

# KINLOCHMOIDART

## AND THE STEWARTS



## KINLOCHMOIDART AND THE STEWARTS

Robert Stewart acquired the Kinlochmoidart Estate in 1883 and rebuilt the main house. His descendants have lived there ever since.



**Kinlochmoidart 1890**

### Robert Stewart's father



Looking at archive papers, the Robert Stewart who built Kinlochmoidart had a father, also called Robert, who married Jane Pott in 1816.

He became a partner in Stewart Pott & Company, Wine Merchants in Old Post Office Court, Glasgow. He lived at Horn Bank and had a carriage and pair.

He had three sons, John, Robert and Frank and three daughters, Elizabeth, Catherine and Jane.

His second son, Robert, was born in 1825.



When Robert was young, his father wrote often to his wife and to his children as business with Stewart Pott & Company took him away to London and elsewhere by coach. There is a charming sequence of letters in an archive of 1833 just after his daughter Elizabeth had been sent to boarding school at 18 Hart Street Edinburgh.



### **Robert Stewart, husband of Margaret Stevenson**

In due course young Robert joined the family business, by now Stewart & Co.

In 1855, along with other members, he acquired the Glen Forth Distillery at Kirkliston and a few years afterwards he wrested sole control, having had a disagreement with his brother John.

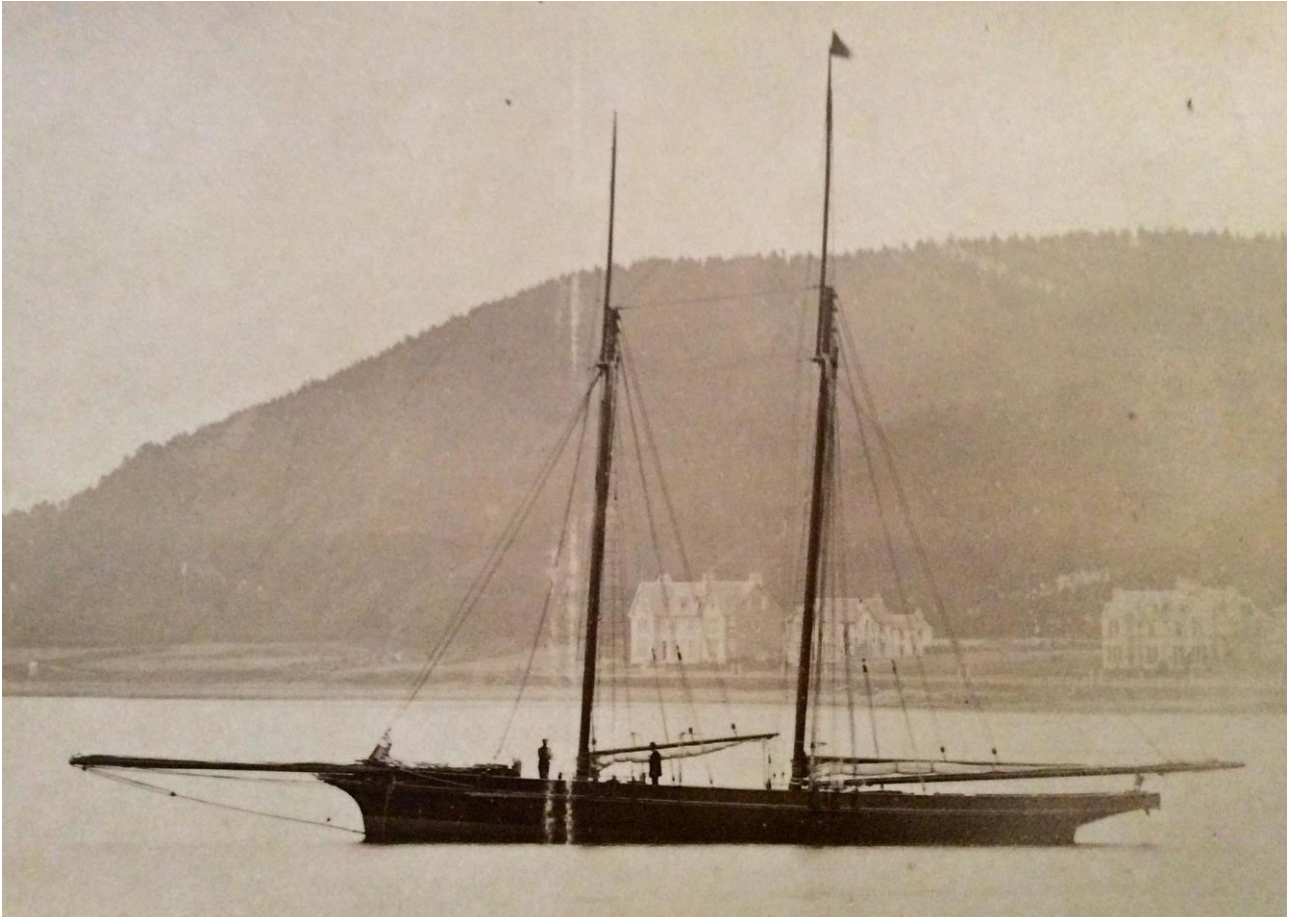
It was about this time that he married Margaret Stevenson in London. They had met in Stirling at a country house owned by the McLarens of Bullikinrain. In 1858 they had a son, John Charles Stewart (Charles) and later daughters Louise (1862) and Frances (1865) and another son called Fred (1872).

By 1862 Robert had acquired a house at Ingliston (now absorbed within the Royal Highland Showground near the Airport) and in 1863 he was appointed to the Royal Company of Archers, so as it can be seen he was making his way up in the world successfully.

About ten years later he sold the bulk of the land off at Ingliston, but retained the house for a time, although later he had a residence in the centre of town at Rothsay Terrace.

The breach with brother John was not permanent, because when the City of Glasgow Bank of which John was a Director, failed at about this time, Robert stood bail for him when proceedings were initiated.

It was in 1877 that he chaired the first Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand & Australian Land Company, and a year later he disposed of his interests at Kirkliston to the Distillers Company, continuing as Managing Director but, according to a newspaper report at the time, leaving his son Charles (still at University) in place as his sub-Manager. Charles was 19 years old, having been to school, first at the Edinburgh Academy then to Harrow (1872-76) and was currently up at Trinity Hall Cambridge (1876-9) from whence he graduated with a first class degree in Mechanism and Applied Science.



### **Hesperus on her mooring at Oban**

Having made his fortune, Robert took to making trips on the sailing ship Hesperus and travelled along the western seaboard of Scotland, calling in at places of interest as well as keeping his eye open for a suitable Highland Estate.

Extracts from Log of the Hesperus 1878: *"A charming sail to Staffa. We landed for an hour and saw Fingal's Cave beautifully, also an otter, sea very clear. Too rough to land at Iona, so went into loch near Treah for the night. The Duke of A's yacht came in. We went out fishing cuddies and I saw a young seal with its mother."*

*...."From Loch Nevis to Lochaylort. Landed at Roshven and called on Mr & Mrs Blackburn." "All started from Kinlochaylort in the gig, where a carriage awaited us to take us to Arisaig....and then to Morar, but did not like the latter place".*



*....."quite calm outside Oban, so the Capt asked steam yacht, when passing, to take us in".*

*...."Left Fort William, quite a hard time getting through Corran Ferry before tide turned. Landed at Kilmalen to see a property that was for sale and drove on to Glengalmadale where we rejoined the yacht and anchored in Loch Corrie for the night".*

*...."We got to Loch Aylort about seven o'clock. Mrs Blackburn came out to call with her son. Went to see the vitrified fort on Goat Island and then we all went to lunch at Roshven. After tea, we all called on Mrs Hamilton, Mr H having first come across to see us."*



### **Loch Moidart in the evening light, where Robert Stewart bought his estate**

As a result of his search and his knowledge of cruising the area, Robert bought the Kinlochmoidart Estate from William Frederick Robertson-MacDonald, in 1882/3. The property had been in the Macdonald family for the previous 300 years. The estate included a house in which Robert took immediate occupation whilst preparing plans for a far grander building. He employed the fashionable architect William Leiper. One of the first things to be done was to build a new pier to allow them to import stone and other raw materials from Glasgow and elsewhere. Stephen Jefferson (a cousin within the family) subsequently wrote,

*"Kinlochmoidart House was completed in 1884 at a cost of £9,048.00 and was described in an article at the time as"...mansion house with electric light laid on...with five public rooms...ten family bedrooms...ample accommodation for servants...outbuildings...shooting over 15,000\* acres of which about 1,000 are of wood, 3,000 acres arable, 6,000 acres grouse ground, clear of sheep and the rest hill pasture without heather."* \*This figure actually includes Glenmoidart, acquired two years later.

Despite calling on the Blackburns during their cruises on the Hesperus, tensions quickly grew regarding boundaries on the marches between Kinlochmoidart and the Roshven estate immediately to the north of it. At the time of purchase plans were requested, but it transpired that nothing firm came out of this. Blackburn even offered to meet Robert on the boundary (not in the winter, owing to his age) saying interestingly enough "*there is still a post waggonette from Corpach to Kinlochmoidart three times a week, as well as the steamer daily from Oban to Corpach.*"

Matters rumbled on regarding boundaries and potential contributions of the parties towards maintaining joint fences. Even ten years later, matters were still being disputed by Professor Blackburn. Lord Kyllachy issued an opinion in 1903 which was not supportive to the Professor and Mrs Christian Head stepped forward in 1905, with an offer to Robert Stewart of an old boundary map showing the Roshven marches of 1851 left to her by her father.

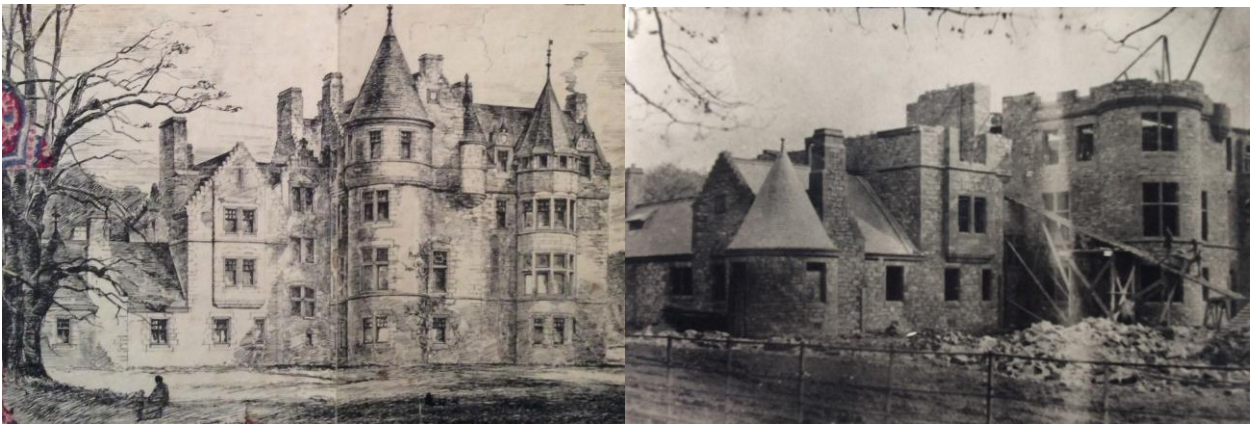


### **Old Kinlochmoidart House, as bought by Robert Stewart in 1882**

Meanwhile, from the early part of 1883 onwards the new house was being built and the most modern techniques employed.

