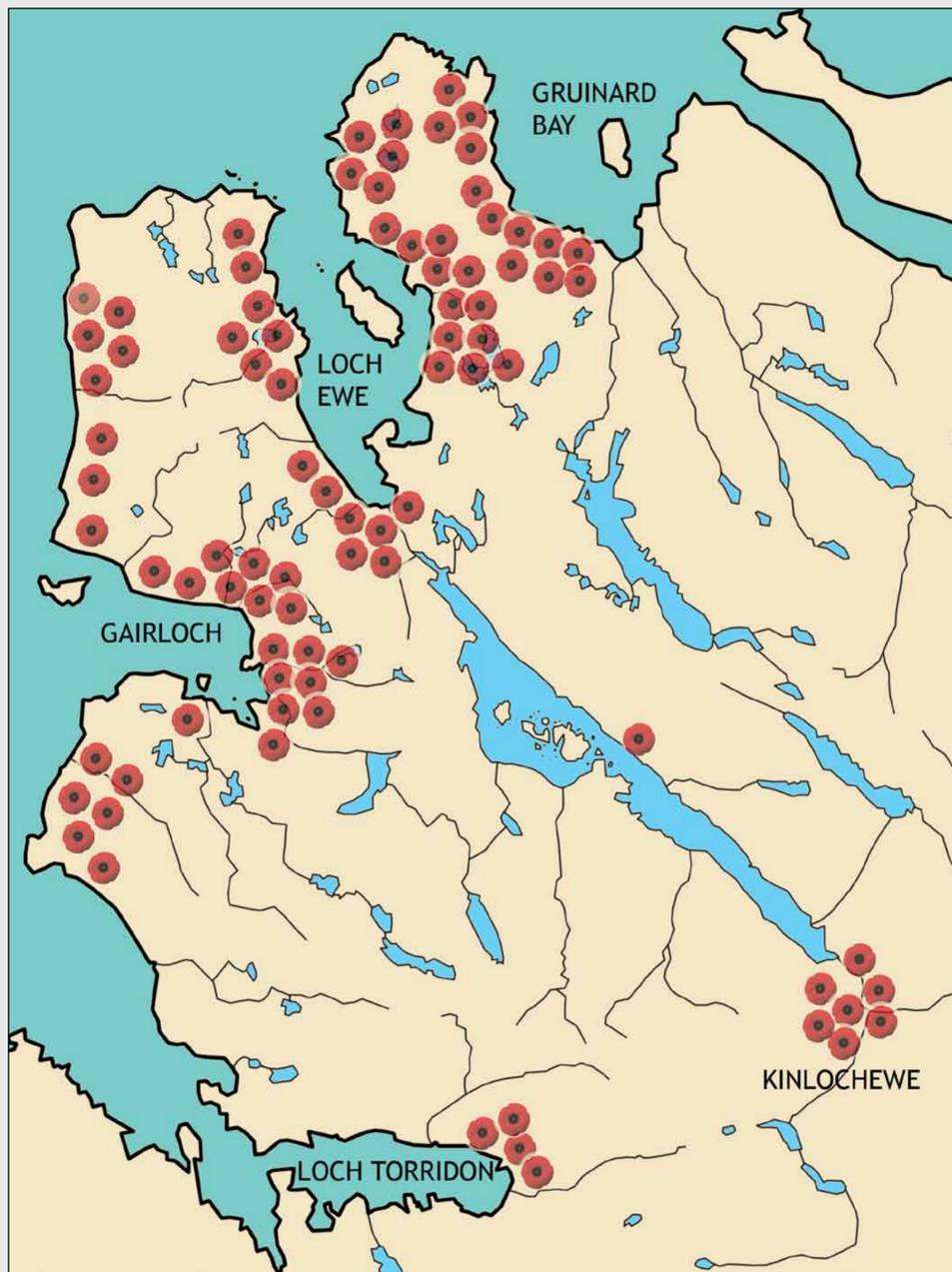


A LAND FIT FOR HEROES?



Many did not come home from serving in the First World War: all the 86 represented by poppies on this map.

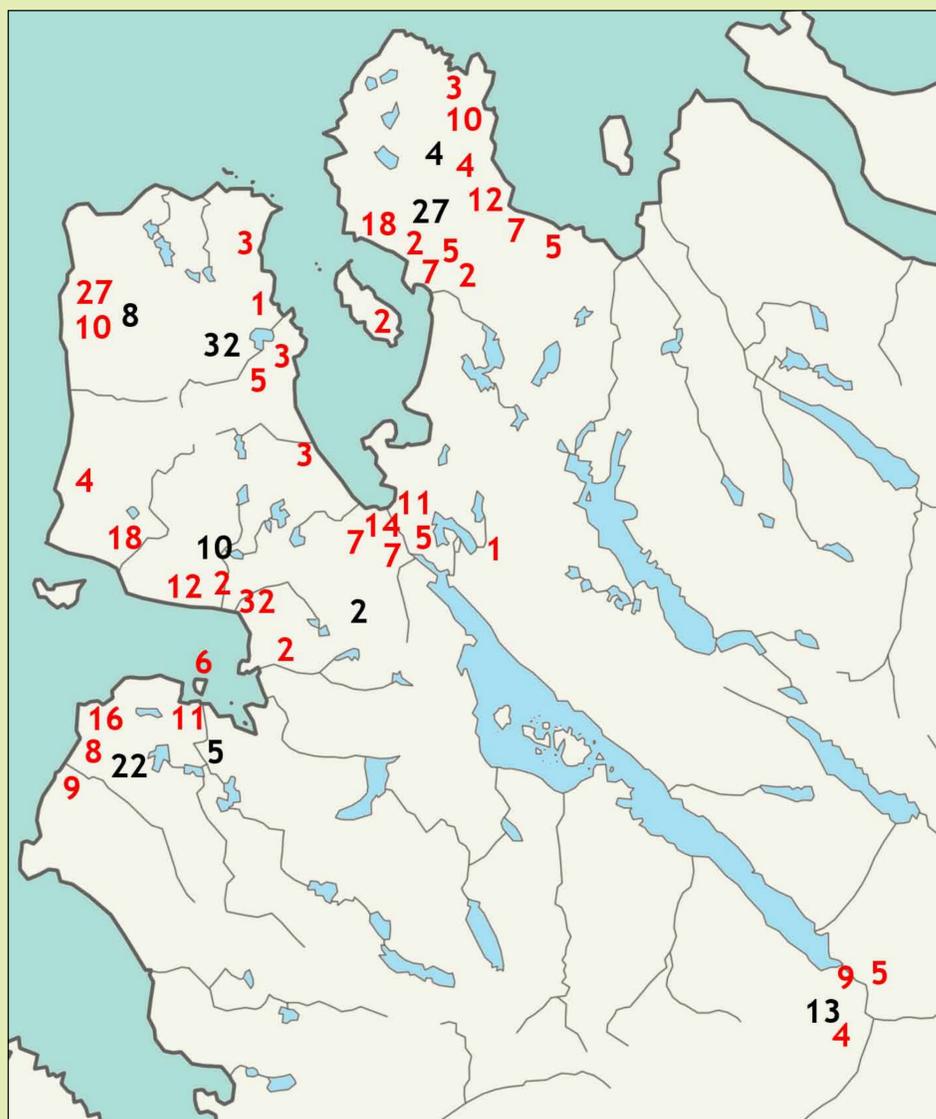
IN FLANDERS FIELDS

In Flanders' fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders' fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high,
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders' Fields.

*Lt Col John Macrae,
a Canadian doctor, 1915*



This map shows the number of men or women who went to war and returned, 435 in total. The number from each village or township is in red; the black numbers are from the district, but their village is unknown.

We must also remember with compassion the many who survived the war, as well as those who did not: they suffered too.

Married or single they had to cope on their return with a life which was very different from the intensity and hardship of the war years. Would they be able to be crofters? Might they fish for a living? What other jobs were there?

Would there be enough to keep them in this Gairloch parish or would they move? And if they did, would this be to industrial cities and towns or to lands far away?

Those who returned to Wester Ross – did they come home to “A Land Fit for Heroes”, as Prime Minister David Lloyd George promised? What was their future in this district?

I WAS YOUNG

I was young when I went to war...
Young and bold and strong
But what I saw, it made me old
My time seemed very long
'Twas the War that made me old
Felt woe beyond my years
It was the War that tore my heart
With death of all my peers
'Til, like an old man, I was left
To cope alone, no friends
To grow, to fight, to carry on
While their youth never ends.

