records were just missing for those particular years. Also two households were recorded on the census forms of 1891 and 1901 so it would appear that there were two houses, especially as the latter census gave Murdo's house as having two windows and his brother Duncan's house with three windows. Donald and Jessie Mackenzie moved onto the croft between the 1851 and 1861 censuses and had four children. Neil, the oldest son, moved to a house on croft 22 between the 1891 and 1901 censuses where he lived with his elderly uncle and aunt, Murdo and Janet Fraser, who originally came from croft 2. Neil had by that time married Alexina Urquhart who was related to the Frasers. Duncan, the second son, married and lived with his wife and children on the croft, Mary, the only daughter, was recorded up to the 1881 census when she was still unmarried and Murdo never married and stayed at home.

Information about the Reverend Duncan MacPherson.

Duncan MacPherson's grandfather, another Duncan MacPherson, was born around the year 1781. In the years 1803, 1804 and 1808 he lived in Kerrysdale (OPR) and since he was not registered in the rent book he was a sub-tenant. In 1815 Duncan was given a fifteen-year lease, along with others, to live in the new fishing village of Port Henderson. Thus he was an original tenant and would have had to prove that he earned the greater part of his livelihood : he is registered as a fisherman on the 1851 census. It is possible that he was not familiar with fishing before this time since he lived at Kerrysdale (which is not near the sea). Duncan married Mary MacPherson (OPR) who was the daughter of a Donald MacPherson, a tenant in Mihol, Strath (OPR). (However, Mary's name is not recorded on the Port Henderson censuses). Duncan had two sons and a daughter. (Donald, at first a fisherman and then a crofter, was the tenant of croft 2). Alexander (red-haired Alasdair), his other son, was baptised on November 30th 1815 (OPR) shortly after his father had come to live in Port Henderson. Alasdair married a Jessie MacPherson, also from Port Henderson, on December 7th 1849 (OPR). Alex (Alasdair) and Jessie had five children, Mary, Kenneth, Jessie, Lexi and Duncan. The three girls appear to have remained unmarried and Kenneth remained an unmarried fisherman.

On the 1881 census Duncan was registered as being 19 years old and a pupil teacher. (See p.58). (Duncan married but this is not confirmed by any census). Duncan became a minister in the United Free Church and it is

also said that he was a great preacher. Kenneth (Coinneach Alasdair) was an Elder in the Free Presbyterian Church, Mary was in the Free Church and Lexy was in the Established Church but never a word came between them regarding churches. It is recorded that there was a lassie coming in, a servant for Duncan's wife. However, Duncan's wife maltreated the lassie. She was not allowed to speak to boys and she was forbidden to do this and that. The outcome was that Duncan's wife was sent to prison for her ill treatment of the girl. Coinneach Alasdair used to say that they gave all their money to Duncan since his wife was in trouble. (This was reported in the *People's Journal* at the end of the 20s).

Attie Macrae

Improvement in housing

Houses were improved. For example the roof of the house on croft 9 was once thatched but then it was covered with corrugated iron and a grant was given for the re-roofing. On croft 10 there is a stone-built house that looks very old. However, it was built around 1910 by Duncan's (Betty's husband) uncle, Alec Mackenzie. It was used by Woolworths as a backdrop for a fashion advertisement. Water was connected in the late 1950s with the main source of water being taken from the South Erradale area. Septic tanks are still in use and there is a treatment plant in Badachro.



Mrs MacKenzie thank you very much for the use of your cottage as location sincerely A Massey
written on the back of the photograph for this house on croft 10

The boat builders

The family of MacKenzies who were boat builders were recorded as living on croft 15 from the 1861 census up to and including the 1901 census. However, local residents recall this family living on croft 12 which reinforces the fact that this family rented both crofts (see p.49). Certainly today's croft 12 is by the shore. John and Colin MacKenzie's boat building shed was located between the present red-roofed cottage and the byre. Boats were launched in the port below the shed, *Port an' t-seada* (see p.10). The main access to the shore was down a track, through the Black Gate (see p.83/84), then between crofts 13, 14 and 15 and crofts 11 and 12 but this access was fenced off in the 1970s.



All that remains of the boatbuilder's wall

Roderick Mackenzie of 'Seacrest' gave information on tape to the Gairloch Heritage Museum about the boat building shed on croft 12. (Later the two red-roofed buildings on this croft were included within croft 22 but the boundaries are rather vague). He recalled that boat building stopped just before the second world war. *An Saor*, 'John the joiner' (John Mackenzie), and his brother Colin lived in croft 12. Roderick, their father, built boats before them. John and Colin were joiners. They built the 'Baden Powell' which belonged to Roddie 'Seacrest' and this boat was only condemned when

the second world war began. The last boat to be built was a twelve foot dinghy for Duncan Mackenzie but later a Duncan Maclean owned her. *An Saor* was the last person to be building boats. Two men built the 'Baden Powell' and they used to get the shoemaker, *Ali Eachainn*, to help on the day when they were bending the ribs. (See p.8 about the shoemaker's well). This was called 'stoving ribs' and they had a boiler for this. Everyone in the village helped. John and Colin Mackenzie had ordinary saws



but there were big square saws for cutting planks and stakes. The planks were cut in Gairloch and came ready made from the mill. They had few tools, just a gimlet, axe and adze. John could make a seam without a hacksaw. For cutting nails he had a piece of scythe blade. It used to make a good mark on the nail. Gairloch larch was used in the boats and John was good at choosing this. He would go into the forest himself and

choose the tree and the estate would cut it. John wouldn't put in a plank that wasn't right. Oak and larch were used for the ribs. Elm was used in the gunwales. (Around the 1950s the children were given the job of clearing the ports on 13, 22 and *An Sgùmán* during the summer).

Other information

Near this aforementioned passage way was the *fuaran mòr* (the lug well) which served a number of households. But today this well is inaccessible as the area around it is very boggy. In later years a tank was built above this and the water still runs to the byre on croft 14.

A quern stone, once thought to have been used for grinding corn, was found in the ruins by the shore on croft 21 by a former resident when he was a boy. A miller was recorded on the 1881 census as being resident on croft 2. This was a John McKenzie, the 47-year old brother-in-law of Donald McPherson who was married to Mary (McKenzie). It is possible that quern stones could have been used by households for hand grinding.

Port Henderson produced its fair share of centenarians. Flora MacPherson (Dolas's aunt) has been written about earlier but also Margaret Waters (Atta MacRae's aunt) reached her 100th birthday in January 1994.

Port Henderson and the two World Wars

World War 1

Many young men joined the Forces during the 1st World War. The population of Gairloch (the entire area) was 3317 in 1911. Out of this number 507 men joined the forces and 92 of these didn't return. From Opinan, Port Henderson, South Erradale and Red Point there were 46 service men. Only four of these were killed but it appears that there were none from Port Henderson. From a list dated March 1917 it can be seen that some Port Henderson men had joined D Company of the 4th Seaforth Highlanders. Those listed as privates were M. Macpherson (shoemaker, croft 9), M. Mackenzie and K. Mackenzie (fisherman and shoemaker, croft 16), M. Mackenzie (fisherman, croft 15), D. Mackenzie

(fisherman, croft 6) and F. Mackenzie (shepherd, croft 8). Another Mackenzie was listed as a steward but no initial or croft number was given. From another source an A. Mackenzie, a labourer, enlisted into the 4th Seaforth Highlanders in April 1911 and was discharged in February 1915 due to ‘debility’. (The only match from the 1901 census is Alexander Mackenzie from croft 22 who was seven years old at the time).

Murdo MacPherson, from another source, became a Lance Corporal, 1260. He had enlisted in Opinan in April 1911 when he was was a 17-year old labourer. He was posted to France and contracted



Pt. K. Mackenzie



Postcard dated 1914

measles in early 1915 and was discharged from the army in April 1916 due to debility. It appears that he suffered some form of medical problem after his bout of measles. He was awarded the Victory and British medals and the 1914 Star.

An article, printed in the *Ross-shire Journal* and dated November 26th 1915, describes two brothers who fought in the war. Private 1258 K. (Kenneth) Mackenzie

(Ello Tallach's father), who was serving his apprenticeship as a bootmaker with Sergeant Bain in Gairloch, joined the 4th Seaforths in May 1914, at the age of 18 years, and was called up on mobilisation and was sent to France in the November. An attack of measles led to him being invalided home to 16 Port Henderson but in the summer of 1915 he returned to the trenches

‘... and on 10th August he was wounded by a splinter from a German shell, which struck him on the head After spending some time in hospital at Boulogne he returned to the trenches, and on 25th September at the battle of Loos he had the misfortune to be gassed. This necessitated his coming to England, where after being convalescent, he spent a happy though brief furlough with his parents.’

Kenneth was discharged in April 1916 and was awarded the Victory Medal, the British Medal and the 1914 Star.

His older brother, Lance-Corporal Murdo Mackenzie, Private 965,

‘... had been in the “terriers” since he was 17, and like his brother went to France with the battalion. He also had an attack of measles in the spring, and was treated at the Base. He returned to the trenches, and has been in every engagement in which his regiment took part, and has come through unscathed. As is only natural, his parents and relatives are looking forward to his getting a short leave home.’

Murdo, a former shepherd, enlisted in May 1909 at Opinan and was discharged in May 1916 after being wounded and gassed in September 1915. He was awarded the same medals as his brother. After



Part of Kenneth Mackenzie's Great War certificate

the war Murdo sailed from Glasgow in July 1923 on the S.S. Columbia and from New York he went to Omaha, Nebraska, to stay with his sister, Mrs. Annie Foster. (However, there are no records of an Annie on the census of 1901 nor in the family tree unless she was Mary Ann who was born in 1903 and who died in 1939). The passenger list describes him Murdo as a fisherman and that he carried £45 with him.

The census form for 1901 records the MacKenzie family living on croft 16 in what was called a 'fisher's house' which had four windows and they had lived on that croft since 1851. Also the Estate records show that the family probably lived in Port Henderson in the 1840s. Kenneth and Murdo's father, John (Long), a fisherman, had been born on croft 6 and was first recorded on the census of 1871 when he was six years old. He married the only daughter, Mary/Marjorie, of the MacKenzies of croft 16 and moved to this croft some time after the 1891 census. John's nickname was 'Long' and he had at least nine children, two of whom died. (The same family of MacKenzies remained tenants of croft 16 until 1992).

Murdo Macrae, son of John Macrae, 5 Port Henderson, originally enlisted at Opinan in February 1913 as Private 1465 in the 4th Seaforth Highlanders. He served in France and was wounded twice in November 1916 and May 1917. Murdo then transferred to the Yorkshire Regiment in 1918 and was finally discharged as Corporal 244652 in 1919. He had also been in Russia during his time in the army. He was awarded the British and Victory Medals and the 1914 Star and was also granted a pension of 6/- a week because he had some sort of disability after his injuries.



Sailors

Port Henderson men were also in the Navy. John Watson of croft 13, son of Andrew Watson, was a seaman in R.N.R. and took part in the Battle of Jutland. John would have been about 31 years of age when war broke out and by trade was a fisherman.

Duncan MacLean, son of Alexander MacLean and Ann (MacDonald) of croft 18, was born in 1892 and he later became a ploughman. Duncan became an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy. He saw service from 1913 to 1921 aboard H.M.S. Vivid 1, Donagal and Erin. (Vivid 1 was a training establishment). H.M.S. Erin was a battleship, originally ordered by the Ottoman Empire. However, in August 1914, along with another ship, it was requisitioned and seized by the British and renamed H.M.S. Agincourt. This incident caused considerable outcry in Turkey and was instrumental in the decision of the Ottoman Empire to join with Germany in 1914. Duncan was also present at the Battle of Jutland.

It was said that Port Henderson along with a village of a similar size in England were the only two in the whole country where all the servicemen returned safely after World War 1. However, this needs to be confirmed.

World War Two

During the 2nd World War some of the men joined the Home Guard, such as John MacPherson of croft 7. There was a wooden caravan opposite the letter box and the men went there to watch for the Germans landing.