At this time quotes were obtained from Cameron & Macphee for laying new drains and watercourses and from Anderson & Munro for electric lighting. This included 382 yards of pipe, dynamo, accumulators, switches and lights but excluding digging waterways and trenches, carriage of goods from Glasgow and a shed for the dynamos. A dam was thrown up at Loch nam Paitean and completed by 1887.





**Leiper's drawing and New Kinlochmoidart House, during construction 1883/4**

The early photographs were almost certainly taken by Margaret Stewart's brother, Frederick James Stevenson, a noted explorer and photographer.



**In 1884, the final touches were made to the new house, here surrounded by workmen's huts**

Even before the house was finished, Robert Stewart moved to get modern technology brought to Moidart in order to keep in touch with his business interests. Together with Lord Glossop, Captain Swinburne and other local landowners he entered into an agreement to underwrite the Postmaster General obtaining an income greater than £63 per annum for Telegraph services. If necessary, they agreed collectively to make up the shortfall for a term of 7 years.

10. Downing Street,  
Whitehall.  
19 Jan: 1884

Sir,

Mr. Gladstone desires me to acquaint you that he is in receipt of the letter with which you have favoured him; and that it will give him much pleasure to bring to the notice of the Board of Treasury your representations on the subject of the Telegraph wire in Invernesshire to which you refer, and in which

**Robert had earlier written to the Prime Minister about the need for a telegraph in Moidart and received a reply**

It was recounted by his grandson many years later that Robert also interceded to get the postman some transport on wheels. Neil wrote,

*"At that time the Post Office officials were in one of their stingy moods. They would not allow the local postman a horse and trap to carry the mail over a fourteen-mile route twice a day. This meant that the unfortunate postman was overloaded, and in winter had a really severe task for an oldish man. To defeat the Post Office, my Grandfather ordered a ton of coal to be sent to him by post. Naturally the parcels accumulated and my Grandfather complained of the outrageous delay in delivery. The postman got his horse and trap."*

Another report on the postal service appeared in "De tha dol" (the local newspaper) many years later when Sandy Macdonald reported that,

*"At one time letters used to be delivered to Dorlin (where he worked) regularly by Postal Van on its way from Strontian to Kinlochmoidart"....."Between them Lord Howard of Glossop and Mr Stewart of Kinlochmoidart had an Industrial Show every year. One year it was at Cliff Farm and the next at Kinlochmoidart. At the same time there were Highland Games, piping and dancing and so forth and it used to be a great day."*





### **Loch nam Paitean was stocked with trout in 1884**

*"It was in January 1884 that Mr Stewart obtained 30,000 (two boxes) of eyed Loch Leven trout eggs from Howietoun.....He placed them in artificial redds in the burn between Loch Nam Paitean and Loch Mhadiadh. The following year no trout were observed, but in August 1886 a shepherd informed Mr Stewart he had seen a few fish rising, so a fly-rod was taken up and twelve well-conditioned trout, averaging about half a pound, were caught in Nam Paitean....In September 1886, larger fish began to rise and four were killed in Loch nam Paitean, the largest weighing one and three quarters pounds. In the same year it was found that a number of trout had ascended the burn to Loch Mhadiadh."*

(Successful Fish Culture in the Highlands, by John Bickerdyke, Page 835 Journal December 1893.)



**Robert Stewart bought the adjoining estate in Glenmoidart in 1886**

Robert bought this adjoining property from Hugh Robertson Ross and a few years later, Glenmoidart House became home to his son Charles, after his marriage in 1890.



**Old Kinlochmoidart House was still used in 1886**

The family continued to appear in photographs of the "Old House" some years after the "New" one was built. Here we are two years after its completion.

About this time, Louisa Stewart, one of Robert's daughters, formed an attachment to Major James Swinburne of Eilean Shona and they duly married. It is possible that they are one of the couples in this photograph.





### **Leiper also put his mark on other buildings on the estate**

These included the west lodge and gates, an east lodge, the remodelling of a cottage at Brunery in Glenmoidart and the school at Kinacara.

At this time, trophy estates such as Kinlochmoidart were generally described as being used "*principally for house parties, with guests arriving for the sporting season by steam yachts from the Clyde*". It was now that Robert Stewart acquired his first yacht, which is referred to in more detail later.

**Moidart Fishing Rights:** In 1888, Robert Stewart sought to clear up the question of fishing rights on the River Moidart. These were somewhat clouded by an agreement made thirty years before involving previous owners of the Moidart Estates and the Loch Shiel Estate. The plan which follows, prepared in 1888 by JL Hill & Co W.S., was enclosed with a Memorial for Counsel's opinion on Fishing rights in River Moidart and Loch Moidart. The Memorial said that in 1883, Robert Stewart acquired Kinlochmoidart Estate and that in 1886, he further acquired Glenmoidart Estate. In 1854, the then proprietor of Glenmoidart claimed exclusive rights over the whole river, but this had been disputed by the then Kinlochmoidart proprietor and was settled out of Court. However, it had left a slightly messy aftermath in that the settlement also involved, rather surprisingly, the proprietor of the River Shiel fishings. The settlement out of court had been between Lt General Hugh Ross of Glenmoidart, William Robertson of Kinlochmoidart and James Robert Hope Scott of Abbotsford.

the Memorial continued:

"..... And whereas disputes have arisen between the parties of the first and









### **1890 The New House**

Although built with the latest technology, it is possible that the new house was experiencing "teething" troubles. A report by a surveyor called Daniel Mackay to the architect William Leiper in 1890 stated as follows:- *"there is damp penetrating the south and west of Kinlochmoidart House and some of the upper floors too. Attention is drawn to the use of the red sandstone, which is porous and the whin stone which has fissures"*.

Suggestions as to improving the position were made, for example open fires in many rooms rather than central heating, repointing parts externally and painting internally with boiled linseed oil.



**John Charles Stewart (Charles), husband of Anna Mary Babington**

In 1890, Charles Stewart became engaged to the 24 year-old Miss Anna Babington. She came from an illustrious military family, her father William being a Lieutenant Colonel and her brother James eventually rising to become a Lieutenant General. She was one of nine children born to Augusta Mary Babington, nee Melville, daughter of James Moncrieff Melville W.S. A marriage contract was prepared in which JC (Charles) Stewart was advised by Mr Wm Stuart Fraser, his father's lawyer, and in turn Fraser wrote to R Stewart clarifying some details. The proposal was that £5,000 in preference stock in the New Zealand & Australian Land Co should be placed with Trustees under a binding agreement. On the decease of RS a further £10,000 would be left with the same trustees (this would protect the capital for Miss B, if JCS became bankrupt). Miss Babington for her part, would bring capital into the marriage, the interest of which would be available to JCS, but the capital, upon Miss Babington's death, could be left as she pleased in the event of there being no family, or as JCS might direct, if there was.



Before the marriage, in a letter of June 1890 to Robert Stewart from his wife Margaret (he was at 8 Rothsay Terrace Edinburgh, whilst she was staying with the Babingtons at Brooklands on the River Hamble, near Southampton), she wrote,

*".....had a talk with Mrs B, and she is very frank about affairs....she told me the Colonel (who was that afternoon at a cricket match in Winchester) gives the girl £1,000 on their marriage and settles £10,000 at his death.....They are very kind and are sorry you cannot come....."*

## **The Marriage of Anna and Charles**

After the wedding Miss KB MacVicar (one of Symers MacVicar's sisters) sent Anna a drawing of the old house made in 1828. She said she was a cousin of the Robertson Macdonalds (her father had married Janet Robertson-Macdonald in 1839 in Edinburgh).

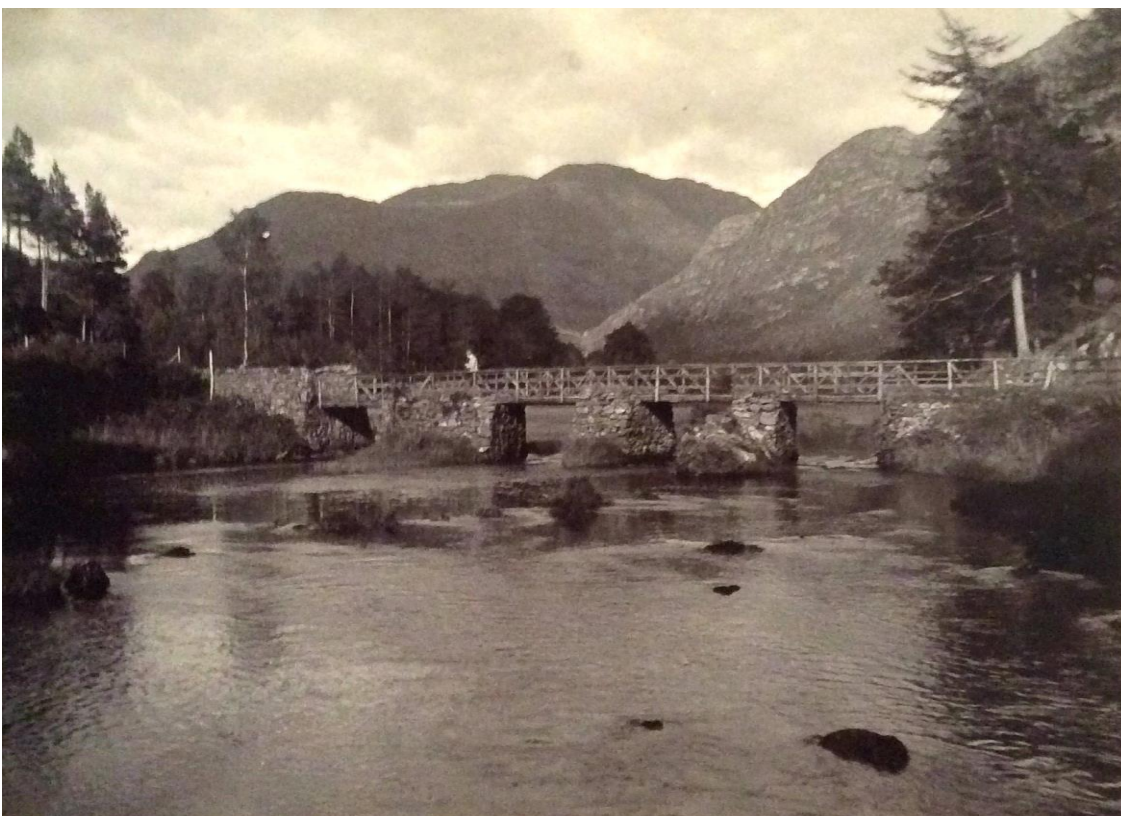
Her brother, Symers MacVicar, was a well-known expert on liverworts and lived on Eilean Shona. He had a double connection with the Robertson-Macdonalds, not only having a father related to them, but also through marrying William's widow Ada in 1887.