S J Robison

This exhibition focuses on one man who did return, and who was indeed a “Hero”: ALEXANDER MACKENZIE of Poolewe.

What kinds of employment were available to him? Should he stay in Poolewe, or leave to find a better life elsewhere in Scotland or abroad? Did he return to “a land fit for heroes”?

ALEXANDER MACKENZIE

Alexander enlisted on 7th November 1914 when he was 22 years old.

He was a lance corporal (1064) in the 4th (Ross Highland) Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders, a unit of the Territorial Force.

When war broke out in August 1914 the men were recalled from their annual camp and mobilised for war.

Alexander's brother, John, also enlisted at the same time. He was a private (1246). He was discharged on 31st March 1916; we do not know why, but probably he was wounded.

By the end of the war Alexander had been promoted to a Company Sergeant Major (200022). In addition to the Victory Medal, the British Medal and the 1914 Star he was awarded the D.C.M. (the Distinguished Conduct Medal) on 30th October 1918.

This award for gallantry was awarded to 'other ranks' in the British Army and was equivalent to the D.S.O. (Distinguished Service Order) given to commissioned officers.



This photograph shows D Company, Poolewe, at the start of the war. It features both brothers: Alexander is seated on the left; which is John is not known as there were three John Mackenzies in the company.

Of those pictured here, five would be killed and six wounded.

**A
Local
Hero!**



"During an attack, when all the platoon officers had become casualties, this Warrant Officer re-organised elements of the company and overpowered detached posts of the enemy. His conspicuous and tireless energy enabled the company to gain ascendancy over the enemy at a critical time, and he set throughout a splendid example to all."

What do we know about Alexander before the war?

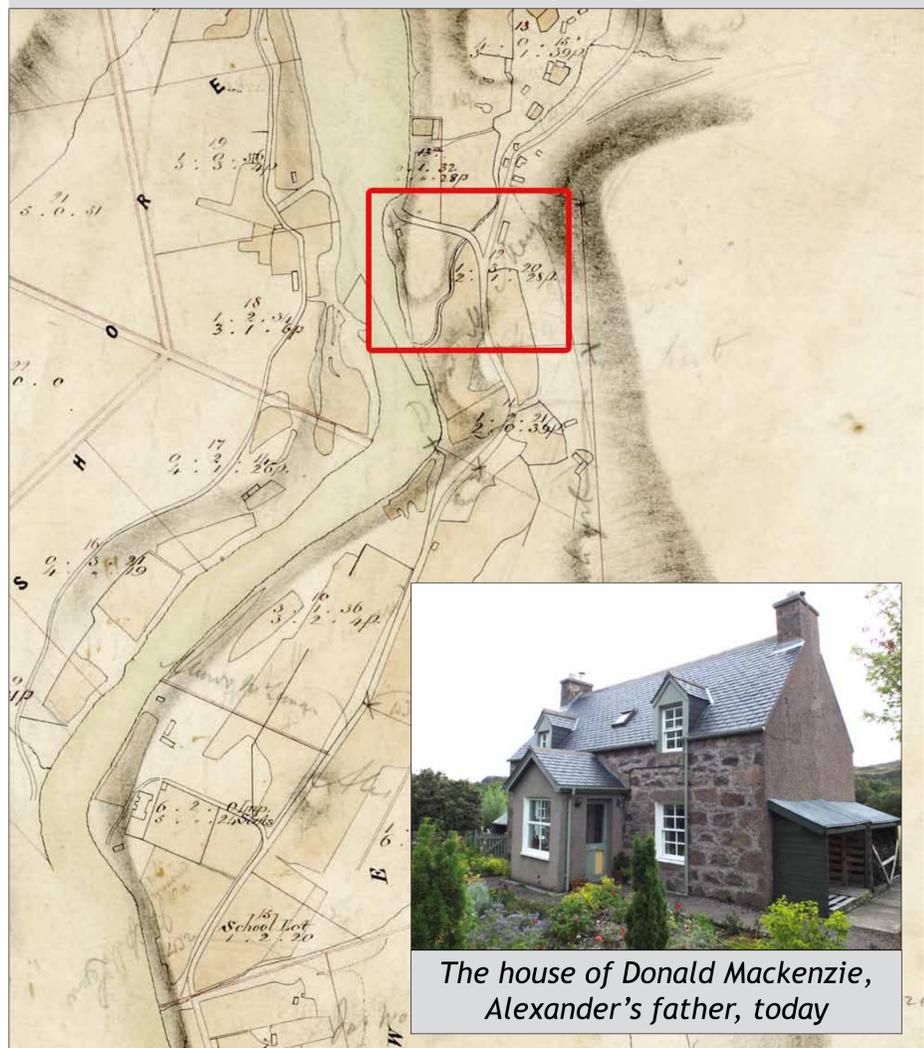
Before the war Alexander was an assistant Inspector of the Poor. He was living at 12 Tollie Croft, Poolewe with his father Donald, his mother Jane, his brothers John and Murdo, and his sisters Margaret and Murdina.

His father Donald worked as a farm grieve (foreman) for the Inverewe Estate which at that time was owned and managed by Robert Hanbury, the husband of Mairi, Osgood Mackenzie's daughter.

Donald had originally lived in the Lochbroom area where his first child, Henrietta, was born. In the 1891 census he is found in Poolewe working as a farm servant, and by 1901 he seems to have moved into the second of two houses on Croft 12.

(Croft 12 was probably a family croft. Another Donald Mackenzie had been allocated the tenancy when the crofting townships were made in 1845. In the 1841 census this Donald has two sons, Donald and Murdo. The elder son, Donald, later took over croft 12, but he never married. The younger son, Murdo, cannot be traced; after 1851 he seems to have left the area. Is it possible that he was the father of Alexander's father, Donald?)

This section of the Poolewe crofting map shows Croft 12 on both sides of the road with one boundary being the River Ewe.



The house of Donald Mackenzie, Alexander's father, today



The River Ewe with crofts

**What will Alexander do when he returns from the war?
What sort of welcome will he receive?
Will he resume his job as an Inspector of the Poor?
Will he become a crofter?**

FISHING

Could Alexander become a fisherman after the War?

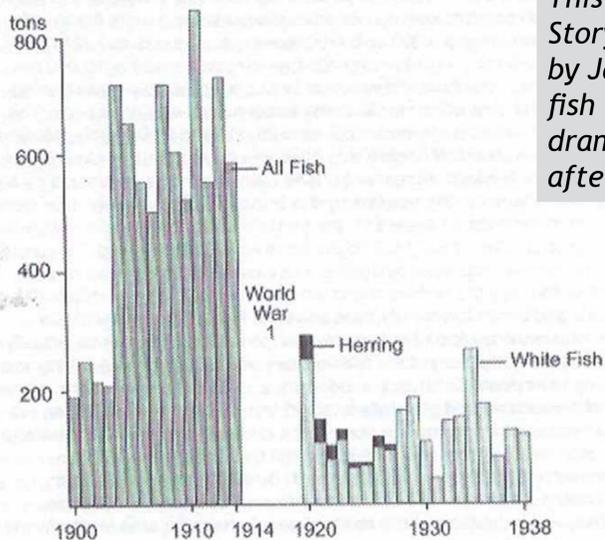
Before the war, fishing was a major industry in Scotland with over 32,500 men employed.

But by 1917 there were fewer than 22,000. What might have been the impact on the parish of Gairloch?

We know, from the 1911 census returns, that there were then 255 fishermen (some men combining this with crofting). So would this number have decreased to less than 200 after the war? And would this have caused major income problems for large families?

White fish such as cod were even rationed in 1917, and during the war years the North Sea was almost totally closed to fishing. On the west coast fishing was only allowed in inshore areas.

Fish Landings in Gairloch 1900 - 1938



This chart, taken from 'The Story of Fishing in Gairloch' by James Coull, shows how fish landings decreased dramatically in the years after the war.

Herring fishing was at its peak before the war. The fish were landed and cured in places on Loch Ewe and in the Badachro area. But after the war there were far fewer men employed in the fishing industry and by 1921 there were only 119 fishermen and 61 boats.

Cod were also caught, but as the years went by larger boats were used. Because of the railways (Achnasheen was the area's nearest station) fish could be sent fresh to consumers, so the market for cured fish declined. The prices offered were poor and men found other employment.



