



## The Development of the Town of Stornoway

The development of Stornoway into a sizeable town took place largely as a result of the herring fishing industry. At the peak of the industry, the town was a very prosperous port with plenty of opportunities for enterprising young people, particularly during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A large number of both rural and town people established various substantial businesses in both fishing and associated trades, such as sail making, rope making, barrel making, curing and other on shore activities.

The Stornoway Directory at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century lists 18 Lewis fish-curers but unfortunately none of these businesses are active in the fishing industry towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, several of these companies are still active in other businesses in the town.

Some of these fish-curers operated curing stations in various other fishing ports on the east and west coast of Scotland as may be seen from the long list of herring curing stations operated by Mr Duncan Maciver Ltd, Stornoway as follows; Stornoway, Scalpay - Harris, Leverburgh, Castlebay, Tarbert - Loch Fyne, Oban, Mallaig, Badacro, Kyle, Wick, Stronsay, Lerwick and Great Yarmouth, as well as coaling depots at Stornoway, Castlebay, Stronsay and owners of steam drifters and Lloyds agents. Duncan Maciver Ltd. also maintained a presence in many sea lochs for the winter fishing with steamers, such as the 'Masterpiece' and the 'Renaldo' buying and bringing the herring to Stornoway for curing and fleshing.

An unsigned profile of Mr Duncan Maciver, founder of the well-known firm of Duncan Maciver Ltd, appeared in the Fish Trade Gazette dated 16 June 1900 as follows; Born in 1864, he started work as a young man with one of the largest firms in the fish trade at that time, Msrs. James McCombie. Duncan was still young when he was entrusted with the management for the Stornoway branch of that firm.

He began in business on his own account in 1888 and he regularly visited the leading continental markets in order to build up his business. An advertisement in 1911 offers Duncan Maciver's world famous kippers in boxes containing 25 large selected fish for 2s/3d (13p) or a sample box containing 12 large selected fish for 1s/6d (7½p) carriage paid, to any address in Great Britain.

It was the herring fishing that sustained crofting by providing employment, as may be seen from the list of 43 Class I boats in Lochs alone, employing about 300 men and boys and also many more men in smaller boats as well as deck-hands on east coast boats.

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