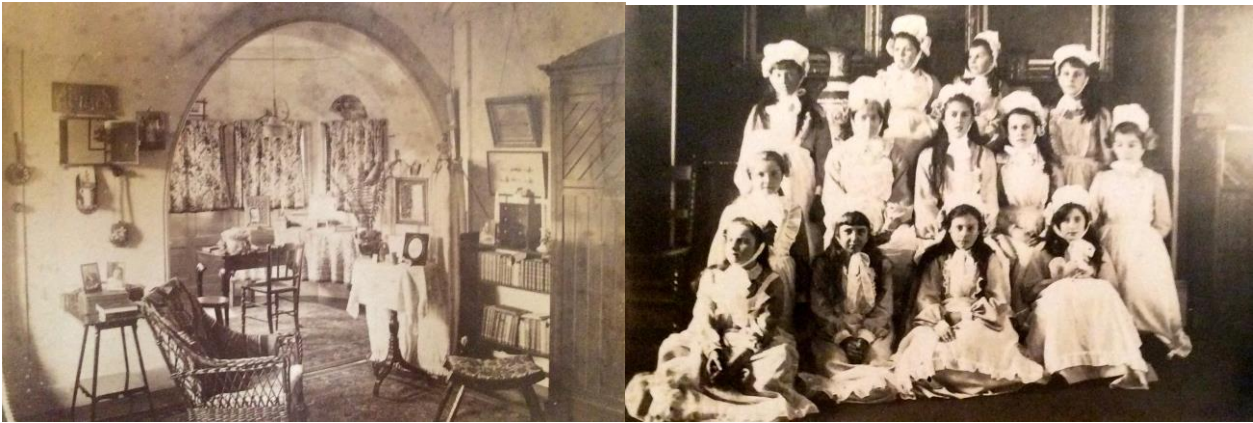
**Pencil sketch of the house in 1828 presented by Miss MacVicar**

A year later in 1891, the birth of Robert Neil Stewart (Neil), son of John Charles Stewart and Mary Babington of 30 Heriot Row, Edinburgh – the finest street in the New Town – was registered. He was to spend a joyous childhood at Kinlochmoidart, living with his parents at Glenmoidart House two miles up the Glen from the “Big House” and overlooking Loch Lochans.



**The bridge at Lochans crossing the Moidart to Glenmoidart House**

Down the glen, the main house by now was settling down and domestic life was lightened by the presence of a large staff.



### **Kinlochmoidart House house-keeper's bedroom and the staff**

Neil's younger sister Sybil joined the lassies in this photograph. She is second on the left in front.

### **A slight diversion with regard to the yachts**

Currently on the wall at Kinlochmoidart there are three yacht models. The first is a puzzle because it has no plaque on it, or label on the back. It represents a steam yacht with a single funnel, a bridge and portholes down the side. In later reports Robert Stewart is said to have commissioned three yachts and as the other two seem to have provenance, it is reasonable to assume that this model represents the first of the three.

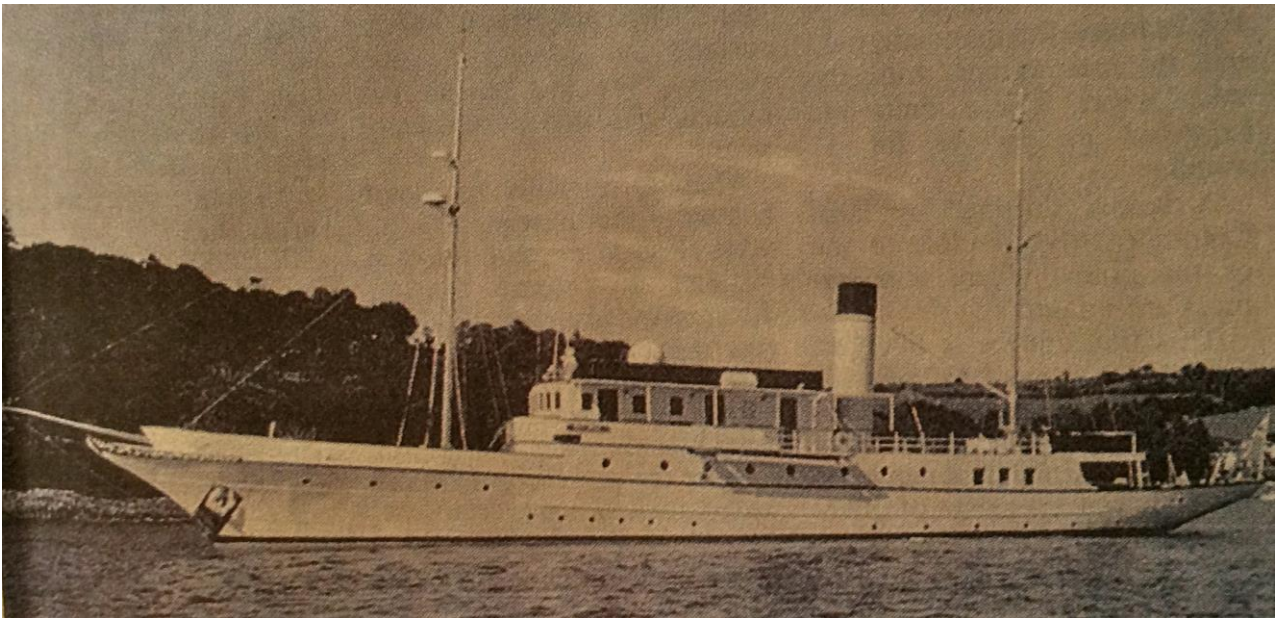


The other two yachts were both called Minona after the African Goddess of sorcery and fortune-telling. The model above is the last of the three.

Yacht number two was commissioned in 1896 and the label on the model says "*SSY Minona, built by Ailsa Shipbuilding of Troon, to a design by GL Watson & Co of Glasgow. Engineered by Muir & Houston of Glasgow*". The carving shows a sleek clipper bow boat, with a bowsprit and mast and is altogether more sophisticated than the first model.

Yacht number three was commissioned in 1906 and has a label saying "*SY Minona, launched by Ramage & Ferguson Ltd., Leith to a Watson Design*". It looks very similar to yacht number two and could easily be mistaken for her, were it not for the fact that the label shows a different builder.





## Kalizma

This is a photograph of a press cutting of the yacht owned by Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor in 1967. It was called Kalizma after their children Kate, Liza and Maria, but according to the press report, had started life off as Minona, and was built for Robert Stewart.

The after-life of Minona may appear well-documented because it was frequently written about – but there are inconsistencies and cross-overs. Reports state that Robert Stewart sold Minona after two years to George Coats and that many years later (including service in both wars) it was owned by Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, by which time it was called Kalizma. It was subsequently owned by Peter de Savary and used as a base for his America's Cup challenge.

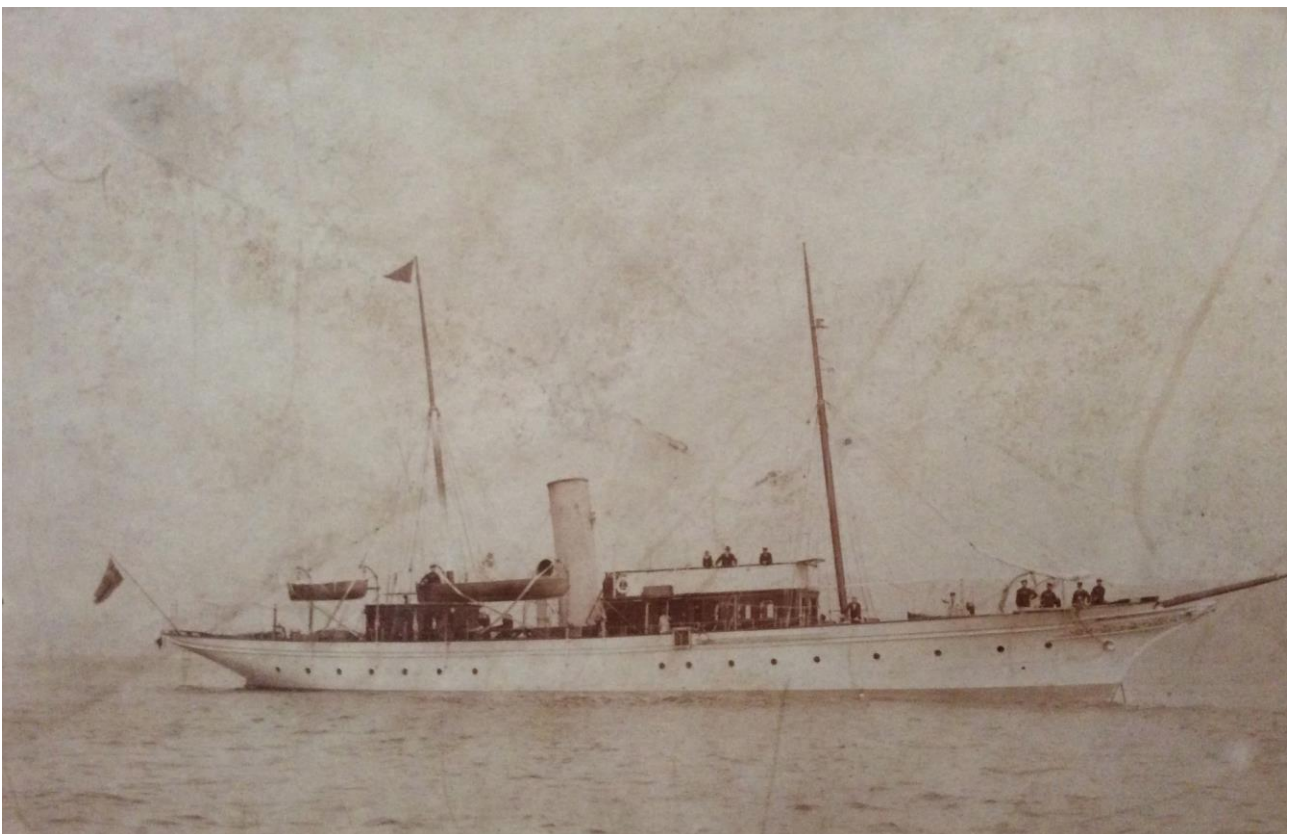


According to Yachting World in August 1986, another change of ownership brought extensive structural modifications, the bow being remodelled and the topsides raised ..... *"in 1954 she was taken over by the Belgian Boels family of Antwerp and enjoyed ten years of private ownership. In their hands she went through major alterations. Off came the original clipper bow and old fashioned cutwater to be replaced by a mild steel, rolled bow. The counter was drawn out into a canoe stern and up went the topsides to give vastly more spacious accommodation"*.