Today the only local sea fishing is the use of creels to catch shell-fish such as langoustine; this boat operates from Badachro



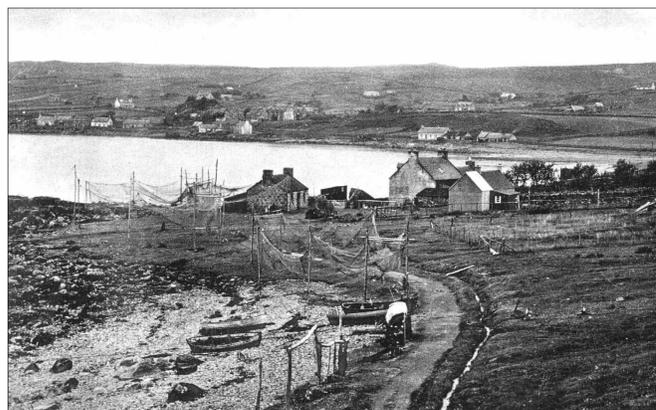
A crowd of cod boats in Gairloch Harbour, probably before the war



A fish curer on Isle Horrisdale



Dry Island



Nets drying at Achtercairn salmon fishing station

Gairloch Fishing

The Badachro area was once very important for fishing as it had a sheltered bay. Men from the east coast were brought over to teach the local men how to fish. There were salt stores and places where coopers made the barrels. There were three fishing stations.

(1) One was at Aird, opposite Badachro. The building can still be seen, although now it is a private house.

(2) A second was on Isle Horrisdale where fish curing took place.

(3) The third was built around 1840 and is on what we know as Dry Island. This closed after the others but by the end of the First World War it was no longer used.

In Gairloch, Charleston House was also a fishing station; it is now owned privately. It was built by a fish merchant in 1776, Charles Cumming from Aberdeen, and is similar to Aird House.

But by the time the servicemen returned home these fishing stations had closed.

There were also coastal salmon fishing stations in many places, for example Red Point, Achtercairn and Poolewe. Some of these continued after the war and could have provided employment.

Poolewe Fishing

In the 1800s Poolewe was important for salmon fishing, but by the time our servicemen returned this was no longer a major industry.

There would have been private salmon fishing on the River Ewe and men would have been employed as ghillies.

The only fishing that would have taken place was probably by local people augmenting their family's food.

So fishing suffered a serious decline after the First World War, and it is unlikely that Alexander could find a job on the boats.

CROFTING and FARMING

Alexander was probably brought up on a croft, and might consider the crofting life...

Crofts

When the crofting townships were made in 1845 families were allocated parcels of land (from 2 to 5 acres) upon which they built their house, a barn and maybe a byre.

They marked out their boundaries by establishing drystone walls and drained their land by digging out field drains.

Their water came from wells protected by a capstone and their waste went into middens.

They had an allocation of sheep and cattle which grazed on common grazing areas outwith the head-dyke (the main township wall) and they could keep hens.

On their arable land which they had cleared of stones they grew potatoes and other root crops and the barley grown would go to the local mill for flour.

It was a simple but hard life. There were few roads although the crofts were divided by passageways; transport was by foot or small boat.



A passageway between the crofts



A croft house with an upstairs



An early thatched croft house



A well with its capstone



A hay field in Strath, Gairloch

Farms

What about the larger, more commercial farms? Did these need agricultural labourers? And if so were the ex-servicemen qualified to take on these jobs? It is known that the first shepherds came from outside the area.

There were farms at:

- Kinlochewe (several), Slattadale
- Red Point, Badachro, Shieldaig
- Kerrisdale, Flowerdale, Achtercairn
- Sand
- Tollie, Poolewe, Inveran, Tournaig
- Kernsary, Letterewe
- Drumachork, Aultbea (Aird), Isle Ewe
- Udrigle, Laide (Sand), Coast

Most of these were sheep farms although some cows were kept, especially where there were hotels which needed milk, such as Aultbea and Kinlochewe.

Few horses were kept and it is said that farmers and crofters lent their horses to others.



Although conditions were improved by the Crofting Act of 1886, the way of life had changed very little by the end of the First World War.

Crofts could support a family: father, mother, several children and maybe a grandparent.

Sometimes a second house was built on the land to accommodate the eldest son and his wife and family. Alexander's father, as the eldest son, returned to the family croft and another house was built for him.

But what about the other sons? Sometimes they would find other work but often, and especially when they married, they moved away.

If the returning servicemen already had a croft then they could carry on small-scale farming as they had done before 1914. But if there was no room for them then they had to find other work and move.



Ploughing with horses



A sheep fank near Kinlochewe, and black-faced sheep



Post-war horse shortage

In April 1919 Farquhar MacRae, a shoemaker and crofter from 1 Melvaig, asked Dugald Campbell at Rhu Ré lighthouse if he could borrow his pony for three days to make up a pair for ploughing his croft. This was because of the scarcity of horses in the area so that springwork was delayed. The request was turned down because the neighbouring crofters might also ask and this would be beyond the pony's capacity.

The 1911 census tells us what job opportunities there were in the local farms. Apart from the farmers there were ploughmen, shepherds or sheep managers, cowherds and cattlemen, plus farm servants (labourers or workers).

Alexander's father, Donald, was a farm grieve, an overseer with a position of responsibility. Perhaps he could help Alexander to find a job.

Alexander is an eldest son and so will have a better chance than his brothers of taking on the family croft at Tollie. Many of his returning fellow-soldiers would find it difficult to get into farming and would have to look elsewhere.

VILLAGE TRADES

Specialist trades need specialist knowledge. Could Alexander master any of these?

The Village Blacksmith

Before the days of motorised vehicles, horse and carts were widely used. Therefore it was important that each area had a blacksmith to shoe horses, repair cart wheels and do general metalwork.

Blacksmiths learnt their trade as apprentices, often from their fathers. We can find information from the 1911 census and the 1919 Valuation Rolls, and today we can find houses which still retain the name 'smiddy'. There were smithies at:

LAIDE: Roderick Mackenzie and his son John

OPINAN: Louis Mackenzie

AULTBEA: although there is no record of a blacksmith

BADACHRO: ditto

POOLEWE: at Riverside, John MacLean was the blacksmith, and his sons Roderick and Kenneth were his apprentices. Kenneth was a private in the 4th Bn. Seaforth Highlanders and was discharged in May 1916. He was awarded the Victory & British medals and the 1914 star. Roderick later inherited the house and business. What happened to Kenneth?

GAIRLOCH HARBOUR area: David Mackenzie

GAIRLOCH STRATH: Hector MacIntosh was the blacksmith and ironmonger; he employed Donald Campbell who was a journeyman blacksmith from Aultbea.

KINLOCHEWE: Alexander MacIver; he employed Coll MacGregor from Lochcarron.

Cars were in their infancy but there was a motor hirer in Gairloch, Colin Gunn.



John and Kenneth, Poolewe, about 1910



Hector Macintosh, Strath



Kinlochewe smithy

Post, Telegraph and Banking

There were many Post Offices. Main ones dealt with telegraph and money orders whilst sub-post offices made no money transactions. Slaters Directory of 1921 gives the following : Gairloch, Strath, Badachro, Opinan, North Erradale, Kinlochewe, Aultbea, Loch Maree and Diabaig. There were others at Melvaig and Poolewe. The 1911 census shows many men being postmen (sometimes alongside their other occupations), including 11 rural postmen.

Telegraph systems might have come late to the area but by 1921 there was a cable hut at Lochewe (Poolewe) and telegraph wires throughout the parish which were under the jurisdiction of the Postmaster General.

There was one bank, in Gairloch. Bank House, next to today's bank, was built in 1867 to accommodate the bank and the bank manager and his family. How many 'ordinary' people might have used this?



Horse and bicycle post; the building is Badachro Post Office



Other trades, often home-based, included carpentry, stone masonry, shoe and boot making, weaving and tailoring.

Some of these trades were found throughout the parish. Slater's Directory of 1921 is a helpful reference book.

As an example there was a carpenter in Aultbea, Hugh Cameron, and there was a joiner, Alexander Mackenzie, in Strath.

Shoe and boot makers were found in Portnaheile, Strath and Kinlochewe.