Many men joined up and were sent abroad. A comprehensive book called *The Heroes of Gairloch Parish World War 11* written by Ann Roots and William MacRobbie details as many of the soldiers, sailors and airmen that they could trace.



Duncan in WW2



Duncan MacPherson
croft 7 in 1934

H. M. Yacht Grive, built in 1905 in Glasgow and a Merchant Navy ship, was used in the evacuation of Dunkirk. On May 31st 1940 whilst with other ships in Dunkirk harbour an attack came from German aircraft. Attempting to leave the harbour Grive collided with a destroyer and then hit a mine. She sank and lost all her crew except one. Murdo Anthony Mackenzie (known as *Murdo Gaity*), originally of 6 Port Henderson, became the first casualty of the war from the parish of Gairloch. He was the chief steward and died on Saturday 1st June 1940. (On the 1901 census Murdo was two years old).

In the June of 1940 the 51st Highland Division were pushed back to the French town of St. Valéry-en-Caux. They had expected to be evacuated from Le Havre but the Germans had blocked this. Thus their General surrendered and most of the British prisoners spent the rest of the war in P.O.W. camps. One of these was Donald MacKenzie (known as *Domhnall Long* and Ello Tallach's uncle) from croft 14. He was in the 4th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders and was taken prisoner on June 11th 1940 and freed early in May 1945. (However, from other information Donald was born on croft 16). Duncan MacPherson (known as *Noonie*) and his brother, Roderick, were also taken prisoner. They were also in the Seaforth Highlanders and came from croft 7. Alick (*Ali Fada*) MacKenzie of Croft 6 and later of the Red House was also taken prisoner and spent five years in a German P.O.W. camp. His brother, Hector, served in the RAF.

Kenneth MacKenzie (known as *Kennie Gaity*) and the brother of Murdo (see p.73) was a cook on the Merchant Navy ship, the S.S. Kyleglen. He died in December 1940 at the age of 45 when the Kyleglen was off the coast of Newfoundland, bound for Baltimore and was torpedoed by a U-boat. She sank and there were no survivors. (On the 1901 census Kenneth was recorded as being six years old).

In 1944 Alick Ewan MacKenzie (known as *Clappie aig Morto Ruaraidh*) died at the age of 29 from an illness he had contracted on board the Merchant Navy vessel, M.V. Jad where he was the First Engineer Officer. (Alick's parents, Murdo and Barbara MacKenzie are recorded on the 1901 census as living on croft 22). Alick's brothers, Neil, in the Army, (Alice Mackenzie, née MacLean's brother-in-law) and Roderick, in the Merchant Navy, (Alison Wyatt, née Mackenzie's father) survived the war.

Five MacKenzie brothers (known as the *Mic Mortie Eachinn*) are recorded. Alick and Duncan (Betty Mackenzie's husband) were in the Merchant Navy, and George, Hector and Murdo (Annie Point's husband) were in the Royal Navy. Hector was lost at sea (probably in 1943). Their croft

number is not recorded but it is confirmed that this was croft 10. John (known as *Lofty* or *Iain Long*), Kenneth (known as *Kennie Long* and Ello Tallach's father) and Murdoch (known as *Mort Long*) were another set of MacKenzie brothers who were in the Army and from 16 Port Henderson (see p.72). (Kenneth and Murdo are recorded on the 1901 census). Four other MacKenzie brothers (known as the *Bulars*) from croft 19 are known to have served in the war. Duncan was in the Seaforth Highlanders, John (Catherine Mackenzie's husband) was in the Army, Murdoch was in the Royal Air Force and Roderick was in the Royal Navy. Four more Mackenzie brothers (known as the *Domhnalls*) are also recorded. Hector and Neil were in the Merchant Navy, Kenneth was in the Navy and Murdoch was 'lost at sea'. Their croft number is not given but it is confirmed that these were the Mackenzies from croft 6. Three other separate MacKenzies are also recorded but with no croft numbers. Roderick (from croft 12?) and known as *Roddie See* was in the Army, Alick (known as *Sandy aig Ali Nan Caorach*) was in the Royal Air Force and was living in Canada and his brother Hector (known as *Cargan*) served in the Royal Air Force. (These were Catherine Mackenzie's uncles).



An early sepia postcard



An early colour photograph

Some general information

Every family grew enough potatoes, oats and hay for their own use. Port Henderson was never that fertile but South Erradale and Opinan were more of a crofting community. The grain would have been brought to the kilns for drying by horse and cart or by boat. Crofts 3 and 4 were lived in by the same family.

Temporary turf or stone houses were often built for a season for crewmen or visiting families, especially on crofts 3, 4 and 6. These were then removed or recycled when no longer needed and this could affect any records because there would have been people just passing through. Thus there is no way of knowing where they might have stayed. Large barns were also built for housing all the associated fishing gear.

Hector MacKenzie.

A few memories from childhood

I spoke again with my brother about the house on croft 1. He cannot recollect the house having a roof when he was young. However, I was sure there was a roof on it when I was young. But my memory may be playing tricks on me. But I can remember my Aunt Chrissie telling me a few years ago that everything was taken out of the house for burning. I do not think they burnt the actual house, although she did say that houses had been burnt

when the occupants came down with diphtheria and TB. I also clearly remember getting warned by my mother not to play in the loch above croft 6 as that was where all the crockery and bottles had been dumped after someone had contracted diphtheria. We did, however, regularly play there and I can remember seeing crockery and bottles in the peat around this small loch.

(Other memories record that this house was torched because it was said to harbour tuberculosis germs. Often croft houses were built on the wettest part of the land because better arable land needed to be preserved. The unhealthy effects of dampness and insanitation were sometimes made worse because the midden might foul the well. Thus typhoid and tuberculosis were quite common).

Murdo Mackenzie

More memories from childhood

I can remember when I was small being told that our present house (9 Port Henderson) was struck by lightning. My aunty Ellen and Mottershan were living there at the time and said that the lightning had come down the chimney in their bedroom and had cracked a mirror. I can just remember being shown the mirror.

When we were getting the house renovated the harling was removed and the builder said that he could see signs of old damage. He asked if we wanted to have fireplaces in the rooms at the east side of the house but we didn't. Evidently if we had wanted fires a lot of remedial work would have been needed.

I hope the old saying that lightning never strikes twice in the same place is true!

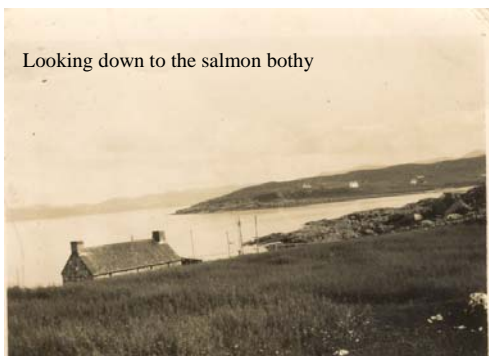
Isobel de la Croix



Croft 9's house before renovations took place - shoemaker's shed on the right

Snippets from the past

She (Iba) remembers her father making and mending nets on croft 4. The nets were dried on the green



Looking down to the salmon bothy

behind the house and then stored in the corrugated iron shed which is still to be seen. The nets were used to catch cod (fished for in February) and she can remember the baskets for the longlines. Her father once made a small rowing boat in that shed which was later taken to Reiff to be used by her family. Willie Macmillan (*Peat*) dried his nets on the green behind the salmon bothy and he had a share in a fishing boat. Income from the boats was divided into 'shares' with each crew member having a share and the owners of the boat and the gear

were given more than one share. A brown tarry substance called *cairt* was painted onto the nets and lines to

preserve them when they were made of hemp (in pre-nylon times). *Cairt* means bark of the tree (*probably the oak*) and the phrase was used 'barking the nets'.

The house in which they lived cost £16 to build and was built by her grandfather with the family involved in the labouring.

Also she recalls the house on croft 1 which was abandoned due to TB. Its contents (plates etc.) were just left there and no-one would touch them. (*See Murdo's account on p.74*). As children they were told to stay away from this loch when on their way to and from school because there was a water horse in the loch. She remembers that she was very scared at the thought of this.

Her family cut their peats on the moor above croft 3 and she used to take a peat to school so this could be used on the fire to warm the schoolroom.

Iba Ross (née Macpherson, croft 4)

Some snippets of earlier days

Bobby MacPherson, of croft 2, was born in 1947 and left Port Henderson in 1966. His father was a John MacPherson and the family came from croft 11. (*MacPhersons are recorded on the census forms from 1851 to 1901*). Bobby's great uncle built the house on croft 2 in the late 1890s and when he went abroad he gave it to Bobby's grandfather. (*This must have been a new build from the original house as MacPhersons lived on croft 2 from 1845 in a 2/3 bedroomed house*). The house had water piped in from a private supply about half a mile away which was shared with croft 4. The copper pipes with brass joints used to freeze in the winter.



Ruins of croft 1 today

He remembers a tinker who used to live in the ruins on croft 1 when he came round selling things in the summer. The children were told to stay away from the old house because a bogeyman lived there. One particular time when Bobby and some other children were throwing stones at the roof of the house a very cross wild looking man came out shouting. They got a great fright as this was the tinker.

The tar road stopped at the turn-off to Aird, Badachro and so the road continued with gravel. In the mid 1950s some type of large machine was taken to Opinan beach to extract sand which was then mixed with tar to put on the road. This worked well at first but when lorries drove over it the surface broke and then the water and frost got in so this type of surface did not last long.

(*See also on p.84*).

Porthenderson - from 1940

My first vague memory is of my uncles and several other men en route to their Army barracks, dressed in their



A group of 'Terriers'

kilts etc. They had been in the 'Terriers' (Territorial Army) and were among the first to be called up. Unfortunately many of them were taken prisoner at St. Valery but one of my uncles was amongst those evacuated at Dunkirk and he went through the war unscathed.



Kenneth's certificate from the PO

My father, Kenneth Mackenzie of croft 16 had been in the 14/18 war (*already recorded, see p.70*) and post war he joined the G.P.O. as the first motorised postman for the south side of Gairloch. He drove a T. Ford initially, the first car in the area after the horse and cart and he served from 1922 - 1945. Mail was delivered every day except Sunday and Feast days and New Year's Day. (*He received a certificate from the Postmaster General on the occasion of his retirement in 1945 after working for the post for more than 23 years.*)

Pre-war he was a trainee bootmaker.

Sometime in the 1920s he built the garage beside the old shop which was first run by Kenneth Mackenzie, of croft 15, who then sold it to dad and left for Peru in South America where he was involved in a serious accident resulting in the loss of a leg. He was afterwards known as 'Crubie'. Repairs took place at the garage.

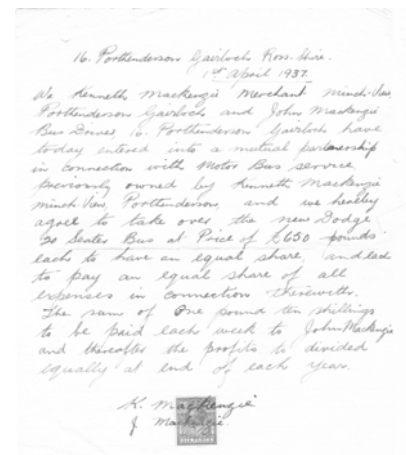
Before my father and mother married in December 1930 Dad had a house built to the south of his family's croft. His father John (Long) was a mason and was involved in the building of many houses in the Gairloch area from Melvaig and all round the loch. (*On the 1901 census John is recorded as being a fisherman but later he became an undertaker. The undertaker's business was in a separate building behind the house on croft 16. The coffins were kept in the shed which also served as the garage which was another separate building*). When the house was built it was wired for electricity which was provided by a generator. We also had plumbed water supplied from a well just above Opinan. There were two tanks and the water was carried by copper pipes at least a mile to the house. Water was gravity fed so no pump was involved. (*In the common grazing land near Loch nan Eun there are the remains of three concrete water tanks*).