The magazine also published a photograph of what Kalizma currently looked like (see left).

This magazine article was made to sound far-fetched when, some time later, another yacht called Kalizma was being offered for charter, and looked nothing like the Kalizma in the Yachting magazine, but very like one of the original Minonas. Indeed, it looks very like the Burton's yacht with an addition upper deck to part. The on-line advertisement offering it stated:

**"Kalizma** This 50 m (165 foot) luxury yacht was crafted by Ramage & Ferguson in 1906 and was previously called Minona; Cortynia; Odysseia. When Richard Burton bought it for Elizabeth Taylor, it was renamed 'The Kalizma' for Burton's children Kate, Liza and Maria. The Yacht was used in both World Wars and after a thorough recent rebuild in Dubai, which saw the addition of a new top deck is now in top condition again."



**An original Minona a hundred years previously, with Robert Stewart on board**





**A Minona today, owned by an Indian businessman – but which Minona is it, or is it Minona at all?**

It seems that the two modern images of Kalizma and Minona show yachts very similar, but not identical to the ones commissioned by Robert Stewart. The question is, are they the same boat after various different modifications (particularly to the superstructure), or are they two boats, both Minonas, but treated slightly differently? The claim that the yacht in Yachting World is really Kalizma following massive alterations, seems rather far-fetched, particularly as these modifications seem now to have been entirely removed.



**Three  
Generations  
of Stewarts**

Neil  
Charles and  
Robert





**William Babington, Charles, Neil, Augusta Babington and Anna Stewart**





**Other folk lived at Kinlochmoidart too:** It must not be forgotten that other people lived at Kinlochmoidart as well as the Stewarts. Here is Neil with the gardeners at the Old House.

There is a headstone on the Green Isle (Eilean Fhianain) to Donald Cameron, head gardener at Kinlochmoidart. He died in 1901 and had been gardener on the estate for 55 years – 37 with the Robertson Macdonalds and 18 years with Robert Stewart. He was also the Postmaster at Kinlochmoidart and ran the shop.

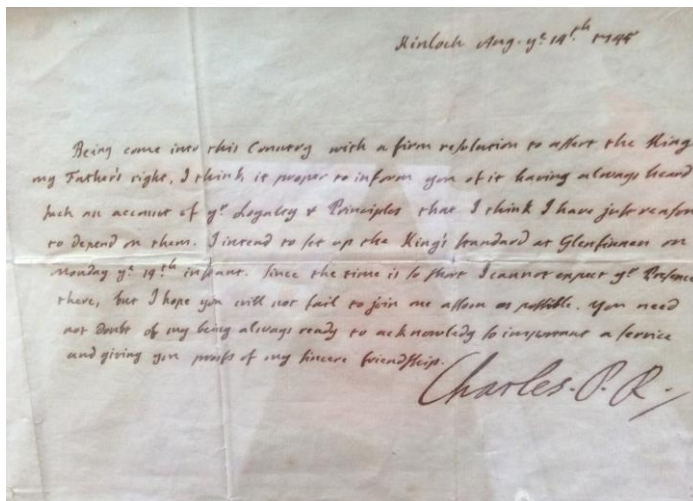


### **The young laird**

During the 1890s most of the delightful photographs taken of the young Neil Stewart were probably taken by Frederick Stevenson. Here Neil is on the road to the church, with the Old Parsonage in the background.



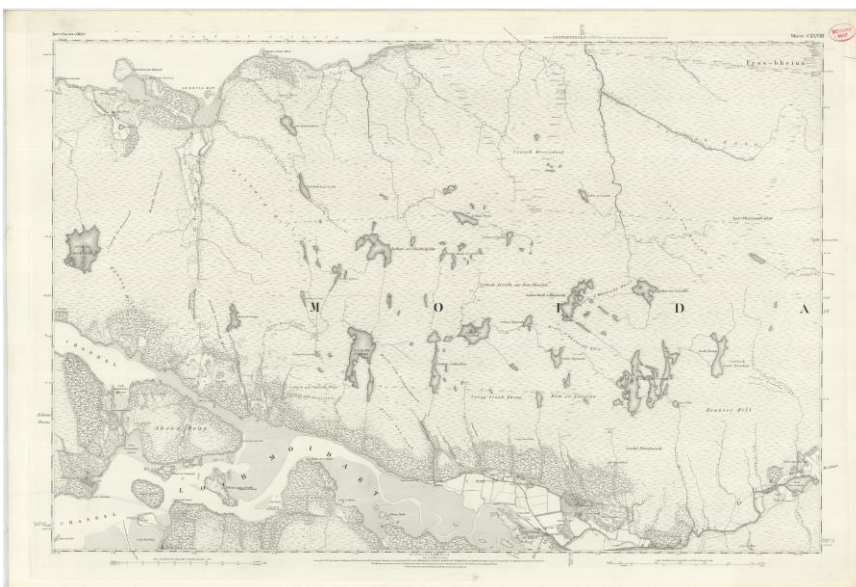
**This lady lived at Ardmolich across the river.**



### **Bonnie Prince Charlie came to Kinlochmoidart in 1745**

In 1898 Robert Stewart acquired a letter from Bonnie Prince Charlie for £73.19.4, which, because of its association with Kinlochmoidart, was a particular treasure. Recently another letter written by Bonnie Prince Charlie to the French King, was auctioned by Lyon & Turnbull for £32,000.

In 1898 a New Parish Council Committee was appointed for Arisaig and Moidart. This included William Blackburn, Farmer of Irine and John Charles Stewart of Glenmoidart. Col MacDonald of Glenaladale was again elected Chairman unanimously. From this can be deduced that Charles was getting involved in local affairs.



**The marches between Kinlochmoidart and Roshven were sources of continuous enjoyable bickering for Professor Blackburn and exasperation for Robert Stewart**

Disagreements with Professor Blackburn rumbled on and at the beginning of the new century Robert Stewart wrote to Blackburn announcing that he



proposed to erect a sheep fence at his own expense along the March with Roshven. He had taken advice regarding the dispute over fences with Blackburn, and had been advised that the cost of any action would outweigh any benefit obtained. He told Blackburn that failing agreement to allow him to erect this fence, he will point Blackburn's sheep should they stray and charge for their recovery.

Professor Blackburn responded by seeking legal opinion, suggesting that the use of the ground had now changed and that the repairing obligations of the mutual fence between his property and that of Robert Stewart did not pertain. He suggested that the implied joint repairing covenant should therefore be overturned.

In an Opinion, Lord Kyllachy did not agree.

Interestingly, Professor Blackburn and Robert were very near in age (b.1823 and 1825 respectively). They both died in 1909.

### **The new Century at Kinlochmoidart**

In 1900 a new boat, the Clanranald, was placed on Loch Shiel and this permitted transport up to Glenfinnan a method still in use more than 50 years later. In 1900, the railway line between Fort William and Mallaig had also just been opened although there was still no road between Kinlochmoidart and Lochailort. That would have to wait another 65 years.

There were local obligations to being a laird too; Charles became involved in local affairs.

It was in 1903 that the Arisaig and Moidart Parish Council were advised by the Inspector the paupers' house at Kinlochmoidart was in a very dilapidated condition. He submitted a letter from Mr. J Charles Stewart in which he stated that Mr. R Stewart of Kinlochmoidart was willing to let a cottage to the Parish Council for a rent of two pounds per annum. The Council agreed to this. Further, paupers' clothing quotations were received from four sources. Shortlisted were H MacDonald of Moidart and Matheson & Sons of Arisaig both of whom were appointed. Men's and boys' suits (from 30/-) were to be supplied.

Although the issue of fishing rights on the River Moidart had been raised and settled by Robert Stewart in 1882, a slightly wider question arose with regard to netting rights in the sea loch.

In 1904 Charles had correspondence with others regarding the unsatisfactory conduct of the tenant of the Crown Lease (Donaldson), who had these net fishings. The matter was resolved eventually by buying out the lease, which ran until 1911.



### **Neil Stewart was growing up**

Charles's son Neil, started out wishing to be a sailor and went to Osborne, the Naval training college on the Isle of Wight. However, he contracted pneumonia and was discharged "unfit".

Upon his recovery he was sent to Harrow (like his father), and followed that with the Royal Military College Sandhurst, subsequently joining the Cameron Highlanders.

### **The school by the Old Bridge**

The Kinlochmoidart school was up and running when Robert bought the estate in 1883. It finally closed in 1945 at Christmas and the remaining three children were transferred to Mingarry School over the hill. The feu was extinguished when Neil bought it for £700 in 1958.



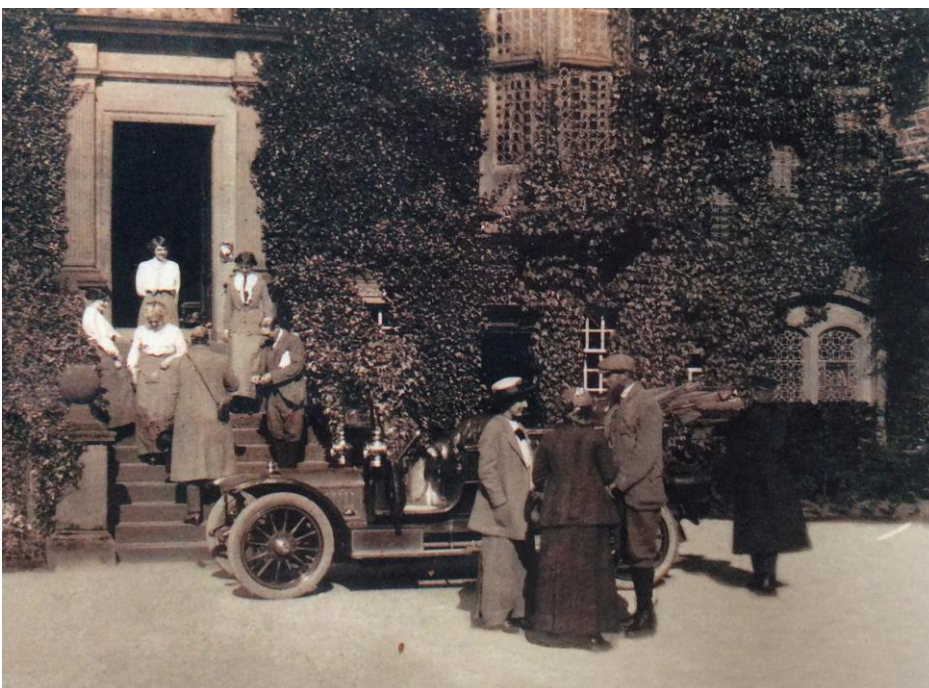




### **The Gamie's House**

The Gamie lived at Burnside Cottage, which had also received the "Leiper" treatment and been remodelled following Robert's purchase.