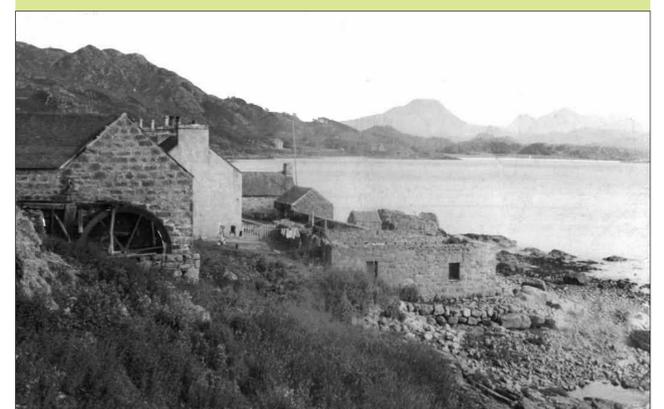
Kenneth Mackenzie was a weaver in Mellon Charles. There were several tailors registered: in Badachro, two in Strath (one being a clothier as well, in the present Pharmacy building) and Kinlochewe. And there were more, so that no-one had to travel far to get work done.

Like motorised transport, photography was also in its infancy and it is interesting to find that John Campbell had a photography 'studio' at Achadesdale. Did he sell cameras, take photographs or have these made into postcards?

Bakers and Millers

One staple food was bread which most people baked at home. But after the war years there was a bakery in Charleston and this can still be seen. From the Gairloch Harbour area look across at Charleston House, a rather grand building. In front of this is a small bungalow-type building. Once this was the bakery, and in 1921 it was run by the Gunn brothers.

To make bread flour was needed, and there were two mills. One was at Strath and the other at Boor. (In early days there were many more mills as well as corn-drying kilns in the townships.)



Strath Mill



John Campbell's photographic studio (left)

It is unlikely that Alexander has the skill for any of these jobs!

VILLAGE SERVICES

As a former Inspector of the Poor and a soldier, Alexander is well suited for some of these jobs.

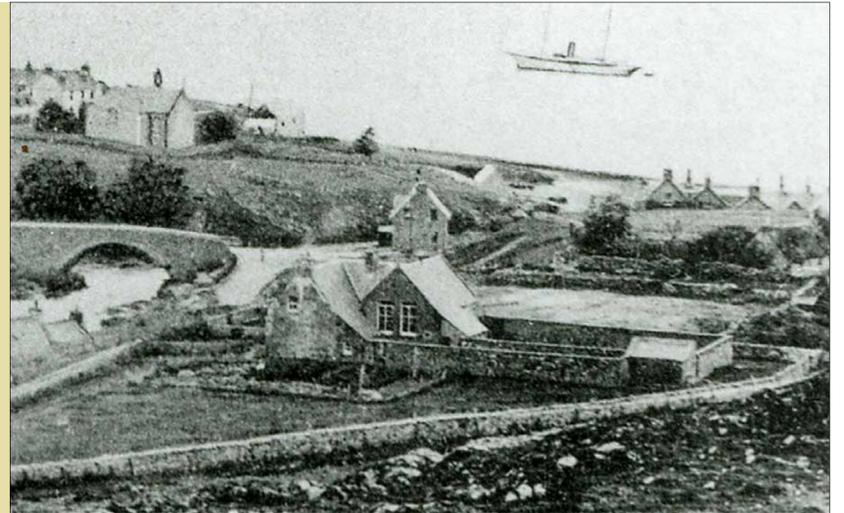
Education

There were schools in the four main villages of Kinlochewe, Gairloch (Achtercairn), Poolewe and Aultbea (Bualnaluib), and also in Opinan, Badachro, Sand (Gairloch), Melvaig, Inverasdale, Laide and Mellon Udrigle.

Side schools (small schools in remote areas which were attached to a main school) were found on Isle Horrisdale (this closed in 1920), Gruinard and Isle Ewe.

When Alexander returned from the war he married Alice. They had four children, Donald, Jean, Susan and William, but William died when he was six years old. Presumably the children would have gone to Poolewe school which was then situated on the other side of the river from their croft, where it is today.

In 1919, when there was a countrywide influenza epidemic, Poolewe school was closed for seven weeks from the end of February.



Poolewe School

Medical

There were two 'fever hospital tents' in the parish: one at Kerry Bay and the other at Poolewe. Would these have been for the epidemics of measles and influenza?

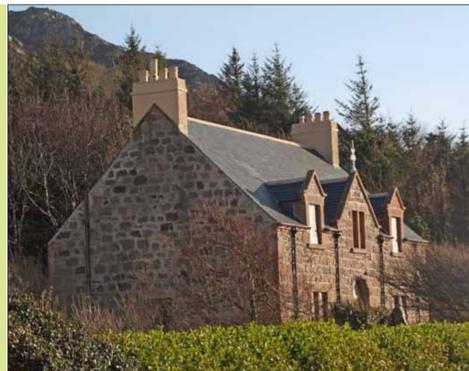
The doctor for the parish was Dr William Knox who lived in Cairn Cottage, Achtercairn, Gairloch, which was built by 1900. He had an assistant in charge of Poolewe and Aultbea. To visit his patients he was driven by his driver 'Teddy'.

There were other doctors at different times but one interesting one was Dr Elsie Scobie (Scorgie) who, between 1922 and 1923, was the first female doctor in the area.

In Poolewe Street next to the Telford Church is a building which used to be the nurses' home. A plaque reads: 'This nurses' home was erected in memory of Mary Lady Mackenzie of Gairloch with money left for that purpose by Dr. Charles Robertson late of Achtercairn, Gairloch 1912'.

Nurses usually worked from home. Jessie Stewart was a certificated midwife in the Poolewe area about 1917 and Annie MacAulay was another nurse in the 1920s. Often untrained women were called in for confinements such as Mrs Kenina Mackenzie of 4 Strath, Gairloch.

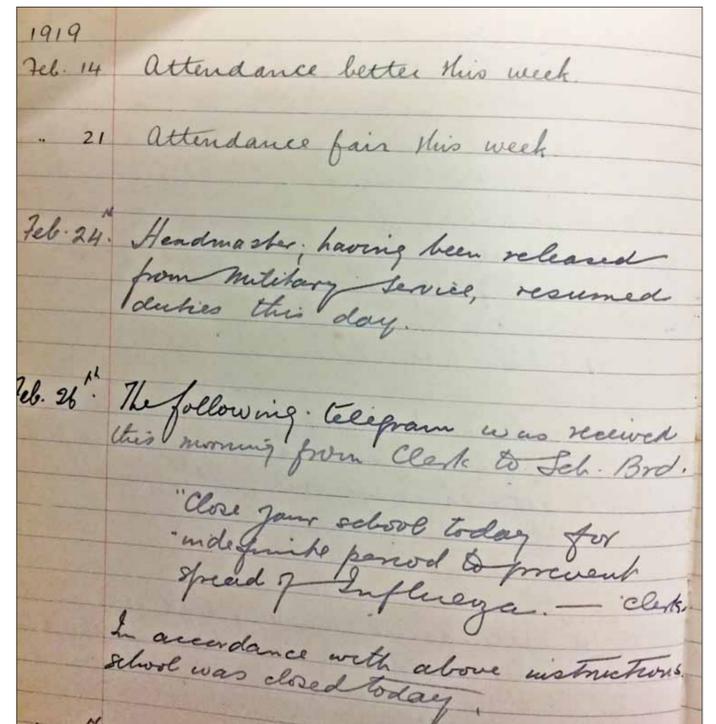
At a later date the nurses were appointed and governed by the local Nursing Association before the NHS. They worked very closely with the doctor and often stayed with a new mother before and after the birth. The fee, paid to the Nursing Association, was 10/- for a week and 7/6 for three days. Infant mortality at the time was high.



Cairn Cottage



Poolewe nurses' home



From Poolewe School logbook

Law and Order

To enforce the law there were customs and excise officers ('preventive men'), and police constables in both Gairloch and Aultbea. The police house in Achtercairn, still lived in as a private house, was built in 1875 (below).



Poverty

Alexander was an assistant Inspector of Poverty before the war. The poor were looked after by the Parish Council. On a map of about 1900, the number of 'paupers' is shown:

Gruinard Bay 23, East Loch Ewe 15, West Loch Ewe 12, Strath 11, Big Sand to Melvaig 5, South Gairloch 24 (of whom 11 in Port Henderson).

How did the War affect these numbers?

Housing

In many places new housing schemes were developed to accommodate returning servicemen. The only housing scheme in Gairloch parish was on Isle Ewe, apparently under the scheme to create new crofts.