In the 20s and 30s (until war broke out in 1939) my father and his brother, John (Mackenzie Bros.) ran a bus during the 'season' between Achnasheen and Gairloch. There was even a bus conductor on this service, their cousin, Alex Mackenzie (Ali Fata) from Red House. This was from May to October and when they sold the bus and got a new one the Bains from North Erradale bought the old bus. (Although this happened before I was born I got a lot of information from my cousin in Inverness). A legal handwritten contract with the signatures, K. MacKenzie and J. MacKenzie, written over a sixpenny stamp, dated 1st April 1937 and headed 16 Porthenderson Gairloch Ross-Shire stated :

We Kenneth MacKenzie Merchant Minch-View Porthenderson

In the 20s and 30s (until war broke out in 1939) my father and his brother, John (Mackenzie Bros.) ran a bus during the 'season' between Achnasheen and Gairloch. There was even a bus conductor on this service, their cousin, Alex Mackenzie (Ali Fata) from Red House. This was from May to October and when they sold the bus and got a new one the Bains from North Erradale bought the old bus. (Although this happened before I was born I got a lot of information from my cousin in Inverness). A legal handwritten contract with the signatures, K. MacKenzie and J. MacKenzie, written over a sixpenny stamp, dated 1st April 1937 and headed 16 Porthenderson Gairloch Ross-Shire stated :



Gairloch and John MacKenzie Bus Driver, 16 Porthenderson Gairloch have today entered into a mutual partnership in connection with Motor Bus service previously owned by Kenneth MacKenzie Minch-View, Porthenderson, and we hereby agree to take over the new Dodge 20 Seater Bus at price of £650 pounds each to have an equal share of all expenses in connection therewith. The sum of One pound ten shillings to be paid each week to John MacKenzie and thereafter the profits to (be) divided equally at end of each year.

The 'Conditions attached to Road Service Licence' showed that a bus also ran between the Post Office in Opinan and the Post Office in Gairloch and that the authorised route was 'via ex Opinan by B8056 via Porthenderson, Bodachro (sic), Shieldaig, thence by B8056 and A832 via Kerrysdale and shall finish at 'Bus Stance, Post Office, Gairloch....' (*the Gairloch Post Office was at that time next to the Old Inn*). This was a 'Mail Service' with set fares and a timetable, daily except Sundays.

Stage	Mileage	Time	Outward Fares	Return Fares
0	0	0	Opinan P.O. 2.5	Gairloch P.O. 2.50
1	1	5	Porthenderson 2.10	Kerrysdale 2.40
2	3	15	Bodachro 2.00	Shieldaig 2.55
3	5	30	Shieldaig 2.35	Bodachro 4.15
4	7	40	Kerrysdale 2.40	Porthenderson 6.20
5	8	50	Gairloch P.O. 2.50	Opinan P.O. 4.00

My father also rented Badachro Farm and for part of the time John Mackenzie (Sammy) from croft 6 managed it for him. Also at Badachro he rented the Old Store from the Laird, used as a fish curing station mainly for salting cod and he bought cod and also processed the cod livers which were taken to Achnasheen by lorry which he also ran. Salt cod and salt herring was the staple diet. The cod livers were refined to make Cod Liver Oil. Cod and cod roe in season were sent by train from Achnasheen all the way to Billingsgate Fish Market in London! For this local labour was employed. All this came to an end with the war. However during the war my father had a contract with the M.O.D. at Aultbea and I am led to believe that his lorry carried goods twice daily to Achnasheen, except for Sundays. Two local men drove the lorry. During the 30s my father also bought coal from 'the puffer' that came up from Glasgow. This boat docked in Gairloch and the coal was brought by a smaller boat to Badachro pier.



The shop today



Ello's brother, Coinneach, in the shop

I do not remember too much of this time but my recollection of the 'shop' is that it sold almost everything from a 'needle to an anchor', including boots, shoes, wellingtons, scythes and hones, pots and pans plus haberdashery and clothing and if certain items were

required they were obtained from suppliers in Glasgow. All kinds of groceries and food stuffs were available. Bread was delivered from Inverness by Burnetts at least weekly and later twice weekly. During the war and until the early 50s food was rationed with coupons being provided for each member of the family and I remember counting the coupons to be sent off for the next deliveries. Clothing coupons were also used. A petrol pump, first installed around the 20s/30s, supplied such local cars as were around (as well as my father's own car) and during the war there was Price Control which meant that



The petrol pump

prices were the same country wide subject to visits from a Board of Trade inspector although I've been told that north of the Highland line even in those days we had to pay a bit more. The petrol pump which was outside the shop was only removed fairly recently and I remember the disc that could be changed as prices went up or down, for example 1/10 per gallon. *(There was another shop on croft 11, 'Lizzie's' shop, but no traces of this building remain today as the original croft house has been extended and the stones of the shop were used to build the retaining walls in the garden. After this shop ceased functioning it was often used as a place for ceilidhs for the men within the township).*

During the war my father had a radio and I can remember that those who didn't possess one used to come and listen to the latest news (at six, or was it nine o'clock?) Our teacher used to keep us abreast of the news and encouraged us to read the newspapers.

My mother was Barbara MacPherson. Her father was Alex from croft 11 and he married Mary Ann Jane Maclean of Point Farm. Mam used to keep visitors and supplied full board. This was mainly in the 30s. After the war when we were growing up the main house was let, usually for whole months, June, July and August in particular and possibly September. Usually these people were professionals. I remember the plastic surgeon of this time, Dr. Wallace. When a local man, Alex (*Alick*) Mackenzie of Carnmore was severely burnt in 1954 or 1955 Dr. Wallace operated on him many times in Bangor Hospital. *(The house, Carnmore, on croft 5, burnt down when a gas bottle exploded. Later this house was rebuilt by local residents).* We also had Sir John Martin and his family and when the Suez crisis occurred, in the time of Anthony Eden, our phone rang for us to get in touch with him as he had to return to Westminster. He had been one of Winston Churchill's advisers during the war. Mam was a very hard working person and kept the shop when my father was away doing other things. The shop had no definite hours and it was quite common for folk to arrive while we were at a meal. I used to hate this as I felt very self-conscious as a child because they just stood or sat until we finished our meal.

There were poles on croft 15 where the fishing nets were hung to dry. As children we used these poles for fixing our swing.

I also remember the dipping, shearing and gathering of the sheep. The shepherds were local men. William MacMillan was the main one in the township. I believe he was employed to keep the sheep away from the township while crops were planted until harvest time. *(There were MacMillans living on croft 21 in a 'fisher's house' and a boy named William was ten years old on the 1901 census).* They used to have lovely sheep dogs which were not averse to a good scrap and sometimes had to be separated with a bucket of cold water. Mam supplied quite a feast for the 'men' on these occasions.

In spite of all her hard work my mother lived until her 97th year and in her final years I had the privilege of looking after her for some time. She was still wonderfully alert mentally until the end though she suffered from profound deafness and we resorted to writing at times.

Ello Tallach (née Mackenzie)

Memories of living and growing up on croft 10 Port Henderson in the 1950s and 60s.

Our croft had its own water supply as did most of the crofts. Water from the wells ran into tanks which can

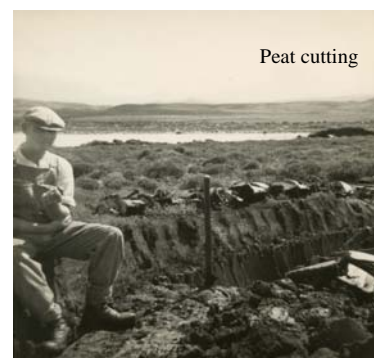
still be seen today. The water was piped to the croft house and a pump was used. This ran by electricity so if the electricity failed or was turned off or if the pipes froze in the winter we had to carry water from the wells in buckets. There were no electrical goods such as washing machines or TVs until the 70s. Washing was done by hand and there was a wringer attached to the sink. There was a mangle in croft 9. It was a familiar sight to see the washing laid outside on a sunny day to be bleached. Linen shirts were left out in the frost to starch. Drains on the crofts were dug by hand and the crofters helped each other if this was needed. Our barn had been used for my father's sister's wedding and I believe that the house on croft 10 was used as a church at one time. When the porch part of the house was redone part of a whisky still was found in the porch foundations.



Washday

When we were children our father took us for walks to show us where to find different birds' nests and where to find white heather etc. Crofting has always been a hard way of life but also a very satisfying part of life, binding a community together. It was a way of life like fishing and is in our blood.

We children helped on the crofts from a young age. In May the peats would be cut in the local peat banks, from Cruchan to the croft, and we would help with this when we were old enough. The girls and the women would lift the peats to dry them and once they were dry, by the end of October, a local crofter would take them on his tractor with a trailer to the croft where everyone helped to stack them. On croft 10 this ceased in 1977 when Duncan, my father, died. Neighbours did the same and families would help each other. Ellen Murdo (from croft 9) would carry the peats home in a creel on her back but barrows were also used. Peat supplied the heating during the harsh weather of winter and spring.



Peat cutting

Croft 10 was planted for crops - hay, corn and potatoes. All the family was involved in potato planting with the hoeing and the lifting. Some potatoes were stored in the barn after being brought from the field in barrows. The surplus was kept in pits made outside which had been dug into the ground and covered by turf. Ploughing and harrowing was done by tractor but sometimes horses were used on other crofts. Lime and fertiliser were applied by hand from a barrow and cow dung was spread as manure by all the family to help improve the ground for the crops. Father sowed seed by hand and used a sheet tied around his neck to hold this. He cut the hay and corn with a scythe. Because he worked for the roads department everything on the croft had to be done after work and he would still be scything at midnight in August. The women of the family helped to dry the hay and corn by turning it. We gathered and tied the corn into stooks by hand which was very tough and the hay/corn was taken into the barn by our family. Some of the corn was stacked outside. Adults would throw the stooks up with pitchforks and we youngsters would stack them.

Cows were kept on our croft, Aberdeen Angus and short horn. These were milked in the byre by hand by my father but mother did this when father was working. My mother made crowdie, cheese, butter and cream and

milk was shared within the village. The cows would be tethered on a rope so that they could graze and my mother would move them about during the day. A swivel was fixed to the rope to avoid any problems. In the 50s/60s



Duncan going to the cows

there was a fence near the roadside which is still evident in places today which surrounded the village. At times the cows were put out onto the hillside opposite the crofts. Cows came back in the evening during the summer and were brought in by all of us.

Hens and cockerels were kept and so we had eggs. Sometimes we would have a chicken for a meal (mainly if the hen was old). The henhouse was attached to the byre. All of us helped to clean it out.

The sheep were blackface. Six crofts certainly had cattle. On the other side of Port Henderson there were cows but a lot of the crofts kept sheep. In

the 50s/60s sheep had their horns branded using a hot numbered iron for identification. Irons were heated on a small fire at the fank which was situated at the back of croft 9. Sheep were gathered in two sections. Most of the village helped on dipping, clipping and dosing days. Sheep were sheared by hand. The whole village shared in the shearing and the rolling of the wool and the men went to other villages such as South Erradale to help. Socially it was a good time but it was certainly hard work. Sheep were put out to the hill for summer and brought back around September time for wintering and sales. The sheep would roam as far as Diabaig and the men would walk with the sheepdogs to bring them back to the lowland crofts where they grazed over winter if they hadn't gone to market. At lambing time the crofters helped each other. Sheep and lambs would have holes/splits put into their ears for identification purposes along with keel put onto their fleeces. Tags were in use in the 50s/60s. Male lambs had bordeso or rings applied for neutering purposes and their tails were docked. Bulls and tups were hired from the 'board'. Bulls were shared by the crofters and several rams were hired. Our family had its own mutton. My parents made wonderful black puddings and liver was good.

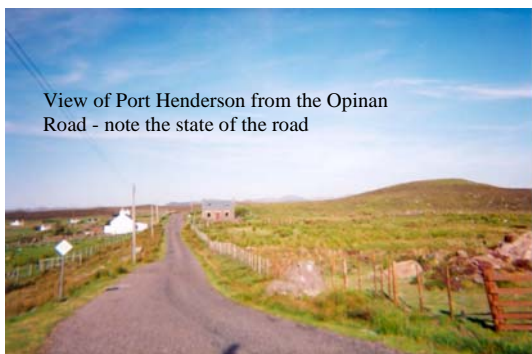


We ate fish and stored barrels of salted herring in the shed. This came from local fishermen (Roddy/Neil MacKenzie). In the summertime my mother hung hake on the washing line to dry. I didn't like this but we couldn't be fussy. My sister helped to gut the herring.

