

The Address given on Saturday, 8th August, 1959,
by Mr. Kenneth Macleod, M.A. former Rector,
of Fortrose Academy in the Town Hall,
Stornoway on the occasion of the
Macleod Visitation 7th - 10th August, 1959.

Ladies and Gentlemen: This is a unique occasion for all of us, and it is my duty and pleasure in the first place to tender our thanks to the distinguished lady who has inspired our meeting, Dame Flora Macleod of Macleod, the most colourful of all our contemporary Highland chiefs, and one of the most constructive and lovable of all the long line of Siol Thormaoid; and in the second place to welcome most heartily her entourage to Lewis, the cradle of our race. We extend a special welcome to Major Loudon Macleod, whose uncle, Col. Torquil Macleod, we recognise as the male head of our Lewis line; and trust he may get at least some thrill from his visit to our homeland, sufficient to attract him to repeat the experience, when we can assure him of an equally warm welcome.

In this stage of the Hydrogen bomb clanship may be an anachronism, but it is by no means dead. Here in Lewis we bear our fathers' names, but our mothers had names of their own too; and in my own case my immediate forebears bore the names of Macleod, Young, Maclellan and Mackay. My wife - alas no longer with me - was a great lady of Macleod name from Bayble, and she brought with her also a strong strain of Macdonald blood. I have no doubt that you, my fellow clansfolk, could tell a similar story of your origins; and it all goes to show that we Lewis people, are a closely-integrated race; in other words, invaders might successfully settle here, but in process of time they are absorbed by the native stock, and their worst qualities I trust eliminated.

I remember reading with some astonishment in the first edition of Osgood Mackenzie's famous book that the women of Gairlock generally were a hard faced unattractive lot, and that when on rare occasions he came upon one of them who had some refinement of feature, he always found on inquiry that such a one had had either a Macleod mother or grandmother. But Lewis women had other qualities besides beauty of feature. I call to witness another Mackensie, Mr. Munro Mackenzie of Calgary, one of the earliest of the factors of Sir James Matheson. Giving evidence before Lord Napier's Commission in 1884, he finished his testimony by saying, "As for the women of Lewis, they are the salt of the earth." Is it surprising, therefore, that Lewismen have a conceit of themselves, sometimes indeed going so far as to show a certain arrogance, especially when in a super convivial mood?

Lewis is the lodestone of Lewis people. The love of Lewis is permanent in our hearts whether we live in Lewis, or in neighbouring Britain, or in the wide spaces of the world. Think of the lovely songs of Murdo Morrison, cheering his own heart in Canada, and ours here; so truly describing the youth of Lewis, "Gu n bhoneid, gun bhroig a siubhal an raoin, ann an Eilean an Fhraoch ud thall"; or the pathos of his closing verse, "O's laidir na bannan tha'm tharruing a null gu Eilean beag donn Mhicleoid". Think also of Bard Bharabhais and Murchadh-a-Cheisteir who sang of Lewis "Bi daoine a fuireach gu brath", long before the English thought of "There will always be an England". Think also of the lovely recent song of an author who is anonymous to me, and who wooed his bride with the words "An teid thu thairis leam thar thonn, null gu Eilean donn mo ruin". And none of these could excel in feeling or language the compositions of Lady D'Oyly, one of the many lovely and distinguished daughters of Raasay. I hope that at the ceilidh/

ceilidh on Monday night some one will be found to sing her lovely "Thainig an Gille Dubh", or the moving lament, "Cumha Mhicleoid".

I had an experience in the critical autumn of 1940 in Edinburgh near the G.P.O. Late at night, when the streets were almost pitch-dark I heard a soft singing coming from an opaque spot to my right. Approaching, I found six men and women with arms and shoulders closely linked, singing with much feeling "Eilean Beag Donn a Chuain". Promptly I linked with them and later found that the singers were from Callanish, Ness, Point and Uig. This was their way of getting comfort, and not from the ephemeral pleasures of the City. Let me at this stage with full heart pay tribute to our dear departed Nandag Macleod for all that she did to collect and, with others, to record so many of our lovely luinneags. How happy she would have been to be with us tonight!