At the end of the war Isle Ewe farm was split up into twelve crofts for returning servicemen. But most of the crofts were taken up by the former residents and farmworkers at the time. It seems that the majority of the younger men who had been away to war chose not to return.

Was this a scheme which did not work?

Under 'Government Circular No 2, 1918 - Provision of Houses for Working Class', Murdo Mackenzie of South Erradale applied for a new house, but no grant was given. He was advised to apply for a crofting grant.

Alexander could return to the family croft in Poolewe, but what about his fellow servicemen?



Isle Ewe

Will Alexander return to his former job, or will he want something new?

VILLAGE SHOPS

When Alexander returns from the war, he will find that food is rationed.



This shop in Strath, Gairloch belonged to the Macintyre family and was built in 1902.

Families need to eat. What they cannot produce on the croft or fish from the sea, they must buy. There was at least one shop in each of the small townships as well as the larger villages. These sold groceries and sometimes other goods as well.

Everybody needs clothes. Women would spin wool, weave and knit, and they would sew and mend. But in the 1911 census there were at least 14 male tailors. There were also about 5 shoe and boot-makers. These were specialist jobs, needing an apprenticeship.

There were also a few specialist shops such as butcher, baker and ironmonger.

Typically, shops were simply ordinary houses where goods were sold in the front room. They were family-run and didn't employ others.

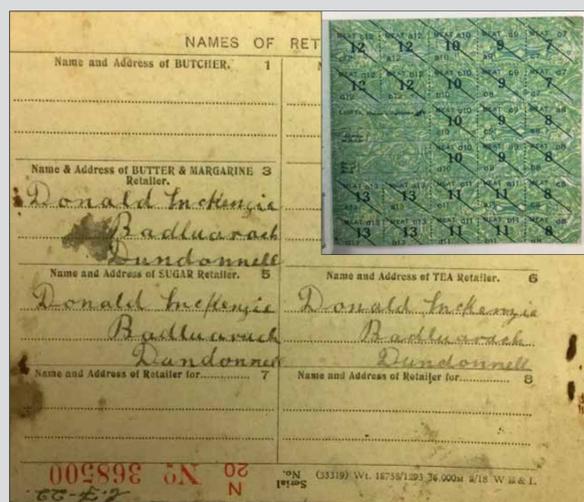
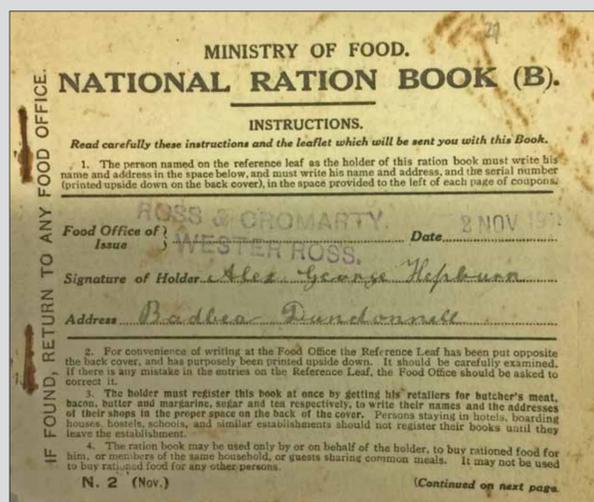
Each community was self-sufficient and even the smaller townships had a shop. However, the larger villages were the places where there were more facilities.



This 1901 postcard shows Poolewe main street. In the 1911 census there were three shops in the village: a grocer, a general merchant and a baker.



Bridge End Stores, Aultbea. The sign says 'Ian McLeans Bridge End Stores, Butcher & Grocer, Cycle Agent'. The thatching on the shed is being repaired.



During the war there was rationing, and it continued for several years after the war. Households had to register with local shops to buy:

- lard, butter, margarine
- sugar, tea
- bacon
- butchered meats

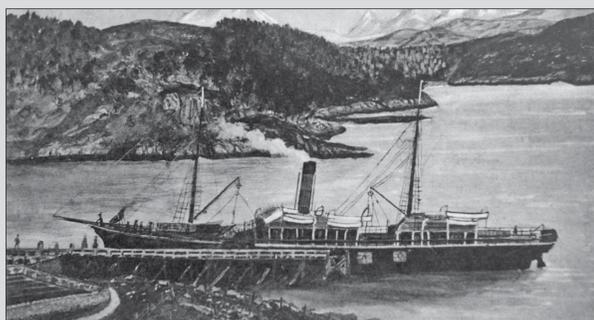
The Ration Book here shows that Alex Hepburn was registered to buy butter/margarine, sugar and tea in Donald Mackenzie's shop at Badluarach.

In January 1909 the first 'ordinary' pensions of 5/- (five shillings, 25p) a week were given, or 7/6 for married couples. To be eligible recipients had to be 70 years of age, earning less than £31 a year and to be of 'good' character. Those who hadn't worked got no pension. But then only 1 in 4 reached the 'grand old age' of 70.

The 1911 census described some people as pensioners, showing who might have received this allowance. Dependents of deceased servicemen were given benefits as were some returning servicemen because of disabilities. Banks and Post Offices were therefore necessary.

Transport of goods

Anything which could not be grown in the fields or be reared on the land would have to be brought in by sea. The sea was the preferred method of transporting goods because in general the roads were very poor. The Laide area, Aultbea, Poolewe, Gairloch and Badachro had slipways or harbours for boats. Only Kinlochewe, the inland part of the parish, would have found the transport of goods more problematical.



David Macbrayne's SS Claymore came from Glasgow weekly, from 1881 to 1931.

Roads

Prime Minister Lloyd George wanted Great Britain to be a 'land fit for heroes' in those days after the war. Did the inhabitants of the parish of Gairloch receive anything which would make their lives easier?

In many areas in Scotland roads were of immense importance, and in 1917 road-roller drivers and road surveyors were exempt from the war. In 1918, from the £400 allocated by the treasurer from Wester Ross Council, the Melvaig road was given £60. Was this adequate? Also in 1918 it was suggested that twelve or more POWs were needed to help road repairs.

The only real benefit from road improvement was the upgrading of the Achnasheen to Aultbea road (the railway ran from Inverness to Achnasheen). A scheme for strengthening and improving the surface of the whole 40 miles of road took place, although it was felt that the volume of traffic would be too much to maintain the road in anything like a satisfactory state of repair.

Whether more funds were allocated is not known.



The road along Loch Maree



Alexander may receive payment for his military service, but he still needs to find a job...

MANUAL LABOUR and TOURISM

A shortage of post-war labour means that plenty of jobs are available for Alexander in these areas.

Building and Road Works

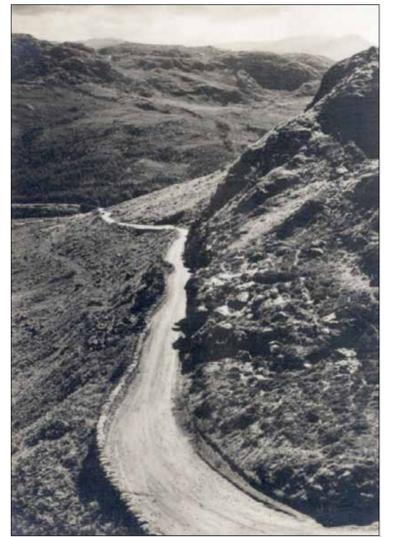
Before the war the largest number of jobs can be found in this category: there were around 63 general labourers.

Houses, barns, byres and walls needed to be built. Pre-war there were around 12 stone masons. There were also 6 joiners, 3 house carpenters and a house builder. Around the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century houses started to change in design and appearance. The small two-room early croft houses with little attic space were still lived in, but crofting houses with an upstairs began to be built. This can be seen in Alexander's father's house (see the *Alexander Mackenzie* poster).

Many would be working on the roads as road contractors, surveyors, quarrymen, stonebreakers and road surfacers. Roads often had to be surfaced and re-aligned, especially when cars became more common.