The local shop was very busy in those days. There used to be meat and bacon hanging up in muslin plus rows and rows of jars of sweets and lucky-bags. I can also remember blocks of cheese. There were petrol pumps outside the shop and we would walk there with our mother. Again it was a very good place for socialising. Vans used to come round the village selling butter, meat, clothing and hardware. Onion-Johnnies also came round on their bikes having travelled over from France. My mother would buy strings of onions. Tinkers used to go round selling pegs and my mother would give them maybe tea or milk instead of money for some.

In those early days the main road was gravel not tarmac (*the main road was tarmaced in about 1967*) and I can remember that the army used to train and camp at Opinan and march past the village. Because my father

couldn't drive he would visit his mother who had moved to Big Sand by rowing across the sealoch. His boat would be moored at croft 21. My father occasionally went to Badachro Inn (*built about 1840*) on Saturday nights



by pushbike. Women never went.

Christmas was family oriented. New Year was a great social event and it was a time for storytelling and music. In the early days we walked from house to house but when cars came we were taken across to our family in Big Sand. We would also go as far as Red Point. But by the 70s/80s this custom of visiting gradually petered out.

We went to school at Opinan and walked there but there would be people to look after us. Around 1960/61 the school at Opinan closed. Becca McAulay was the teacher and her sister Kate was the cook. One of our school photographs showing me and my sister Margo is in the archives of Gairloch Museum. I was in Primary 4 when the school closed so transferred to Achtercairn and went by bus driven by 'Dolong' (croft 14). I left Achtercairn at the end of my 3rd year as no-one could stay there after that. I then went to Inverness to college and came home at weekends. After my education ended I returned home and worked in Badachro Inn with several of the older women from Porthenderson.

As a family we attended the Free Church, both in Gairloch and at Opinan. We got a lift to Gairloch but we walked to Opinan and back. Church attendance was one to three services on a Sunday and we always attended communions.

In the summer of 1977 Duncan, my father, died having returned from working at the salmon fishing at Red Point. At that time my mother was working in hotel administration in Gairloch and she continued to work the croft but she didn't grow crops or cut peats. She just kept the animals.

Mairi Baddon

The MacPhersons of croft 7

Jessie Ann Nicolson, Katie's mother, was a MacPherson from croft 7. Katie's mother was Margaret MacKenzie from Red Point (*born on November 13th 1876*), whose brother 'Bullar' lived in Port Henderson (*a Mackenzie from croft 19*), and her father was Kenneth. Kenneth was a crofter and a fisherman but he was also a builder and he built Jessie Fraser's house in Lonemore and a house at Melvaig for a Mrs. and Mrs. McAskill. (*Kenneth and Margaret married in 1897*). Margaret and Kenneth had nine children.

(MacPhersons were recorded on every census from 1841 to 1901 as living on croft 7 and there is every possibility that Alex MacPherson who died in 1857 was one of the original fishermen in the fishing village, although it is not possible to confirm this with any accuracy. On the 1901 census Kenneth was 35, born on June 12th 1865, the head of the household and a fisherman and Margaret was 24. Kenneth died in 1938 and Margaret in 1935. One child was recorded at that time, Catherine at 3 years. Also living in the Fisher's House which had six windows was Donald, Kenneth's older brother and Catherine, their mother at 76 years old. Kenneth's parents were Hector and Catherine/Katharine/Kate Macgregor who married in 1849. Kenneth had two brothers,

Alexander and Donald, and two sisters, Ann and Mary).

Their eldest child Katherine (Katie) emigrated to Montreal as a cook, married Captain Charlie Stewart from North Uist and settled in Nova Scotia. When Katie was going to Canada her father escorted her to the station at Achnasheen which was customary in the Highlands when someone in the family was going to emigrate. Katie and Charlie had three children, a son who died in infancy, a daughter, Margaret Ann, who became a head mistress and another daughter, Marina Elizabeth, who became a well known artist based in New York. The second daughter, Annabella, was a side school teacher in Applecross and then in Lubcroy, north of Ullapool. She married Duncan MacKay, a gamekeeper, and they lived at Inver, Achnasheen and then Strathconon. Hectorina, the next daughter, worked as a cook in the Gairloch Hotel and married a head gardener, Finlay MacRae, from Kishorn. A son, Murdo, worked in the forest at Slattadale but when he was 22 years old and engaged to be married became ill and died within three days. Another son, Alexander (Alister), left home at 14 years of age and went to Ullapool where he worked as a shepherd on an uncle and aunt's sheep farm. He married Margaret (Peggy) Ross from South Harris whose father had been a missionary with the Free Presbyterian Church. Alister and Peggy had four children. Yet another son John was a salmon fisherman who worked at Red Point and during the second world he was in the Home Guard. He married Katie Bain from 6 Opinan who died when her children were young. There were three children and one of them, Cathy, owns Curlew Cottage, on croft 7. Another daughter, Kenina (Nina) is a crofter at Opinan. Another son, Duncan, married Isabella (Didy) Mackenzie of Opinan who was a schoolteacher in Diabaig and Melvaig.



Katie Bain married John MacPherson. The bridesmaid was Isabella MacKenzie and the best man was Duncan MacPherson.

Isabella and Duncan married when Duncan returned from a P.O.W. Camp in Germany because he had been captured at St. Valery in France (*see section on World War Two*). Jessie Ann (Katie's mother) was the youngest girl in the family and stayed locally after her mother died so that she could look after her father instead of going on to further education. She served in the NAFFI during the war and worked in many locations. She married Calum Nicholson from Portree, Skye. Jessie and Calum had four children, Katie, Margaret who died three days after she was born, Kenneth and Donald. The last of Margaret and Kenneth's children was Roderick (Roddy) who was also in the war with his brother, Duncan. (*See section on World War Two*). Roderick married Jean and they had two children.

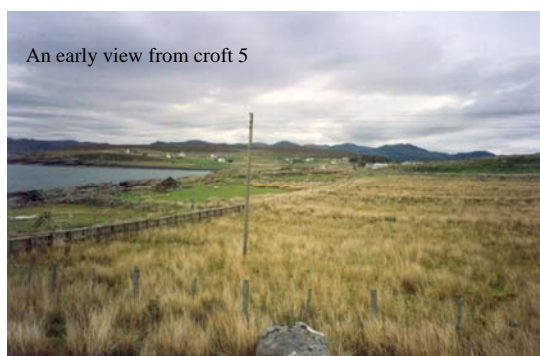
Jessie's headmaster at Opinan school was Mr. Cooper from Fife. Jessie took her young brother Roddy to school when she was seven and he was five. Jessie and Roddy would take the animals to the shielings every summer. The ground of croft 7 was very poor, although they used to grow blackcurrants, but that of croft 6 was good.

When Anabella married the reception was held at croft 7 and this lasted nearly a week, a Highland custom and all the neighbours helped to prepare the food. Jessie's mother, Margaret, used to say that the neighbours,

including her own mother, were very helpful and how they would all help poorer people and those who had serious illnesses. Particular help was given to the family who lived on croft 1. Jessie's aunt, Mary (McLennan), who was also resident in croft 7 (grandfather Hector's sister) had been married to a farmer at Muir of Ord but when he died his relatives evicted her and she was left with nothing. It was said that she was illiterate but no MacPherson would help her, only young Kenneth, Jessie's father. So when Kenneth died Jessie had the responsibility of looking after Mary who suffered from dementia. (*Mary is recorded on the 1861 census as a six-year old but not on the other censuses*). Kenneth regularly went to the Laide Free Presbyterian Church and stayed in a friend's house. It is said that he never missed attending until he died. Faith was very important to the family. A fishing boat would go to the communions in Portree, Skye, and lots of people went, Jessie included. When Kenneth died the funeral service had to be conducted by the Free Church Minister (maybe Rev. McRuary). Although he was not the regular Minister he conducted a good service with a very suitable psalm, Psalm 15. Katie gave up her work to care for her mother, Jessie Ann, in Kyle.

(Katie has traced her family on both sides and her great grandmother on her mother's side was an Urquhart, Margaret, who was born in approximately 1815, who married Murdo Macrae, and who died in Port Henderson on January 5th 1895. Her parents were Duncan Urquhart and Isabella MacLennan. It is interesting to consider what links there might be with other Port Henderson crofts and to see that the family members came from Applecross, Contin, Point/Redpoint, South Gairloch and Gairloch).

Katie Nicolson



More memories of growing up in Port Henderson

There were gates where the cattle grids are at the shop and the road at the other end of Port Henderson and also a gate on the road leading to Seacrest. These were a terrible nuisance as invariably there were lots of sheep just waiting for you to open the gate. I remember opening the gate at the shop for Sammy the post and in being such a hurry to keep the sheep out that I caught the bumper of his car with the gate. It was always very bad at Seacrest because of where the gate was - it was so steep. If you were on your own by the time you opened the gate, drove through and then stopped to shut the gate again half of the sheep in Port Henderson were in and this was always causing rows.

There was the Black Gate leading to the passage which passed between crofts 11 and 12 and crofts 14 and 15. When the road was made in our end of Port Henderson where it is at present John Watson of croft 13 was not

pleased at all. He did not have a car himself but each year in the summer his sister Mary and her husband Willie Skeldon came on holiday and they would not use the new road but came in the Black Gate and along the passage and up the field to the house. They did this for years until the passage was no longer passable. Andrew Watson and his wife who was always referred to as *Bean Anudra*, Andrew's wife, lived in croft 13. They both lived well into their nineties as did their son John. (*The census form for 1871 showed Andrew as a 15-year old general worker. His wife, Alexina or Alexandrina, was two years older than him. John was 18 on the 1901 census and there were three younger sisters. Two younger brothers died before the 1891 census*). He always had a cow and you could hear him talking to his cow all the time. When grocery vans etc. came they stopped at the Black Gate and everyone had to go there for their messages.

The new road was of gravel and very rough even when I got my first car in 1963. When my mother died at croft 18 in 1967 she had a major heart attack and the doctor said that he could not send her to hospital as the road was so rough she would be dead before they reached the main road. It was after this we fought to get the road tarred.



Remains of the track and a retaining post from the Black Gate

It was the communions in Shieldaig (Applecross) on the second Sunday in June and Roddie 'Seacrest' used to take the *Constance* there. (*See earlier in the section on boats*). The people of Port Henderson used to meet the boat at the *Creag Mhaol*. If the *Constance* could not get in to the rock a small boat was used to get out to it. Each year in December the Free Presbyterian Church held a catechising in croft 12. The minister came and asked shorter catechism questions (ten were given each year to be learned). He also asked questions relating to the catechism questions. Everyone went to this, young and old. Before there were cars I remember us all setting off to walk to the meeting on a Sunday evening in Opinan. We went no matter what the weather was and I remember many times in the winter being battered by hail showers and gale force winds. We rarely went over to Gairloch except to church on Sundays on Lofty's bus. It was always full and sometimes I had to sit on someone's knee.

My father Duncan worked for the 'County' and spent a lot of his time digging out gravel in the gravel pit at *Ceann a' Mhìl* (Tallach's road end). His dog, Nellie, always accompanied him there and lay at the top. After my father died when my mother went to the peats which were on the opposite side of the road at *Cnoc nan Each* the dog would accompany her and lie at the top of the gravel pit until she came back.

Our peats were quite far away and a tractor could not get near the peat bank. We had to carry the bags to the main road and have the tractor collect them there. You would see piles of bags of peats (20 or 30 bags) lying by the roadside waiting to be collected.

