



Children of the Black House

Calum Ferguson

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Children of the Black House is a fascinating glimpse into life on the Hebridean island of Lewis from the middle of the nineteenth century up to the 1970s. Calum Ferguson employs an unusual narrative technique, drawing on his mother Mairead's reminiscences, and presenting her experiences and conversation in the first person. This book describes the treadmill of seasonal work on the croft, the all too frequent loss of bread-winners through wars and drowning at sea, but also the richness of the culture: the storytelling, music-making, dancing, interdependence of families and the sincere religious faith that sustained the islanders through their trials. Gaining in confidence, many families sought to improve their lot through higher education, and the number of university graduates from the poorest communities became a source of pride for all. This remarkable memoir is a treasury of personal recollections, traditional tales, poetry and songs, and contains a wealth of detail about everyday life on Lewis through those years. It is illustrated throughout with photographs of Mairead, her family and friends and of the crofting way of life.

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