Our foreign kindred may wonder why their forebears left a homeland so much loved. Let me assure them that it was no dishonour that forced them out but hard economic facts. Lewis under the Seaforths was not devastated by factors and landlords like Sutherland and Glengarry. On the contrary! A spontaneous desire arose in Lewis in 1770 to move across the Atlantic, and Seaforth hastened up from London to dissuade them, fearing that the Island might be depopulated; but he was unable to meet their demands, which included dismissal of his factor, and a restoration of the old rents. In July 1775, 840 souls left for overseas; but the wars that were aged continuously for the next 40 years in America, Europe and the Indies, slowed the process of emigration to a trickle. When Stewart of Galloway became Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth he suppressed the tacks of Lewis and established small holdings for letting, but without security of tenure. This helped a great deal to bring contentment. It was millionaire Sir James Matheson who instituted a double-barrelled system of forced emigration; and so diplomatically did he do it that to the outside world it is still almost a secret. In the Geddes Report it is stated that 2,200 souls were sent overseas by him before 1853. In addition he devastated great areas of Lewis, turning them into deer forests, sheep walks and newtacks. The people of Galson, Park, Uig and Morsgail were the principal sufferers but the displaced persons were usually found quarters in other parts of the Island; and on the whole there was no great feeling of injustice in Lewis until the appointment of Donald Munro as the Hammer of Thor. The Skye people have reason to be proud of the Battle of the Braes in 1882 which led two years later to action by Mr. Gladstone, but Lewis struck the first blow eight years earlier, when the men of Bernera and their neighbours marched on Lewis Castle and revealed to Sir James Matheson the iniquities of his hirelings. Perhaps he didn't know of them before. At all events he saw the red light.

Higher Education has been well organized in Stornoway for over 60 years, and Advanced Technical Education has been recently established in Lewis Castle with very promising results. Between them there is a large and increasing drain of Lewis youth outwards, but the Island can I think stand it. A year or two back the Nicolson had a great crop of 97 Leaving Certificates of substance; and of these 82 were awarded to young people with native names, the Macleods leading with 17. This shows that the remanent stock in Lewis is far from impoverished mentally by the creaming that has gone on for so long.

Now to speak of the past; The legendary history of the Macleods has been at the mercy of Seanachies, and the recording of it is of comparatively recent date. Every clan has its heroes of many and wonderful exploits, and its villians of the deepest dye. In the published clan histories you will find many examples and illustrations of this. But there has also been some critical work by distinguished historians, and the conclusion respecting our clan by one of these, Donald Gregory, is writte down as follows. "The Siol Torquil and the Siol Tormod were in fact two powerful clans, distinct and independent of each other/

other: the Lords of Lewis and of Harris had a high and equal rank among the vassals of the Isles and were allied by marriage to all the principal clans; but in regard to the tradition of their descent from a common ancestor, it deserved to be noticed that their armorial bearings were different, that of Lewis being a Burning Mountain and that of Harris a Castle". To Dr. Grant's recently published history of the Macleods Albany Herald has contributed a valuable dissertation on these Arms, and quotes inter alia what Sir George Mackenzie of Tarbat and Coigach, the heir of the line of Torquil Cononach, had written 250 years ago, viz:- "that a former Chief of Siol Torquil was obliged by a King of Norway to keep fired at a certain time of the year two beacons, one in Lewis and another in the Isle of Skye. The supporters when they appear on record, he says, seem to refer to the Burning Mountain upon their relative shields. The supporters are blazoned as two savages with flames issuing from their heads and hands, each on a blazing hillock. (These would of course be the fire kindlers and watchers).

"As Arms of Pretension the Chiefs of both branches of the Clan Macleod came to quarter with their own coats the coat of the Ancient Kingdom of Man".
You will observe that the coat of the Kingdom of Man came later than the original Arms.