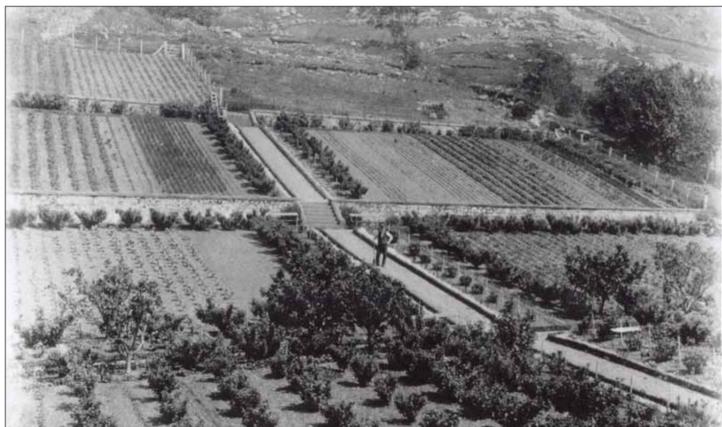
Road realignment



Gruinard Hill



Gairloch Hotel with early cars taking part in Scottish Trials, probably in 1923. Motorised transport made a lot of difference to the area.



Gairloch Hotel had its own vegetable and fruit garden on the slope behind it

Tourism and Hotels

Tourism began in the second half of the 19th century, boosted by the coming of the railway to Achnasheen in 1870 and the development of five local hotels: Kinlochewe (1850s), Loch Maree (1872), Gairloch (1872), Poolewe (1861) and Aultbea (1860).

Jobs in the hotels were for porters, hotel boots, waiters, barmen and gardeners. This was the time when motorised vehicles started to take the place of horse-drawn transport so there were both coachmen and chauffeurs. Blacksmiths were still needed as were carters and vanmen in the wider area.

In 1886 John Dixon published his 'Gairloch and Guide to Loch Maree', which includes suggested itineraries for tourists. There must have been employment for local guides and transport.

Dixon describes Gairloch Hotel as being 'conducted on the best modern system'. It has a stall which sells photographs, hose and other souvenirs; a lawn-tennis ground; sea-bathing below with a 'suitable bathing-machine'; boats for hire for sea-fishing; angling on Loch Tollie; a small shop nearby.

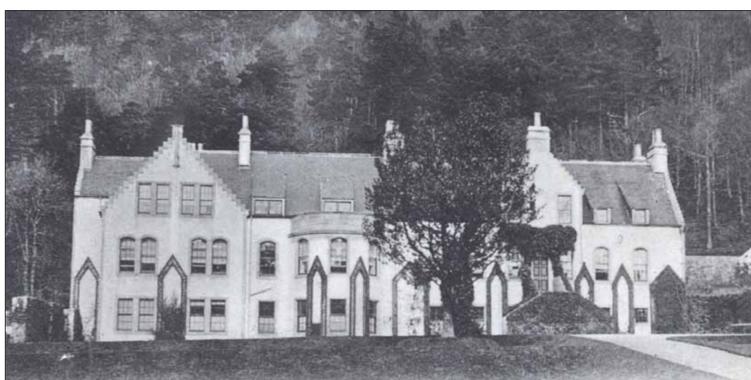
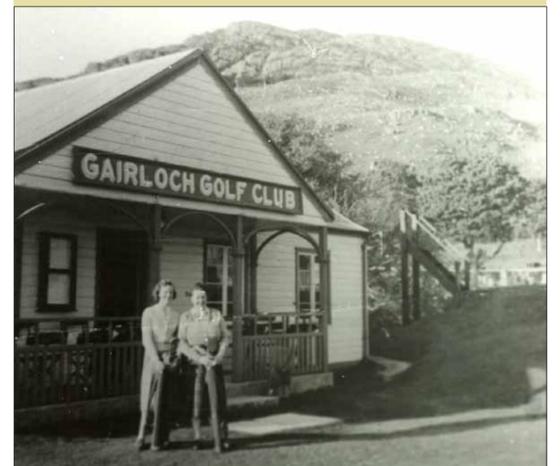
Recreation

What about relaxation?

We know that there were halls for communal gatherings but most ceilidhs (gatherings with music and dancing) took place in private houses.

Gairloch Golf Club was formed in 1898 with 11 members. This was a 'rich' man's activity, but it may have supplied some local employment.

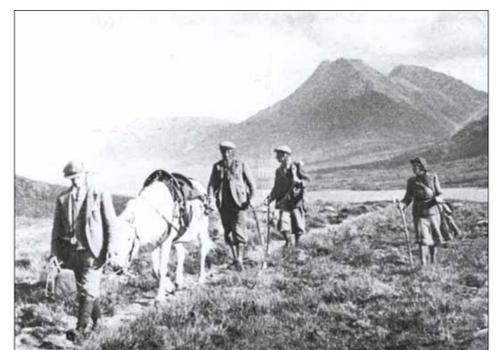
Gairloch Horticultural Society was in operation but was this open to all? (Today this is the Gairloch & District Show).



Flowerdale House photographed after the war



Shieldaig Lodge, leased for shooting and fishing



Setting out on deer-stalking and fishing expeditions

Estate Work

Estate owners with large houses such as Flowerdale, Letterewe, Tournaig, Shieldaig and Kinlochewe Lodges employed gamekeepers, ghillies, deer-stalkers, gardeners and foresters, as well as workers for maintenance of the house and grounds. Their main source of income was the rent paid by sportsmen who came to hunt, shoot and fish.

We learn that after the war normal estate life resumed for the wealthy. From the winter of 1918 to about 1921 Osgood Mackenzie's stalker, Donald Urquhart, killed 25 foxes; his aim was to protect the 'game' from predators. On one day he killed 2 eagles and 2 foxes; for two seasons running he got 10 eagles. On another occasion he shot a wildcat in a trap, and got a hind and an otter.

And all this after such recent human slaughter...

There may be some useful opportunities for Alexander here.

EMIGRATION : PRESSURES

Many of Alexander's comrades decide to emigrate after the War. Should Alexander join them?

A Land Fit for Heroes?

At the end of the First World War returning servicemen and women would have looked forward to settling back into their old lives. They had been promised a land 'fit for heroes' by the then Prime Minister, David Lloyd George.

However, the reality was somewhat different: employment opportunities were scarce, rationing was introduced in 1918 for some foodstuffs, and there was the lure of greater opportunities abroad.

Unemployment in Scotland was high: the fishing and agriculture industries were in crisis and there was massive decline in heavy industry, such as coal mining, iron and steel works and shipbuilding. In the cities there was slum housing, a poor diet and a lower standard of living than was expected by returning heroes.

Legislation was passed enabling the government to forcibly purchase farm land and rent it out, but the process was very slow. Failure of the government to force big landowners to hand over under-used land led to land seizures in some cases. This caused disillusionment at home.

Other legislation encouraged emigration through the 1919 Overseas Settlement Act and the 1922 Empire Settlement Act.

Scottish Emigration

Emigration to other countries in the British Empire was not a new thing, but would have seemed an attractive proposition, given the parlous state of the economy in Great Britain. There were 'pull' and 'push' factors to encourage those wishing to start a new life abroad. Many Scots viewed emigration as their escape from unemployment in the cities and poverty in the Highlands.

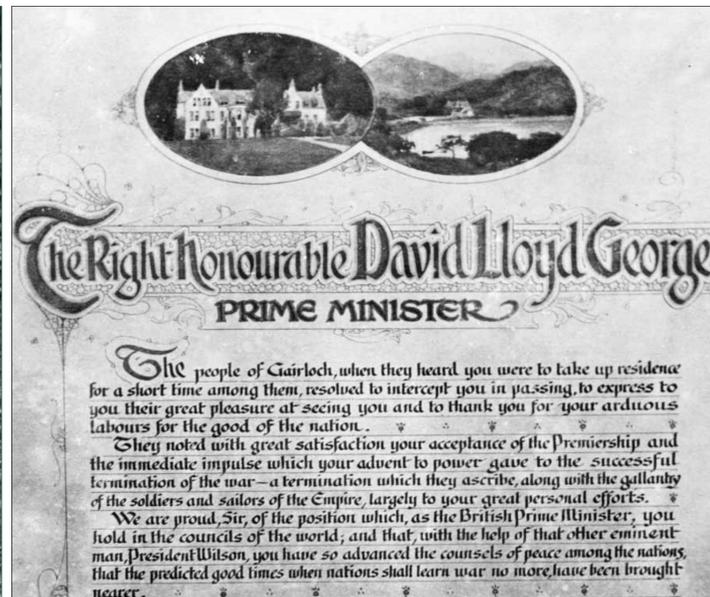
In the years following the First World War Scotland had the highest emigration rate of all the European countries; 60% of the total of British people who emigrated in the 1920s were Scottish. The peak was in 1923 when nearly 30,000 people left Scotland.