According to Sandy Macdonald (1892-1982), "*Brunery Cottage, or Kinlochuachrach as it was known in the old days, was built for Mr Stewart's Head Keeper. The first keeper which Sandy knew was a Macdougall, followed by another man of the same name and after him a Roderick Macdonald. When he left, Mr MacAulay, the farmer, put his shepherd there*".



### **Motor transport comes to Kinlochmoidart, together with a chauffeur**

This motor car came to Kinlochmoidart, by way of Acharacle and Salen.



## Edwardian House party at Kinlochmoidart

Robert Stewart by this time, is visibly getting old. Sybil is standing next to him.

Margaret died in 1907.

Charles had adopted full highland dress.

Robert Stewart died in 1909. The books in his room at Kinlochmoidart included "Moidart or among the Clanranald"s, by Father Charles Macdonald, Boswell's "Life of Johnson" and books of history, sermons, yacht building, agriculture and various Journals. His obituary reads in part as follows:

*" Mr Robert Stewart of Kinlochmoidart, who has died at the age of 84 years, was a prominent figure in business circles in Edinburgh and the social life of Inverness-shire. Besides his partnership in the firm of Messrs John Stewart & Co., Kirkliston Distillery, his many business activities included a seat on the board of directors of the Distilleries Company Ltd., a directorship of the National Bank of Scotland, the chairmanship of the New Zealand and Australian Land Company, and a directorship of the Caledonian Insurance Company and the National Guarantee and Suretyship Association.*

*After his wife's death, Mr Stewart stayed chiefly in Kinlochmoidart, but a few years ago he removed his town residence from Edinburgh to London. His remains were conveyed to London for interment."*

## Fishing nets bought off

Shortly after Robert's death, Charles Stewart was part of a consortium of local worthies who bought off the nets. There is correspondence between MacRitchie Bayley & Henderson, 4 Hill Street, Edinburgh, Lord Howard's solicitors and Fraser Stodart & Ballingall W.S. agents to Mr Stewart of Kinlochmoidart, examining the possibility of conservation of salmon stocks by the removal of nets. The value of the Ardnamurchan fishing was estimated at £400 p.a. The initiative was promoted by Mr Rudd the proprietor of the coastal fishings, who suggested he would contribute £150 a year, with a similar amount to be contributed by Lord Howard and the balance of £100 p.a. might be met by the other four benefactors of the nets coming off, namely - Col Macdonald of Glenalladale, Lord Morton, Miss Riddell of Sunart and Robert Stewart of Kinlochmoidart at £25 each. This arrangement continued for some time and it appears that the five contributors to this scheme effectively acquired the netting rights in perpetuity as a result. These rights have never been exercised.



## Neil had a taste for speed

In 1911, (aged 20) Neil broke the six hour record for a single cylinder motor cycle, riding a 3 ½ h.p. Trump Jap.


*"Lieut RN Stewart, of the Cameron Highlanders, broke the six hour record at Brooklands for single cylinder machines, riding a 3 1/2 h.p. Trump Jap. He managed 50 m.p.h. until a gale of wind and bad weather slowed him down. After a puncture, a number of pit stops for fuel and the replacement of two faulty drive-belts, he crossed the line, having completed 254 miles in 6 hours and taken the record".*

**SIX HOURS' TRACK RECORD BEATEN.**

Mr Stewart's intermediate times are interesting. They are as under:

Miles	Time
50	14.25
100	28.50
150	43.15
200	57.45
250	72.15

Mr Stewart's record is 254 miles in 6 hours.



Lieut. Stewart, who broke the six hours' single-cylinder motor bicycle record last Saturday, covering 254 miles in that time. The reflection of his machine in the water shows the state of the track.

At the commencement the rider maintained an average speed of about fifty to fifty-two miles an hour until the rain fell, when he had to stop to shorten his belt; he also stopped in the sixth lap for a puncture which caused a delay of five minutes. Stops for petrol or to tighten the belt were also made in the 29th, 41st, 46th, 53rd, 63rd, 64th, and 66th laps, but the intrepid record aspirant kept steadily on, riding magnificently.

In the 76th lap a stop of eight minutes was necessary owing to a broken pipe. With the exception of the above-mentioned incidents the motor and the machine ran without a hitch. At the conclusion of the sixth hour Mr Stewart had ridden 254 miles 37 yards, which is a record for a single-cylinder engine not exceeding 500 c.c. The following are the official times and speeds:

Time	Miles	Yards
1 hour	46	772 yds.
2 hours	95	1,397 "
3 "	132	1,559 "
4 "	176	1,443 "
5 "	215	95 "
6 "	254	37 "

\*Record for class.

## The first World War

In the lead-up to 1914 Charles was dealing with management issues at Kinlochmoidart, for example when letters were exchanged with Glenaladale relating to the March, when a Glenaladale shooting tenant had complained of Kinlochmoidart trespass. The signatory and "apologist" from Kinlochmoidart was Charles Stewart.

As a separate matter, he granted a lease of Kinacara to Donald Macdonald for 5 years from Martinmas 1915 at £10 per annum. "The tenant was permitted to keep a horse and allow it to graze on the links on the whole of Loch Moidart, but not allow it to stray on a public road. The tenant was not permitted to keep a cow or a pig and had to get permission for a dog. The tenant could not use any part of the property for a shop, other than that which is purpose-built, and keep all empty boxes and casks out of sight of the road at the back".

The farm at Kinlochmoidart was let at Martinmas 1920 to John McAlpin and wife for 15 years with a break at the 5<sup>th</sup> year. The letting comprised the Home Farm plus hill grazings, which conveyed the right to graze not more than 100 head of cattle. The arable lands comprised 160 acres and the hill grazings 3,500 acres. Buildings which were included consisted of Low Farm and Brunery, plus workers' cottages annexed, and portions of the farm steading at Kinlochmoidart, namely byre, calf-house, turnip shed, hay shed, and piggery. Also included were threshing house with mill and crusher, dairy and the smithy near Low Farm and the fanks, corn racks and other erections.

The tenants were also bound to supply the Landlord's household and certain employees with milk, mutton and potatoes, as well as milk to the Shop and Schoolhouse. In addition they covenanted to supply manure for the Landlord's garden and to cut hay in his Orchard. Rent £250 per annum.



## Kinlochmoidart offered for sale

In 1924, the Kinlochmoidart estate was offered for sale by auction by Messrs. Knight Frank & Rutley but did not achieve its reserve price and was not sold. It was advertised as having 15,000 acres, deer forest, salmon and sea trout fishing, a let farm of 160 acres and numerous estate houses as well as the principal residence.

It is said that the reason for trying to sell was that the Stewart family were comparatively poor 15 years after Robert's death and had tried to sell out of necessity. Charles was himself an invalid for much of his life and it is reported that for many years he had permanent nursing care.

## Letting of Glenmoidart

In 1927, an eventful letting of the sporting rights took place, when Glenmoidart was let to a Miss Edith Margery Lees for the season at £700. This was to play an important role in the future of the property.



All Cheques and Money Orders to be made Payable to the Company.

J.C.Stewart Esq.,

ACHARACLE. S.O.,

Oct 19 34

of Kinlochmoidart

To The Loch Shiel Steamboat Service Company, Ltd.

856/34		Cartage	Railway	Steamer	TOTAL
AUG .	To balance of account ren'd.				<i>pd 22/10/34 Cal. h.w.S.</i> - 11
Sep 1	1 crate accumulator.A.Sidley	4	4 6	9	- 5 7
	1 pol ex Lucas.	2		6	- - 8
	1 bx acc'r	6		1 -	- 1 6
5	1 1/2 brl ale.	9		2 -	- 2 9
8	1 case Acc'r Lucas Ltd.,	6	10 3	1 -	- 11 9
	XXXXXXXXXX.1 Lawn Mower.Fraser	6	1 7	1 -	- 3 1
10	1 cycle wheel.Fraser.	2	1 1	6	- 1 9
	3 bdles. firebars.1 bag.	9		2 -	- 2 9
11	1 bx ammunition.	2		6	- - 8
13	1 " books.				- - 8
14	1 " " D.& F.Library	2	1 7	6	- 2 3
20	1 h.Venison.Jackson.	3	6 3	9	- 7 3
21	1 case/ waters.	6		1 -	- 1 6
22	2 cases whisky.	6	5 2	1 -	- 6 8

### Transport before the road link through Glenuig

Loch Shiel was still a principle form of transport as this invoice to Charles in 1934 shows.

## The period leading up to Neil's inheritance in 1935

The period between the end of the First World War and Neil's inheriting of the estate upon the death of his father Charles, was turbulent and momentous, not only for Neil but also for his bride-to-be.

Before his marriage to Georgette in 1937 (a happy marriage lasting 36 years), both had had earlier marriages and both (particularly Georgette) had traumatic and fantastic stories to tell.

At the end of her life, Georgette said *"Paris was a magic to me and something I thought that I would miss always, but Kinlochmoidart became my Paris and I was so very happy there. This is something I want to put on record as very few people know really how much attached I was to this place."*

### Neil's story:

Neil ended the First War as a Lt Col in the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. He was sent to T'bilisi in Transcaucasia in temporary command of his brigade. The purpose was to keep the peace between Georgia and Armenia and he was appointed Chairman of the Peace Conference and Military Governor of the Neutral Zone comprising Borchala Province and the district of Akhalkalaki, with his headquarters in Alaverdi.

Upon return to England, he found peacetime soldiering a dull business and prospects of promotion not good because of the number of other senior officers. He decided to retire in 1921.

