



['Bùth Thearlaich' and Alexander MacIennan of Marvig]

One hundred and forty years ago Charles Morrison came from Dornoch to Stornoway as a young man and opened a ships chandlers shop which became a universally recognised institution, particularly among the fisher folk. Sadly, the Stornoway Gazette issue dated June 6th 2002 reported the closure of 'Bùth Thearlaich' on Thursday 31st May. Marvig had a close association with 'Bùth Thearlaich'.

About halfway through its life Charles Morrison's original shop fronting onto Bank Street amalgamated with the shop 'Mackenzie & Macfarlane' in the same building but fronting onto Point Street. An internal communicating door between the two shops was opened, and from then onwards the two shops functioned as one retail shop.

Two men originally set up Mackenzie & Macfarlane's shop from Crobeg, Lochs. John Mackenzie (1836-1903) was the son of 'Coinneach Bad a Chro' or 'Coinneach Crossbost' as he was known because he was the last tacksman in Crossbost. John Mackenzie was brought up in Crobeg and mention was made of him in the book 'The Men Of Lewis' by the Rev. N.C. Macfarlane (who also resided at Crobeg for a while) as being one of the saintliest men in Lewis at that time. His partner John Macfarlane was a cousin who resided in Crobeg as well, a brother of Rev. N.C. Macfarlane.

A young man from Marvig became a shop assistant in 'Mackenzie & Macfarlane', Point Street. He was Alexander MacIennan, 6 Marvig 'Mac Alastair Bhàn'. Alexander was popularly known as 'Holy Alex', probably because he was a pillar of the Free Church congregation in Stornoway. Alex the young lad from Marvig eventually became the proprietor of 'Mackenzie & Macfarlane', and in due course Provost of Stornoway, and County Councillor for Park, the district of his birth.

After Alex MacIennan retired, his shop was taken over by the ship chandlers 'Charles Morrison', and continued in the same building fronting on to Point Street. When Charles Morrison came to Lewis practically every house in Lewis was thatched and the thatch was held in place by 'sioman-fraoich', homemade heather rope. Charles Morrison introduced 'coir-yarn' which became known as 'sioman-Thearlaich', long after both he and his shop had gone.

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