They sailed in ships from Glasgow to destinations within the British Dominions; the main destinations were Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

This resulted in a 'brain drain' as skilled and educated Scots left Scotland in search of better employment opportunities and higher wages abroad.



In spite of post-war problems, Lloyd George seems to have been popular with some people in Gairloch: when he stayed at Flowerdale in 1921 (above) the Free Church Minister and the Gairloch Estate factor produced an effusive testimonial in his honour (part shown, above right).



Rioting in Glasgow: the Battle of George Square over post-war unemployment



Scots, when compared with other nationalities, were very successful at settling in the countries of destination. The reasons for this were:

- The Scots were considered to have a very strong work ethic.
- They could easily adapt to the harsher climates of other countries.
- They formed their own communities and helped each other.
- The skills and knowledge of the Scottish emigrants could be used to improve existing farms.

Employment opportunities in the cities

Highlanders had often moved to cities such as Glasgow to find employment. But there was a massive decline in heavy industry following the end of the War with the ending of war contracts. For example:

- Ship building fell by 90% during the 1920s.
- The number of iron furnaces halved by 1927 due to overseas competition.
- The coal industry employed a third fewer people in the 1920s than before the war.

Unemployment in Glasgow, coupled with disputes over the length of the working week, led to 'The Battle of George Square' on 31 January 1919. Some 60,000 strikers and protestors clashed with City of Glasgow Police, resulting in many injuries on both sides.

Therefore for highlanders there was little prospect of finding employment in the industrial heartland of central Scotland after their return from the war. This made emigration abroad more attractive to those seeking employment opportunities.



Alexander's two brothers both emigrate, four years after the War. Will Alexander follow them?

EMIGRATION : PLACES

Will Alexander be tempted to emigrate by the advertising and the special offers?

Legislation and Other Schemes

The British Empire was in a fragile state after the First World War and emigration from Britain was seen as a way to shore up and strengthen the Dominions. The British government encouraged emigration firstly through the **1919 Overseas Settlement Act** permitting free passage for ex-service men and women and dependents to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and other parts of the Empire.

An office to promote emigration to Canada was located in Inverness and a Canadian emigration agent toured the Hebrides in 1924 on a recruitment drive.

The 1919 Overseas Settlement Act was superseded by the **1922 Empire Settlement Act**, which then included 'suitable persons' from the general public. So called suitable persons were agriculturalists, farm labourers, domestics and juveniles.

In 1924 the government of British Columbia, on the west coast of Canada introduced a **fisheries emigration scheme**, targeting Highland fishermen. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company and the Hudson's Bay Company also ran **assisted emigration** schemes to Canada.

The Canadian government, in 1925, aimed to attract British families by offering land to those on the '**3000 Families Scheme**'.



The Inverness office opened in 1923 but there were problems as the Inverness area was not a farming area but a pasturage for sheep and cattle. The agents had little knowledge of farming in Canada although it was said that crofters should do well in Cape Breton and Nova Scotia. Only 446 recruits were recorded.

Favoured Countries

Canada

From the records of the soldiers from the Gairloch area who fought in the war, it is estimated that 19 emigrated to Canada before the war and 13 after the war. We have to assume that this also meant that relatives would emigrate with them, thus swelling the numbers of those who left Scotland during this period.

United States of America

The records indicate that more soldiers from the Gairloch area emigrated after the War than before it.

South Africa

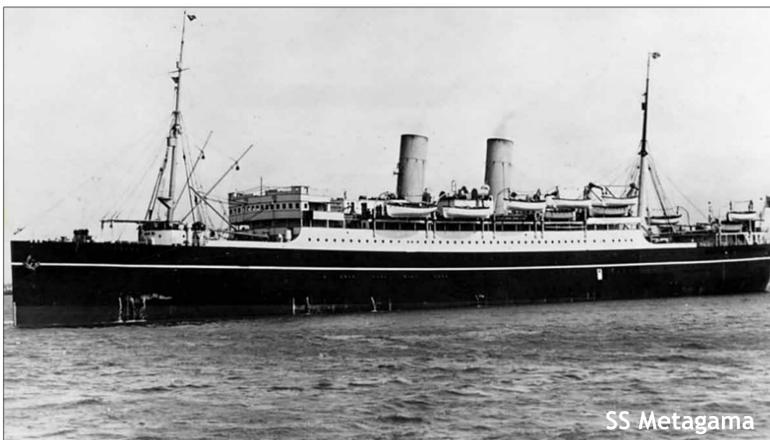
There were a few men who emigrated here from the Gairloch area before the war, and later served in the war.

Australia

Before the First World War it is estimated that 8 soldiers from the Gairloch area had emigrated here before they had joined up, and more were to follow after the war.

New Zealand

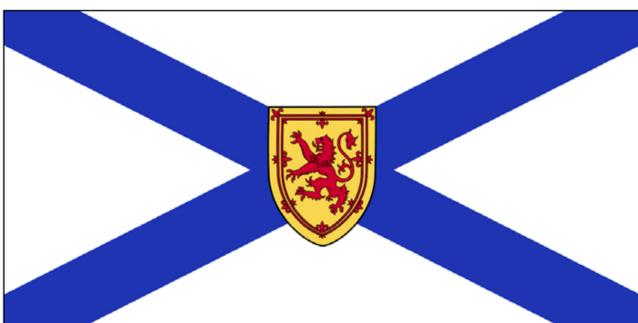
There were about 9 soldiers from the Gairloch area who emigrated before the war, and a further 2 followed after the war encouraging relatives to join them.



In April 1923 two Canadian Pacific liners, the SS Marloch and the SS Metagama took 600 Scottish emigrants to Canada. Many took advantage of the 1922 Empire Settlement Act in order to receive subsidised passage.

The governments of Canada, Australia and New Zealand actively encouraged settlement from Britain to open up these countries. Canada had emigration agents in Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness.

The decision whether to stay or go would have been life-changing, but emigration from Scotland was encouraged from both home and abroad. Many thought there was little to stay for and started afresh overseas.



The flag of Nova Scotia ("New Scotland")

CANADA DOMESTIC SERVANTS FOR ONTARIO

Wanted for ONTARIO, DOMESTIC SERVANTS for FIRST-CLASS FARM HOUSES

In placing the Girls in Situations every effort will be made to place them as near each other as possible.

Part of an advertisement from the Stornoway Gazette

Australia

Government Assisted Passages from Great Britain at greatly Reduced Rates are provided for approved

LAND SETTLERS
(Minimum Capital £400)

BOYS FOR FARMS
(15 to 18 years)

DOMESTIC WORKERS
(Free Passages are given to Domestic Servants)

and for

Persons nominated by relatives of friends resident in Australia.



Applications should be addressed to --
THE DIRECTOR OF MIGRATION
AND SETTLEMENT,
Australia House, The Strand,
London, W.C. 2.



BUT their new life didn't always meet their expectations, so many emigrants, both men and women, returned. What did they return to? Was life ever the same?

Will Alexander feel a responsibility, as the eldest brother, to remain at home when his two brothers emigrate? Will he try to persuade them to stay?

EMIGRATION : PEOPLE

Will Alexander hear from his brothers in Australia & Canada? Will they encourage him to stay or to go?

John Mackenzie, Alexander's brother, from Tournaig, Poolewe, whose occupation was in farming, emigrated to Australia on the SS Ballarat in 1922 aged 27. His journey was on the ship's maiden voyage.

The SS Ballarat (*right*) was a 13,033 gross ton ship, length 519.7ft and beam 64.1ft, with one funnel, two masts and a twin screw. Her speed was 13.5 knots.

She was built by Harland & Wolff, Greenock, one of five sister ships and she was launched for Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Co (P&O Line), on 4th September 1920. There was accommodation for 491 3rd class passengers plus 743 temporary berths.

Her maiden voyage from the UK to Australia via the Cape started on 27th January 1922. The passenger list was dated 26.1.1922 and they embarked at London. The captain was Captain Warner.

Where did John settle? What work did he do? We do not know.

Alexander's other brother **Murdoch** also emigrated, but he went to Canada.