In some notes he prepared later, with sketches from his early life, he said:-

*"Our family on both sides were in comfortable circumstances and for long had been used to the placid security of long years of prosperity and peace. My grandparents brought their families up in a code of rigid integrity, class distinction, and they were taught to believe they owed a duty to their country and to their tenants and employees. Elder sons were trained to succeed to properties, younger ones went into the military or the church"*



### Motorcycle racing

Neil broke ranks with his background with his next career choice. Motor racing and speed appealed to him, and in particular motorcycles, which curiously in those days, he noted, carried higher rewards than racing cars. So he took it up.

His decision caused raised eyebrows in the family because it was no job for a gentleman, but he said he never regretted his choice and met many people whose friendship he valued.

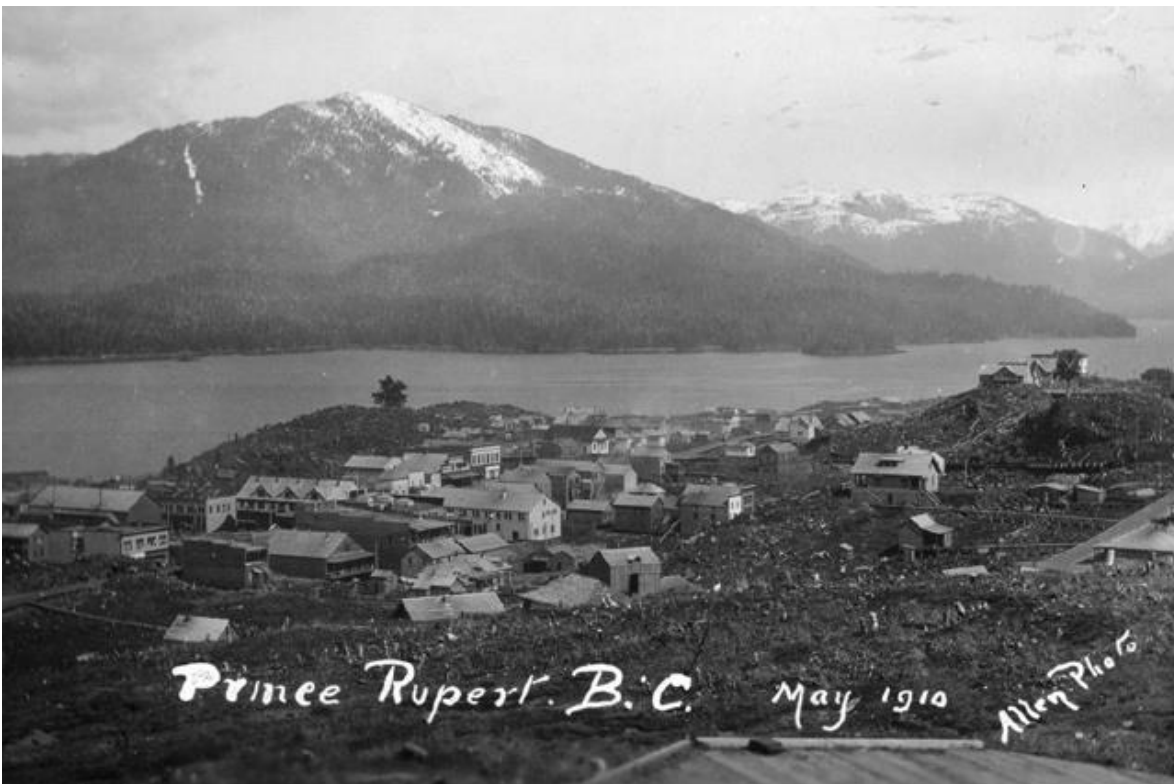




## The Queen of Speed

It was while he was involved in racing that he met the "Queen of Speed", Gwenda Janson. She was the daughter of Major General Sir Frederick Manley Glubb and at that time married to Colonel Sam Janson, a director of the Spyker car company. Gwenda became interested in motor racing and established a 1,000 mile record in 1921 and in 1922 took the Double-12-hour record at Brooklands on a Trump-Jap motorcycle, the same manufacturer provided Neil with his own record breaking machine in 1911. She also broke records in cars.

Gwenda's marriage to Janson had taken place in 1920 but only lasted three years after she developed a close relationship with Neil. Janson divorced her in 1923.



## Neil moved to Prince Rupert in the early Twenties

During the upheaval of Gwenda's divorce, Neil moved to Prince Rupert in British Columbia for a while.

He says in his unpublished memoirs that he decided racing was “*a young man’s game*” and he was getting too old. He therefore decided to involve himself in fast inboard-engine marine craft and it seemed to him that the widest field lay on the Pacific Coast of North America. That is where he went and he spent the next six months on a forty-footer at Prince Rupert.

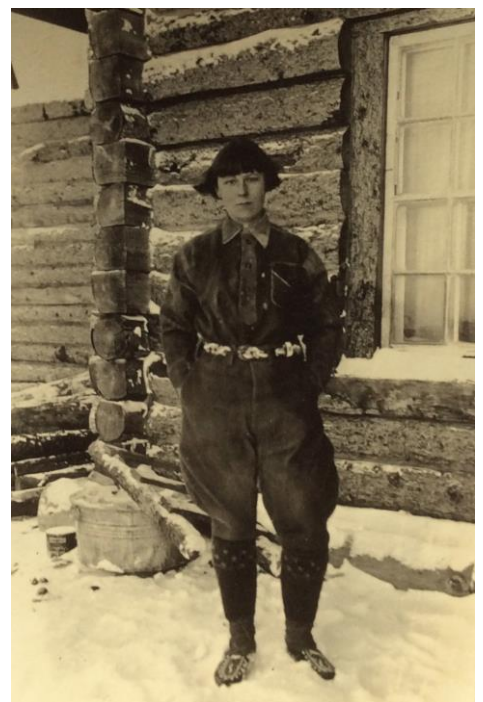


### **Stern Wheeler on the Yukon: A postcard brought back by Neil**

At the end of this period, still footloose, he took a further twelvemonth break to explore Alaska, travelling from White Horse to Dawson City by a river steamer stern-wheeler. Here he befriended some mining folk, prospected for gold and climbed Mount McKinley, which in the native tongue is called “Denali”, or “The High One”. The summit is 20,237 feet above sea level.



It appears from the photographic records that at some time during this period Neil was joined by Gwenda.





Neil and Gwenda married in 1924. Almost immediately they moved to France where he was offered a job as an experimental engineer. During the next three years he worked on high speed engines.



### **Gwenda in France**

Brooklands (where Gwenda had previously raced and set records) had night-time restrictions on the track.

Gwenda always had specialised in racing against the clock and not against people. That is where her expertise and record-breaking lay, although she did also occasionally enter road races and competed at Le Mans a couple of times.

When they were in France Neil and Gwenda were pleased to find the unrestricted circuit at Montlhéry. Here Gwenda broke the world 24-hour motor cycle speed record on a Terrot-Jap machine.

In 1927 Neil and Gwenda came back from France to England and Neil, wishing to exploit his knowledge of engines and boating, must have astonished his family yet again when he bought a powerful American inboard-engined craft of just under 30 feet and offered trips around the bay at Clacton during the summer.

He had a very successful season and did the same thing next year at Bridlington.

He had a speculative look at repeating this exercise in France on the Riviera but decided, correctly, that the market was entirely different.



### **Leaving London for Oslo by Speedboat**

In 1929 Neil produced a mad-cap scheme for driving a motor launch from London to Oslo. It was, in reality, a vast publicity stunt. Together with Gwenda and Wally Swift, a Thames waterman, he set off in an adapted 30 foot Thornycroft launch for Oslo by way of Aberdeen. It had a 140 h.p. engine and was capable of 36 knots. The eventful journey was duly made, the two principal hazards being the weather (which frankly was rather too much for the boat at times) and floating baulks of Scandinavian timber, which had been washed overboard from cargo ships. The journey featured in many newspapers.



**Oslo at  
journey's end**



This adventure secured the Thorneycroft agency in the Western Mediterranean for Neil. However not much later the stock market crash caused a lot of belt tightening and the bottom fell out of the yacht and motor launch market. Neil remained in France and continued to work in "engineering", although it seems fair to say that some of this activity was also involvement in the arms trade.

Regrettably the marriage to Gwenda foundered and they divorced. As a post-script and a little later, she became the fastest ever woman driver at Brooklands at the time, lapping at an amazing 135 m.p.h. in a Derby car with a Maserati engine. She eventually married one of her mechanics called Douglas Hawkes. After the Second World War, she and Douglas moved to the Greek Island of Poros where she died in 1990, aged 96.



### **Georgette**

During the early 1930s, Neil met Georgette, in Paris. She was a Georgian refugee and an excellent linguist. Their first meetings were business-like with Georgette helping out on the secretarial side, but in due course a deeper friendship developed.

When she was an older woman and after Neil's death, Georgette wrote down an account of this most turbulent period in her life, from the time she left Georgia in exile in 1921 at the age of 17, until her marriage to Neil in 1937. It reads like an adventure film script.

### Georgette's story:

In a lined notebook, written at Tipperlinn Road, Edinburgh, and transcribed after her death, Georgette wrote in pencil of her life between 1921 and 1937.



She described how she lived with her father, mother, brother and two sisters in T'bilisi in Georgia. They were a prosperous family with servants and her father owned a sanatorium nearby.

One night in 1921, she and her sister Sounanna were woken by their father at three in the morning to be told the Bolsheviks were going to occupy the town and they had to flee. Their mother was away on the west coast at Batumi



(over 200 miles away) raising funds for the Red Cross, brother Guivi was in the army (although only 16) and the other sister Medea was in London studying English.

Georgette and Sounanna dressed and set off to walk to the station about an hour away. Their plan was to travel to Batumi and find their mother. Father stayed behind because he was a doctor and would be needed to treat the wounded.

After three days the train stopped at Khashuri, a good distance short of their destination, and went no further. They went to see some friends who fed them and discovered that no trains were going to Batumi, although some were coming the other way. So they decided to wait at the station to intercept their mother. They stood on the platform for more than two days before spotting her anxious face, and the re-union was very joyful.

Then the Red Cross announced that a hospital train would, after all, be going back through to Batumi, so all three boarded and commenced a nightmare journey lasting two more days along with wounded people, some without limbs, receiving no medical attention. One of them died in Georgette's sight.

At Batumi, because the situation was moving downhill fast, with Communist infiltrations and sporadic fights, their mother made the decision to flee the country. They managed to get on a cargo boat going down the Black Sea to Constantinople and slept on deck. They had nothing but the clothes they stood up in.

The Mensheviks (The Georgian government-in-exile) were already in Constantinople and lent them some money. They found themselves a flat. Georgette's mother made a living by teaching them French, but then the Government-in-exile moved to Paris and they were left with no source of income.

