



[The Clans and Landlords of Lewis]

The Clan Macleod held sway in Lewis for three or four centuries prior to 1598, which was the date King James VI of Scotland granted a Crown Charter for Lewis to a group of lowland gentlemen adventurers known to history as the Fife Adventurers.

The intention of the Fife Adventurers was to invade the Island and re-colonise the place with lowlanders, in order to exploit the reported rich resources of that profitable and fertile Island, an Island fertile with 'corn as well as great quantities of fish'.

An invading force of 600 mercenaries under the command of the Duke of Lennox, the King's cousin, prepared, in their own words, to 'ruit out the barbarous inhabitants', who were supposed to have given themselves over to all kinds of 'barbarite and inhumanite, and was void of any knowledge of God and his religion'.

The expectation of that aspiring colonial mission was therefore of greatly increased revenues for the benefit of the King and his conspirators, and they came fully prepared to carry out their mission of bloodshed and pillage.

However, although the Macleods of Lewis had at that time dissipated their strength feuding among themselves, they proved more than a match for the invading colonisers who were given a warm reception by the Lewis men, who put up a stubborn resistance under the leadership of Neil Macleod. In that way the well laid plans of the Fife Adventurers were frustrated and their expedition collapsed. Providence decreed that the Islanders were to retain their freedom, their language and their Celtic culture for the time being at least.

However, in these events Kenneth Mackenzie of Kintail, Ross-shire, saw the opportunity for which he was waiting and made a deal with the Adventurer colonists, whereby, in exchange for the Woods of Letterewe in Ross-shire, he was granted a Crown Charter for Lewis in 1610. Thus began the long reign of 234 years of the Seaforth Mackenzie landlords in Lewis, as follows:

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| 1610-1611 | Kenneth Mackenzie of Kintail. |
| 1611-1633 | Colin Mackenzie, 'Cailean Ruadh'. He was empowered by the government to clear up the troubles with the Macleod of Lewis, and pacify the Island. For his services in that direction he was created Earl Seaforth in 1623. |
| 1633-1651 | George Mackenzie, 2 nd Earl of Seaforth. |
| 1651-1678 | Kenneth Mackenzie, 'Coinneach Mor', 3 rd Earl of Seaforth. |
| 1678-1701 | Kenneth Mackenzie, 'Coinneach Og', 4 th Earl of Seaforth. |
| 1701-1740 | William Mackenzie, 'Uilleam Dubh', 5 th Earl of Seaforth. He fought at Sheriffmuir in 1715, was wounded at Glenshiel in 1719, forfeited, and pardoned in 1726, lived in Seaforth Lodge. |
| 1740-1761 | Lord Fortrose refused to come out for Prince Charles. |
| 1761-1781 | Kenneth Mackenzie made Earl of Seaforth in the Peerage of Ireland. He became financially embarrassed and sold the estate to his cousin for £100,000. He died without male issue and the title of Lord Seaforth became extinct. |
| 1781-1783 | Thomas Francis Humbertson Mackenzie. |
| 1783-1815 | Colonel Francis Humbertson Mackenzie. He was created a peer of the United Kingdom in 1797 as Lord Seaforth. He suffered from the defects of deafness and imperfect speech, but he was said to be a man of high mental endowments and he triumphed over these defects. He died after all his male children and so his daughter inherited the Island from him. |
| 1815-1825 | Mary Elizabeth Frederica, Lady Hood, wife of Admiral Sir Samuel Hood who died in 1814. She married James Alexander Stewart in Glasserton in 1817 and he assumed the name Mackenzie. |
| 1825-1844 | He bought the estate in 1825. He died in 1843 and his wife sold the estate to James Matheson in 1844 and she retired to Brahan Castle, where she died in 1863. |
| 1844-1878 | Sir James Matheson. |
| 1878-1896 | Lady Mary Jane Matheson. |
| 1896-1899 | Donald Matheson. |
| 1899-1918 | Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Matheson. |
| 1918-1925 | Lord Leverhulme. |

It was during the last two periods of the reign of the House of Seaforth Mackenzie that most of the clearances at Park took place. The Park Sheep Farm was established early in the 19th century during the time of Colonel

Francis Humbertson Mackenzie, but almost all the Park clearances took place during the time of James Alexander Stewart Mackenzie.

James Matheson was born in 1796, the son of Captain Donald Matheson from Sutherland, Scotland. James went out to China as a young man and by his early 20s he was engaged in the smuggling of opium into China, where it was banned by the Chinese Government. Subsequently he went into partnership with William Jardine a former ship's surgeon turned merchant, and in 1828 they formed a company known as Jardine-Matheson and acquired ships and prosecuted the China coastal smuggling trade in opium.