I venture to think that these two extracts from Gregory and the present Albany Herald support the view which I have long held that the Macleods go further back than 1200 A.D., in which year Leod is said to have been born to Olaf King of Man and Christian, his third wife, daughter to the Earl of Ross. King Olaf died in 1237 and was succeeded not by any Leod but by his son Harold a boy of 14 years of age, who in 1242 received a Charter from King Hakon of Norway, confirming him and his heirs in the dominions of the Isles which his predecessors, Godred, Reginald and Olaf had possessed. Unfortunately this young king was drowned six years later off Shetland when returning with a young bride from Norway. His younger brother Ranald succeeded him but was murdered the following year. Harold the son of Godred Donn, the rival of Olaf, succeeded him but was later ousted by Magnus, 3rd son of Olaf, who received in 1256 from King Hakon the usual Charter of Confirmation.

So there is no word of Leod in all these years. The Chronicle of Man makes no mention whatever of him, nor does the Saga of Hakon; but there is a record in the Orkneying a Saga of Liotwulf Lord of Lewis, some three generations earlier. In 1154 Earl Harld of Orkney and Caithness banished a man called Gunni Olafson to be warded by Liotwulf in Lewis for a specified crime; and during the Civil War of the later Manx Kingdom there is a record that in 1230 Pol Balkanson (2nd) and Ottor Snaeckalson (Nicolson) fell in with Thorkell Thormodson in Loch Bracadale and slew him with two of his sons; that a third son escaped, and that Pol followed him to Lewis and drove him from the Island. This record suggests that the Lewis family favoured Godred Donn and that Pol and the Nicolson supported Olaf. Eventually Godred Donn restored the situation, slaying Pol in a sea battle, and sharing the Kingdom for a time with Olaf.

Captain Thomas, an antiquarian of Great repute in his day, wrote of these entries in the Saga as follows. "This Thormod forms a link in the Macleod Genealogy being the son of Torquil, son of Tormod, son of Liotwulf".

Dr. Alexander MacBain, the celebrated Keltic authority and Historian, wrote also, "Lewis is the Cradle of the great Macleod Clan. The evidence points strongly to their Norse extraction, and the name is curtailed from Liotwulf whose underlying/

lying meaning is, fierce and strong against the foe".

Contrary to the famous Skene, Dr. MacBain believed that the Macleods were of one race, for he finished his eulogy on Neill Macleod of Berisay as follows, "Such is the end of the great Siol Torquil, chiefs by blood of the whole clan Macleod". You all know that in 1774 Raasay of the day vigorously asserted the same claim and forced Dr. Samuel Johnson to retract the statement he had made to the contrary in his original Tour to the Hebrides.

The descent from Liotwulf would account for the Burning Mountain and the two savages. Tradition in Lewis pointed to Murnag as the Mountain, but the tradition in my day made no reference to a second beacon in Skye, an Island which at the time was outwith the Macleod domains. It might also account for the frequent references in the poetry of Mairi Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh to her clan's blood-relationship to the lords of Bergen or Boroimhe.

I have never had any doubt that the first accepted historical chiefs, Torquil and Tormod, were brothers. They alike became vassals of the Earl of Ross after 1266, and Torquil was subsequently favoured with the hand of the Earl's daughter, Lady Dorothy O'Beolan or Mac an-t-Sagairt, in marriage. To strengthen his connection with Lewis the Earl also arranged with Torquil that the extensive district between Dalbeg and Callanish should be granted in perpetuity to one of his near Kinsmen, a district which continued to be held by the O'Beolans until the invasion of Lewis by Huntly, the King's Lieutenant, in 1507-08.

For over 200 years there was a close friendship between the two Macleod families, and on at least two occasions the Lewis-men succoured Siol Tormod from oppressive and dangerous invaders of their country. The rift was dynastic and came after 1520, when John MacTorquil allied himself with his half-brother, Donald Gruamach of Sleat, to drive Siol Thormaid out of Trotternish.