Georgette managed to get a scholarship to a college on the outskirts of Constantinople, sponsored by an American philanthropist, possibly on account of the fact that her mother had been born in New Jersey.

Meanwhile her father, who had been put in charge of all the health resorts in the Caucasus by the Bolsheviks, found it impossible to work with them – particularly after they appropriated his sanatorium.

He managed to join his family in exile. At this stage, the League of Nations offered the whole family free passage to either the USA or to France. The choice made was France (driven, it appears by Georgette's mother) and they all moved, except Georgette, who had another two years to run at College in Constantinople.

Georgette continued her studies.

When at last, she was able to rejoin them in Paris, she was overwhelmed by its beauty. It was now 1924 and things were very bad in Georgia. Friends were being shot or sent to Siberia. Although homesick, she elected to stay abroad in France and got a job in the Galignani Library on the rue de Rivoli.



### **Galignani, rue de Rivoli**

The family were well acquainted with Paris. In their hey-day before leaving Georgia, they had travelled there often for holidays, and it was where Georgette's American Grandmother lived (although eventually she returned to the United States aged 82).

But now her family felt thoroughly displaced, separated from its roots, its way of life and its wealth. Her parents in particular were miserable. Her father attempted to run a clinic at Passy but went bankrupt. He always held out the hope that one day they would all return to Georgia and that what had happened had merely been a bad dream.

Two years later, in 1926, an old friend from Georgia arrived, an academic metallurgist who was to take a higher degree in mathematics at the Sorbonne. His name was Georges Nicoladze. In due course he and Georgette became fond of each other and he proposed to Georgette who accepted. There were huge difficulties about a visa for her going back with him to Georgia, now part of Russia. As a condition, the authorities required her to denounce her own father as a deserter and a bourgeois enemy of the Soviet Union. She anguished over this and talked it through with him but, after their discussion eventually did as requested. Even then it was to no avail, no visa was forthcoming.



Georgette and Georges married in Paris in 1927. Finally, through the intervention of her new sister-in-law in Moscow, Georgette got a visa and she returned to Georgia (now in the Soviet Union) with Georges in 1928.

What met her eyes when she returned to T'bilisi shocked her, particularly the poverty of her old friends and how conditions had changed since she left seven years earlier. No more big houses full of food, no more servants, the estate-owners who previously had lived off their rents had been dispossessed and had no profession to fall back on. Fear and suspicion reigned everywhere. Purges began. Georges was questioned at the University. She was interrogated by the Russian secret police with detailed questions about her family and on the contents of her letters, all of which had been opened. The experience had a devastatingly unsettling effect on Georgette.



### **A climbing disaster in the Caucasus on Mount Tetnulidi**

There was a terrible tragedy when in August 1928 with a party of 15 plus 6 guides, she went with Georges to the Caucasus to climb Mount Tetnulidi, a peak of 16,000 feet. The first attempt, they abandoned because of an avalanche, so they tried again. The summit party was Georges and two climbing companions, both students from the university. In a catastrophic accident, the two students lost their footing and fell down a crevasse and were killed.

The party returned to a very dismal reception in T'bilisi, bearing the bodies of the dead in bags for the funerals requested by their families.

The next three years passed fairly uneventfully. Because Georges was a scientist held in high esteem, the poverty of Communism did not affect them directly and Georgette felt that this situation was rather surreal.

Her brother Guivi, now back in Paris found exile unbearable and one day killed himself with a gun. He was 28. Georgette's father wrote and told her.

But an even bigger tragedy awaited Georgette. Georges got pneumonia and after a terrible illness lasting 14 days, died aged 40.

Georgette was desolate with grief and despair. With Georges, her husband and protector dead, Georgette resolved to return to Paris to rejoin her family but she could not get a visa. Beria, Stalin's head of secret police absolutely refused to let her go .....

*"how can you expect me to let the daughter of an enemy of the communists go to join her father; he must be punished and I am determined that he should not have the joy of being re-united with her".*

Georgette was desperate. She had a few Georgian "friends at court" and was directed by one of them to seek the help of Abel Enoukidze, a childhood friend of Joseph Stalin and now a very prominent member of the ruling elite. A few months later she travelled to Moscow, having learned that Enoukidze had responded to the approach, and she managed to secure an appointment to meet him.

He tried to persuade her to stay but then, seeing how desperate she was, said he would organise an immediate exit visa for a year.

She left on a train next day to Berlin and thence to Paris, never intending to return.

She was forever grateful to Abel Enoukidze. Tragically he was shot in a great purge of high officials five years later.

By now Georgette was now working as a secretary to Count Dudzelle in Paris and addition did a little free-lancing as well.

In 1931 she met Neil. They became inseparable.

Way back in 1921 in Georgia, she had also been aware of Neil, but this time as the Military Governor. He would have been 32 then and she a teenager. Although invited to her house, he had always refused as he wished to appear strictly neutral between the Georgians and the Armenians, as demanded by his appointment at the time. He and Georgette talked all about this when they met once again.





## **Neil prepared to return to Kinlochmoidart**

When Charles Stewart died, Neil returned to Kinlochmoidart to deal with matters.

*"Register of Sasines 1937: Anna Stewart and RN Stewart, etc Trustees of Disposition Settlement of J Charles Stewart the heritable property which should remain with him at death, (which was on 28 October 1935) - and subject to any bond or security lodged against it (as at date of death, £7,000), - the following lands:- The Estate of Kinlochmoidart viz: all of one merk land of Kinloch, one merk land of Bronarie, one merk land of Ullocarie, one merk land of Glenfersallen, one half merk land of Killescelba, one merk land Duillad and Assary, all merk land Kinlochachrioch and Badnagrogan and half merk land Chuilsmore and the feorling land of Shewnabigge,....*

*.....excepting always, the salmon fishings belonging to Duillad and Assary, Kenlochochrich and Badnagrogan, Chuiles muir and the Fairling lands of Sheunabegge."*

Fraser, Stodart & Ballingall WS advising, noted his wish to keep Kinlochmoidart. But once again, estate duty had taken a toll and it was Uncle Fred, Charles's younger brother who stepped in with a loan to Neil, to help him achieve this. In due course this was fully repaid.

When he went back to Paris in 1937, his divorce from Gwenda had been finalised and he was free to marry Georgette.



**Neil Stewart and his new wife Georgette Hambachidze of Asniers, formerly of Georgia**

Here are Neil and Georgette at Dorlin.

There was a certain serenity for both Neil and Georgette in their coming together in 1937 after such a very turbulent time and Kinlochmoidart remained their focus thereafter.

They remained happily married for the next 36 years having a son and a daughter. Tragically their first-born, Martin, had a hole in his heart and died suddenly at the age of six months. Georgette said that she never recovered entirely from this.

In 1936, Neil let Kinlochmoidart Home Farm to Alastair & Donald Smith of Eilean Shona, from 1936 to 1943 with a break in 1939, at £60 per annum. He stipulated occupation of Clifton Cottage in place of the Farmhouse. The Tenants had rights to graze 250 sheep and the Landlord reserved the right to have up to 35 head of cattle on the ground.





### **Major General Stewart was recalled to the army**

With the advent of the Second World War, in 1939, Neil was recalled to the army and appointed GOC North Highland Division with the rank of T/Major General. At the same time, he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Inverness-shire.





### **Disposing of part of the estate**

During the war, he had correspondence with Miss Lees, who since 1927 had had a tenancy of Glenmoidart. In one of her letters, she wrote "My dear Neil, many thanks for your letter of Sept 18th. I think that perhaps I did get a wrong interpretation from your previous one, but I am very glad to hear you don't want to part with the whole K.L.M. Estate, & note that you would only reluctantly consider selling the Glen."

In 1943, despite the vicissitudes of war, the sale of Glenmoidart took place. RN Stewart accepted Miss Lees's offer and the property has remained within her family ever since.

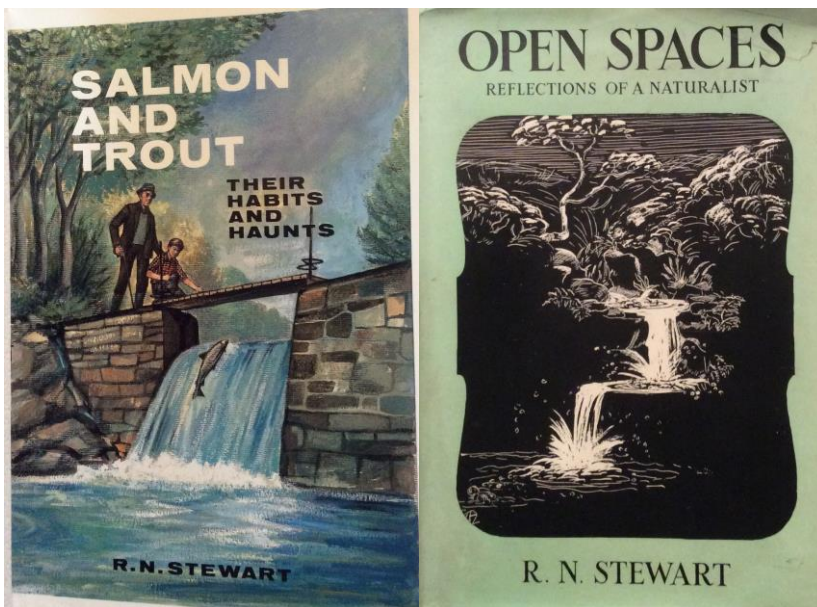


The next year, at the age of 52, RNS retired from the army and focussed mainly on country pursuits, in particular fishing.

Annual visits took place to Iceland as well as trips to Norway and memories were stored up for use in a series of excellent books which he wrote.

These were to some extent instructional, but always thought through and well written.





### Author and fisherman

*The Boys Book of Boats*  
*The Boys Book of Angling*  
*Running Silver*  
*Rivers of Iceland*

And many others,  
 including *The Swan*, a  
 charming reference to his  
 boyhood at Glenmoidart,  
 in a book of essays called  
*Open Spaces*.

In 1952, to recognize the importance of his research and writing *The Rivers of Iceland*, Neil was appointed Commodore of the Icelandic Falk Order and family papers include a warm letter of congratulations from Kristian Einarsson



### Postwar Kinlochmoidart

One of this band of happy local women wrote down some recollections of life in the 1950s at Kinlochmoidart. Here is her report on activity in the Women's Rural Institute at the big house.