Just below us on croft 15 lived Kenny Mackenzie (*Crubaidh*) with his mother Kate *Ruadh*. He was called *Crubaidh* because he had lost a leg in an accident in South America when he was just 19. He sent a telegram to his mother after his accident saying 'Home tomorrow. Leg off. Kenny.' He was an amazing person despite his disability, riding a bike, ghillie on Loch Maree and a fisherman in the *Mhaighean Bhan*. (*See earlier on the*



House on Croft 15 today



Crubaidh

section on boats). Crubaidh used to cut peats at the bottom of his croft. He was very fond of a dram and landed in many strange situations. He lived to be over 90 and all his life suffered a lot of pain in the stump. He ate Veganins as if they were sweeties.

Two brothers from croft 6 drowned within six months of each other in World War 2. (*See section on World War 2*). My father Duncan Maclean served in the Royal Navy and was at the Battle of Jutland in

the First World War. He never mentioned the war and it was long after his death that I discovered he was at that battle. (*See section on World War 1*).

The first house telephone was at Seacrest (*croft 22*). The doctor used to have a surgery there every Wednesday afternoon. Seacrest and Minch View were the first households to take in summer visitors.

My father had five brothers but only he had any family. Kenneth and Roderick died fairly young and John went out to Australia in 1909 where he married a widow with a grown-up family. Alex had no family and Willie married late. Alex and Willie were both shoemakers, Alex with a shop in Tain and Willie a shop in Aikenhead Road, Glasgow. Roderick was a tailor. My grand-aunt, *Iseabail 'am Og*, lived in the barn end of the old house (*on the census form for 1901 this was called a cottar's house with one window, lived in by Isabella MacLean, an unmarried domestic servant - also see the section on paupers*) and sister Catherine married a Murdoch Campbell (*Murchadh Ionhar*) and went to live at 20 Strath.

There was a well at the top corner of the croft and several small 'tobars' on the croft but our main drinking water came from the well (*am fueran mor*) which was at the passage at the bottom corner of croft 15. This well had a cover and had beautiful water and it never dried no matter how dry the weather. It was a long way to carry water and sometimes there was not very much left in the buckets by the time we got home. Some of the drains were very deep and many sheep and cows fell into them. I remember a cow from Seacrest going into the deep ditch at the bottom of croft 14. She was taken out of it with great difficulty and had to be carried home on a stretcher where she later died.



The well

At croft 10 Mary Ruadh (Mary Mackenzie) Betty's mother-in-law had a parrot which was unusual at that time.

In croft 14 lived *an Bhràlaidh ar Surachan*. I vaguely remember him sitting by the fire. With him lived his daughter Katie (*Ceitch*) who later went to live in Altgrishan when she married Finlay Macrae. Her sister Kirsty (*Ceorstch*) went to Glasgow where she married Donald Macdougall and they, with their family, came regularly for holidays. I used to play with Jessie Jean Macdougall who was slightly older than me. Her sister, Sheila, was a well-known Gaelic singer. Kirsty had a sister Annie (*Annch*), Mrs. Wheatley, in Australia and a brother Alick (*Alchy*). The father always added a 'ch' (Gaelic pronunciation) to their names. After that Kenny MacKenzie, Chrissie and their son, John Alick, lived there for a few years. Kenny was a son of *Ali nan Corach*, one of the

family of thirteen from Red House. Then Donald Long and his family lived there. Alick Mackenzie's (*Clappie ag Morto Ruaraidh*) widow belonged to Skye and she married another man from Port Henderson, Duncan Bullar from croft 19 and they lived in Sandbank near Dunoon. Duncan was on a yacht down there as were many others from the area including Alick Mackenzie (*Alchy*) of croft 14, brother of Katie (*Ceitch*).

All the children in Port Henderson would have gone to Opinan school until 1912 when Badachro school opened. Then the ones from our end went to Badachro. Dola, although in our end, went to Opinan school. (*See section on schools*).

I remember the old house on croft 18. It had three rooms. The bedroom had an alcove in which was a home-made wooden bed which fitted the space exactly. Before my sisters left home I would be sleeping in that alcove bed in the same room as my parents. The mattress was made of straw and very scratchy. The closet (most houses had one) was a tiny bedroom with just enough room for a small bed. It opened off the kitchen. The lobby had a fixed stair leading to the attic and one end of the attic was floored and before my time some people slept up there. There was a tiny window in the attic on the eastern gable which is now closed. Beneath the stair was a cupboard which held pails of water brought home from the well. The walls of the rooms were covered with layers of wallpaper over newspaper and the stone wall. I remember my mother used to do the papering using a paste of flour and water. In the kitchen cum living room there was a small range which had to be black-leaded with Zelve every day to keep it nice and shiny. The steel on it used to be cleaned with emery paper. The fire was used for all the cooking and baking and I remember my mother making oatcakes and standing them to finish off cooking against a peat in front of the fire.



Part of the old house on croft 18

My mother was very good at hanging wallpaper and sometimes did some for Ello's mother and she also helped her with the spring cleaning as Minch View was rented out. Sometimes we got friendly with the children of the people who rented Minch View and we often played a game called Lens with a ball. It was particularly good there because there was an area of concrete where the ball bounced well. We also liked playing 'houses' on our croft among the stones and rocks taking crockery and things from home. We sometimes lit a fire and threw potatoes into the embers to be baked and then we ate them.

I remember the first couch we got (it's still in the old house - a chaise longue type). My mother bought it for £30 from O'Hare who used to come round selling herring. To show how strong it was he threw it off the back of the lorry onto the road over at the shop and we carried it home. It was pretty heavy. Before that we sat on a big wooden bench with arms on. Our first armchairs were bought for my parents when my oldest sister went to work.

After my father died my mother had the kitchen lined with plasterboard, the alcove in the bedroom removed to form a bigger closet and the closet door shifted from the kitchen to the lobby. We ourselves after we were married had the bedroom lined with plasterboard and the chimney in the bedroom end closed off. I remember a fire being lit in the bedroom only very rarely as the chimney did not vent well and there was a lot of smoke. We also removed the stair from the lobby and put cupboards there and the cooker. The corrugated iron roof on the house was first put on in 1916 with my Uncle Willie's first wages. Part of that iron is still on it.

My mother used to do washing and ironing for the Masons who had a yacht in Badachro. Their chauffeur used to be in croft 5 for the month of August with his family and the rest of the time was on the yacht. He brought and collected the washing every day. I remember her damping the ironing with the old box iron which had to be heated by a stone which was put in the fire to heat and removed with the tongs and put in the iron. It was a long tedious process but the clothes were always beautifully ironed. There were no washing machines in those days and all the water had to be brought in and heated and thrown away afterwards. When my mother would be washing white sheets, towels etc. she used to spread them out on the grass or the bleaching green and leave them there for days, held down by stones at each corner. I can't understand now how they did not get covered with birds' droppings etc.

My mother came from North Tolstar in Lewis. Her mother had died when she was born and her father remarried and she came over to work as a servant in Applecross when she was just fourteen. She then worked as a laundrymaid in Loch Maree Hotel where she met my father who was gillying on Loch Maree for Kinlochewe Hotel. Lots of girls from Lewis came to work in the surrounding hotels such as Shildaig and as my mother came from Lewis she welcomed them to our house. Some of these kept in touch with her until she died.

My father had relatives round the Applecross coast, many of whom were fishermen and would be about here during the spring fishing etc. They would visit us whenever they could. Occasionally one would stay with us for the weekend even though the house was small. One thing I remember was getting a very big cod on a Saturday night from either *Crubaidh* or my brother-in-law Neil or from one of the men from Diabaig or round the coast. Our Sunday supper was very often a big portion of this fish fried. One of these fish would provide us with food for several days.

We always had one cow and I remember basins of milk left for the cream to form on top, then skimming



the cream off using a scallop shell with holes. The cream was put into a clay jar and then a wooden plunger was used to make the butter. You pushed it up and down until the butter formed. Sometimes it took ages and we used to be fed up taking turns at putting the plunger up and down. We also owned probably 30 - 40 sheep. Although our croft was quite rocky and stony parts of it were ploughed to plant potatoes and

corn. At first horses ploughed. Our fields were usually ploughed by *Sandag Mhor* from Opinan but other crofts had people from Erradale for the ploughing. There were no horses in Port Henderson. All the Port Henderson sheep were sheared along with the Opinan and Erradale sheep at the fank in South Erradale. It was a very big occasion and we as children loved that day. We used to get a ride up to Erradale on the tractor and we used to have lunch in some of the houses in Erradale where lots of food had been prepared for the shearers and followers. The day before the shearing all the



Shearing

men would have to go to the hills, even as far as Baoisbhein, to gather the sheep. It was a long day for them and

even from here we could see some of them in the distance with the droves of sheep. When the ground was planted any sheep or cows which were still on the crofts were tethered and shifted around the croft.

My mother always had hens and we had to keep chasing them out of the corn. She also kept turkeys for a year or two. I used to be frightened of them. At Xmas and New Year time my mother would be sending a chicken, black and white puddings, dumplings and one or two dozen eggs to my aunts and uncles away from home. I remember the special egg boxes and you had to carefully wrap each egg in newspaper in the hope they would reach their destination unbroken.

My father would kill a sheep before New Year and my mother was very good at making the black and white puddings. She used to be cleaning and scraping the sheep's innards at one of the 'tobars' or wells and a lot of water was needed. She would have a big zinc bath and keep filling it with water until all was clean. Our house was a very popular one at New Year time. My mother would have been preparing food for some time before. There was always plenty of meat (even after the neighbours had all received some of the killed sheep) and baking and there was always a welcome and great jollity and singing. We always looked forward to New Year. One particular New Year I remember *Crubaidh* (from croft 15) and *Roddie See* (from croft 12) were in our house. It was a terribly wet evening and *Crubaidh* decided he was going to put on my mother's wellingtons which were much too small for him but he was determined. They were pulling and pushing and rubbing soap on his heels but he eventually got them on (they couldn't have been very comfortable) and off the two of them went. They returned at daybreak when the next difficulty was to get the wellies off. Again they pulled and tugged but to no avail and *Crubaidh* had to go to bed with the wellingtons on. It was later on that day that John (Lofty) from croft 16 eventually managed to get them off him.

As we got older we used to go round the houses as well and it was a very happy time. We went to every house even if there was only an old man or woman living by themselves. My mother did a lot of visiting as she was a very sociable person and I sometimes went with her. We visited *Eilidh Bheag* (from croft 9) and Jeannie Bella (from croft 5) frequently and I remember walking there and back on a clear moonlit frosty evening. I liked going to croft 9 as Mortisan had an encyclopedia which I looked at while the adults did the blethering.

I, like most of the others who carried on in education, went off to Dingwall Academy at the age of eleven. I remember well how I felt when I started off. We did not get home at weekends only at the main holidays. I remember my mother seeing me off over at the shop at the end of each holiday. We used to be saying eleven weeks Friday we'll get home, counting down each week. Although times in the Hostel were hard we did have good times and laughter among ourselves. It did not do us any harm and made us appreciate home all the more.

Chrissie (from croft 20) used to go off to work as a cook in some of these country houses down south. When she came on holiday she visited my mother every day and they would sit knitting. My mother was really looking forward to Chrissie retiring and coming home to live permanently. Unfortunately my mother passed away three months after Chrissie retired.

My mother did a tremendous amount of knitting - sometimes knitting kilt stockings with patterned tops for



Johnny's mother from croft 19 knitting

Kirk Hand Weave (*a shop in Gairloch*). She also used to get bobbins (using for weaving tweed) from Lewis and spin them on the spinning wheel to get wool for knitting. The garments knitted with the wool were very hard and coarse but improved with washing.

Some of the old men were very set in their ways sticking rigidly to a timetable. Chrissie's brother Alick went to sit at the table every day at 12 o'clock on the dot whether the lunch was nearly ready or not. I remember visiting *Crubaidh* and his brother one afternoon. About five to four I said I would have to be going. *Crubaidh* said "If you wait till four o'clock you'll get a cup of tea."

My uncle Willie came home regularly every August for three weeks and we looked forward to that. He did this until he got married. Also *Crubaidh's* sisters and family used to come on holiday too - Katie Miller from Edinburgh, Jessie Bell from Sheffield and Lexie Waters from the Castle of May where she was a caretaker for the Queen Mother.