British India was heavily involved in the growing and supply of opium to the smugglers who supplied the Chinese market, and the peasants who cultivated the opium, like the crofters of Scotland at that time, were deliberately kept down to a subsistence level of living. They were at the mercy of a few racketeers who oppressed and rent-racked them and kept their purchasing power down, and in that way forced them to keep producing opium. The whole exercise brought shame to Britain and was a scourge to China.

Eventually that opium trade resulted in the opium war between China and Britain in the early 1840s. Ostensibly that war was in the sacred name of free trade, but in fact, the real reason for the war was to protect the revenue earned from the sale of opium, because that revenue was considered necessary in order to pay for the tea imported by Britain from China.

The Jardine and Matheson company expanded and consolidated their business in Hong Kong, where they are very active to this day. William Jardine came back to Britain and became a Member of Parliament for Ashburton, England in 1842 where he was in a good position to influence British policy in the Far East. He passed away in 1843 and as the Jardine-Matheson Company was by that time established in Hong Kong James Matheson could afford to retire and Jardine's death gave him the opportunity of taking over the Parliamentary seat at Ashburton, England. It was generally accepted that it was our James Matheson who a writer at that time was referring to in the following terms: 'A dreadful man, richer than Croesus, one McDrug, fresh from Canton a million of opium in each pocket, denouncing corruption and bellowing free trade.'

And back home James Matheson proceeded to invest his opium fortune in real estate. He purchased the Island of Lewis in 1844 for £190,000, as well as extensive estates in Ross-shire, eventually extending to 627,000 acres. In due course he was awarded a Baronetcy, by a grateful British Government for making a fortune in contraband opium at the expense, in human misery, of countless Chinese people.

After sitting in Parliament for Ashburton from 1843 to 1847 James Matheson took over the Parliamentary seat of Ross and Cromarty, which included Lewis at that time, and kept it until 1868 when his nephew Alexander Matheson succeeded him.

As the crofters did not have the vote until the reform act of 1885, their views were certainly not represented in Parliament by their landlord Member of Parliament or his friends, and it is therefore little wonder that their clamor for land law reform went unheeded in Parliament until 1886 when by that time the franchise was extended in 1884 to include the crofters for the first time and at the general election of 1885 a group of Highland Members of Parliament, supporters of the Land League and the crofters cause were returned.

James Matheson embarked on the re-lotting of the crofts of Lewis a few years after he bought the Island and he also commenced to build the castle at Stornoway, and he had a seat at Achany in Ross-shire, as well as a residence in Cleveland Row, London. He had no family and he died in 1878 at the age of 82 years. He was succeeded by his widow, Dame Mary Jane Matheson, who died in 1896 after spending some time in the South of France.

The next proprietor of Lewis after Lady Matheson was Donald Matheson, a nephew of Sir James Matheson, and in 1899, he was followed by his son Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Matheson. In due course the accumulated burdens of taxation and death duties made it impossible for Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Matheson to sustain the heavy financial liabilities of his Lewis estate as well as various other properties and he was obliged to sell his Lewis estate in 1918.

Lord Leverhulme bought the Island from Duncan Matheson in 1918 at a cost of £167,000, including the Lewis Castle and its policies etc, the building of which alone cost well over £100,000.

William Hesketh Lever 1851-1925 was a partner in his father's wholesale grocery business at Bolton, England when he first visited Stornoway as a tourist on a cruise ship in 1884. He was then about 33 years of age. During that cruise it occurred to him to specialise in selling soap under his own trade mark, and within a year he was manufacturing and selling soap, made in a small rented factory at Warrington, England. He married Elizabeth Ellen Hulme and when he was raised to the Peerage he adopted the name of Leverhulme, formed by joining their two names.

By the time Lord Leverhulme acquired Lewis in 1918, he was 66 years of age and the head of a vast business empire extending all over the world and employing a capital of 17½ million pounds sterling. Unlike previous Lewis

proprietors, Lord Leverhulme seemed to have acquired the Island in order to develop it industrially, particularly the fishing industry as he contended that the great wealth of the Island lay in the surrounding sea and not in the land.

He did not see any merit in crofting and declared that Lewis had two good industries, fishing and weaving, and the only reason that people remained poor was that they added to these occupations, a third - their crofts. He preferred to provide quarter acre plots outside Stornoway, but not crofts. He refused to cooperate with the Scottish Office in order to implement the land resettlement schemes that started before the 1914-18 war under the Small Landholders (Scotland) Act 1911, whereby some of the Lewis farms were to be broken up, compulsory [sic] if necessary, into crofts for the numerous landless families in Lewis at the time.

When his development schemes failed and he left Lewis he generously offered the whole of the Island of Lewis to the people of Lewis, free of charge.

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