*"The ladies got their heads together and decided to cream-wash the walls of the room which the General had kindly made available and painted the grate black....everyone brought something to eat at these meetings which was pooled on a plate and one member brought a large kettle which was permanently on the boil...."*

*Miss Lees (from Glenmoidart House) added a certain amount of dignity, but even she was many times convulsed with laughter and just sat there holding her ribs....At the end of each meeting, we had a game we loved to play, called Rag Bag. There were corsets, bloomers, bras, bathing costumes and when the music stopped, we would all rush to the Rag Bag and put something on. This was hilarious and we used to laugh our heads off."*

In the early 1960s, RSN received advice from his lawyers about a way of reducing death duty and accordingly took steps.

He died in 1972, aged 81.

### **1972 Obit RN Stewart:**

General RN Stewart, MC, OBE, Croix de Chevalier de Legion d'honneur, died; (born 1891).

Extract from Obit from The Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth & Camerons).

*"Puggy Stewart died on 21st June 1972. Only son of JC Stewart and Anna nee Babington, daughter of Colonel W Babington of 7th Hussars. Osborne, Harrow, RMC Sandhurst. After WWI retired in 1921 with rank of Lt Colonel. Recalled at outbreak of WWII, later appointed GOC North Highland District with rank of T/Major-General. Married first Gwenda daughter of Major-General Sir F Manley Glubb (marriage subsequently dissolved) and secondly Georgette, daughter of Doctor Hambachidze of Asniers, Paris, by whom he had a son (dead) and daughter".*



### **Nino Denali Stewart**

Nino has unusual names for a Scottish lady. Her first name is after the patron saint of Georgia, her mother's birthplace, and her second name is the native Indian word for Mount McKinley in Alaska, scaled by her father.





## **Nino inherits the estate**

In the period following her inheritance, Nino had a bleak time financially trying to cope with a vast mansion which had been built a hundred years earlier, and which had always had problems with damp penetration, had been poorly maintained for the past fifty years and remained fundamentally unchanged since it was built.

At probate it was described by the valuers as "*an old Victorian country house in a poor state of repair and with considerable outbreaks of dry rot on each floor. Only part of the house was used for summer visits, the remaining parts being unoccupied*".

Georgette, who was still alive, expressed her anguish when she said

*"I am glad Nino, in spite of the many difficulties, tries to hold on to it, and I pray that all the work she is putting in to it, will in the end be worthwhile".*

Kinlochmoidart House was extremely lucky not to have been demolished at this time, like many of the other "White Elephant" Victorian trophy houses in the area, such as Dorlin House and Shielbridge House, both by now reduced to rubble.

It was the fact that Kinlochmoidart House had remained virtually unchanged since its original construction, that was to be its saving grace, although Nino did not know this at the time. She still had the next fifteen years to get through.



## **Disposals**

Nino sold various houses on the estate, to make ends meet, amongst others getting rid of Low Farmhouse and Burnside Cottage. She let the houses in the grounds of the big house for holidays and tried to make a business out of the estate. But the burden of the main property remained. What had started out as a joyous celebration of wealth a hundred years before, became an albatross in the late twentieth century.

Georgette died in August 1981.

## **Redemption on the horizon**

In 1984, the Scottish Development Department began to express interest, and in a letter thanking Nino for allowing their representative to visit said,

*"It is without doubt, the most interesting house from an architectural and historical point of view in the area. The retention of so many of the original internal fittings and the wall papers is very remarkable".*

And then there was mention of approaching the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments to mount a recording exercise. Finally the letter concludes

*"I was concerned by the extent of the dry rot and roof problems which you have and would be very willing to discuss these further, together with my colleague who deals with Historic Buildings Council matters in your area, if you would like to call on us at Drumsheugh Gardens."*



As a result, between 1986 and 1996 official help stepped in with very substantial support. Huge sums of money were granted, Simpson and Brown, Architects of Edinburgh devised a scheme of preserving the whole, but subdivided into 5 units to provide a viable future for letting.

Of particular interest was the interior. In Stephen Jefferson's words,

*"The interior decoration of Kinlochmoidart House has remained almost entirely unaltered since the 1880s and hence the importance of the house lies not only in its architectural quality, but in its expression of the decorative arts of late Victorian Britain, demonstrated in the wallpapers, fireplaces, furniture, window lights, pictures, ornaments and soft furnishings. Interior photographs of the 1880s, show that remarkably little has altered in the intervening century".*



**The  
Seven  
Men of  
Moidart  
were  
showing  
signs of  
their age  
too.**

As an interlude in all this activity, Nino also had her civic duties as the Laird to perform. In the early nineteenth century, seven beech trees had been planted opposite Kinacara, to commemorate the "Seven Men of Moidart" who accompanied Bonnie Prince Charlie when he landed there in 1745. But in 1988 they were in poor shape following winter storms and the Highland Council arranged a ceremony for Nino and Miss Monica McLean (aged 5, who lived opposite) to replant them. The weather and soil conditions have never been kind to beech trees in this location and regrettably they are struggling to survive.

At last the work on the house was finished. Well over a million pounds had been granted (at a maximum level of 80%) on the restoration of what was now recognised as a beautiful original Victorian House. It had all been very worthwhile. A high level of interest in the restored house continues to this day with visits from academics and historians and others.





**The exterior parts were extensively repaired and made wind and watertight again.**



Inside, the restoration was astonishing





The interior parts were virtually back in their original condition. Subject only to slight restoration of some materials, absolutely everything, appeared pristine again. If not actually original in a few places, a very exact copy had been achieved. The hall bears witness to this in two photographs a hundred years apart.

Kinlochmoidart House had also been made economically viable again by achieving an owner's portion plus four lettable sub-units within the whole, each complete and each achieved with very little alteration to the original structure.



## Kinlochmoidart House featured in Country Life

The accolade of being featured in *Country Life* as a desirable Scottish residence in the early part of the Twenty First Century was beyond the wildest dreams of Nino when she took over the structural wreck she inherited in 1972. As she has said subsequently, she had been very lucky indeed. A number of circumstances all came together, which enabled it to be done. The right parties came and saw and were enchanted and alarmed. The right funds were available. The right professionals and physical team came together and did the job. And very satisfying indeed was the fact that much of the work was done under the direction of talented local master-craftsmen.

Looking to the future, the next generation of Stewarts are already in place. Nino's only child David Stewart Howitt (b 1966) married Lady Louisa, daughter of the Earl of Moray in 2002 and they have two children, Robert (b 2004) and Cleodie (b 2006).

### **Acknowledgements:**

*Stewart family papers and photographs*  
*Kinlochmoidart House, by Stephen Jefferson*  
*Notes by Rosemary Bonnalie edited by Iain Thornber and other extracts*  
*Internet for other open information*  
*Yachting World photograph*  
*Country Life photograph*  
*Moidart Local History Group*

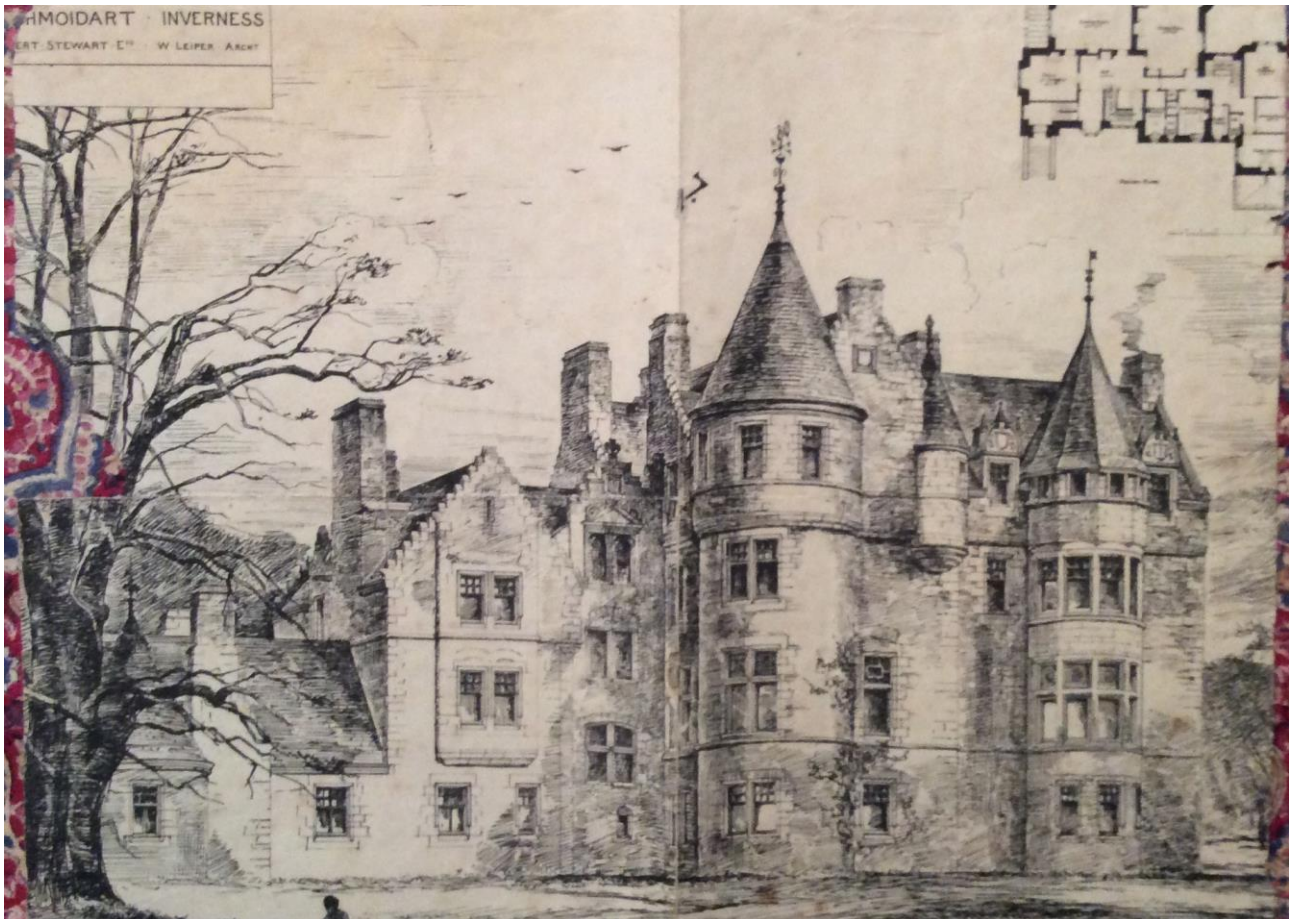




**Nino's study in Kinlochmoidart, where much of this research was done.**

*Tim Robertson - July 2014*





**THE DESIGN FOR KINLOCHMOIDART HOUSE IN 1883,  
AND  
HOW IT LOOKS NOW, MORE THAN A CENTURY LATER**