We always went over the hill to Badineal. There was a sort of path when you went up the hill behind our house. From the top you could see a special sharp stone, *A'chlach Spideach*, and if you made towards that stone and kept on past it in the same direction you would soon come in sight of Badineal. I used to bring messages from the shop to *Bellag Mhaoilidh* who lived there with her husband who was bedridden, as I remember. When I would go in to see him he would invariably say in his slow voice '*De tha dol am Portigil?*' (What's doing in Port Henderson?)

When I was a child I spent as much time at croft 19 as I did at home. Johnny must have been very patient as I followed him like a puppy. My two sisters were a lot older than me (eight and ten years) and they had two dolls called Maggie Turran and Childrags. My first doll was given on the first Christmas after my oldest sister started work. I was very proud of her but I also had a very threadbare teddy passed down to me. At Christmas I hung one of my mother's stockings by the mantelpiece and I can still remember the feeling of excitement at seeing it bulging in the morning with probably an orange in the toe. There might have been some little games in it, a box of hankies, some soap and maybe some sweets. We were easily pleased.

As there were no clothes' shops all our clothes came from catalogues or from other stores in the towns. Kenny Long's shop kept things like shoes (or you could order them from him through his supplier Bayne and Duckett), oilskins, wellingtons etc. I remember when I first went to Dingwall at the age of eleven Kenny took my mother and me to Inverness to the wholesalers to get a new coat for me which meant we got it at cost price. I remember it was camel-coloured. We used to send to Oxendales, J. D. Williams and Price Jones from their catalogues and they would send parcels C.O.D. and you paid the postie. People also sent to shops like Gordons of Alford, Isaac Benzies in Inverness for coats, hats (before the communions) on approval and they would send a selection (sometimes as many as six) and you chose what you wanted and sent the rest back. Imagine that happening today. A number of vans used to come round selling clothes. One such was Bruce Munloch who came for years and years (I can't remember was it monthly or less frequently). We looked forward to him coming as he had lots of nice clothes and shoes for sale. His name was Sinclair Bruce and his brother David used to take a van down Melvaig way. Also there were several Pakistani men who came round with vans. They were generally cheaper and did not have much clue about sizes but they were very popular. There were other ones

wearing turbans and we used to be frightened of them. Tinkers also came round in the summer time selling all sorts of nick-nacks. One dog we had seemed to sense these coming when they appeared over at the shop and she would begin barking so they often gave our house a wide berth,

The mail arrived about 6pm and we used to meet Sammy the post over at the shop. Sometimes we had ages to wait. When he arrived he would have a small bundle for the whole of Port Henderson which he stood and sorted in the shop. Nowadays one house may get as much as was in his whole bundle (no junk mail then). He also brought the newspapers. My father got the *Daily Express* which he read from end to end. Weekly we got *The People's Journal* which was a great favourite with everyone. The *Dandy* and *Beano* were the main comics but we also saw these occasionally. No Sunday papers came to the village but occasionally someone outwith the village gave us a copy of the *Sunday Post* and we liked 'Oor Willie' and 'The Broons'. As we grew up we were discouraged from reading fiction. Our schoolteacher at Badachro was very strict Presbyterian and there were no fiction books in the school at all and of course we did not have access to a library. As a result pupils coming from Badachro were clearly disadvantaged in the English class although they excelled in other subjects like maths and arithmetic. I did not know Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, R. L. Stevenson etc. existed till I went to Dingwall Academy aged eleven. I remember having two story books at home (I don't know who gave them to me) entitled *Who was Wendy?* and *Nancy's Fox Farm*. I don't know who wrote them and can't remember much about their content but I read them over and over again. I can still see them, one in a hardback red cover and the other hardback grey with a coloured design on the cover. We did not get music of any kind in school either but the occasional psalm tune and modulator up on the wall. We were some of the fortunate ones as we had a gramophone and some records so we did listen to some music.



Croft 18 today - the barn end is on the left

Our first radio was a monstrosity but we enjoyed listening to Radio Luxembourg and the Irish requests. We acquired an old wind-up gramophone and some 78 records (Gaelic and dance music) and we loved listening to these on winter evenings. The records were scratchy and tinny sounding compared to today's standards but we enjoyed them.

When I was in school the MacNairs lived at croft 20. Cathie MacNair was married to Donald (from croft 15) 'The Crusher' and they had two sons, Duncan and Neil. Duncan was killed in South Africa. Neil was exceptionally clever in school and ended up working for the American Embassy. Donald and Cathie later divorced. After them the Baxters lived there. Flora Baxter was a sister of Cathie MacNair and her husband Bill drove a lorry when the Power Station at Kerry Falls was being built. They had two children, Catherine and Ian. Later they move to Ardersier and Flora trained to be a teacher. Then *Ali Beag* came there. He lived all on his own in Badineal and his health began to be affected and he came and live with *Crubaidh* (of croft 15) and eventually he went to croft. 20.

Alice Mackenzie (nèe Maclean)

Memories of the village of Port Henderson

I came here in May 1961. Most of the crofters worked their land, growing oats and making hay. They also planted a field of potatoes and the land was especially good for growing these vegetables. Quite a number of crofts had one or two cows which provided milk for their households, and most crofts also had sheep. We didn't have cattle and most days I would find a bottle of milk at the road. Our main source of milk came to Badachro Post Office (*this closed in the 1990s*) two or three times a week and we collected it from Willie Dingwall who took the payment at the end of the week. He ran the Post Office and also kept a very good shop. The second shop in Badachro was Roderick MacLean's (*but this closed in the 1960s*).

In Port Henderson the present shop was very good and well-stocked. Fresh bread was delivered from Inverness every Friday. Most necessary things could be bought there and they always stocked a huge selection of sweets and cigarettes etc. We didn't have the need to go to Gairloch as we do today. A butcher came each Friday from Dingwall with a well-stocked van. One snag was that he delivered in the Torridon and Diabaig area the previous day, spent the night there and came straight to us the following day. This was all right in winter but it could be a bit difficult in the hot summer days!

There were two schools in the area, one in Badachro and the other in Opinan. As each teacher retired the schools closed and the children were taken by bus to Gairloch. There was little or no employment. A number of people worked on the county roads and others were fishermen. I can't think of anyone who didn't work and the postman and relief postman were from this village.

My husband owned a fishing boat which carried a crew of six. There were three boats from Port Henderson which were kept in Badachro Harbour. All three originated from the time when the men returned after the the second World War in the 1940s as getting men to work them was quite easy. However, by the 1960s it was a different matter and most of the crew could be from Stornoway or the East Coast. There was good accommodation on board and most weeks the boats would be away from Monday to Saturday. In February the cod fishing started in Gairloch and carried on until late March or early April. This was a very busy time for the fishermen, landing 80 to 100 boxes each day onto Gairloch pier. If the winter fishing was poor we looked forward to this 'Big Lift' in the spring. Most of the winter was spent in Kyle hake fishing and again the men would only come home at weekends.

In spring peats were cut and if the weather was good it was no problem getting these dry. They were raised up in small heaps on the banks and finally were taken home by tractor and stacked. They made a lovely fire. We were not altogether dependent on them as we bought two tons of coal for the winter. There was no delivery of bags as there is today. Also in spring the potatoes had to be planted which was usually done by tractor. Later, in the late 1960s, we got sheep, the tending of which fell to me. With Roddie at sea lambing time could be a worry but I had kind neighbours who were always willing to help.

Our doctor, Dr. MacLean, held a clinic in Port Henderson in Seacrest each Wednesday afternoon. This was before I came to Port Henderson but no doubt the people found this very useful as there were few cars in those days. I used to know each car which passed the top of the road. It is very different these days as there are so many

incomers and each family has a car or even two.

Today in Port Henderson we are still fortunate to have a lot of the 'natives' or descendants whereas in Opinan and Erradale some of the crofts are occupied by strangers. But if this didn't happen the houses could have remained empty.

In the 1960s and 1970s we were very busy with Bed and Breakfast and most nights we were full. My sister-in-law at Shildaig Farm also did B & B and always passed on her surplus guests. We also gave them evening tea (a cup at bedtime). The charge was £1 per night which shows how the cost of living has changed. As time went by people returned each year and often stayed for a week or even two. It was a busy time but very interesting.

In 1970 we sold the big boat and got a much smaller one which only required two men for the crew. They fished from Monday to Friday for prawns and didn't go beyond the sealoch. Saturday was a busy day as they took parties out sea angling, mostly these were people from Inverness, Muir of Ord etc. The fishing was good in Gairloch then and they went home with loads of fish which they gave away to the senior citizens round about them. In those days our cat ate more fish than we could afford to buy today. Now we can never get the lovely fresh fish straight from the sea. It is just not there.

I. Mackenzie

Memories of staying in Port Henderson in the 1940s

My late mother, Christina (Teenie) MacPherson Kirsop was born in 1896 at the family home at 2 Port Henderson. Her parents were Ishbel MacGregor MacPherson and John MacPherson (*Iain Dhu*). My grandfather was a crofter/fisherman and he had spent two years in the 1920s on the Canadian prairies with my uncle, John (*Iachan*) MacPherson. For a short time my grandfather was the helmsman on the fishing boat *Queen Mary*, now at the museum, and he also assisted in the construction of the 'light' at Melvaig. (*The Queen Mary was built at Alligin, Loch Torridon, in 1910. She was built for a Mr. MacKenzie of Isle Horrisdale, Badachro, and fished there for some 40 years*). There were six children in the family, Rodina, Kenneth (who was a steward on Sir Thomas Lipton's yacht on the Clyde and who worked occasionally with Roddy (Seacrest) on the yachts), Roderick, my mother Christina, John (who took occupancy of the family home at Port Henderson in 1947) and Hector. (*John MacPherson was first recorded on the 1871 census at six years of age, then on the 1881 census and lastly on the 1901 census when he had married, Isabella. Rodina, Kenneth, Christina and Roderick were also recorded on this census with the two younger children's names to be found on the Opinan school register. However, it was assumed that this family lived on Croft 11 in a fisher's house with seven windows. But Ian's later description of the house shows that this must have been Croft 2, a croft where other MacPhersons were shown to be living from early times*).

I was born in Renfrewshire but it was customary for my mother and my brothers and sisters to go to Port Henderson every year during the summer holidays where we were joined by my father for two weeks in August. We all loved Port Henderson so much and we have lovely memories of my grandmother and the lovely people who lived there at that time.

We normally stayed overnight at the Station Hotel, Inverness, and the following day we travelled to Achnasheen and then on Long's bus to Gairloch, where we were uplifted by 'Sammy the post' who took us to Port Henderson. When we saw the gate on the road at the fank leading to grandmother's we had arrived at our 'children's paradise'. During 1943 my grandmother became ill and my mother went home to nurse her taking my brother and me with her. Rather than lose time from my schooling mother enrolled me at the school at Opinan. Happy memories. The 'city boy' in a remote school - what an experience.

There was a well at the side of grandmother's house as there was no piped water at that time. (*Water was piped to the township in 1961*). A weekly grocery van came to Port Henderson which was a big event for the kids as we sometimes got a bar of Highland toffee. My grandmother had her own tiny closet and I recall she always had a small paraffin lamp during the night. I was very attached to her, going in to wish her goodnight in Gaelic as she did not speak English. (*Interestingly it is recorded that Isabella could speak both Gaelic and English on the 1901 census*). She always gave me a *caravie* (sweetie), peppermints which were known as bachelor's buttons.

Grandmother had one cow (which on one occasion ate my sister's dress which was drying on the fence) and a collie called Fanny which we all adored. Many a time I used to turn the churn for the butter, sit at the fire whilst the dumpling dried off, and watch her baking the oatcakes on a peat in front of the fire. The family worship was twice daily without fail and frequently when I went over to the byre in the morning I would see my grandmother on her knees praying.