Let me now say a few words on the heroic age of the Siol Thorcuill, when they stood starkly divided, when the majority of them had to kill or drive from the Island a powerful minority, and when a multitude of foes from without stood poised for attack. If only the Lewismen had stood together, how different might the outcome have been!

History has not been kind to old Rory, with us the term Bastard, which has no comparable word in Gaelic, is one so offensive that it usually leads to bloodshed; but if you are a prejudiced historian, or a vengeful Privy Council, you make great play with the word at a distance, otherwise you speak or write sweetly of a Love-Child, or a Natural son, as the last male Stuart King, James II spoke and wrote of his Bastard, the Marshall Duke of Berwick. Suffice to say here that the Mackenzies, ably and ruthlessly led as they were, succeeded in their conquest only because they had the full support of the Scottish Crown, to slay and destroy without mercy a people who had already sustained a ten year war against three Royal conquering expeditions to Lewis.

The principal enemy of Siol Thorcuill was King James VI of Scotland, probably the ablest as he was the most contemptible of the Stuart line of Kings, a man who looked upon Lewis as the Israelites looked upon Canaan, whose greed for gold to shower prodigally was insatiable, and who even sold his mother's life to secure his Tudor inheritance. There had been a Civil war in Lewis for a generation after the death by drowning of Torquil Oighre in 1566; and in 1599 came the Plantation of Lewis by the Duke of Lennox and his Fife Adventurers, with orders from the King to remove by fire and sword the native inhabitants. A similar fate was expressly designed for Siol Thormaid, for Clanranald, and for the people of Trotternish, but the Macleods of Lewis who were loyal to the ruling house were first in the firing line, and right gallantly did they comport themselves. Three times they drove the/

the Lowland Scots out, laying their encampments in ashes. They broke their hearts so utterly that the few surviving adventurers sold their claims on Lewis to Kintail for the contemptible price of the woods of Kinlochewe.

The great hero of these exploits in Lewis was Neill Macleod of Berisay, and this is what Dr. MacBain wrote of him, "No braver or more loyal man appears in the history of the Macleod reign in Lewis than this same Neill, bastard son of old Rory."

Old Rory certainly had five Bastards, known to history, but we are not to judge him or his generation by the hypocritical prudery of the Victorians. He had had the highest example in the land to follow, his contemporary King James V, who in this particular practice was the worthy son of a worthy father, King James IV. Huistean of Sleat, not long before Rory's time, had had six sons, each by a separate mother, including Donald Gallach by a daughter of Gunn of Caithness. Old Rory had not always been old, and to show that he must have had his points let me quote an old saying "that the girls would give their snoods for Rory". The mistake that Rory made was that he had not handfasted the mother of Murdo Macleod, later of Shawbost, who was a sister of Hucheon Morrison, the Brieve of Lewis, as Hugh of Sleat had done with the daughters of two powerful Chiefs, Gunn and Macleod of Harris. Hucheon Breve in revenge seduced Rory's first wife, who in due course produced Torquil Conoach. Soon afterwards she eloped with John of the Axe, and Rory divorced her, repudiating her son by the Breve. His second marriage was a happy one with Lady Barbara Stewart who lived with him from 1541 till her death in 1568. Significantly there was no claim made on behalf of Torquil Cononach till after the only child of this marriage, Torquil Oighre, was calamitously drowned in 1566. Rory was then without a legitimate son and gave expression to his desire that his successor to Lewis should be Donald Gormson, the grandson of John MacTorquil, his predecessor. Forthwith the claims of Torquil Cononach were pressed by his relatives in Lewis, and by Kintail, and for a few years it looked as if their claimant should succeed. But at the age of 72 old Rory married again, a young daughter of Duart and within a few years was the father of two full sons, Torquil Dubh and Tormod. There followed 25 years later the unhallowed murder of Torquil Dubh, the acknowledged Chief of Lewis, and that by a foul conspiracy of Kintail: Iain Dubh, the Breve; and Murdo Macleod of Shawbost. The two latter paid with their lives for their crime, as well as many others, guilty and innocent.