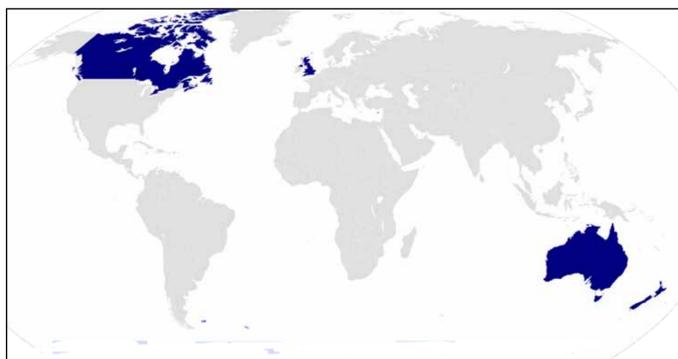


It appears that men often followed their brothers. Several Gairloch area men had emigrated before the war and joined regiments in their new countries. This could have led to families being 'lost' in future generations. For example here are three families.

John Macleod from Achgarve went to Canada as a labourer. His brother **Murdo** emigrated to Australia after the war.

Charles Mackenzie, a piper from Coast, went to Canada as a carpenter. His brother **Hugh** followed him.

John Macleay, originally from Tighnafiline, went to Canada as a labourer. In 1922 his brother **Allan** joined him as a joiner (!) and their half-brother **William** followed in 1923. He went into farming work.



For and against emigration

from the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*:

Sir John Lorde Macleod spoke at the Annual Dinner on 22.2.1923: 'The Highlander has been a great builder of Empire... Hundreds ... are again on the move for overseas, and we all wish these loyal and sturdy men the best of fortune in their homes in the new countries.'

General D A Macfarlane CB DSO praised the Highlander at the Jubilee Dinner on 9.3.1921: 'The surroundings of one's life in youth made all the difference on one's outlook in life... Men of all countries had some form of affection and tie to their own country ... That spirit was always most prevalent and strong in Highlanders.'

Personal Evidence

We do not have a diary or letters describing life for these post-war emigrants, but in Gairloch Museum there is the diary written by **Donald Macleod**, originally from the Gairloch area, who emigrated as a single man before the War in 1911.

He left on June 27th and arrived on September 9th. The diary describes his journey from Scotland to London to Brisbane, Australia, where he found work. But then war was declared. Donald joined up and was killed on May 24th 1915 at Gallipoli.

Donald had once worked as a blacksmith and had then become a policeman. But he went to Australia as a labourer.

He visited Melbourne and Sydney on the way to Brisbane and described these visits vividly.

As a labourer he worked on bridges for the railway before becoming a prison warden.

For a single man the voyage and subsequent life might have been exciting. But would this have been the same for families?

So what work might the men in the Gairloch area have done when they reached their new homes? Did those who had been fishermen go to British Columbia? Did those who had been crofters become farm labourers? Would it have been more difficult for families to settle than for single men? Without information in the form of letters or diaries we can only speculate.

Place Names

People from the Highlands had emigrated from the 1800s when times at home were bad. Whole families left their homes and started life in what must have been strange and even frightening circumstances. They often endowed the places in which they settled with familiar names, names that reminded them of their past lives. Look at websites and you'll find Scottish placenames: Inverness, Perth, Ross, etc. There are Gairlochs (sometimes written as Gairlock) in Canada and Australia.

Did the post-war emigrants like to live somewhere that sounded familiar?



And what about the women?

Domestic service gave opportunities for employment. But in the cities or abroad?

In 1922 30-year old Isabella Chisholm from 13 Melvaig left Scotland on the SS Metagama, and arrived in Canada on November 3rd.

Her destination was Dorchester House in Montreal (*right*) which was a women's hostel and immigration centre. Part of the cost of her ticket was paid for by Dorchester House. Her work was probably as a domestic servant.



So what will Alexander become after the War? – fisherman, crofter, blacksmith, postman, teacher, doctor, policeman, shopkeeper, road worker, joiner, hotel worker, gamekeeper, estate worker, Inspector of the Poor, or ... ?

And will it be in Poolewe, or abroad?

CELEBRATING THE PEACE

In 1919 Alexander is welcomed home as a war hero.

The armistice was signed on November 11th 1918 at 11am.

The Peace Treaty was signed in Paris on July 1st 1919, and this was seen by many as the true end of the war.

Locally Aultbea Naval Base was closed in April 1919.

Most servicemen didn't return until 1919. How must they have felt after their long train journeys from the south of England to Achnasheen, and then the last leg of their journeys to their homes?

Were there banners and bunting to welcome them? Certainly there were for at least one of them...



Embroidered cards, made in France, were sent from the war, but this one from 'Johnnie' to his sister is one that celebrates peace-time.

From the Poolewe School log-book:

'11 Nov 1918. Today news has come by wire that hostilities have ceased on the continent. The armistice had been signed at 11 o'clock to-day. Naturally we spent the rest of the day in discussing some of the outstanding events since 1914 and paid special attention to details re the generals and advisers which brought our troops to victory.'

There is no mention of rejoicing. Was the report drafted for the benefit of the school inspector? Was peace heralded merely as relief, at the end of the slaughter, from the threat to serving men? Or as an end to food shortages and travel restrictions?

From the Opinan School log-book:

The attendance for the week is only 8 1/2%, this is owing to the sheep-dipping which was for 2 days. Duncan Mackenzie's children (Patricia) Donald and Maggie in the Senior Division have been kept away all week for potato lifting at home. His family are notorious for bad attendance. The Great War has come to an end - Peace was declared on Monday the 11th inst.

An extra week was awarded to the schools in September 1919 for Peace Celebrations and in December 1919 there were school closures for Universal Thanksgiving Day for the Armistice and Thanksgiving Day for the Peace.

Only in the Opinan School log-book on 25th July 1919 do we read of any real celebrations:

25th July Today, the school closed for a period of six weeks; but it is expected that, in deference to the King's recommendations, another week may be granted by the Education Authority: failing a compliance with His Majesty's wish, this school is due to open on Monday, 8th September. The children were dismissed today at 2 p.m. to prepare for the Peace Celebrations Picnic organised by a Committee of local ladies, of which Miss Mackenzie, teacher, Opinan was the Secretary. 9th Sept. The Education Authority granted a week's closure to all the schools in the County, and consequently this school did not reopen till the 15th inst. The pupils attended regularly, but steps should be taken...



Osgood Mackenzie, who owned Inverewe Garden, commemorated the peace by having a stone erected which can still be seen today as a physical reminder. Donald Grant was Osgood's gardener.

THE PEACE SHRUBBERY
PLANNED BY OSGOOD H MACKENZIE
OF INVEREWE
TO COMMEMORATE PEACE AFTER THE GREAT WAR
1919
THE PREPARATION AND PLANTING WAS ALL DONE
BY DONALD GRANT AGED 77
HIS FRIEND AND FAITHFUL SERVANT
FOR OVER 50 YEARS

No personal documents recording the news of the armistice locally have come to light, but in his autobiography Donald MacDonald, a soldier from Uist, comments that on 11th November 1918 'In the billet that night I saw men that I knew well as brave and steady under fire, now crying uncontrollably.' Later Donald received a disablement pension of eight shillings a week.

(From Small Lochs to Great Lakes)

A small snippet of information comes from Robert Hanbury, Osgood Mackenzie's son-in-law, who wrote in July 1919: 'We gave all the returned soldiers and their fancy ladies a day on Loch Maree. They had a bonfire at Poolewe on Peace night which was very wet.'

Did everyone enjoy this, we might wonder?



War memorials were erected in later years to commemorate those who had lost their lives. These are at Gairloch (before it was repositioned), Poolewe, Aultbea and Kinlochewe.

And one returning soldier, our Sergeant Major Alexander Mackenzie, DCM, received a hero's welcome in the old Drill Hall in Poolewe.

This was a 'most enjoyable function'. Robert Hanbury of Inverewe was the Chairman of the Presentation Committee which wished to 'mark the extreme pride and satisfaction' with which the community regarded Alexander MacKenzie.

The Chairman presented Alexander with a beautifully designed gold locket bearing a suitable inscription, a number of war saving certificates, and a 'well-filled purse of treasury notes' in recognition of his 'meritorious services ... in the titanic struggle against the Kaiser and his hordes'. There were speeches and dancing with bagpipes, violin and accordion.



So, finally, what does Alexander Mackenzie choose to do after his triumphant return to Poolewe?

He decides to stay in Poolewe, living in Croft 12, his family home.

He does not take back his old job as an Inspector of the Poor.

Instead he works at Inveran, the big house across the river, and during the Second World War at the Boom, Aultbea.

He marries and has four children, two girls and two boys; but one dies young.