Grandmother's house was situated above *Camas nam Bloigh* (see p.11 and this description confirms Croft 2)). My schoolfriends, MacPhersons, lived in the croft below (*Croft 4*). We went to school together. We all set off up the hill at the back of grandmother's house and crossed the moor, peat bog and sand dunes at the road side to the school. Coming home from school we would stop at the bogs and make footprints in the soggy peat, place rocks in the rivulets of peat water to create large pools, then letting the water run away and making peat pies. Most days it was wet and stormy and frequently our outer clothes had to be dried off at the fire in the classroom. It was wartime and there was grocery rationing. Each Monday I took with me a small bag of oatmeal and daily I took fresh pancakes or scones and crowdie - and nothing else. There were few biscuits and one of the older girls would prepare my brose comprising oatmeal, salt and a knob of home-made butter to which was added boiling water from a black kettle boiled on a primus stove in the scullery. There was no sugar but some Westburn golden syrup was spread over the brose and milk added. Tea was available to those who wanted it. The primus stove was started off with methylated spirits and the teacher always attended to that process. The brose was the staple diet for most of the boys (and some girls too) and that was usually followed by bread, butter and Fowler's treacle although the teacher had some home-made jam of her own available to us. Our food was taken whilst standing in the small cloakroom adjacent to the scullery. At playtimes we sometimes had pancakes and crowdie or scones and cheese and frequently a drink of the peat water from the nearby burns.

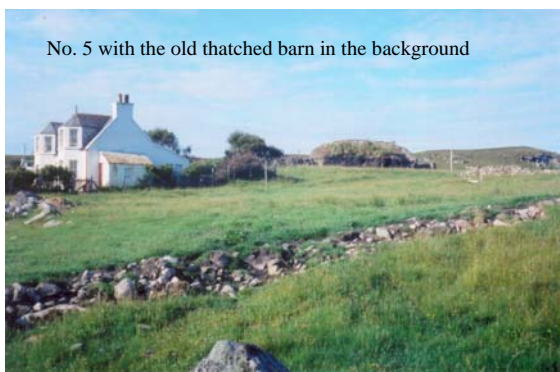
In the classroom there was the teacher's desk and high stool, a commonwealth map, a globe, blackboard and chalks and one side of the blackboard was lined for writing. There was an alarm clock on the window ledge. Children were taken out to the front to demonstrate long-hand writing. I think I was the only pupil in the infants' class. I had my own slate and chalk, one infants' reading book and an abacus. I also had a small jotter in which

preliminary arithmetic was written.

Although school life was somewhat austere there was a happy, and to some extent a reverend feeling about being there. I closely associated the school with the church, perhaps as a result of my strict Free Presbyterian upbringing. Although the teacher read a psalm each morning and we said the Lord's Prayer I cannot recall that there was religious instruction as such. Although the other children were native Gaelic speakers they spoke English when I was present. I had a smattering of Gaelic mainly through sitting with my grandmother while she made her own wool into balls.

School life for a six year old 'city' boy at Opinan was both a rewarding and a bizarre experience. A complete readjustment was required for me transported into that environment that existed at Opinan school.

Ian MacPherson Kirsop (account in the Gairloch Heritage Museum).



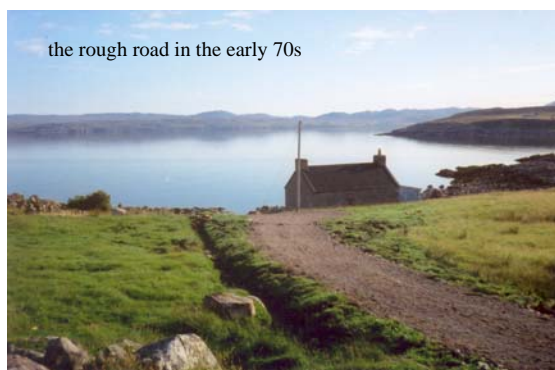
No. 5 with the old thatched barn in the background

Memories of holidaying in Port Henderson from 1947 to 1965

With my mother, brother and two school friends we spent two weeks in August 1947 at the McRae's house, croft 5. This house belonged to Murdo and Jeannie Bella McRae who lived there with their son, Ian. Murdo died in 1966. (*On the 1901 census the fisher's house was lived in by the McRaes and Murdo was five years old*). Jeannie McRae took in visitors and gave 'board and attendance'. There was no electricity or running water in the house and the Elsan chemical toilet was housed in a lean-to at the end of the house. (*Electricity was connected to the area in the early 1950s*). Water was carried from the nearby well. Milk was provided by the house cow and there was a shop and a petrol pump in Port Henderson at that time. Mrs. McRae provided all our meals and we had three bedrooms and a sitting room at one end of the house. (*According to the 1891 census the house had six windows but only five in 1901. However, this showed it was quite substantially built*).

From 1967 to 1977 we rented this house on croft 5 for summer holidays and for the first few years we were there for six weeks at a time. We had the whole house, as after Murdo died Jeannie went into the old peoples' home in Gairloch. Running water and electricity had been installed by this time. The old barn was demolished in 1975.

The salmon bothy was occupied by Willie MacMillan, who was a cottar with only a small parcel of land. He shepherded the local crofters' sheep. He had a cold water tap outside the door. He was in residence in 1947 but transferred to the old peoples' home in 1970. His house was originally accessed by a track passing in



the rough road in the early 70s

front of croft 5 but then this was made into rather a rough road. (*From at least 1871 to 1901 the MacMillans lived on croft 21 where there were several houses as this area was part of the former fishing village. On the 1901 census William was ten years old and lived with his family in a fisher's house with two windows*). Willie MacMillan moved from his house at the foot of the passage on croft 21 when the roof started leaking and so he rented the salmon bothy. He paid rent of £1 per annum for this which was marked in the rent book for croft 21, starting in 1951.



croft house no. 4 1960

Duncan MacPherson, known as 'Big Duncan' lived on croft 4 which he and his brothers had built, helping a mason with the preparation of the stones. He said it had cost £14 to build around 1900 (*but this isn't confirmed as accurate*). We rented the house from 1960 to 1965 and we were charged £7. 10s per week. He had three daughters, Iba, Mary and Jemima, all of whom had left home by 1960. Iba moved to Reiff and two of her daughters stayed with their grandfather in the summer when they were about six and four years old. Duncan MacPherson moved into a wooden shed beside the house when he had visitors and the two children slept in a part of the garage. Before the war Mr. MacPherson had skippered large yachts. (*The MacPhersons lived on croft 4 from at least 1871 and by the time of the 1901 census the fisher's house had six windows and was, therefore, quite substantial*).

MacPhersons also lived on croft 2 and for all the 17 years when we visited Port Henderson *Eachan* (John), his wife Joan and their family were there. (*The Estate records from 1830 and the seven censuses all record MacPhersons as living on croft 2 and see p.95 for Ian MacPherson Kirsop's account*).

Hector and Dina Mackenzie lived on croft 6 with their son, Kenny, who was born in 1947. Until the 1970s they had a cow and we got milk from them, morning and evening, collected in a milk can. (*The census records show that MacKenzies lived on croft 6 from at least 1871 and by 1901 the fisher's house was another substantial one with six windows*).

Margie Russell

Memories taken from an article in the Gairloch & District Times of May 1981 (previously a tape) The Queen Mary and her sister boats, and all who sailed in them.

It is very gratifying to know that the fishing boat 'Queen Mary' is being preserved for posterity by the Gairloch Heritage Society. The present generation do not know how dependent the local people were on boats for transport as well as fishing for their livelihood.

As a young girl I remember going to church on the Sabbath from Badachro to Gairloch on the 'Queen Mary'. Depending on the tides she would leave from Badachro Pier and if the tides were not suitable people were rowed out in a small boat from Aird or Badachro to the 'Queen' anchored in the harbour. (*The jetties at Aird were used on Sundays to enable people from Port Henderson, Opinan and South Erradale to embark on the boat which would take them to church in Gairloch when the tide prevented the use of the main jetty beside Badachro Inn*). If it was a stormy day it was a precarious business climbing on board from a boat with about 20 or more people crammed into it, and many prayers were said aloud in Gaelic by the women as they climbed on to the

larger boat. People came from as far away as Red Point, Erradale, Opinan and Port Henderson, and there was always a goodly number when it was a fine day for the sail to Gairloch. Of course, there were many times when it was too stormy for the boat to venture over the Loch with so many people, but even so they would still walk from the villages and be prepared for the disappointment of walking back again if the 'Queen' did not sail! In June and October at the time of the 'Sacraments' the boat would be crammed!

There were three fishing boats that took turn about taking the people to Church. The 'Margaret' from Dry Island went occasionally. I cannot remember the name of the other boat but the crew came from Port Henderson. (*Maybe this was the Beautiful Maiden*). On arrival at Gairloch Pier there would be quite a climb up the iron ladder from the boat to the pier, and we would be pushed from behind and hauled up the last part of the climb by the men on the pier. We dared not look down!



The Queen Mary

During the week of the Sacraments the 'Queen' and sometimes another boat depending on the number of people, sailed to Gairloch every day, and on the Sabbath one spent the whole day in Gairloch from the first service at 11am until we finally returned from the last service in the late afternoon or evening. Much hospitality and kindness was shown to us by the people of Strath and district. They invited us into their homes where a delicious repast would be set before us, the traditional dinner of Scotch broth, roast lamb or boiled mutton, vegetables and potatoes, jelly, fruit and cream or trifle, crowdie, cheese and biscuits. Before we returned to the evening service we would be served a tea of scones, pancakes, with home-made butter and jam, and cake or a luscious fruit dumpling, better known as a cloutie dumpling. Of course no cooking was done on the Sabbath, so there was a marathon preparation done on the days before the 'Communion'. Truly Highland hospitality, which was greatly appreciated.

Sometimes it would be too stormy to go back to Badachro on the boat, and we would have to walk the eight miles home, of course much further if you lived in the other hamlets. In these days half a century ago if someone died on our side of the Loch, the corpse would be carried on the shoulders of eight stalwart men walking from the village where the person had died, and placed reverently on the small boat if the tide was out, and rowed to the pier at Badachro, and so over to Gairloch, thence carried to his or her last resting place, on the shoulders of friends or relations at the Old Gairloch Burial Ground beside the sea.

C.T.N. (Christina Northrop)

A Place to Work

Common Grazings

The *First Crofters Act of 1886* gave security of tenure to the crofters which meant that there would be no evictions as long as the rent was paid. The *1976 Crofters Reform Act* gave crofters the right to buy their crofts (at a price equivalent to fifteen times the annual rent).

From the current *Regulations for the Management and Use of South Erradale, Opinan and Port*

Henderson it can be seen that Port Henderson is now subsumed with two other crofting townships, Opinan and South Erradale, and the common grazings apply to 2029 hectares which are divided into 60 shares. The regulations take in the Acts of 1955, 61, 76 and 78.



A turf and stone wall in the common grazing area

The souming (allocation) for each share 'shall be three cows and fifteen sheep'. A single cow is said to be equivalent to eight sheep and one horse to eight sheep. Each souming is checked yearly on a set date and any foals, calves and lambs born during that year are not taken into account when making up the souming. The committee can allow another shareholder to graze his stock on the souming of someone who cannot maintain

his own full allocation.

The committee can hire, buy or sell bulls and tups if this is considered necessary and they are responsible for their 'proper management.' If shareholders keep tups with the approval of the committee they must remove them from the sheep by October 1st and not allow them to go among the ewes until the committee fixes a date. The committee has to fix dates for the gathering of sheep. Shareholders have to mark their sheep with a distinctive mark and a register of such marks will be kept by the committee. Unmarked stock found on the Common Grazings are treated as trespassers unless the committee members are satisfied about their ownership. There are also regulations about sheep dipping and animal health measures. It is the responsibility of the committee for any muirburn (there are separate regulations for this), the control of peat cutting and the use of seaweed. The committee also has duties with regards to the management and maintenance of improvements, fixed equipment and fences (and there are separate regulations for this).



Shearing

In February 2007 there were 20 crofts and shareholders in Port Henderson. Recorded are the original souming (all at 3 cows and 15 sheep) and the current souming held. (In 1981 there were 21 crofts with 87 hectares of common grazing land).