In regard to the legitimacy or otherwise of Torquil Cononach Dr. MacBain wrote "It is significant that the Morrison clan supported Cononach's claim in every way, crime included, in the fratricidal contest that ensued".

But to return to Neill. I have a list of 60 names of Lewis patriots, followers of Neill, who were put to the horn by the Scottish Privy Council for opposing the Fifers, and another list of 25 names of men, similarly treated, who held Berisay for three years against the mainlanders. In 1613 these brave men vacated Berisay to save the lives of their women and children who were exposed on a skerry near Berisay at low tide to be otherwise left to drown. Such humanity shows the quality of Neill.

The chieftains of Siol Torquil did not sell their lands, nor did they come to any composition with their enemies. They fought it out to the end, and by their sacrifices they saved the Hebrides from Colonialism, the brand of rule that has split Ireland after centuries of hate and bloodshed and that stronger races have been imposing on others since time began. Germany is by no means the first country to act upon the theory of the Master Race.

It is well known that Macleod mothers of the 17th century had ceased to tell their sons of their descent for fear of murder and sudden death, and that the name Torquil nearly if not wholly died out. Certain Macleod families, however, persisted until recent times in exercising their old right of burial of their dead in the hallowed Chapel of Eye; and this is generally construed to mean that such families were relatives, more or less close, of the recent Chiefs. Perhaps the best known of these is represented here tonight by Major Torquil Macleod whose father lives in Melbost, and he has with him his young son Torquil an Honours graduate of Aberdeen University. Some years ago I spent some hours in Sydney, New South Wales with another Torquil Macleod who is also from Melbost and of the same blood, and who had enhanced in that city the fine reputation he possessed here for uprightness and common sense, and who had also done a great deal in the hungry thirties of that Dominion to relieve Lewismen who had found themselves out of work.

Ruairidh Ban of Bayble who had also the right to bury in the Chapel, became well known in Lewis and on the mainland as an eloquent leader of Land Law Reformers. He had a majestic presence and as the Rev. N.C. MacFarlane in his Men of Lewis wrote of him, "he looked like a Chief of the older time". Councillor Donald Macleod is his grandson.

There is a well known story from Point, of a gallant Macleod of Garrabost or of Bayble, who in the early 18th century boasted in his cups in a tavern in Bayhead that Lewis belonged to him. "Sleamsa Lenghus"; only to be shanghaied that same night never to return to eyes that knew him. He undoubtedly knew something. The most distinguished scion of Siol Torquil in this country at the moment is the Minister of Labour, the Right Honourable Iain Macleod whose father Dr. Norman Alexander Macleod was one of the intellectual Macleods of Lochs. His mother was a Ross of Lewis and of the highest quality which is interesting, as the progenitors of the old House of Lewis were Torquil Macleod and Lady Dorothy O'Beolan whose family were afterwards called Ross. The venerable Minister of Uig, Rev. Norman Macleod, who is of the same Lochs stock has a son who is a Sheriff in Peebles, and there are innumerable others in the less exalted professions both here and throughout the Commonwealth.

Here I shall curtail my address with an earnest exhortation to you, Macleods of Lewis, both at home and from home, "that it is your bounden duty to get together and form yourselves into a Siol Torquil Association; and when you shall have done so, that you should seek affiliation with the Clan Macleod Society. I have no doubt you would loyally and profitably support the general aspirations of the Society; but you have at least one special and imperative duty of your own to carry out, namely the erection of a stone or Cairn of Remembrance, suitably inscribed, in Stornoway, to Neill Macleod of Berisay, who like all real heroes in the end lost his life, giving it with calmness and dignity - and that on behalf of Lewis and his Macleod kindred. He did not suffer the mutilations and tortures endured by Sir William Wallace in London; but he suffered the same vilification in the indictment made against him in Edinburgh; and he was deprived of his life for an exactly similar cause. Some measure of justice has been done, and is being done annually, to the memory of Sir William, but little has hitherto been done for the memory of the heroic soldier, Neill Macleod.