Crofts 3/4 - 5 - 8 - 9 - 11 - 13 - 17 - 18 - 19 - 20 -
third of 22 : 3 cows & 15 sheep

- Croft 6 & half of 7 : 3 cows & 8 sheep
- Croft half of 7 : 1 cow & 14 sheep
- Croft 10 : 3 cows & 10 sheep
- Croft 12 : 3 cows & 12 sheep
- Crofts 14 -15 : 3 cows & 11 sheep
- Croft 16 : 3 cows & 13 sheep



A scything demonstration

Croft 21 : 6 cows & 26 sheep (2 shares)

Croft two thirds of 22 : 3 cows & 14 sheep

It appears that horses were not kept in Port Henderson and if any were needed for ploughing then they would be brought from South Erradale or Opinan (see p.87). Many of the early tools continued to be used in the 20th century. Scythes were used for cutting the hay. A croman drilled holes for potato planting. Turf was dug with a flauchter spade in order to pare the turf from the surface of the land in order to get to the peat layer which was used for fuel. An adze (or *tàl*), an axe-shaped tool, was used for shaping wood.

Other work

As the years went by more residents found work away from fishing and crofting and even went away from the township. However, some worked as posties, shop owners and travelling shop drivers within the area.

One such is Roddie MacKenzie who lives on croft 18, the croft belongs to the MacLeans, his wife's family croft. For some years Roddie had a van from which he sold groceries. He carried a varied selection of goods and kept meticulous lists for each customer. A weekly delivery was given and each item was listed with its price alongside. The total was tallied and if the bill wasn't paid immediately the sum was carried forward. When settled Roddie would write 'Paid with thanks' and sign his name at the bottom of the list.



From 1974 here are examples of the goods he might be carrying.

Food (fresh and tinned)

bread including pan loaf/rolls : homewheat/Bandit/digestive/Rich Tea biscuits
butter (half a pound cost 14p) : lemon curd/strawberry jam : Cookeen (1lb cost 25p) :

packet of suet : cheese

sugar : tea (Sun Ray) (a quarter pound cost 9 or 10p)

tins of beans/spam/mince/hamburger/macaroni/pilchards/spaghetti : tomato sauce :

tins of chicken soup/tomato soup/oxtail soup : packets of minestrone soup/vegetable soup, broth mixture

instant potato

sausages (large pork)/bacon (half a pound cost about 33p)/steak and kidney

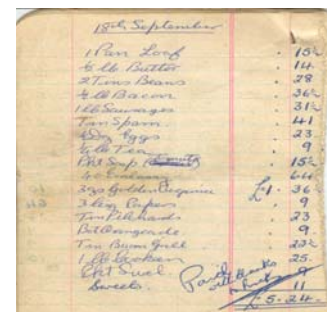
eggs (half a dozen cost 23p)

bottle of orangeade

sweets

Cigarettes and tobacco

Embassy cigarettes (40 cost 64p)/Players tipped/Golden Virginia tobacco (2oz cost 91p)/Leig papers (for



15th September	
1 Pan Loaf	15
4 lb Biscuits	14
2 Tins Beans	28
4 lb Bacon	36
1 lb Sausages	31
2 tin Spams	41
4 doz Eggs	23
5 lb Tea	9
1 lb Soap	15
2 doz Butter	44
3 doz Golden Biscuits	36
3 doz Papers	9
1 tin Pilchard	23
1 tin Orangeade	9
1 tin Biscuits	25
1 tin Tea	9
1 tin Biscuits	11
Paid with thanks	
R. S. MacKenzie	

A page from Roddie's cash book

cigarettes)

Household

Radiant washing powder/face soap/toilet soap/razor blades/elastoplast

black shoe polish

Beechams Powders

8) Port Henderson today

There seems to be little to be seen of the ‘old’ Port Henderson but on closer inspection much has remained unchanged. Most of the fields are no longer cultivated so the ground is full of reed grass and heather. There are a few ruined houses and barns, some of which are be seen along the shore area and are the remains of the first fishing village. Others are within the later croft areas and many of the original croft houses have been rebuilt and enlarged and are therefore still used as today’s houses.



An Sgùman today showing the former salmon bothy, now modernised, the remains of some of the former fishermen's houses and the shingle & stoned beach, with no slipway

There are ruins, sometimes only footings or odd stones, on crofts 1, 2, 3, 4 (a former barn), 6/7, 8, 10 and 15. There are former passages between some of the croft boundaries whilst others have become roads and some wells can also be seen. The former fishing sheds have been re-roofed. Traces of the pavements in front of the houses are still in evidence.

A substantial corn drying kiln can still be explored on the peninsular plus a smaller, and maybe older, one. Two other traces of kilns can be seen on the shore next to croft 13 and above croft 20.



A former passageway



Remains of the older kiln



The flue and kiln (new kiln)

Some present residents can remember the ruins on croft 21 and *An Sgùman* being more substantial than they are now. According to Kenneth MacPherson brought up from childhood on croft 2 the ruins had walls that reached up to the lintels. The barn on croft 19, although in a state of disrepair, still retained its former thatched roof in 2004 (see p.45).

There are 34 houses which are either permanently lived in or let as holiday houses. The village has been ‘enlarged’ by certain areas of apportionment, ten of them, and some of these have been built upon. The 22 crofts were labelled by giving them Gaelic names in the 1800s, using the father’s name,

which changed from the 1930s onwards with the son's names. For example, croft 10's tenant was Murdo MacKenzie in 1901 and his croft was labelled '*Lota Dhomhnaill Bhàin*' whilst in the early 1900s his son, Duncan, took over and the name changed to '*Lota Dhonnchadh Ruaidh*'. And croft 18's tenant was Alexander MacLean, '*Lota Chousin (Alasdair an Oig)*' which became '*Lota Dindan*



Original house on croft 6 now reworked as a barn



An Sgùman today - showing a new house on the headland



Ruins on croft 8

(*Donnchadh a' Chousin*), Duncan.

Today there is no croft 1 and 3 is still joined with 4 and is under owner-occupancy. Crofts 2 and 21 are tenanted by the same person. Croft 7 is in two halves, one is tenanted and the other owner-occupied and croft 22 is split into two thirds owner-occupied and one third is tenanted. Three full crofts are owner-occupied and the rest are tenanted.

New buildings will continue to be erected as long as planning permission is granted and some crofts will be cultivated or stocked with animals. However, there are few sheep and cattle left to wander the common grazing land and peat is only occasionally cut for use as fuel.

Like many Gairloch townships Port Henderson is continually changing but as long as there are records its past will be written, drawn and photographed for posterity.

Appendix

General information about the making of the crofting townships

Sir Francis Mackenzie was an innovative laird and he had many ideas for his new crofting townships. He envisaged houses being built with a porch, a kitchen and a bedroom, with the dwelling house and its byre and/or barn being separate. He also felt that a quarter acre garden could be used to grow fruit trees and that oats, clover and turnips could take the place of barley (which was previously used for distilling processes). He also recommended that the land should be drained and trenched with spades rather than the ineffective hand plough, the caschrom, that ploughs should be spoke-wheeled rather than solid-wheeled carts and that liquid manure should be used. Sir Francis also felt that the cottars should think carefully before marrying early because of overpopulation concerns.

The creation of the crofts in Gairloch were carried out in 1845, later than elsewhere in most of the Highlands & Islands. After the death of Sir Francis, his younger brother, Dr. John Mackenzie, managed the Gairloch estate from 1841. Sir Kenneth Smith Mackenzie, sixth baronet and son of Sir Francis, succeeded to the estate in 1853 although as he was still young he was allocated trustees and tutors, and so his uncle, John, became

his Factor, or estate manager.

In 1856 John Mackenzie M. D. had published a '*Letter to the Gairloch Crofters*', printed at the Courier Office in Inverness and written in both English and Gairloch. This began by explaining that although Sir Kenneth had become old enough to take over the running of the estate he (John) wished to pen a '*few parting words to those in whose progress and welfare, I have, for fifteen years past, been so deeply interested.*'

This document compares and contrasts the Gairloch of 1841 when John took over the estate management and the Gairloch of 1856 when he handed it over to his nephew. Of course, the subject matter is the entire estate but it is relevant as Port Henderson was part of this.

Gairloch of 1841

There were no roads or bridges until 1850.

There was one parochial school and the occasional '*shifting*' Gaelic one.

There was little in the way of church preaching.

The mail came by runner (no mail carts) at a pace of about a mile and a half an hour.

There were no steamers.

Only the '*wretched Celtic crooked spade*' was used.

There was no drainage so the land was wet.

Many cattle died in spring from starvation.

Gairloch of 1856

There were excellent roads and bridges.

Almost all children were within reach of one of twelve schools

There were well attended Sabbath schools and the gospel was preached faithfully.

The mail was delivered by mail cart and there were three new post offices with a money order office.

There were both steamers and carriers (from the east coast).

The corn mills were busy most of the year.

Picks and spades were well-handled.

Houses were improved on their own plot of land (unlike those in 1847 in each township huddled together, often a distance from the arable land which was in common or runrig arrangement).

Land was drained and cattle no longer died from starvation in the spring.

After John had compared the conditions in these two years he attempted to get the crofters to understand that their lives were so much better than others, that the Estate had spent a great deal of money on improvements and that their (the crofters) dislike of change '*which has so sadly hindered, and still hinders, your progress*' must give way. The rent of an average croft provided a comfortable home, '*a preached gospel*', education, peat for fuel, being able to keep cows and sheep, fish from the sea and food for most of the year '*even with your STILL BAD cultivation.*' Obviously this was a reference to the continuing use of the cas chrom which he had hoped would not be used.

In a paternal manner he told the crofters that they were '*mere children in farming*' and they knew nothing

about profit. He realised that he was often thought to be strict and that the crofters thought they knew better than he did about the best practices for farming in the area. He stated that their children would think differently.

'Be kind to THE SOIL, and THE SOIL, in return, will be grateful to you. Unless your cattle have plenty turnips and sown grasses, you will have worthless manure, poor crops, and valueless stock. ..Feed your cattle well, and, with God's blessing, your cattle will assuredly feed you.'

Poem : Tarring the Boat by Iain Dubh

Each year we tar the boat;
hot on our backs the sun
raises that familiar tangy, sweet,
almost antiseptic smell,
winterlost, but now remembered well;
another mackerel summer has begun.

Careful, we brush black tar,
filling each chink we know,
caulking treacherous gaps which winter found
and drove intrusive sand
past rib and strake spokeshaved by loving hand
carried gravewards eighty years ago.

*Bench-seated, two by two,
bum to bum, six men
each pulling one salt-whited narrow oar;
between two stone groines, they
creel-laden, stir the elephant-wrinkle-grey,*

*Bench-seated, two by two,
bum to bum, six men
each pulling one salt-whited narrow oar;
between two stone groines, they
creel-laden, stir the elephant-wrinkle-grey,
autumn sea. Or middle season, when
bright from the sand, the sun
reflects, turns water blue;
surface a flaming mirror. On their backs,
through flannel shirts, the heat,
line featherhooked for mackerel at their feet;
a usual summer evening's work to do.*

Those who built this boat
a century ago,
would marvel at the Seagull we shall use;
but superstitious wish
for ritual, more important than the fish,
moors us fast to customs that we know.

How many years until
others tread this shore,
replace the warping bottom-boards and then
push out, just as we
push out to where the sun gilds up the sea,
succeeding those who steered her out before ?

Painting the gunwale blue;
dissembling, year on year,
pretending we're no older than we were,
and that, though seeping in,
sharp, grainy years can't pierce our leaching skin:
we caulk ourselves against that tide we fear.

A local verse

Mach a Port a' Sgumain	Setting out from Port Henderson
Na gillean gasda sunndach	Are the fine lively laddies,
An fhairrge tigh'nn dluth orr',	The ocean swell pressing them:
'S an run ri ghith treigsinn!	Their whole desire is to be leaving!

The naming of Port Henderson

Another theory about the origin of Port Henderson's name has come to light. Sir Hector Mackenzie's second wife's maiden name was Henderson. Could it be that he named the fishing village for her? In all probability this is the best theory.

The past in the present



